


Kamala Das: A Poet Who Loads Every Rift of Her Subject with the Ore of Personal and Self Mythology

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Abstract

The present research paper is structured into three distinct sections, each rigorously examining various dimensions of mythology within the context of Kamala Das' poetics. The initial section offers a comprehensive analysis of the concepts of myth and mythology, focusing specifically on personal and self-mythology. It seeks to elucidate common misconceptions regarding their origins, meanings, and inherent characteristics, traversing the continuum from classical myths to the intricacies of individual and self-mythological constructs. The subsequent section critically investigates the pervasive influence of patriarchal structures in shaping Das' life and, consequently, her personal and self-mythology. It raises essential questions regarding the extent to which her work mirrors existing myths or transcends them, thereby contributing to broader discussions on gender and narrative agency. Finally, the paper robustly examines the practical manifestations of personal and self-mythology within her poetics. It highlights significant life events, foundational beliefs, and core values that inform her writing, while also assessing her innovative integration of mythological elements throughout her oeuvre. Utilizing diverse research methodologies and textual analyses, this paper aims to illuminate the complexities of her poetry, positioning Kamala Das as a poet who intricately intertwines personal and self-mythologies into the fabric of her literary endeavours.

Keywords: Myth, Mithos, Muthos, Mythos, Mythros, Mythology, Mythologist, Mythopoeic, Mythopoetic, Mythopoeia, Mythologize.

Myth, like Norse's Compass, guides and protects its beholder, like Freud's lens, probes and projects its possessor's mind, experience, and interpersonal relationships, and like Greek's Tiresias, tints time's central divisions—past, present, and future. It responds to the dateless questions of each generation and pegs down all the logics of learning somewhere. However, the literary sphere has an exceptional repulsion to it. The rationality running behind it is its co-

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existence with literature because authors create mythical allegories, analogies, metaphors, and themes in their works. Although it is difficult to confine myth within definition limits, the mythologists have done their best. According to Lauri Honko, it is "a story of the gods, a religious account of the beginning of the world, the creation, fundamental events, the exemplary deeds of the gods as a result of which the world, nature, and culture were created together with all parts thereof and given their order, which still obtains. A myth expresses and confirms society's religious values and norms, it provides a pattern of behaviour to be imitated, testifies to the efficacy of rituals with its practical ends and establishes the sanctity of cult" (*Sacred Narrative* 49) and to José Manuel Losada, it is "a functional, symbolic, and thematic narrative of one or several extraordinary events with a transcendent, sacred, and supernatural referent; that lacks, in principle, historical testimony; and that refers to an individual or collective, but always absolute, cosmogony or eschatology" (*Myths and the Extraordinary Event* 31-55). Based on their nature and origin, myths are classified as ritualistic, nationalistic, regionalistic, and religious. Based on their clan and category, they are grouped as aetiological, historical, and psychological myths.

Great confusion prevails in apprehending myth and mythology, but it is ever more significant in apprehending myth as a peculiar word. As its literal and literary meaning create cognitive chaos. Most scholars are stuck only to its literal meaning, depicting it as a belief miles away from the truth. They hardly cross its literal boundary and heed the literary suggestiveness that adores it with accumulated meaning with or without factual testimony. Moreover, most scholars consider myth and mythology coordinating. They forget that the former, with or without time's testimony, is a story about gods, goddesses, and legends encompassing each generation with its customs, traditions, and taboos. In contrast, the latter is a collective study of a particular myth or the myths' torso belonging either to a particular tribe or, race or nation in totality from the individualistic, identical, cultural, devotional, and ethical lenses. Its sublime illustrations are Mesopotamian, Greek, Chinese, Norse, and Hindu Mythology.

Over time, the pantheon of mythology is incorporated day by day. Personal mythology and the mythology of self are its precedential illustrations. Their genealogy has often been in great fuss for their nature, nurture, and gesture besides their beginning, meaning, and corroborating power. Even though their existence and essence are not aloof from it, as they, without any preserved truth, are often considered to be identical, they contradict each other at the core of their existence, fosterage, and motility. Although their rudiments are identical—philosophical and psychological—and their fruits coordinate, their actional mechanism differs. What

mitochondria is for the cell and primary imagination for the secondary, the latter is for the former for producing energetic and productive stuff.

Self-mythology, rooted in philosophy and psychology, is nothing more than a narrative art through which one consciously weaves one's mythologized story that is fostered by a broad spectrum of social stimuli—attractions, distractions, and interactions—and decorated by the tapestry of such diverse experiences that one consciously or unconsciously adopts from one's existential threads for one's identity. Serving as an instrument for identifying one's individuality, defining one's essence, and stirring one's self to shape personal myth, it, despite its paradoxical beginning and coexisting inarticulacy caused by the effect of personal, social, and political norms, transcends all the obstacles coming in the way of weaving one's narrative. Moreover, it bestows one's life with such a vibrant meaning, purpose, and ethics that elevate one's life story to a place of profundity, i.e., legendary, i.e., as a practice, it often involves emphasizing or embellishing certain facets of one's life or achievements, transforming them into a more favourable, even heroic, self-image. It is "the art of creating and embracing a personal narrative that elevates one's life story into something more profound and meaningful. This practice, rooted in ancient traditions and modern psychology, allows individuals to frame their experiences and identities in ways that empower and inspire them. At its core, it involves creating a personal myth—a story that defines who you are, what you believe in, and the path you choose to follow. Unlike falsehood and mere fantasies, this myth is grounded in reality but imbued with a sense of purpose and significance" (*Self Mythology-Creating Your Narrative*, uranialondon.com). On the other hand, personal mythology, grounded in the evolving self's psychology, forms the essential basis for understanding and finding meaning in the world, spanning a spectrum of personal beliefs, perspectives, and imageries, ultimately culminating in a unified self-mythology that integrates defining images, emotions, and beliefs. This cohesive framework shapes how one perceives and navigates life, sustained by the influence of the individual's unique mythology. Dr David Feinstein and Dr Stanely Krippner defined it as "a constellation of beliefs, feelings, images, and rules—operating largely outside of conscious awareness—that interprets sensations, constructs new explanations, and directs behaviour... Personal myths speak to the broad concerns of identity (Who am I?), direction (Where am I going?), and purpose (Why am I going?). For an internal system of images, narratives, and emotions to be called a personal myth, it must address at least one of the core concerns of human existence" (*Personal Mythology* 5-6). Through their syncretism, personal mythology and self-mythology jointly venture out to help one write one's story and make one

feel one's life is more significant than day-to-day humankind's. Overall, self-mythology slowly shapes an individual's mythology and takes a long time to disclose who one is, what one believes, and which path of life one follows to develop one's worldwide sense and meaning. Moreover, this adopted mythologized life story, the result of one's endless odyssey of self-discovery, self-diagnosing, self-editing, and self-alteration, universalizes the dictum that changing in the story changes life.

