

I B.A. English

Semester – I

Subject & Code: Indian Writing in English (17UENC13)

Unit –V Short Story

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*Neipayasam*

- Kamala Das

Kamala Das, regarded as Mother of Modern Indian English poetry, is one of the prominent Indian writers of the 1960s writing in English. She is a woman who has attained worldwide recognition. She draws her main inspiration of writing from her hatred of the chauvinistic attitude of men towards women in the traditional Indian society. She craves for love, companionship and understanding. She is a serious woman writer who has deep concern in the description of Indian women in literature. In the beginning of her career, Kamala Das wrote very popular short stories in Malayalam. Kamala Das' maiden name was Madhavikutty. She has created a new landscape for human experiences using the depths of the female psyche portrayed in her stories.

Kamala Das wrote *Neipayasam* in Malayalam, an Indian dialect. When it was translated into English, the story was given the name "Sweet Milk". The narration is omniscient third person focusing on the unnamed father as the protagonist of the story.

A young mother is found dead from a heart attack in her kitchen. The story begins with the woman's husband returning from the cremation and funeral of the wife. Tearful, it is obvious that he is in a shock. His concern is for his children and how he will carry the responsibility for himself and his wife.

When the father arrives at home, two of his three sons are waiting for him.

The middle son is sleeping. Immediately the father decides not to tell the boys about their mother until the next day. There is no reason to ruin their sleep. The boys enquire about their mother thinking that she has to spend the night in the hospital. The father responds by telling them that the mother will return.

### **The Importance of the Neipayasm**

The mother has a loving legacy for her children. Before the mother had her heart attack, she followed her usual routine preparing food as well as potatoes and a special treat for the children for the evening meal when they returned from school. The boys loved their mother's payasam. It was their favourite snack.

When he saw the boys, the father learnt that they had not eaten. He offered to fix them a meal. All the boys wanted their mother's treat that she had made especially for them. First, the father thought that the boys should not eat the food their mother had prepared because it was touched by death. Then, with a melancholy feeling, he decided that they should be able to eat the payasam since it was the last thing that their mother would ever make for them.

As the older boy began to eat, he commented that his mother made wonderful neipayasam. With this comment concerning the food, the boy expressed his love for his mother and appreciation for her making them their favourite food. Sadly, he was unaware of the importance of this payasam, which was the last their mother would ever have made for them. They would never again be able to eat their mother's cooking.

No longer was the father able to hold back his tears, and he rushed to the bathroom to hide his grief from his boys. What would the next day bring without the mother's love!

Without the father's name revealed, the father becomes a universal figure for all men who lose their wives and worry about how to cope without their partners. The story employs an unemotional quality which makes the story even more poignant. It illustrates the shock and dismay the father feels for his life and his three sons.

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