



Alienation in the Poetry and Prose of Kamala Das

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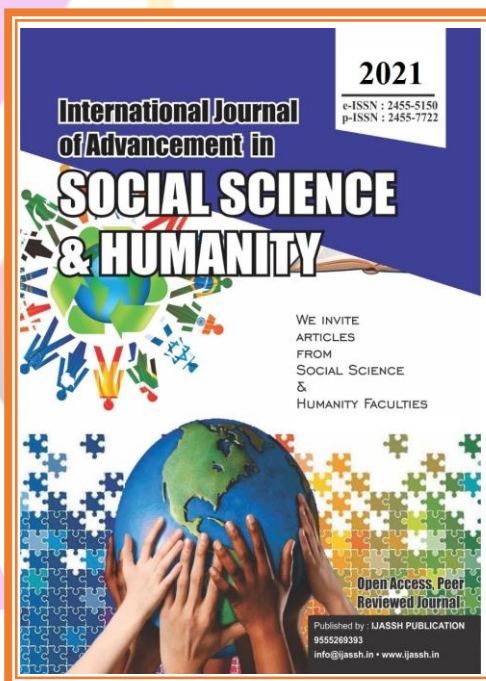
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ABSTRACT

Kamala Das is one of the most well-known figures in Indo-English literature. Between 1965 and 1985, Das released six collections of poetry. Das writes of profoundly intimate events, including her growing into womanhood and her futile desire for love in and outside of marriage, using religious and domestic imagery to create a sense of identity. Das has been a divisive figure since the publication of "Summer in Calcutta," noted for her distinctive visuals and truthfulness. She gives her love poetry a new dimension by demonstrating her relationship with an earlier Indian tradition with origins in Indian epics. Her family background, on the other hand, not only provides an appropriate backdrop but also increases her poetry's introspective streak. Her poetry is solely concerned with the search for love. Her persona has a sexual "brazenness" to it that barely masks her inner ferment. Das became known as the "voice of women's sexuality," credited as the most vocal – and often controversial – writer. Kamala Das' poetry began as a fiery and moving female confessional poetry, with the examination of the man-woman relationship as the central focus. Kamala Suraiyya (Das), a poet who is deeply engaged in the sexual realm, has always attempted to link love to bodily emptiness. This identification was an attempt by her to reinvent her own identity while yet maintaining a meaningful relationship. Her anguish drove her to seek refuge in another's arm and knock on another's door, as she wrote in *The Wild Bougainvillea*: "...yearned for a man from/another town." "I always desired affection," Das stated in an interview with the *Warrior*, "and if you don't get it within your house, you stray a little." Kamala Das felt lonely in her world since she was alone. Except for her grandmother, Kamala was almost completely neglected during her youth, as were the other children in the Nair household. It's a story she tells in her memoirs.

KEYWORDS: *Kamala Das's Poetry, Evolution of Themes, Controversial Figure, Feminism.*

INTRODUCTION:

The purpose of this research is to investigate the intricacies of the term alienation from many perspectives. It also aims to investigate the issue of alienation in modern literature in general, as well as Indian English writing in particular. We attempted to include as many writers as possible to highlight the varied forms of alienation found in the literature. Many psychological, social, literary, and philosophical types of research have been conducted on alienation. It is a major subject in the modern epoch's human condition. It's only natural that such a prevalent issue as alienation has left such an indelible mark on contemporary literature. The goal of this research is to familiarize English literature students and teachers with the issue of alienation in modern literature. It is believed that the study will aid students, researchers, and teachers in boosting their interest in their studies, research, and teaching.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Urmila, Dr. R M Jha (2017) Kamala Das was born in Malabar, Kerala, on March 31, 1934. Das is one of India's most well-known female writers today. Das has written several autobiographical writings and novels in both English and Malayalam. Several well-received English poetry