Like other mythologies, the personal mythology and mythology of the self need no factual testimony for their authenticity, validity, and reliability. They form such an analytical framework in projecting one's life that is more scientific than theirs, i.e., the rest of mythologies. Consequently, they are believed and believed with and beyond the juxtaposition of truth and false. Undoubtedly, they are in the line and length of classical mythology. They resemble it a lot. Their contours are without any conflict. However, their dealing with one's self and personality—especially with thoughts, memories, emotions, and other aspects of one's mind that make one—sets them apart from it. For intellection, like classical mythology, they don't tell the bewitching tales of gods, demons, and legends, but the tale of such one's perceptions, thoughts, emotions, and behaviours on that, in that, and for that one lives and dies. Moreover, they "address at least one of the core concerns of human existence" (*Feinstein and Krippner* 6) that is counted as meaning, purpose, and ethics of one's life on one side, and death, freedom, and isolation, on the other. They incorporate the fabrics of one's wishes, values, and critical occurrences so that one's ordinary life gently becomes extraordinary.

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Kamala Das, the mother of modern Indian English poetry, is called the female Prometheus of Indian English writing. Whatever she wrote, she wrote with a manifest desire to seek an escape from such existing paradoxes of the hegemonic patriarchal discourse of her time that confining the second sex in its steely clutches would check the free development of their mind and soul. Her feministic spirit began to revolt against it. It stimulated such deep despise in her psyche for the Patriarchy that, niggling the divisions of class, caste, country, religion, and race for the sake of unconditional love that dwells beyond selfish lust, she divided the world simply on the binary of male-female opposition. To attain her manifestation, she wrote such pieces of poetry that are sagaciously obsessed with genuine love in a confessional mode based upon the theme of *bona fide* freedom, veritable love, and the ethical frizz of life that goes beyond the common computation. For it, she applied such penetrating myths in her *oeuvres* that, being

individualistic, rationalistic, ritualistic, nationalistic, regionalism, and religious by origin and aetiological, historical, and psychological by nature, present the crisis of a female's life. She is not limited to traditional myths. She is beyond it. She has created such myths that, blending plurality in singularity, describe the pangs and plights of her gender and race. It seems that myths have shaped her, and so has she shaped the myths. What K. Satchidanandan writes is quite applicable in the context of her as well as her gender and race—

Women suffer cultural scripts in their bodies and women writers are like the mythic warrior who went into battle-scarred by the thin blades which her parents used to write fine lines of script on her body (13).

For the literary sphere, Kamala Das' poetry is a thesaurus of love that contains a list of such endless words, phrases, and sentences of love and longing that sometimes synonymously and antonymously, sometimes coordinately and subordinately, and sometimes actively and passively present their spectrum in the totality their all shades. Whether they relate to body or soul, love or betrayal, boldness or frankness, protest or confession, they are mind-blowing. She is a confessional poet. She reveals her experiences, her anguishes, and her frustrations in her artefacts in this fashion that her poetic confessionality naturally gets brimmed with the boomerang of such blistering experiences and psychic traumas caused by existing taboos of the society that they check the free evolution of her body and soul, curtailing her freedom, trampling her individuality, diminishing her identity, depressing her sexuality, and dragging her toward *hara-kiri* through the lanes of spirituality. It is another thing that to reflect such embarrassing thoughts in her *opuses*, she has no great concern with myths and mythologies, yet whatever myths she has crafted and designated make her narrative *par excellence*, reflecting her literary identity in “the body of her writing... not the writing of her body” (K. Satchidanandan 13). This is why, about her deed and action, Ancy K Sunny writes—

Kamala Openly introduced a generation to a subject that was taboo those days—she spoke on topics like coming of age and the sexual yearnings of a woman. In her time, bold Kamala was certainly a trendsetter, an iconoclast who defied all conventions. Her writings open a window into the intricacies of the female mind, thought process, her tussles with the patriarchal setup to which she was bound, her quest for love, and her acknowledgement of the body's carnal desire (*The Week* 1).

In Kamala Das' realm, all the kinds and categories of myths—aetiological, historical, and psychological—attain the form of self-mythology that paves the way for indelible personal mythology. The only reason behind it is the psychic current that makes her tell the world only one tale—the tale of love yoked with loss and betrayal that she observed, felt and borne. Furthermore, whatever she is is the result of such myths that prevail in the patriarchal society and cause men to consider women secondary, passive, and nonessential creatures. To annihilate such myths of Patriarchy, the myths that she creates and adopts hoard for her, like Newton, the

gravity of honour and recognition. Her poetry, as the computation of her poetic cosmos displays, is nothing except a string of actions and reactions to ethical mythical thoughts and theories that prevail in her male-dominated society. She reacted to all such irrational rules and regulations it imposed upon her. This reaction to the action made her such a poet that her perusers began to consider her for her audacious and outspoken countenance on personal and social issues. It not only feathered her cap with the title of being an innovator in Indian English literature for her impenitent assessment of female sexuality, identity, and societal norms but also made her impression and expression everlasting, marking her as one of the most furious feminist poets in Indian English poetry with the thought (only) women are not born to “bear the whip marks of culture on their bodies”(K. Satchidanandan 18).

The rules that govern patriarchal society have largely been shaped by abiding myths that have influenced it in their courses. However, it is essential to accept that as times change, so do all things, including myths and societal rules. When confronted with revolutionary progress, these myths and rules change or are changed. It is discernible in both General MacArthur's views on rules and Kamala Das' reflections on myths, as they advocate for the dissolution of digressive and superannuated structures. In their respective domain, they fence for rejecting norms that no longer serve society. MacArthur's famous assertion that "rules are mostly made to be broken" (*Cambridge Dictionary*) can be mirrored in Das' approach to mythology, suggesting myths are mostly made to be broken. Although she had nowhere directly expressed it, her poetic journey embodies this sentiment at the core of its heart. Das's challenge to traditional myths riffing with Patriarchy, her creation of new myths rooted in a matriarchy, and her mythologizing of the self-set a powerful example for the women of her era and beyond, encouraging them to pursue greater harmony, companionship, and self-determination.

Like Simone de Beauvoir, Kamala Das also considers Patriarchy to run on mythical and realistic thoughts in that the former, as a causal factor, decides women's existence and essence in its totality. To her, the myth being myth and truth being truth can be subordinated but not coordinated. Subsequently, she is often seen in her poetry condemning its dominance with a firm faith in De Beauvoir's age-changing and challenging conjecture that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (*The Second Sex* 295). To her, the dominance of the former declares one passive in societal pursuits, assigns one secondary place in the familial spectrum, and defines one 'the Other' in its *opuses*. Consequently, what one is is "All that man desires and all that he does not attain (*Evans* 48). To her, one is neither passive nor secondary and nor nonessential by birth, but by rearing that makes one one. Whatever one is described as is the

cause of such jaundiced mythical thoughts that, being the only cause and causing, dominate the patricentric society and destine one's entirety. What Honoré de Balzac, the French writer, writes in "The Physiology of Marriage" seems to be its effect. For consideration, he writes—

Pay no attention to the woman's murmurs, cries, or pains. Nature has made her for our use and for bearing everything: children, sorrows, blows, and pains inflicted by man. Do not accuse yourself of hardness. In all the codes of so-called civilized nations, man has written the laws that ranged woman's destiny under bloody epigraph: *vae-victis!* Woe to the weak (qtd. in Lopston 447)!

