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Being and Beyonding: The Poetry of Kamala Das

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ABSTRACT

This research paper comprises four sections. Each section thematically highlights "being and beyonding" as central to Kamala Das' poetic *oeuvres*. Emphasizing these terms, it aims to unveil how they notably shape her poetic identity and entrench their universal relevancy and vibrancy. The initial section provides an in-depth exploration of "being" and "beyonding," dispelling ambiguities concerning them. The subsequent section probes the concept of "being" as manifested in her poetry, intimately annexed to her personal experiences and crucial life events, disclosing the intimacy between her art and her identity. The third section shifts to analyze the term "beyonding" in her works, displaying how she transcends personal narratives to address profound existential questions. Finally, it presents the dynamic interplay between these ontological notions, underscoring their comprehensive resonance and vitality within her poetics. Moreover, through rigorous research and insightful analysis, it presents Kamala Das as a poet who intricately fuses the essence of "being" and "beyonding" into her poetics, seamlessly balancing the subjective and the objective phenomena of her life and her art, contributing to broader literary and philosophical conversations on identity, femininity, and transcendence.

Keywords: *Being, Becoming, Beyonding, Being-in-itself, Being-for-itself, Dasein, Existence, Femininity, Male Chauvinism, Phallocentrism, Yolo and Fomo culture.*

There is something in Kamala Das' poetry that after the decades of her demise, tempts the multitude, akin to the dahlia beacons to the bees. Day by day, her poetic legacy expands, gently

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creating more space for her poetry on the literary horizon. Nowadays, scholars see it beyond the boundaries of love and lust, death and immorality, and feminine sensibility and nostalgic recollections. To study her confessionality, her autobiographicality, and her mythical exploration of Radha and Krishna has been outdated. The days of reading her thematic and pragmatic aspects have also gone. With them are gone the days of reading her poetry through the eyes of stylistic, structuralistic, and marginalized thoughts and theories that once would make a great fuss among her perusers. Time has changed, and along with it, changed people's perspectives towards her poetic world. Now, scholars study it with new goggles of thoughts and theories. For some, it is the icon of the YOLO culture and, for others, the FOMO culture. For some, it is overlaid with literary ecology, and for others, with ecological feminism. Some find it brooding with alienation, others with crises. For some, her poetry is existentialistic, and for others, surrealistic. Let them relate to what they think, let them explore what they search, and let them find what they desire, but it is the fact that her poetry is closer to the life of the half population—women folk—that links the rest of population sometimes as a sister, sometimes as a mother, sometimes as a daughter, and sometimes as a wife and so on and on. Without any ifs and buts, it is about their being and beyonding, preserving their experience and struggle as a bequest for their posterity to deal with their days, provisioning their respect for every gender.

People's craze for Kamala's poetry will never cease to allure their eyes from its undeniable articulation of sexuality and sexual desires, pensive pain and harrowing loneliness, curtailed will and stifled freedom, spilled self and dehumanized personality, men's traditionality and women's romantic relationship, entrenched resentments and impounding radicalization, critique of masculinity and the victimization caused by patriarchy, and eternal insurgency caused by existential angst and particularities. Moreover, it will never leave to reflect the pluralities of the second sex that she depicted through the singularities of her physical and spiritual politics, hard-hitting audacity, steadfast candidity, and justified rationality that compoundingly blesses the half population with such unbeatable noesis that gently energizes them to uproar at the atrocities against them. The mantra of her poetry will inspire them to rise like phoenixes, enabling them to fight against all impertinences that hinder their quest for equality. Her poetic legacy that, like the god Janus, covers all the tinges of time—past and future—with being and beyonding, will unceasingly prompt the appendages of her gender and

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race to imitate “prospice,” enchanting: “I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more, / The best and the last” (qtd. by Susan Ratcliffe in Oxford Essential Quotation 05) for their cause.