books, countless volumes of short tales, and articles on a wide range of topics. Das has been regarded as a prominent voice of her generation from the publication of her debut collection of poetry, "Summer In Calcutta" (1965), marked by a break from the past by writing in a distinctly Indian Persona rather than copying the techniques of the English modernists. Her poetry is the most painful and poignant. Kamala Das became known as the "Voice of Women's Sexuality" after being dubbed the most vocal and even controversial writer. Das published in Malayalam under the pen name Madhavikutty before converting to Islam, in addition to English. Her short stories and the autobiographical "My Story," which was translated into fifteen languages and in which she candidly revealed her miserable sexual relationship with Madhava Das, her husband, were attributed to her popularity in Kerala. The poetess expresses her displeasure with the male's dominance and, as a result, the female's diminution. The woman is expected to fill certain stereotyped roles, and her desires and ambitions are ignored. The complaint's passion, expressed in conversational phrase and rhythm, makes it emblematic of all womanhood's revolt against the male ego. She married at the tender age of fifteen, and her marriage was a complete disaster. Her marriage's failure prompted her to seek out extramarital

sexual connections to find the kind of love that her spouse had failed to provide..

Suddhojit Chatterji (2021) Kamala Das is one of Indian English Literature's most prolific and divisive poets and authors of the post-colonial era. Her works have been judged more for their sexual overtones than for their literary value. The majority of research on Kamala Das has focused on her love poems and man-woman relationships, as love is the most prominent theme in her poetry. She has been labelled a Feminist Poet because she writes with the feelings, emotions, and sensitivity of a woman and her world, and she expresses her outrage at the patriarchal design of women's subjugation. No woman poet had ever written about her subjective experiences so openly, deeply, and intimately as she did in the creative arts. As a result, she was classified as a Confessional poet. These, however, are just the tip of the iceberg. Few attempts have been made to comprehend the woman's 'loneliness' in her writings, which unfortunately represent the vast majority of the iceberg that has remained uncovered. Loneliness is a recurring theme in Kamala Das' poetry. The current research investigates it alongside her own female awareness exploration. She seeks to live deeply and honestly on her own terms by raising her consciousness.

Shubhi Bhasin (2016) the development of imaginative fiction in English by Indian writers has increased steadily in recent years. The intelligent Indians' continuous efforts to express their bright ideas and heightened sensibility in English have drawn worldwide notice. Only a language is indeed a universally recognized medium of expression through which a writer struggles to pour in the rich pearls of his imagination, as well as the great struggle of seeking compromise through the uncompromising wilderness, which forms the true story of true identity literature. Kamala Das spoke out against society's current systems. Her insulted feminine self-embarked on emotional ramblings, striving to find an identity and independence for herself, as well as the entire women's creed in general. Her sensitive comprehension and elucidation of the predicament of Indian women as a whole qualify her as a feminist. Through multiple functional ideas and metaphors in her poems, Kamala Das has powerfully visualized the realm of "empty joy" and sterility. She is thrown into a sequence of scenarios in which she is reduced to a puppet in the hands of masculine dominance. She was courageous in protesting and expressing her frustrations, rage, and loneliness via poetry. Her poetry encapsulates the predicament of modern Indian women attempting to break away from the patriarchal society's

imposed sexual and home bonds. As a result, Kamala Das's quest for self-identity becomes a rallying cry for women seeking improved living conditions and equal human rights...

Dr. Sunita b. Nimavat (2014) following the gradual decline of the romantic tradition, a new wave of Indian poetry in English emerged. It first appeared at the start of the post-independence period. Kamala Das is one of the most outspoken of these new Twentieth-century Indian poets in her protests against patriarchy and women's exploitation. Kamala Das has been dubbed the "Icon of Indian Feminism." Kamala Das, a bilingual poetess, has established herself as a powerful new voice. Her poetry has a confessional tone to it. Her poetry is filled with feminine sensibility and a yearning for true love. This paper is an attempt to examine some of Kamala Das' poems that deal with feminine sensitivity. Movement is slow in Das' poetry "The Freaks," but she vividly expresses her aversion to sex and, in the end, she compromises. When she admits that she despises his lovemaking because she has to yield like a victim while pretending to enjoy it, her tone turns impetuous. She feels obligated to do so because of social expectations. In a world controlled by men, a married woman has no right to speak out against her dirty

experience. She writes that she feels like an object, a possession and that she is unable to express her inner feelings. Kamala Das embraces a new standard of expression that reflects a rejection and denial of traditional poetic expression. She is a true poetess who expresses her rage while criticizing male dominance. Her frustrating love experience serves as a motivating factor for her. She portrays disillusionment and pain in "The Freaks," a lady who yearns for genuine love. She is enraged at her companion's brutality. Her poetry is a scathing critique of masculine dominance. She also openly highlights feminine sensibilities. Kamala Das is a liberated woman who believes that it is every woman's right to have her sexual wants fulfilled as well as psychological stability. In "My Grandmother's House," Kamala Das expresses her longing for her family's Malabar house. She misses her grandmother's love and devotion. As a result, a detailed examination of "Freaks" and "My Grandmother's House" reveals Das' feminine sensitivity.