To Kamala Das, a society running on myths with vicious thought can never be fertile for the grace and poise of the second sex. For the myths that prevail in it make and mar one's existence and essence. They make one's life with their guiding stories, offering symbolic narratives that help one understand the world, render ethical lessons, and yield meaning to human experience. On the other hand, they mar it, imposing such confining mentation, unbending norms, surrealistic expectations, and stereotypes and ideologies that force one to live such an absurd life that, lacking meaning, purpose, and ethics, is laden with inner conflict, misspelt identity, and shattered personality. What she feels, she writes. In her poetics, she applies selected myths that cover all the themes she wants to deal with and present all the moods and tones she wishes. Be it her public or private life, be it her feministic existence or essence, be it her identity crisis or personal legacy, or be it her masculinity or rebellious nature, all come within its compass. In her works, myths exist sometimes as a symbol, sometimes as an icon, sometimes as an incident, and sometimes as a character. Rare is their use as a whole in her universe. Their existence, in her works, does not matter much, but what for they exist matters more. She chiefly applies them to explore her feminized identity and map and re-imagine her narrative as a cultural critic, spiritual explorer, social transformer and real liberator.

Myths have made and marred Kamala Das. Made because the myths—be they aetiological or historical or psychological—that exist in her poetic world offer such meaning and guidance that help her action for the betterment of the condition of (Indian) women folk whose plurality she presents through her singularity and whose throes of heart she puts down on the paper in such a way that its mere presentation made her an iconic figure of their cause in her age. They have made her "a female Prometheus, one of the *voleuses de langue* or thieves of language with a manifesto of desire that seeks to escape the paradox of being a prisoner of the hegemonic patriarchal discourse she despises; only she stubbornly resists the temperament to divide the world based on the simple binary male-female opposition since that excludes not only other equally real divisions—of class, caste, nation or race—but even the possibility of authentic love" ("Preface," *K. Sachidanandan* 7). Marred because the myths that exist in her poetry are

only to shatter such erroneous and irrational myths that the Patriarchy, embracing in its lap for ages, makes women wretched creatures. Her neglect to these myths, her protest at their interference, and her revolt against their absurd existence tarnished her honour so badly that her sonority was linked with notoriety forever. Her boldness, her frankness, and her changing of religion fueled this fire. The Patriarchy that, since the dawn of so-called humanity, would neglect women's sexual desires, biological conditions, miserable lives, and unending struggles could not bear her interrogation of the role of tradition, culture, and civilization. It never accepted her faith shaken in the context of rituals, doctrines, and dogmas of the religion. It did not like her despise for economic inequality and her candid narration of the restrictions imposed on the women folk. It had no respect for her thoughts of gender inequities and inequalities that cause physical, marital, and psychological violence. Thus, it tried to mar her iconic personality by washing her dirty linen in public. It is another thing that she was never to tarry. She, with her incredible power and unyielding will, was ever busy in breaking all such men-made myths that make women a woman and thwart their existence and essence, supporting the steel frame of the Patriarchy.

Kamala Das's dealing with myth, mythology, and mythologization is dumbfounding. Any myth in any form she applies makes her poetic cosmos astounding. But the most astounding thing that happens in her poetic domain is the gentle transformation of all the myths into the personal and self-mythology that she preferably uses as a tool to interrogate and mirror the ethos and mythos related to the existence and essence of the women folk both in the preceding and contemporary societies of her age. Whether by their group or category or by their nature and origin, they gently assume the form of the personal mythology and the mythology of self in her literary discourse. The reason behind such assumption is their conditional application that she does only to show cruelty, disparity, and partiality showered as a trend upon her and the members of her gender and race since time immemorial. Besides it, her subjectivity—principally related to love and sex after that she is seen hankering—that she always objectifies is also a lodging behind the curtain of such happenings. Additionally, the plasticity and suitability of her favoured myths and her adaptivity as a mythologist in selecting the appropriate myths to steal the particular thought contribute greatly. The rest behind such occurring is the synthesis power of the personal and self mythologies because they gently adapt, digest, and assimilate with the rest of the myths in their categories.

Mesmerizing is the mythical macrocosm of Madhavikutty's metrical microcosm. In her literary galaxy, she sets such sprinkling starry myths that seem to guide her bewildered readers, like

the syndicate of Guiding Stars, in attaining the cognitive, affective, and *psychomotorik* destination of learning her poetry. With their help, her perusers grab not only the delivered distinct meaning and message of her poetry that explains the world in a literary rather than a scientific way but also the tone and tense that she uses to stir them emotionally. In her poetic collections, their presence stands not only for ameliorating the momentous aesthetic spirit but also for accelerating the momentum of her reach back to such stories that matter more to her and her race. Moreover, their presence shows the nobility of her characters that she borrows to highlight their primal actions from the selected myths treasured in the classics of India and abroad to highlight their primal actions. The myths and mythologies that she uses in her works are ritualistic, nationalistic, regionalistic, and religious by their nature and origin and can be classified as aetiological, historical, and psychological by their clan and category. Besides it, the mythical allusions, metaphors, and similes that she applies as literary elements in her mythical discourse present such redolent images that not only provide the layers of understanding that connect her readers to the ancient tales but also comment on contemporary controversies with their long-lasting classical narratives. In this sequence, the presence of sociological and psychological myths in her creative cosmos consecutively vindicates the purpose of supporting and validating the order of a particular ethic and explaining the cause of one's individualistic feelings and actions. For more consideration, the myths and mythologies she applies are mostly from oral traditions, cultural beliefs, and cultural practices. Most of them are symbolic, syncretic, and protozoic by their nature and application, while the rest are from historical events, especially related to historical figures and literary creations. In this context, there is a need to be clear that their source of origin and their way of application don't matter greatly. What matters great is their suitability and suggestiveness in her literary constituency. It's safe to say that if one meticulously observes her works, one finds all the types and categories of myths merging just to universalize her cries, sighs, and sobs at the subjective junction of her cardinal cravings, and from that place emerges the stream of personal and self-mythology that with or without the help of myths trenchantly irrigate her literary terrain with their long-lasting waters that leave "behind many strong lessons for the women of yesterday, today, and tomorrow" (*Ancy K Sunny* 1).