“Being” and “Beyonding" are twin terms. They have essential bonds in ontology and existentialism and possess a core position in metaphysical discussion. The first of them, contrasting the terms 'becoming' and 'non-being,' refers to the 'nature of existence.' It is “a part of a culturally established form of social relations” (Willy De Craemer 21), which is described as “To be, or not to be”—that is the question when you are talking about being. Things that exist are in a state of being: this meaning of being is vague, but it has to do with the way things are alive and real" (vocabulary.com). According to philosophers like Plato, it "(Being) does not mean existence, but something specific—a human, a lion, or a house—being recognizable by its quality or shape" (Being Philosophy, Britannica.com), to Aristotle, it "("being") is whatever is anything whatever" (Britannica.com), to Hegel, "it is simply emptiness—i.e., Nothing" (Britannica. Com), to Heidegger, it is "Dasein"—the way man exists and is aware of his existence in the world—(Britannica. com), to Sartre, “consciousness is a being such that in its being, its being is in question insofar as this being implies a being other than itself.” (Being and Nothingness 651), and to Jaspers, “the idea of being oneself signified the potentiality to realize one’s freedom of being in the world” (Britannica.com).

On the other hand, ‘Beyonding,' often mentioned as the philosophy of "Beyond" and "Transcendence," has come from the Germanic word 'beyond' which suggests 'farther away,' 'outside the limit,' and 'the afterlife.' As a futuristic term, it philosophically denotes the things that exist beyond reality and rationality, transcending the boundaries of existence. To apprehend it just through the objective studies of materiality is not easy as it is a way to engage experience around the dimensions of events that are beyond measurement, enumeration, meaning, and ethics, but experienced as a kind of events and lineages that demand belief, faith, and trust in transcendental things, radically imagining a far better future, breaking new grounds supposing to where none has gone before. Moreover, an arduous action of self-mastery, self-alteration, and self-actualization needs an ardent passion, desire, and patience for the future and its belongings without any doubt or hesitation.

The ways of philosophy and the says of philosophers are not easy for an average reader. They are not straightforward. They are hard nuts to crack, chew, and digest. Their technicalities and methodologies demand reflective judgment and a pragmatic orientation of seeing the world

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from afar. They need great passion, patience, and leisure to decipher. Such is with the tenets of 'Being and Beyonding.' Being an integral part of philosophy, they are not away from these enumerations. Their acquisition is not a child play for everybody. Most of the readers do not take them seriously. They blank out their divergence and consider them identical. Besides this, they do not use proper strategies to understand them. Their ignorance or negligence of the concept of learning is the best illustration in this context, i.e., to be familiar with the concepts of "being" and "beyonding," they must be familiar first with the concepts of "existence" and "becoming." Otherwise, the chaos resulting from being ignorant of the similarities and dissimilarities of these concepts will spoil the tense and sense of understanding the twin concepts of "being" and "beyonding" as they considerably help in deciding their connotative meaning.

The propositions of 'existence,' 'being,' and 'becoming' possess primal positions in ontology, a part of metaphysics, the first philosophy. They encompass various facets of reality, existence, and the nature of life. On the other hand, "Beyonding," near to the philosophy of "Beyond" and "Transcendence", indicates the philosophical beliefs, methods, and approaches that depict the rudimentary artifacts of being in the frame of immersion and authenticity of knowledge. "Existence," unlike 'non-existing' and 'non-being,' refers to the state of physicality that lacks any deeper essence beyond what the term 'Being' implies and "Being," with its static entitative caliber of depicting the totality of a individual in general, denotes the fundamental nature of a human being that is beyond mere physical existence, while "Becoming" refers to the dynamic transformation of human beings over time, in which an individual passes through one state to another. All, be it the life journey of a person or the journey of a person through life, are trapped in the nets of being and beyonding. From birth to death, they remain caught in one's life. The initial state of one's life always begins with tabula rasa. When "existence precedes essence" (Sartre 541), one attains the totality of being and struggles for 'Becoming' with never unwavering will and vision. If hurdled, one remains in the reveries of "beyonding" that ever dwells with the hope of the happy isle.

The world's philosophical literature reveals that writers and philosophers contribute their unique thoughts and theories. They envision the ideal state of their dreams. Be it Socrates' Kallipolis, the perfect city, or Plato's Ideal State, a Utopian Vision of Governance; be it Thomas More's Utopia, a fictional island, or Francis Bacon's Bensalem, the scientific Utopia; be it Aldous Huxley's Brave New World, a dystopia, or Swift's Lilliput and Blefuscu, the

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fictional island nations, all tell the same tale. The tale of the life journey of writer-philosophers or the journey of philosopher-writers through their lives. What they observed, felt, and born, they depicted in their creative world. The reason for such depiction is only the betterment of the world and its posterity.