Siva Satyanarayana Jagarapu (2020)

Kamala Das was one of the most famous poets in the Indian English language. Her diverse poetry portrayed a typical middle-class Indian woman's dual conflict of ideas by portraying herself against the backdrop of Indian life and culture. Kamala Das was

an advocate for women's hidden desires, goals, and longings. Her poems are filled with her unique thoughts as a woman and self-discovery. The focus of this article is on the voice she gives to every woman who is suffering in her marriage and the reawakening of her soul, which she submits to God.

THE POETRY AND PROSE OF KAMALA DAS

There are several poems in Kamala Das' volumes of verse that exude love, amorousness, and sensuality. However, none of this should lead one to assume that she has been pleading for promiscuity and infidelity all along. They rather express her intense desire to be free of the confines of a male-dominated society and live a happy, healthy, peaceful, and restful existence. The woman-persona in her expresses an "indomitable will" and "spirit of retribution" (to use Milton's popular expressions), and issues a clarion appeal to the weaker sex to rise in revolt against all forms of oppression and tyranny. As a poet, Kamala is never tired of standing out for all women, and several of her poems should be read from this perspective. Love/sex, without a doubt, takes center stage in her poems and emerges as one of the most prominent themes.

Kamala Das's poetry falls under the headings namely:

- Summer in Calcutta (1965)
- The Descendants (1967)
- The Old Playhouse and Other Poems (1973)
- Tonight This Savage Rite (1979)
- Only The Soul Knows How To Sing (1996)

In *Tonight, This Savage Rite* (1979), a compilation of their love poetry, Kamala Das teamed with Prithvi Nandy. Her poetry explores love and emotional dissatisfaction in the context of an empty marital life. Her public image is that of a woman who is feminine and straightforward, unorthodox yet honest, vivacious yet tragic, impulsive yet insecure.

“I Studied All Men,” “What Women Expect Out of Marriage and What They Get,” “Why

Not More Than One Husband?” and “I Have Lived Beautifully”.

India is a melting pot of cultures, and its literature reflects this. After the end of colonialism after WWII, modern Indian English poetry arose. It's one of many 'new literature' that emerged around that period. In comparison to the creative writings of Africa and the Caribbean, modern Indian poetry in English has been mostly ignored

by critics, international readers, and intellectuals. The reason for this is that it bears no clear and direct resemblance to the cultural movements that led to national independence. By 1947, however, the situation had altered, and the new poets' primary focus had shifted to their relationship with and estrangement from the realities of their society. They faced stiff opposition from older nationalist writers and regionalists who desired a revival of India's pre-colonial languages' culture. The language of colonial rulers is no longer English. It is a modern Indian language in which words and idioms have clear national connotations and connections. The language of regular people is not English. It's the language of people who run the country, communicate, produce, and make decisions. Modern Indian English poetry's words, phrases, and idioms depict local reality, Indian customs, and emotional states.

Such Indianization may be found in the poetry of Kamala Das, Pritish Nandy, and especially Keki Daruwala. In the poetry of Nissim Ezekiel and Jayant Mahapatra, it is more typically present in terms of voice and stress. Kamala Das is the most distinctive and singular voice in Indian English poetry, as well as the entire Indian literary scene. In her poetry, she expresses

a strong and clear feminine sense as well as an explicit, unmasked natural idiom.

Kamala Das is a poet with a wide range of styles and moods. She is a free-love poet. Love is the lynchpin around which Kamala Das' poetry revolves. Her poems are primarily about her unsatisfied need for love. In her poetry, love is a multi-faceted and nuanced human emotion. Kamala Das' poetry has physical, emotional, and spiritual moods. In her poetry, love and hate are frequently neighbors. Her poetry contains the idea of estrangement as well. She uses feminism as a protest note in her poems because she feels disillusioned and alienated from the physical world. Aside from these topics, we're also interested in the idea of honoring womanhood. Her poems are primarily about her indifferent husband, her childhood, her marriage, love, life, and her intimate relationships with others. Kamala Das relishes the opportunity to embrace her feminine personality.