(iii)

Kamala Das, an unapologetic poet from the Republic of Bharat, is best known for blending intense individualistic psychological experiences with global themes, creating a mythos around her individuality that shapes her personality and identity. In her poetry, she deals with the

inmost split spaces of the self—especially the themes of love-longing, body repulsion, gender equality, and desired identity. The 'Ore' she loads into her 'Rifts' pertains to her artistry to enrich the gaps of experience with profound personal narratives, shading wounded emotions and shrouded passions with myth-making. She retrieves her vox through her mythology of the self, translating personal diathesis into powerful poetic expression. Her works are often asterisked by a sense of rebellion against conventional norms, especially about gender stereotypes, deep affection, and physiological property. Put differently; she paints her poetic tower with such dark and deep pigments of personal and self-mythology that through the canorous theme of love, identity, and desire, transfigures personal experiences into worldwide narratives and bridges boomy rifts with emotional intensity, creating a compelling compaction of vulnerability and self-reclamation.

Mythology, be it personal or self, is affluent in Kamala Das. Her *opuses*, with—partial or complete—or without myths, set such impellent vibrations, elucidations, and demeanour in her readers to the second sex that they get embarrassed and begin to ponder over their identity (Who is one?), interrogation (Can one's life be meaningful?), and purpose (Why is one born?) of life, supposing themselves being at their (women's) place. Hurling of her tormenting thoughts, rebellious nature, pragmatic mind, and autobiographically bold narrative style of her poetry make her an iconic poet with personal myth or mythology. Textual discourse in her poetry witnesses such selected myths that, blending with rational individuality and psychological philosophy, gently but hectically brim her works with myriad emotions, passions, and suggestions on one side and, on the other side, serve as an international highway for the cultures of the world to transmit their agitations, ethics, and aspirations. Additionally, all the introspective elements—for *instance*, reflection of her life's key events of her life, identification of her core beliefs and values, creation of her narrative, embracing of symbolism and archetypes, living her myth, incorporation of her myth into her mundane life, to take guidance in making choices from her myth and to overcome obstacles and to pursue dreams—that one needs to create one's myth prevail in her poetry. Therefore, she is known as a poet who loads every rift of her subject with the ore of personal and self-mythology

As a poet, Kamala Das, the first Hindu Brahmin woman to indite candidly about sexual sensitivity and love, composes autobiographically confessional poetry in first person style. Like a prism, her poetry reflects the spectrum of her life under the effect of all those major and minor incidents that affect her cognitive, *psychomotor*, and behavioural spheres. Whether physical or spiritual, logical or fantastical, psychological or philosophical, social or political,

economic or aesthetic, aspects of her existence and essence all come within its compass. Remorselessly, she delineates the *bona fide* incidents of her personal life with such boldness, frankness, and honesty that stunning the literary world makes its people think about women like her as the victims of Patriarchy. There is no exaggeration in saying that every line of her poetry dominates such self-exploring and self-revealing power that presents her life account as a "thoughtful and analytical excursion into self" (*Penguin* 63-64), making her text her life history and her life history, her mythology that loads every rift of her subject with its ore. It reflects all the key events of her life, whether to her infancy or puberty or senility and narrates the victories and defeats of her love and loathes in such a way that her perusers, feeling themselves in her shoes, objectively correlate themselves to the poetics of her life and its longings. Her works unwrapped her infancy, replete with negligence and solitude, as her parents were busy like bees in their passions and occupations. They have no time for her. Whatever love and care she received at the dawn of her life was from her grandmother. Its witness is her nostalgic and sadistic poem "My Grandmother's House", in which she writes—

There is a house now far away where once
 I received love. That woman died...
 You cannot believe it, darling
 Can you, that I lived in such a house and
 Was proud, and loved...I who have lost
 My way and beg now at stranger's doors to
 Receive love, at least in small change (150)?

The personal myth that Kamala Das creates in her poetry is the blessing of her uncle, who fired her passion for poetry; her mother, from whom she inherited poetry; and her spouse, who encouraged her literary odyssey, but none of them took a little care of her inborn cravings—love and affection—for that's suitability and admissibility her self remained pining at every stage of her life. When her childhood is glimpsed through her literary window, it is found entirely barren without any drop and shoot of love and care. Her parents were too busy to spend a little time with their issues. Her poems "My Mother at Sixty-Six" and "My Father's Death" indirectly hint at this dry spell well. Revealing the state of the creaky bond existing between her and her mother, in the concluding stanza of the first poem, she writes—

I looked again at her, wan, pale
 As a late winter's moon, and felt that old
 Familiar ache, my childhood's fear
 But all I said was, see you soon, Amma,
 All I did was smile and smile and
 Smile... (Flamingo 91).

And, in the same order, depicting her wheezing connection with her father, she expresses in the final part of the second poem, i.e., “My Father’s Death”—

He was generous with money
 As generous as I was with
 Love. There was a cloud of tension
 Between him and me. I brought him
 Shame, they say. He brought me on each
 Short visit some banana chips
 And harsh words of reproach. I feared
 My father. Only in a coma
 Did he seem close to me, and I
 Whispered into his ears that I
 Loved him, although I was bad, a bad
 Daughter, a writer of tales that
 Hurt, but in the task of loving
 The bad ones were the ablest (147).

In both stanzas above, the lines "and felt that old / Familiar ache, my childhood's fear" (91) and "Only in a coma / Did he seem close to me" (147) reveal that nothing was well between her and her genitories. This rift affects her mythology so badly that it changes her persuasion towards her kin and kin and the rest. The land of her palanquin days was as sterile and stark as that of her cradle days. It also lacked the moisture and the dewdrop of emotional support and mutual understanding in lack of that no sound sapling of kinship could ever grow that would have covered the land of her pyre's days. Be it her babyhood or adulthood, or be it her dotage, all were in the bleak and barren land of relationships. Her marriage, a silver lining for love in her life, also deluded her. The love that she should have received at this prime time, the love that she has mythologized, and the love that she has lived and died also betrayed her in such a way that she has to revolt against it at the cost of changing her religion. It made her mind and soul weep so bitterly that their lament is continuously resonating in her poems, especially in "An Introduction", "Stock Taking", "Summer in Calcutta", "A Hot Noon in Malabar", "Forest Fire", "The Freaks", "The Sunshine Cat", "A Loosing Battle", and "Words". This betrayal in love made her write such a poetical epic story of her life, i.e., her mythology, in that she narrates all those struggles for true love that determine her thoughts, feelings, and behaviour. Presenting this prime phase of her life, she writes—

When
 I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask
 For, he drew a youth of sixteen into the
 Bedroom and closed the door. He did not beat me
 But my sad woman's body felt so beaten.
 The weight of my breasts and wombs crushed me. I shrank
 Pitifully (“An Introduction” 119).

She, being a mythological lady, incessantly metaphorizes her mythos of love, consensus, and self-respect, but what she finds is one-sided savage sex, sedate separation, and self-deprecated soul that gently make her sense of the tapestry, the treachery, and the hollowness of the society in which she dwells. Whenever she glances at the cravings of her inner universe, she finds it in-cohering with the discursive villain of her outer world that appears in the form of Patriarchy. And she, being the heroine of her epical mythology, defends the regime of her individuality, identity, authority, and freedom with her sword-like pen that is mightier than its substitute. Owing to this, in the poem "Stock Taking", shouting out at her enemies (as she considers males) dwelling in Patriarchy, she says —

Do not beguile me with a promise
 Of immortal love
 For, I have seen the glaze in a dying
 Husband's eye and have lost faith in all
 Do not promise great moments
 Of self-realization
 Or serener incarnations
 I have seen terror twist
 My husband's face and have heard
 The awesome rattle of his final breath
 Do not talk to me of beauties
 Still to be envisaged, for I have
 Seen the waxy pallor of a dead man's
 Skin and I do not care now
 To see more (151).