Her life's journey and her journey through life, as depicted in "the body of her writing and not the writing of her body" (13) reveal that she is conscious of her "being' and she has great hope from 'beyonding'. Believing in Delphi's maxim: "Know thyself" (Wilkins 01), reflecting on her sophrosyne, she paves her way for beyonding. She thinks, today or tomorrow, she will have all the things for which her life has been thoroughly turbulent. Besides this, she is conscious of her 'existence'—be it personal or divine—and her 'becoming'—to become a dear daughter or a true beloved; to become an ideal wife or a poet down to earth to the members of her gender and race—with Heraclitean thought—"No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it's not the same river and he's not the same man." (qtd. in The Invisible Mentor 01)—that constantly devises her about the changeability of the man and the world. She does her best throughout her life, but what she got was an existential crisis that, on the internal part, includes despair, helplessness, guilt, fear, anxiety, and loneliness and, on the external part, includes conflict with the patriarchy with a hundred hands frustrated both her public and private life. Be it her childhood or marital life, or be it her professional life, all are on the altar of frustration. Her state of life gently makes recall the chunk that Earnest Hemingway, the American novelist, gave, "The best people possess a feeling for beauty, the courage to take risks, the discipline to tell the truth, the capacity for sacrifice. Ironically, their virtues make them vulnerable; they are often wounded, sometimes destroyed." (The Crossroads 974).

(ii)

Once, in a conversation with Eunice de Souza, the Indian poet and literary critic, Kamala Das, the love queen of Malabar, voiced her thwarting with the reductive and sexist construe of her poetry. She candidly stated, "I have a number of social commitments, but everyone thinks only about sex in relation to my writing" (Kohli 35). Her words play up a profound misapprehension of her work, which transcends the slender orbit of social commentary to embrace deeper philosophical explorations. Whereas her poetry is known for its bold depictions of love and desire, its thematic concerns extend far beyond the physical or erotic. Her social commitments are evident in her unwavering critique of patriarchy, her exploration of women's struggles, and

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her advocacy for individuality and freedom. However, these concerns are the mono-layer of her multifaceted poetic vision behind that lies a philosophical inquiry into the being and beyonding of human conditions. Her opuses reflect a quest to unravel the complexities of selfhood, balancing the interplay of body and soul, freedom and confinement, love and betrayal, challenging societal norms and redefining the meaning of femininity and morality with the view of making it a philosophical statement on life itself. In this light, her literary commitment is not merely social but deeply philosophical, positioning her as a thinker and poet whose work bridges the personal, the social, and the profoundly philosophical.

Kamala Das, a poet with a Manichean personality, wit, and behaviour, always produces dualistic poetry that seeks sometimes corporeal and sometimes incorporeal love in life and life in love for her being and beyonding. Rarely is she away from it. The manja or the twine of her beyonding kite is never away from the charkhi or kite spool of her being. It winds round and round to its spool that she boldly, bravely, and brightly holds. The soar that the kite of her poetry makes in the literary sky is always with the roar of the dichotomies of the physique and psyche, the man and woman, and the modernity and traditionality that exist in the societies of her age that she wants to settle down to give a new way with her radicalized feministic thoughts, presenting contrastively two different concepts, often opposites, to convey different orientations, ideas, and imageries. Her dualistic self sometimes pines for physical love and sometimes for spiritual love. Sometimes, it becomes rational, and sometimes, emotional. Sometimes, it wants to eradicate masculinity and sometimes seeks shelter in its dwellings. When and what she wants is like the riddle of the Sphinx for her readers. All that her ordinary readers understand is that she wants to eliminate the patriarchy with all her possible efforts. They often blank out the duality of her mythologized self and personality and their fruits. They overlook this duality, a literary device involving conflicting forces. And more than this, they miss that her poetry hardly had the confluence of her mental and psychic phenomena at any space. And, if they have, it is her personal and poetical politics that dominate her poetry, marking the vestige of being and beyonding as the effect of her dualistic personality, dualistic intelligence, and dualistic behaviour that have ever produced such a dualistic poetry in which she, like Hamlet, the prince of smoke, constantly ponders over the question of life and death. His pondering follows as follows:

> To be, or not to be: that is the question:
>
> Whether ’tis nobler in the mind to suffer

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The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,

Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,

And by opposing end ? (Hamlet Act III, Sc.i, lines- 56-60 886)

In Kamala Das' creations, the dichotomies of "Being" and "Beyonding" are intricately woven. They form such a tapestry where the mythologies of the self and personality, twirling in the endless dance of complexity, disturb the pose of her spirituality. Her sonority becomes a vessel for exploring the multifaceted nature of self-hood that constitutes her individuality, the labyrinthine corridors of personal identity that set up her iconicity even in the most discombobulating of circumstances, the ardour of passionate desires that make her odyssey of attaining the best for women cause continue, and the subtle interplay between existence and co-existence that make her ever active for new attainment. Within the intricacy of this framework, her poems pound with such a tenseness that flows between the immediacy of her present existence—her "Being"—and the constant, oft turbulent longing to transcend its boundaries, to run away into a realm of "Beyonding," where limitations dissolve into the ether of unbounded possibility. This perpetual interplay, even though a frail balancing act between the remaining rooted in the present self and the nudge to soar beyond it, egresses as a shaping distinctive of her works. It becomes the prism through which her poetical expedition of muliebrity, laden with passionated emotional vulnerability, unfolds its wings to soar in the literary sphere. Moreover, hither the integrity of intimate ordeal insights countenance, whereas her quest for meaning—individuality and identity—thrusts against the stiff ramparts of the conference, endeavouring to transcend the corporeal and the craved. Hitherto, her opuses blossom, rich in existential inquiry layered with passionate emotional resonance. It reminds Toni Morrison, who, expressing the intricacies of female existentiality, said:

> I think now it was the shock of liberation that drew my thoughts to what “free” could possibly mean to women. …the debate was still roiling: equal pay, equal treatment, access to professions, schools…and choice without stigma.To marry or not. To have children or not. Inevitably, these thoughts led me to the different history of …women…—a history in which marriage was discouraged, impossible, or illegal; in which birthing children was required, but “having” them, being responsible for them—being, in other words, their parent—was as out of the question as freedom. Assertions of parenthood under conditions peculiar to the logic of institutional enslavement were criminal (“Foreword”, *Beloved, p.* xi).

Morrison's insights are crucial for all women, and Kamala Das embodies this truth. Her experiences resonate deeply with themes of being, becoming, and beyonding, echoing women's journey everywhere. In her poetry, the concept of 'being' is deeply rooted in her experience of femininity—its individuality and identity—that tells the raga and saga of her deep and dark personal endeavours and escapades that she faced for her existence and essence, feeling: "One

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is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Simone de Beauvoir 330) and believing: "I rebel, therefore, we exist" (The Rebel 54). Her literary compositions unveil a firm and fresh confessional pitch that acquires the complexities of her inner space asterisked by her longings, loneliness, and resistance. The societal touchstones of her time endowed her with such intuition that, in her earlier years, she recognized both the meaninglessness of life and the absurdity of the world. Along with it, she soon comprehended the true essence of Darwin's "survival of the fittest" and De Beauvoir's "transcendence" (The Second Sex 443) for her "Being-in-the-world" (Heidegger 78), thinking "the only way to deal with an unfree world is to become so absolutely free that your very existence is an act of rebellion". Thus, for the best of her existence and being, she rebelled against all those interventions that would trample her individuality, mar her identity, curtail her choice, and deprive her of the freedom that blesses her equality to men. The being in her poetry is volatile and perpetually in flux as she wrestles with the identity imposed upon her by the community, family, and kinship. It's best exemplified in her polyphonic poem "An Introduction," in which she, neglecting the men-imposed identity, expresses her sense of self—her individuality and her identity—as formed by cultural, gender-based, linguistic forces:

> I am Indian, very brown, born in
>
> Malabar, I speak three languages, write in
>
> Two, dream in one. 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 in
>
> Any language I like? The language I speak
>
> Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses
>
> All mine, mine alone (119).