Her writing style is concise, and she employs exact terminology. Her creative genius is such that she has remained a widely popular literary figure despite being involved in various unwelcome issues. Kamala Das is not just a poet who writes in the Indian English language, but she is also a woman of a certain age. In this mortal world, there are many different sorts of male-female partnerships. Human beings

form these partnerships to meet their many social, personal, and emotional requirements. The mother-son relationship is the first and most important relationship between a man and a woman. Other sorts of man-woman relationships include father-daughter, husband-wife, brother-sister, and lover-beloved, and each has its own societal, personal, and emotional qualities and significance. The major and most important issue of Kamala Das' poems is the portrayal of man-woman relationships. Although her handling of man-woman relationships in poetry is subjective, it is equally true in everyday life for the average man and woman. She generally discusses her connections with her husband and other guys who she treats as friends or loves in her poetry. However, the conclusion of all of her relationships with men, including her husband, is that love is a crucial component of a healthy relationship, which she lacks. Kamala Das writes about a husband and wife's loathing relationship in her famous poem "The Freaks." In this poem, she concludes that the foundation of husband-wife interactions is as follows:

"However, they merely wander in puddles of Desire...caisn't this guy with nimble finger-tips unleash nothing more alive than the Skin's lethargic pangs of hunger?"

She believes that only physical relations can provide a man-woman, or husband-

wife relationship, with a flawless touch. "Who can help us who have lived so long and failed in love?" she wonders. ⁵ To put it another way, love is required to form a good and long-lasting connection between two people. Only a physical bond can bring two people together in any relationship. In her other poem, 'The Sunshine Cat,' she also discusses the same kind of loveless man-woman connection. She bemoans:

"... The man she loved who loved her was not enough..."

"The husband who neither loved nor used her"

"A bed made soft with tears, and she lay there wailing..." finishes the fate of this loveless man-woman relationship. As a result, Kamala Das strongly encourages the presence of love in any form of a healthy and long-lasting relationship between man and woman in her poems. All forms of man-woman relationships can only be formed through a bond of love, whether it is a bond between husband and wife, lover and adored, or mother and son.

Kamala Das' poetry must be interpreted through the lens of her feminine sensibility. She was born into these conditions as a result of the society in which she grew up. She is aware of her

creative faculties as a poet and attempts to break constraints and restraints. To poetically define herself, she engages in self-awareness, self-exploration, and self-introspection. She is forced to play the part, even though she is a woman. It is a masculine culture that forces her to choose her roles based on their practicality. She is compelled to play the role of a slave or an idol. Her demeanor reflects her deplorable state as a woman. In her book, *My Story*, she writes:

"Often I have toyed with the idea of drowning myself; o get rid of my loneliness which is not unique in any way but: is natural to all. I have wanted to find rest in the sea and an escape from involvements".

As a result, her feminine self has traditionally been identified with the enclosed world of household under the guise of being a mother, wife, and helpmate. She writes in 'Substitute,' when her body's reaction shocks her feminine self, "Our bodies after lovemaking turning away rejecting our handiwork began to sound like the clatter of sounds in combat," that she wishes to escape from her disappointed recollection. ⁹ Such a psychically terrible event during her search for emotional contact with her husband drove her to commit suicide. For

her, love has devolved into a mechanical affair, and partners have become a series of stand-ins: She repeats herself.

"After that love become a swivel-door, where one went out, another came in.

The 'ache' and misery emanating from her inner being represents overall suffering. The usage of the word 'sea' as a metaphor for her inner restlessness and melancholy mood, expresses the self's confessional experience of melting and crumbling into nothingness. The 'sea' becomes a haven for her beleaguered mentality and time-worn existence. Throughout her second volume, the water serves as an objective counterpoint to her desire for serenity. Kamala Das is confronted with two psychological traumas in this scene. Her feminine self wants to be connected to her 'body's knowledge,' while her poetic self wants to be divorced from the former and achieve a holistic view of existence. She is unable to bring the two back together because there is always a chasm between them. The irony is that these experiences have given her neither the capacity to subjugate herself nor the ability to forgive her. Both warring selves are unable to achieve a common conclusion. "Despite the positive of 'body's wisdom,' the body itself is prone to degradation," writes Devendra Kohli. Several poems in 'The Descendants' deal with the issue of love affairs that lead

to futility. The majority of her poetry in this collection is sorrowful. However, 'The Looking Glass' works as a humorous relief in the same way that a traditional Shakespearian tragedy does.