Kamala Das' other poem that captures the queue of the current illustrations is "A Losing Battle", in which, while presenting the image of failure love—the end of her companionship with her life partner—she precisely presents all the agonies through which her mythologized character passes. For the justification of her action, she dramatically asks the world—

How can my love hold him when the
 Other
 Flaunts a gaudy lust and is lioness
 To his beast?
 Men are worthless, to trap them
 Use the cheapest baits of all, but never
 Love, which a woman must mean
 Tears
 And a silence in the blood (59).

To her, the men who master the social structure create about women such freakish myths that are outrageously beyond the proper limit. The reason lying behind their actions is their *erotomania* or sexual appetite that never lets them sit in silence. Weighing such, her mythopoeic

mythos becomes earnest and makes her appeal to the members of her gender and race to gift men, all because they are called ones. It is the reason why she satirically, but ironically writes—

Gift him all,
Gift him what makes you woman, the scent of
Long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts,
The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your
Endless female hungers ("The Looking Glass" 68).

Kamala Das, the love queen of Malabar, earnestly advocates for an extramarital relationship in her mythic pattern. To her, if the marital life is on the verge of ruin, there is no harm in illicit affairs. Her poem "The Stone Age" is its best beholder. It discloses the pathos of a female articulator whose salacious spouse deprives her of her individuality, identity, and independency. He makes her lead such a hellish life that is full of neglect, suffocation, and traumatization. Nevertheless, there is a limit to every limit. One day, she crosses the see of Indian taboos to surpass her bottomless blues and to achieve her palmy days, saying—

When you leave, I drive my blue battered car
Along the bluer sea. I ran up the forty
Noisy steps to knock at another's door.
Through peepholes, the neighbours watch,
They watch me come
And go like rain. Ask me, everybody, ask me
What he sees in me, ask me why he is called a lion,
A libertine, ask me the flavour of his
Mouth, ask me why his hand sways like a hooded snake
Before it clasps my pubis. Ask me why like
A great tree, felled, he slumps against my breasts
And sleeps. Ask me why life is short and love is
Shorter still, ask me what is bliss and what its price...(82).

One of the most turning events of her life that shocked the literary world first and her 'self' later on was her change of religion. As in her senility at the age of 65, she embraced Islam for (so-called disguised) love that in an interview she says—

Love is my religion. Love is a nameless religion, but it is the strongest religion. I have fallen in love with muslim and for the sake of my love I have converted into Islam. Religion is a myth, and love is truth. I cannot surrender the truth before myth. In spite of being a Muslim, I see Krishna in my afternoon dreams and I don't feel it as sin to dream of Krishna as a muslim. Krishna is my lover, and my lover is Krishna. I feel that love has power to remove all religious difference (Impressions 8).

But what she got was aeonian repentance that, in an interview, made her utter her feminist standpoint: "One should not change one's religion. It is not worth it" (<http://www.ijps.in>). Besides all the facts above, one thing that echoes mostly in her poetry is the effect of Patriarchy on the terrain of her free love. To her, all the forms of love are painted in black Patriarchy that

constantly gives birth only to such male-dominated discriminated societies that never let women like her make their identical colour in their societies. All the colours of their life are in the hands of men who, like crafty painters, paint their lives as they want with the deceiving brush of their willed biased actions. The paint they apply contains such blackish pigment of ceaseless longing, mourning, and passing on that no other colour attains its presence. The painting of their life that they paint enshrouds their hellish life that is full of revolutionary but smouldering fires, unfulfilled but existing desires, and chaotic but hoping for a rosy morrow. Many internal and external battles that go on in their lives are created and decided by men. They are the creator and the winner of their life. Whatsoever they say becomes a corroborated fact and the terminal truth for women. The battle between "I's" of both sexes (male and female) continues incessantly. Owing to this, she despises every colour of Patriarchy, thinking it discolours the poise and elegance and disturbs the peace of mind and soul of her and the rest of her race. Moreover, her feministic standpoints make her unapologetically disclose all such bitter truths of the existing society that have ever wrapped the pains and pangs of their lives, trampling their desires and breaking their bosom with betrayal merely in the name of Patriarchy and its tradition. Its witness is her polyphonic existential poem "An Introduction," in which, presenting the plethora of their plight, with prowess, she interrogates the Patriarchy—

Who are you, I ask each and everyone,
 The answer is, it is I. anywhere and
 Everywhere, I see the one who calls himself
 I; in this world, he is tightly packed like the
 Sword in sheath. It is I who drink lonely
 Drinks at twelve, midnight, in hotels of strange towns,
 It is I who laugh, it is I who make love
 And then feel shame, it is I, dying
 With a rattle in my throat (120).

Additionally, in her mythopoeia, Kamala Das delves deep into the complexities of such love and longings that present not only the key events of her life but also such key experiences that have defined and proved her existence and essence, crafting her mythology that exists on her self mythology for its formulation. For it, she attempts to comprehend the lineage of such human passions and emotions that serve as a bond between the souls of men and women and sustain humankind on this blue planet. However, in her discourse, what she finds is paradoxically more bizarre than her expectations and computations. It becomes part and parcel of her personal and self-mythology and turns "her poetry" into "the outcome of a struggle to relate her private experiences with the larger world outside" (*R. Raphael* 127).

To create a personal myth, Kamala Das identifies the feminine sexual appetite and the experience of being a Hindustani woman as her core beliefs and values in determining her fundamental principle of revolting against the steel frame of Patriarchy. Because of these beliefs and values, the actions and decisions that she took not only inspired her to create a personal raga-saga but also gave her such an existence and essence that shook the roots and shoots of the male-dominated society. Her poems, especially "An Introduction", "A Request", "The Old Playhouse", and "The Freak", describe her beliefs, values, and fundamental principles well. Going through her polyphonic poem "An Introduction", it is found that this poem is one of the best paradigms of her/personal mythology for astoundingly reflecting her individuality, rationality, and psychology. For *instance*, how and what she replies to the people who forbade her to write in English is nothing but the result of her mythology that includes her individualistic rational psychology, and the answer that she gives is part of her outlook; the fact—timeless questions of the women folk—she presents is part of her politics, and the time she presents is part of her such imageries that covers all the generations of so-called culture and civilization. Her mythology of language reminds Jacques Lacan of feminist theory that presents language as a calculating and defining order of meaning. Like Lacan, what she calculates in her poem “An Introduction” defines her meaning. What she writes defines her mythology. It is the reason why she writes—

Don't write in English, they said,
 English is not your mother tongue. Why not leave
 Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,
 Every one of you? Why not let me speak
 Any language I like (119)?