Her nationality, colour, and birthplace do not agonize her as they are beyond the mortal's hands. What agonizes her most is her attire, food, and language that must come in the realm of her choices and decide the destiny of her individuality, identity, and futurity, but sad, they were in the hands of stone-hearted patriarchates from whom hope for any mercy is impossible. In the refraining condition of such possessions, she falls victim to such dashing hopes from whose trauma she hardly came over. They haunted her dreams, days, and ways so bitterly that they changed the realm of her perspectives about the institution of family: its societies and its people

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who would give free advice. Be it in the context of her decision to write in English language about that she says: "It voices my joys, my longings, my hopes" (119) or be it in the reference of her attire regarding which she reproaches the society and its contractors, interrogating who are they to decide what one should or should not wear, what one should or should not eat, and how one should or should not act, i.e., their interference in the ways of womankind like her enrages her. She becomes the Rani of Jhansi, revolting against all such stony rules and regulations that the Foreign rule of Patriarchy imposes upon her. About it, she pens:

> Then I wore a shirt and my
>
> Brother's trousers, cut my hair short and ignored
>
> My womanliness. Dress in sarees, be a girl,
>
> Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be 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 (119-120).

However, she was not to tarry here. She amalgamated to be characterized by categories. Alternatively, she sought to conserve her individuality, plant her identity, and translate both the physical aspects and the greater meaning of the world for herself and others of her gender and race. She chose her path without worrying about the consequences. With these thoughts in mind, she expressed her feelings in the poem "An Introduction" and decided to:

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

As her biography and autobiography reveal, she found what she desired. She had her preferred name, preferred attire, and preferred role. However, she had no preferred love. She was duped by such bonafide love and marriage that they wanted to make her forever "an invisible woman in the asylum corridor"(17). In her existentialism-affected poem "An Introduction," she pens:

> I was a child, and later they
>
> Told me I grew, for I became tall, my limbs
>
> Swelled and one or two places sprouted hair. When
>
> I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask

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For, he drew a youth of sixteen into the

Bedroom and closed the door. He did not beat me

But my sad woman-body felt so beaten.

The weight of my breasts and womb crushed me. I shrank

Pitifully (119).

The reality of love and marriage that she perceived deteriorated her life. It left her embarrassed by the absurdity of her marital existence. She soon sensed that her husband was also an integral part of the patriarchy that, like others, wanted nothing but to exploit her. Consequently, narrating the plethora of her miserable life, she wrote: “He was free to exploit and I was free to be exploited" ("Larger than Life was He" 141). Such a state of life shattered her dreams and desires and haunted her existence and essence to such an extent that her psyche would often haunt her, asking whether she was only to be "the 'silent woman' robbed of all expression" (17) on this blue plant or a non-essential creature (as the patriarchs consider) destined for being exploited or something else. Thus, with a heavy heart, she writes:

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. I am a sinner,

I am a saint. I am the beloved and the

Betrayed. I have no joys which are not yours, no

Aches which are not yours. I too call myself I (120).

A detailed analysis of the cited lines reveals that Kamala's 'being' was conflicted with socialistic and individualistic norms. The socialistic norms attempted to shape her into a submissive woman, while the individualistic norms sought to shape her into a rebellious woman, validating her inherent talents. The conflicts arising from the pressure of these opposing forces sparked intense emotions in her poetry, making it palpably fierce like a volcano. She resisted being confined to a specific identity or role bestowed by male chauvinism. She did not want to be identified by the blessing and identity of the patriarchy. At her own cost, she wanted to be the creator of her identity and role. This totality of her being is reflected well in her poem "An Introduction," about which K. Satchidanandan writes:

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> The many ontological dimensions of her being—lover's darling, drinker of the city nights, one who makes love, feels shame, sinner, saint, beloved—are tied together at the end of the poem where the poet's ego dissolves in others as soon as it is asserted: if the poet finds the male ego, "tightly packed like sword in its sheath", violent, arrogant, and exclusive, she finds her identity to be a moment of difference before a final dissolution in others as she finds that her joy and aches are the as those of her readers (Preface 13-14).