It is up to her to fulfill the male ego by adoring his manly powers and her feminine fragility in a male-dominated environment. Her soft, gorgeous feminine self serves two purposes: first, to arouse his desire, and second, to fulfill his superior male vanity. Her feminine self also learns how to entice a man to fulfill her sexual desires. "Getting a man to love you is simple; just be honest about your desires while a woman stands naked before the glass with him," she says. So that he views himself as the stronger one, and believes it, while you appear to be much softer, younger, and lovelier..... Acknowledge your admiration. Take note of his limb perfection, his eyes reddening in the shower, and the skywalks across the bathroom floor." The poem is a psychic striptease for a lady poet who is deprived of the emotional connection she craves.

The 'queen of erotica,' Kamala Das, confesses that she is softer and lovelier than he is and that he is the 'stronger'. She made him feel like he was her 'one man' when it came to sexual enjoyment. She donates her feminine anatomy to satisfy her "endless female pangs of hunger," including the "musk of breasts," "scent of

long hair," and "the warm shock of monthly blood." Her desire for emotional fulfillment, however, remains unsatisfied. Her sexual self, who was previously warmed by passionate touch, is now drab and poor. Her poems are a reflection of who she is on the inside. There's a strong feminine sense at work here. Kamala Das, a hot-blooded woman, makes an open confession of her sexual-starvation desires. Love is the core and slice of life for a woman. Frustration and turbulence in childhood, passion and sexual cravings in adulthood, soft tenderness for children, and flirting with males are all psychological expressions of woman-love.

A woman yearns for love at all times, and this love cannot be one-sided. It should be mutually beneficial. Kamala Das, on the other hand, finds an 'empty cistern' in her life instead of the juice of love. "She writes about love with the possessiveness of a woman who can realize her existence entirely only through love," Saleem Peeradina has said. Given the theme, it's unsurprising that the writing is occasionally sloppy and self-indulgent."

As a result, it is understandable that she is constantly hungry and sad in the absence of true love in her life. She spent the rest of her life looking for love, but she couldn't seem to find it. "Do not throw the meat and bones away when I die; pile them up and

let them tell by their smell what life was worth on this earth and what love was worth in the end," she says.

Kamala Das is a mood and freak poet, so she writes about pigeons, seasons, children, bangles, the sea-shore and the morning tree, bats, phone calls, artificial alarms, airports, ferns and maggots, juice-sticks and looking-glasses, convicts, compositional problems, high tides and loud posters, the swamp, and the bluebird, and so on. These numerous items have been catalogued to demonstrate that Kamala Das does occasionally break apart from her well-chosen topics, giving a sense of diversity and variety. She handles them as deftly as she handles her well-known themes. And, taken together, they give the feeling that her poetry is "as honest, as human, as she is." Kamala Das' debut book, Everest Press Delhi, was published in 1965, but it was like a "Parcel of dynamite," as O.J. Thomas describes it, "exploding in your face, ripping masks and bringing out the latent discontents of the worked-especially the woman's point of view."

Kamala Das' personal experience of love in its various functions is the central focus of this collection of poems. It's a harrowing description of her disappointments and psychological traumas. In Kamala Das' poetry, the love topic is a multi-faceted

phenomenon. On the one hand, she understands love as a mechanical act of bodily union; on winter evenings, I loved his body without guilt... .. For some, this type of relationship becomes a compulsion that only leads to frustration. She, on the other hand, prefers to have relationships with other men. This is also another part of her love motif. She looks for fulfillment in other men, but the lover is bound to be disappointed in each experience. This collection of poems depicts her unrelenting frustration, culminating in her desire to die. In some of her poetry, she goes beyond herself and connects to the bigger picture. She becomes the voice of the world's oppressed women."