In the preceding lines, she seems to rebuke all those who, being obsessed with the existing myth about language, forbade her to write in English. She does not conform to them. She broke the myth of language and made her name immortal in the world of English literature. Moreover, she remorselessly tries to break all such existing myths that block the national highway of her free race and does not respect her individuality and identity but tramples the meaning, purpose, and ethics of her life. The best *instance* of this thought exists in her poem "An Introduction", in which she condemns all the patriarchal domination that makes her choose such a name, such a role, and such a norm that makes her a woman, e.g., secondary, the Other, passive, and nonessential in the society. She never pays attention to the mentation that "every deviation from the norm is looked upon as perversion or mental illness" (*K. Sachidanandan* 13). She, without any interference from masculinity and its blessed Patriarchy, chooses her name, her role, and

her norms for the betterment of her existence and essence and of the rest of her gender and race. It is the reason why in the poem "An Introduction", she writes—

Be Amy, or be Kamala. Or, better
Still, be Madhavikutty. It is time to
Choose a name and a role (120).

Her thought about Patriarchy has a quite intimacy with the thought of Betty Friedan, an American feminist and the author of *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), who once uttered that "patriarchy...was responsible for women's oppression. And monogamy, marriage, child-rearing, the nuclear family were all patriarchal traps to contain and oppress women" (*Neeru Tandon* 75). Like her, Kamala Das also considers Patriarchy as the root cause of all her pangs and plights, causing all such myths that give birth to womanliness. It is governed by such men who are ever busy "to tame a swallow (38)" named female only to have the pleasure of their "body's response (38)", in the name of their wife. She deconstructs it first and exposes its blemishes in her works later on. In this context, K. Satchidanandan observes that "she deconstructs myths by exposing them to the text of experience" (21). Exemplar is her poem "The Old Playhouse", in which "she uses the mythical concept of metamorphosis to subvert the conventional myth of marriage (21)" that continually belittles her existence and essence—her individuality and identity. For instance, she writes—

You called me wife,
I was taught to break saccharine into your tea and
To offer at the right moment the vitamins. Cowering
Beneath your monstrous ego, I ate the magic loaf and
Became a dwarf. I lost my will and reason, to all your
Questions I mumbled incoherent replies. The summer
Begins to pall ("The Old Playhouse" 38).

She does not lounge here. Instead, she goes behind it and, reflecting on her detestation of masculinity, writes—

We mated like gods but begot only our killers.
Each mother suckles her own enemy
And hate is first nurtured at her gentle breast... (164).

To her, women lose their individuality, identity, meaning, purpose, and ethical values due to the men who, with the help of their manipulated Patriarchy, gently make them adopt all such signs and symbols that it assigns to them. It is the reason why she is often seen busy breaking all such symbols and signs of the patriarchal myths that make her feel feminine. Her writing in the English language, her putting on her brother's clothes, and getting her hair cut in boy cut

style are the rubrics of her mythology that she does only to annihilate the prevailing sociological myths to defend her individuality and identity. She breaks the old myths to create new myths for new women like her. It's the reason why she writes—

Then I wore a shirt and my
 Brother's trousers, cut my hair short and ignored
 My womanliness. Dress in sarees, be girl,
 Be wife, they said. Be an embroiderer, be a cook,
 Be a quarreler with servants. Fit in, Oh,
 Belong, cried the categorizers. Don't sit
 On the walls or peep in through our lace-draped windows ("An Introduction" 119/120).

Without taking any pause here, she goes beyond it. She bitterly warns the existing societies not to play "pretending games (120)" with women. To her, for this one-sided dominance, not only men but also women are equally responsible as they (women) do not rise against it. They consider it their destiny and blindly imitate Shakespearean phraseology that gives tongue to "Frailty, thy name is woman" (*Hamlet*, Act I, Scene ii, p. 873). The *pros and cons* of their existence and essence are always seen with jaundiced eyes. They are underestimated and blamed for the downfall of the society. Not to say about their identity and individuality, they (men) forget how they make a house a home. It is why she writes—

It is I who laugh, it is I who make love
 And then feel shame, it is I, dying
 With a rattle in my throat. I am a sinner,
 I am a saint. I am the beloved and the
 Betrayed ("An Introduction" 120).

Occasionally, she feels surrender is the only option for women, and she seems to yield. Her woman shuttles make her feel the meaninglessness of her life and the love after which she hankered throughout her life with pace. Consequently, with a subjugated soul, she pleads the readers in the poem "A Request"—

When I die
 Do not throw
 The meat and bones away
 But pile them up
 And let them tell
 By their smell
 What life was worth
 On this earth
 What love was worth
 In the end (104).

The reason behind making such a request is nothing but love for a woman who lives and dies.
 It's the only reason that makes her conditional freak—

Who can
 Help us who have lived so long
 And have failed in love? The heart,
 An empty cistern, waiting
 Through long hours, fills itself
 With coiling snakes of silence...
 I am a freak, it's only
 To save my face, I flaunt, at
 Times, a grand, flamboyant lust ("The Freaks" 99).

Being disappointed with all the exertions of exploring and obtaining true love, Kamala Das turned to spirituality and made it an integral part of her self-mythology, the author of her (personal) mythology. To her, as her poetics reveals, the thirst for unconditional love can be quenched only by the unconditional love that is found only in spirituality, not in physicality, the possessor of conditional love. Here, she also could not remain aloof from controversies. She turned to spirituality, distorting the Shakespearean assertion: "The devil can cite Scripture for his purpose" (*Merchant of Venice*. Act I, scene iii, L. 99, p. 196) and people's escapist thought of relating "spirituality as the last asylum to an evil person." (*Proverb*), yet for her quibblers, it's nothing but her such an action that has others on. To them, she puts on the mask of spirituality only to hide her *eros*. Whatever it may be, it is a fact that the put of the personal myth that she has put in her poetry is ever with the tapestry of such theological practices that find their property into the raga and saga of such women folks like her who pine for such an ideal love that is beyond the flame of temporal love. Although the typicality of her spiritual love reminds the love of Radha and Krishna and of Mira and Krishna, it is ever with her disguised love politics. For consideration, the Radha of her poem "Radha" is not Radhe of Krishna but Radha of Kamala Das that is not a kindred spirit as that of Lord Krishna, but being her doppelganger wants only one thing that is her physical communion with Krishna, the Prankster. Rest is in the hands of readers. Understand what they think. She has her world, her song, and her dance.