This is why Kamala's poems persist in her endeavour to define her being on her terms, particularly about the plurality of her gender and race that she presents through her singularity, thinking "woman is not undeveloped man but diverse" (Rickett 417). Through her intrepid and candid explorations of love, cravings, and corporeal expertise for the sake of the decentred sexuality, oppressed individuality, and trampled identity of the second sex, she induces the convolution of their existence and essence in her poetics, declining to correspond to such conventional paragons that would entrap them in the binary logic of phallocentrism. But she was not too fool to be entangled in such traps. Soon after her marriage, she discerned all the shrewdness done in the name of love and marriage. She became so frustrated with her married life that she blamed the male-dominated social structure for all her plights. She believed that her spouse was also an integral part of it. He was no exception. Because of this, with the plurality of 'You' accusing everyone, she wrote:

> You planned to tame a swallow, to hold her
>
> In the long summer of your love so that she would forget
>
> Not the raw seasons alone and the homes left behind, but
>
> Also her nature, the urge to fly, and the endless
>
> Pathways of the sky (The Old Playhouse 38).

Her 'actual being' never wanted to exist merely as a wife cum maid who traditionally breaks saccharine into her spouse's brew and offers nutriments timely. It wanted more than this. It wanted equality and freedom with men. Moreover, it wanted them to understand the members of her gender and race. Though complicated in her era, she tried to change men's attitudes and their look at women folk as the existentialists describe. Thus, her being turned her blood into ink, disclosing:

> The strong man's technique
>
> Is always the same. He serves his love in lethal dose
>
> For love is Narcissus at the water's edge haunted
>
> By its lonely face, and, yet it must seek at last

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> An end, a pure, total freedom, it must will the mirrors
>
> To shatter and the kind night to erase the water (The Old Playhouse 38).

Her being is embodied with a dual commitment: the commitment to herself and the commitment to the members of her gender and race. Through her singularity, she represents the plurality of the members of her gender and race. Through her lived experience, she experiences the life of the fair sex. Through the demand for freedom for herself, she demands freedom for the rest, and through the reflection of her plights, she reflects the plight of her gender and race. Like Simone de Beauvoir, she considers, “to will oneself free is also to will others free” (The Ethics of Ambiguity 31). Her plural singularity, her experience as a woman, her reflection of the female plights in her works, her consciousness, and her call for freedom all are shrouded with the philosophy behind her application of the first person pronouns: I and We. When does her I, which signifies her individuality, her identity, and her importance for the women folks, change into WE, which spells the universality of the women’s quandaries, becomes a mystery for her perusers, i.e., her application of the first person pronouns—especially of “I/me/mine/mines”—gently becomes “we/us/our/ours" in her lexicon. The rational motive behind it is the double commitment that makes her represent herself and the selves of the rest members of the 'half population.' Beholding this, K. Satchidanandan writes:

> This double commitment—to the self and to others—is what defines Kamala’s poetics of complementarity and lends to her creative universe a comprehensiveness seldom encountered in the stereotypical feminist poetry of 70’s and 80’s with its oppressively repetitive concern with the body, its deliberate and aggressive anti-male stance and its jargonised confessional or indignant idiom (Preface 17).

It would be a treachery to consider her poetry as only the poetry of her being. It is more than this. The 'being' found in Kamala's poetics is more than the singularity of her being. It is plural and includes both men and women and all those things that transcend the boundaries and categories of human beings. It encompasses the being of other beings: of non-beings and non-existing things, signifying 'being there for someone', interestingly supporting with care the members of her gender and race, and listening to their life with the fusion of her experience. Besides this, it is the amalgamation of "accidental being, being as truth, actual being, and intrinsic being" (Jiyuan Yu 1-20) as Aristotle presents and of ‘being-in-itself’ (merely a mode of existence), ‘being-for-itself’ (a mode of existence of consciousness), and ‘being-for-others’ (one’s being in other’s consciousness) as Sartrean nomenclature presents. Like Plato's concept of being, it is not static. It is astatic. Moreover, with the growth of her poetic sensibility, its

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scope keeps increasing. No matter what, all the types and categories of beings existing in her poetry denote her 'being there for someone' who is tortured, exploited, and thought to be other like the women folk. In this context, K. Satchidanandan writes:

> Kamala's poetry shows a gradual widening of concerns over the years as she liberates herself from her initial obsession with her gender identity and extends her sympathies to entire sections of suffering humanity—the marginalized, the poor, the minorities, the fighters for justice, women, children, abandoned youth, victims of war and oppression—until she "gate-crashes into the precincts of others' dreams" and feels she is "million, million people/talking all at once, with voice raised in clamour (K. Satchidanandan 16).