Kamala Das' novel *The Descendants* is about physical degradation, nothingness, and frustration. Her marriage has harmed her ego and left her unfulfilled; her poems also depict a woman revelling in the newness of the world as she wanders the streets and follows her hobbies. She has experienced dissatisfaction, disillusionment, and drabness, which she has boldly portrayed via every verse line of her poems. This collection of poems has an overarching tone of gloom. It has several references to her frustrations and feelings of loneliness. The poetess has finally

realized that her quest for genuine love will not be fulfilled in this life.

This *Old Playhouse and Other Poems* expresses her disdain for a life of lust that deprives her of emotional and spiritual fulfillment. It denotes a transition from the physical to the emotional or spiritual realms. It also demonstrates how lust destroys a sensitive woman's emotional and spiritual well-being.

Only the Soul Knows How to Sing (1996)

This is a sample from Kamala Das' whole poetry corpus, published in 1996. The new poems in this book deal with death and decay, society, and human connections, among other topics.

Social poems:

Kamala Das criticizes individuals who plant the seeds of discord and conflict in society in "Toys." In the aftermath of Indira Gandhi's assassination, terrorist carnage was unleashed on the innocent Sikhs in "Delhi 1984." "Smoke in Colombo" is a protest against the genocide of Tamils perpetrated by Sri Lanka's dominant non-Tamils.

The film "The Dalit Panther" depicts police brutality against a Dalit teen. "If Death is Your Wish" is a forceful criticism of individuals who settle their accounts by

destabilizing society via acts of violence. The anti-hate forces are condemned in "Daughter of the Century."

Poems of Death and Decay:

"Women's Shuttles" depicts the misery of a poetess who had to make several trips behind a daredevil's bier. "Death is Life's Obscure Parallel." The poetess visualizes her preparation for death in "Death is So Mediocre." The poetess' first-hand confrontation with death at the moment of her father's death is depicted in "I Shall Not Forget." Her thoughts were continuously tormented by her contact with death. The poetess laments her worsening health and approaching old age in "Smudged Mirrors." "The Intensive Cardiac Care Unit" depicts a death-like environment, with patients awaiting execution and half-grown dreams couched beneath beds. "A Requiem for My Father" is a realistic depiction of her father's death following a protracted illness, and it shows her longing for fatherly tenderness that she was denied during her childhood.

Personal Poems:

"Larger than Life was He" is a candid revelation of Kamala Das' marriage failure. She has no qualms about admitting that her marriage is a ruse. In "The Widow's Lament," the poetess laments the death of

her husband, who was both her parasol and her home. The poet writes in "Cat in the Gutter" about how lust makes her feel like "a high-bred kitten rolling for delight in the gutter." The non-fulfillment of a treasured love is the subject of "The Seashore." "Mortal Love" demonstrates that loyalty in love is reserved for immortals exclusively, not mortals.

Conclusion:

Kamala Das is obsessed with love's death, decay, failure, and dissatisfaction. Her canvas expands, and her imagery becomes more creative and contemporary. With its enduring appeal, captivating range, and astounding authenticity, Indian English Poetry has matured. With her stunning imagery, innovative idiom, and honest portrayal of Indian women and their issues, Kamala Das is a preeminent figure among contemporary poets. As a result, one may argue that her current state is due to her frustration with love. She is a woman who desires to find love while avoiding the trappings of passion. She is frequently terrified of recalling the death of a man she adored. She accepts that while loving is simple, living without a partner and his memories is extremely difficult for a

woman. She declares: "Yes, finding a man to love is simple, but living without him later may be a challenge. A life without life when you wander around, meeting strangers with eyes that have given up looking, ears that have only heard His final voice shouting out your name, and a body that once looked like burnished brass but is now drab and poor" .. 16 These sentences demonstrate Kamala Das' desire for complete fulfillment in love, including security, mutual understanding, shelter, and a happy household. To her, love has always meant more than a sexual encounter. She needed sympathy, soft treatment, and company from her husband. She has spent her entire life looking for genuine love and a true companion with whom she can share a happy life. Kamala Das is well known for raising awareness among women about the need of prioritizing themselves. It is impossible to help others without first helping oneself. In her poems, she immortalizes the beauty of nature and human interactions, where personal experiences become universal via impassioned expression. Kamala Das' rustic, honest voice shines a sharp light on everything around us, illuminating minute details we never knew we had.

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