Whatever doubts prevail, prevail in her spirituality, not in her spiritual poetry that democratically dwells along with optical illusions. But as a rule of thumb, it is laden with such a spiritual sonority that makes her, considering herself Radha, turn to Krishna, considering her such a lover that "accepts life in all its facets, in all its climates and colours" (*Osho* 4). Her poems, like "Radha", "Krishna", "Radha Krishna", "Vrindavan", "Ghanshyam", "Phantom Lotus", "The Cobweb", "Maggots", and "Lines addressed to a Devdasi" reveal it within their

reason and set her free from the one-sided imposed level of being called the poet of physical love and lust. Her expression of melting into nothingness and remaining in nothing but in Krishna is enough to refute the mythical attribution and approve of her spiritual fixity. It's witnessed by her poem "Radha" in that she writes—

The long waiting
 Had made their bond so chaste, and all the doubting
 And the reasoning
 So that in his true embrace, she was girl
 And virgin crying
 Everything in me
 It is melting, even the hardness at the core
 O Krishna, I am melting, melting, melting
 Nothing remains but
 You (77).

Kamala's gyration to spirituality is not essential but extrinsic. As a politics, it relates to her being and beyonding. After getting betrayed in love, her mythical muthos turned towards Mother Kali, the crowning countenance of nature's dual discourse of crushing and caring; Lord Krishna, the crowning countenance of life's triple trio—love, companionship, and ministration; Radha, the crowning countenance of the human soul; and finally towards Mira, the crowning countenance of chastity, loyalty, unconditional credence, and altruistic sacrifice. Her special devotion to Krishna gently stirred her mythic character to provide him with an adorable room in her poetics and make her write such lines—"Your body is my prison, Krishna, / I cannot see beyond it" ("Krishna" 82)—that persuades her spiritism. Her poetics convinces Krishna is all to her and she's all to him. To her, he is her pal, her person, her partner, and her piety, the Almighty. This is why in her poem "Ghanashyam", reflecting her transcendent love for him, she writes—

Ghanashyam,
 You have like a koel built your nest in the arbour of my heart.
 My life, until now a sleeping jungle, is at last astir with music.
 You lead me along a route I have never known before
 But at each turn, when I near you
 Like a spectral flame you vanish
 The flame of my prayer lamp holds captive my future
 I gaze into the red eye of death
 The hot stare of truth unveiled (117).

The fixture of Kamala Das's spiritual corpus comprises the vistas of Sagun and Nirgun Bhakti. Be it her poetry or autobiography, both speak of such a lover that is sometimes with and sometimes without body. Her devotion to such a lover deity in natural form falls in the former

category of Bhakti. Lord Krishna is its best example. Meanwhile, for the latter category, she mentions that a bodiless one falls in the latter category. Moreover, she often synthesizes both forms of devotion as her mythic pattern perceives dividing love or lover into categories as a sin. Consequently, she writes—

I have always thought of Krishna as my mate. When I was a child I used to regard him as my only friend, when I became an adult I thought of him as my lover. It was only by imagining that he was with me that I could lie beneath my husband to give pleasure... we do not have him physically to love us; we have to worship a bodiless one (My Story 20).

Skimming and scanning readings of Kamala Das substantiate her as a lusty lady, but her intensive and extensive study denies it. To the former studies, it's not lust, but love. After that, she hankers lifelong. Her poetics estimates it existing beyond the boundaries of physical touch, dwelling in spirituality and meta-physicality. Whatever it may be, one thing is clear the spirituality that she displays in her creative world is beyond the boundaries of Sagun and Nirgun Bhakti and is mosaicked in such a way with such many aetiological, natural, and religious myths that coerce her readers to be the victim of willing suspension of disbelief and believe that a lady with inextinguishable sexual appetite can be a lady with pietistic desires, taking into consideration the archetypes of Amrapali, Valmiki, and Aṅgulimāla.

To create her personal and self mythologies, Kamala Das, the enigmatic mistress of words, applies symbols, images, and archetypes that make her narrative dark and deep, integrating it with elements that lead it to the apex of universal mythopoeic standards. Moreover, the multifaceted roles (of the hero/ine, mentor, sufferer, and quest) that she plays also help her in her myth-making process, providing such elemental solidity that gently makes her mythologies cope with the mythologies of the yore. Her poems, for illustration, "The Old Play House", "The Sunshine Cat", "Hot Noon in the Malabar", "Freaks", "The Siesta", and "The Invitation" are full of such symbols—the sun, the moon, the sea, and the sunshine—that convey her thoughts on life, death, love, lust, sex, and marriage; such visual, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory imageries—ancestral home, sparrow, young tree, merry children, sunshine cat—that suitably suggest her pining for unconditional love, her burden of mismatched marital life, her nostalgia for childhood, and her hope for joy and freedom; and such archetypes—from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the nuclear Holocaust, the modern Indian history—whether it belongs to Pt. Nehru, Indira Gandhi or Phoolan Devi—that have their tense, sense, and meaning. For consideration, while presenting the social ecology and worldly psychology that hinder women

from creating their identity, she uses such symbols, imageries, and phraseologies in her poem "The Siesta" that present her playing with myth. As she writes—

The dreams glow pearl-white, to her,
 They seem hardly mortal
 But as evening comes,
 Snake-like, she sheds
 Their silver coils and wakes
 To meet this alien world which talks
 Of Gods and casual sins.
 Has she the courage, the sense
 To pick herself an average
 Identity, to age
 Through years of earthly din
 Gently, like a cut flower until
 It's time to be removed; or, will she
 Wander,
 Fog-eyed, seeking another
 To be hers... (124).

The symbols and images of 'pearl white', 'snake-like', 'fog-eyed', 'silver-coil' and phraseologies, for example, 'Gods and casual sins', and 'casual identity', often seem to work like myths. Her poems usually illuminate myths. The reason behind such application is her poems that "epitomize the dilemma of a modern woman who attempts to free herself, sexually and domestically, from role bondage sanctioned by past" (*Blurb*). Myths of modern Indian women cannot be put honestly without applying modern myths in contemporary phraseology. It is why she tears the terminology annexed to the dictionary of myths. Doing so, she seems to follow the Shakespearean dictum that says: "to do a great right, do a little wrong," (*Merchant of Venice* Act IV, Sc. i, L. 216, p. 211). To her, truth is all. It must come out. Manner and method do not matter a lot. With such thought, she, without any torpor, launches into a tirade against the Patriarchy that would the power and prowess of the women folks, underrating them based on physiology, forgetting De Beauvoir's dictum "one is not born, but becomes a woman" (*The Second Sex* 295). Nevertheless, glancing over her archetypes reveals that they also have much to do with her mythologies. They are preferred to present her mythological temperament. For illustration, to describe the universality of orgasms for women, she presents the mind-blowing archetype of Phoolan Devi, the Bandit Queen, and, leaving food for the thoughts of the reader, she concludes the poem with such an interrogation that asks—

What was courage worth
 At the very end?
 Even Phoolan, the dacoit queen
 Finally threw down her guns
 To settle for weekly orgasms (160).

In addition, the mythical archetype of Draupadi that she has applied in her story "Kalyani" is astounding in this context. Although its title has 'a little' to do with her (Kalyani/Draupadi), this 'a little' does a lot. It indicates the sexual exploitation of the second sex caused by the Patriarchy with a suggestion that time changes but not the ways. Be it Veda Vyasa' Draupadi or Kamala's Kalyani, both have to pay their wages in their ways. The ways and wages of the former are known to all, but the latter needs attention. This attention is paid by Dr S. Nagammal and Dr I.P. Remya who in their joint article "Love Vs Lust: A Sneak into the Select Short Stories of Kamala Das," write—

In "Kalyani," the man's lust alone drives the police officer to change a family woman into a prostitute. The utter male dogmatism coerces him to print a dignified woman to the status of a whore. She is taken to a position in which she is powerless to convince her integrity and purity. While it might have been a required emphasis on the fact that a woman's injustice is not an isolated misfortune under a single man's tyrannical rule, the notion of sexism has been fetishized. What is more, she is being enslaved to a whole system of societal systems and customs endowed with the fascist philosophy that men are and should be superior to women (Ijrar 57).

Myth for myth is common in Kamala Das' personal and self-mythologization. She uses aetiological, historical, and psychological myths to give her mythos a mythical calibre. In her mythologies, the former myths, which are sub-categorized as natural, etymological, and religious aetiological myths that signify the cause and effect of such happenings that occur in her mundane life, do not find direct room. They are in explicit forms and, in turn, assume nationalistic, regionalism, ritualistic, and religious forms to present all the shades of the thematic diversity of love and longing, gender and identity, spirituality and liberation, commenting and criticizing such societal norms that affect her personal and self mythopoeia. Its best example is her poem "The Old Playhouse", in which she applies the Greek Myth of Narcissus to denote the divergence of love existing between her and her spouse. She writes—

He serves his love in lethal doses
 For love is Narcissus at the water's edge haunted
 By its lonely face, and, yet it must seek at last
 An end, a pure, total freedom, it must will the mirrors
 To shatter and the kind night to erase the water (38).

For the sake of the transcending quality of the myth of her love's mythos, in the poem "The First Meeting", she depicts the African historical myth of King Cophetua and the Beggar. She tries to convey that love is unknown to the boundaries of class and reason. However, as the poem progresses, she realizes the limitations of her place and position and says—

You were not King Cophetua, nor was
 I am a beggar maid. But when I walked in

I feared that you might hear my heartbeats thump
 Like beakers at high tide hour (112).

For the sake of her personal and self myths, besides aetiological and historical myths, Kamala Das uses psychological myths that explain the pays and ways of her particular feelings. Its notable example is observed in her poem "Next to Indira Gandhi", in which she, writing about the pay and ways of her fears, writes—

Next to Indira Gandhi my father I feared the most
 He was the one who told me when I was five
 That dark children should only wear white
 He was the one who had no time for me (148).

Kamala Das exhibits her unparalleled power to turn common and uncommon things into mythical metaphors in her myth-making process. Like a magician, she takes them in her hands and transforms them, uttering strange mantras of her depressed desires, into something alluring, astounding, and sedating. It is illustrated well in her poem "Home Is A Concept", in which, questioning the concept of home, she presents the metaphors of the nuclear Holocaust and commonwealth literature in her familiar mythical style and makes her readers recall the horror and terror not only of the historical 'Little Boy' and 'Fat Man' but also of her histrionic mythical discourse. As she writes—

If home is a concept
 They shall not know it, if home is a group
 Prepared to love, the traveller has not known that
 Group and never shall. The unwanted speak in
 Strident voice. Silence holds terrors for them
 When they speak of the need for a centre
 To promote commonwealth literature or of
 The Nuclear Holocaust they are merely
 Crying out to you, love me, I am not so
 Different from the ones you seem to love (133).

The myths that Kamala Das, a woman of multitudes, uses in mythologizing the myth of her mythic character comprise both mythical metaphors and sociological myths that mirror the social codes and conducts of the existing social order. In her poem "Next to Indira Gandhi", while describing the rusty roots of Patriarchy, satirically, she addresses her father and pens—

You chose my clothes for me
 My tutors, my hobbies, my friends,
 And at fifteen with my first saree you picked me a husband.
 I am grateful
 For choosing for me a man
 And a life of suburban dullness (148-149).

Death and Thanatos also get good ground in her personal and self-mythologies. To boycott them is to curtail her mythology. Her reason for longing for them is her failures in love that showered upon her multifarious terrors, never-ending tears, and long-lasting repentance. Be it the house of her father or father-in-law, she, like Sibyl, was to survive even at the cost of her wills and visions. The milieus of both places continually present before her such monaural conditions that have just one way of committing suicide and dying. However, she was not too cowardly to embrace death with ease. She was an absurd lady.

Moreover, such one never does so. Her absurdity, like that of Sisyphus, makes her bold enough to face the enduring challenges of life and its longings. It is another thing that she was not ever free from the fringe of suicidal thoughts. Sometimes, like Sibyl, she would cry: "I want to die" (*North* 3), and sometimes, like Sisyphus, she conceived in the monotonous deed of pushing the bolder of Patriarchy up and down. Her poems- "The Suicide", "The Sunshine Cat", "Death is so Mediocre", "Substitute", and "Composition"- present this aspect of her life very well. Its best *instance is* her poem "The Suicide", in which, while addressing the sea, she discloses the bale of her inner life—

O sea, I am fed up
 I want to be simple
 I want to be loved
 And
 If love is not to be had,
 I want to be dead, just dead (108).

To draw an inference, it is evident that Kamala Das transcends traditional myths and their inherent limitations through authenticity, validity, and reliability, engaging in a unique alchemy of personal and self-mythologies. Her poetic corpus, whether derived from external influences or meticulously crafted, does not emerge solely from the public sphere; instead, it is intimately connected to significant events in her life, as well as her core beliefs and values.

These myths possess a literary significance that extends far beyond their literal interpretations, shaping and influencing her identity as an iconic poet. In her work, Das embodies the image of the liberated woman, ardently challenging patriarchal structures with unwavering resolve and fervent passion. Through her singular approach to myth-making, she reflects the mythic plurality of her gender and race, prompting a critical examination of the patriarchal narratives that render women as marginalized entities.

By integrating elements of these dual myths into her everyday existence, Das finds guidance in her decision-making and inspiration to navigate the barriers that impede her aspirations.

These personal mythologies endow her with a sense of self-esteem and resilience, intricately weaving together the threads of individuality, identity, and purpose. Far from allowing her mythos to fade, they continuously invigorate her resolve to advocate for her rights.

Her quest for love, her critique of phallogocentric culture, her challenges to patriarchal norms, and her complex identity—including her narcissistic tendencies, rebellious nature, and nuanced spirituality—constitute a constellation of mythologies. These influences not only enrich her subjectivity but also facilitate the reinterpretation of intense emotions, engender novel insights, and foster altruistic behavior. The excerpt "Load every rift of your subject with ore," as articulated by John Keats in a letter to P.B. Shelley in 1820, resonates profoundly in the context of Kamala Das's exploration of personal and self-mythologies. Her poetic oeuvre predominantly reflects upon her own lived experiences, crafting a vivid tapestry that underscores the intricate interplay between personal history and broader cultural narratives.

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