In Kamala Das' poetry, the concept of 'being' is portrayed through female perspectives. While dealing with the state of feminine existence, identity, and introspection, it transcends her in the lap of beyonding beyond the traditional expectations and conventions of androcentrism. It becomes the cause of her belief in beyonding, musing it will yield all the things she could not attain in her life. Under the aegis of sensitive love, deep desires, prickly pains, and jeopardized vulnerability, it paves the way for her beyonding, reflecting her all endeavours, eliciting and deconstructing the profanity of the highly manipulated touchstones of the social and cultural expectations. Her poetry, with profound confessionality, applies her life as a canvas to explore the tralatitious conception of femininity, sexuality, and sovereignty. It always presents her unblinking expedition of individualistic verity through which she pursues a genteel delineation of her watery, colonial, and confounding being that never departs from the sense of beyonding.

(iii)

Kamala Das is one of the canonical poets of the postcolonial scenario. Her poetry reveals her firm faith in the multiverse or the co-existence of the alternate universe that subsists with this better-known cosmos. To her, this parallel world is ever blessed with celestial life. There is no prosy fret. There is no partiality. Even though, there is no discrimination based on the biological binary that divides its denizens along the lines of gender and race. There is respect for one another's rights. Ruminating this, she wrote: "There was an imaginary life running parallel to our real life" (My Story 107). The telescopic vision of her poetry reveals the concept of "beyonding" found in her is four-dimensional in which the initial dimension refers to the expansion of her self-consciousness to pull down the boundaries of the age-long rusty patriarchy that refrains her from attaining the higher potentialities for the free development of body, mind, and soul. Its subsequent dimension pertains to calling the members of her gender and race to action with readiness for the challenges that demoralize them, assigning a secondary

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place in society, thinking of them as Other, and calling them non-essential creatures, and the existing and impending opportunities of that they are or may be bereft. Its ternary dimension relates to the retreat that calls the women folk for introspection to challenge their limiting beliefs, cultivate self-reliance, and create a futuristic vision for themselves and their posterity. In its final dimension, her beyonding comprises personal politics. For gratification, it makes her corporeality shelter in spirituality, interpreting, for instance, the myth of Radha and Krishna for her cause. Thus, her beyonding, for the sake of her being, goes beyond all such mythical facts that pacify her tranquil soul from the turbulent thoughts that disturb her mythologized existence, staining her legacy.

In Kamala Das' poetics, the initial state of beyonding refers to self-awareness. The more she becomes conscious, the more she musings about the pathetic condition of the members of her gender and race, and the more she thinks to eradicate the patriarchy, considering it hinders the free development of the body and soul of women folk like her. Undoubtedly, like a pendulum, she swings between the opposite poles of the inward and outward journeys, yet she concludes that all the obsession with physicality is a blunder. Man must go beyond it. If feasible, most problems in life will go away on their own. Contemplation it, in the fourth part of the "Anamalai Poems," she writes:

> If only the
>
> Human eye could see beyond the
>
> Chilling flesh, the funeral pyre's
>
> Rapid repast and then beyond
>
> The mourner's vanquished stance, where would
>
> Death be then, that meaningless word
>
> When life is all that there is, that
>
> Raging continuity that
>
> Often the wise ones recognize as God (137).

On the one hand, her being makes her busy like a bee in the herculean task of self-exploration, self-assertion, and self-depiction in such an absurd world that does not take her lived experiences seriously. On the other hand, tension arising from the confrontations existing between her vision and mission of demanding gender equality and the reality of the patriarchy-dominated world makes her a bird with beyonding, howling here and there with an earnest

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desire to break the bars of phallocentrism in which she exists. It is nothing but her intentionally expanded consciousness that wants only one thing—removing limitations for the women folk to attain the highest potentiality with their beyonding initiative and beyonding retreat. As a part of her politics, the condition of failure leads her towards spirituality in that she seeks the missed love she never found in her mundane life. It is why her poetry is ever imbued with a sense of restlessness and arousal to go beyond the orbit of her identity given by the patriarchy and to reach a state of fulfillment or liberation. This impulse frequently manifests in her explorations of love, seeking shelter in spirituality, and desire for suicide and death as she tries to break free from the confinements of both physical and social expectations. In the poem "The Looking Glass," depicting her love, she suggests a beyonding in which vulnerability gently turns into a path to transcendence:

> Getting a man to love you is easy
>
> Only be honest about your wants as
>
> Woman. Stand nude before the glass with him
>
> So that he sees himself the stronger one
>
> And believes it so, and you so much more
>
> Softer, younger, lovelier… Admit your
>
> Admiration. Notice the perfection
>
> Of his limbs, his eyes reddening under
>
> Shower, the shy walk across the bathroom floor,
>
> Dropping towels, and the jerky way he
>
> Urinates (68).

The love she portrays here is not just an emotional or physical experience but a space where one can transcend the limitations of the ego through probity and self-display. For Das, the titillating things become a means of "beyonding," a way to approach a profound, more ubiquitous linking with the being of another person, even though it is not eternal, but temporarily fraught with its challenges. Similarly, in her nostalgic poetic composition "My Grandmother's House," she wishes to have the lost belongings she once fully fledged, i.e., she repeatedly sighs for her grandmother, her house, and the love that she never attained even in her marital life. Owing to this, she captivatingly writes:

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You cannot believe, 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 strangers' doors to

Receive love, at least in small change (150).

Through these lines, the beyonding that Kamala presents explores her desire to surpass the inner vacuum of her marital life. As a medium, it makes her recall the love of her yore days when she was its mistress. Repeatedly enshrining her integrity with the time and place she spent with her grandmother, she tries to retrieve it. The nostalgia for its wholeness and completeness haunts her present life. It made her beg it from strangers. But all disappointed her, giving her lust in place of love. Although it despaired her, she did not give up. She used her nostalgia as an ointment for her stark actuality. To make up the rest, she envisioned the happy isles of beyonding, considering this longing for the lost will lead her to the evasive state of satisfaction that lies nowhere but in its utopia, i.e., her continuant motility toward beyonding soothes her actuality.

The subsequent dimension of Kamala Das' beyonding refers to calling the women folk to action with preparedness for such provocations that pollute their self and identity, assigning them a subsidiary place in the society, considering them as Other and non-essential species owing to that they have an earnest desire for self-annihilation and death as in the poem "Life's Obscure Parallel," she writes:

Life's obscure parallel is death. Quite often

I wonder if what I seem to do is living

Or dying. A little of each is in every

Gesture, both my mind's and my body's. Inside

My throat the inward breath combats the outside

One. And the sights, seen, reside not outside

But within (104).

In her poetic realm, when the ways of women like her get embarrassing, she feels it is easier to die than to survive suffocatingly, for they have no return to life. In this context, she writes: "at my age there are no longer / any homecomings" ("Women's Shuttles" 105) and "Life has lost

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its clear outlines. Or else, I may / have gone blind, its ritzy splendours stealing / the light from my eyes" ("Death is so Mediocre" 64). Such states of mind pave her way for beyonding, attaining the form of suicide and death, such as she writes:

> I tell you, sea.
>
> I have enough courage to die,
>
> But not enough.
>
> Not enough to disobey him
>
> Who said, do not die
>
> And hurt me that certain way ("The Suicide" 108).

Through the singularity of these lines, Das depicts the impuissance of the Indian women. Her apprising to the sea that she needs the permission of her spouse to die indicates all those constraints that, suffocating her existence, make her life hell. Such is not just with her but with all belonging to her gender and race. All of them have been made miserable creatures whom no god can save. On the other hand, to assert her diverse perspective in her poetry, she gently turns the tense and sense of her singularity into the plurality of the rest of the women. In doing so, she replaces the pronouns "I/me/my/mine" with "we/us/our/ours." Its best example is her poem "Daughter of the Century" in which, cautioning women against men, she writes:

> We are ordinary,
>
> No God seems too keen to preserve us
>
> We mated like Gods but begot only our killers.
>
> Each mother suckles her own enemy
>
> And hate is first nurtured at her gentle breast;
>
> And each man's seed is pregnant with his death (164).

Although patriarchy affects both genders-male and female, these lines highlight the catharsis of the women folk, who foster life yet are implicated in the trap of such hostility and devastation to escape from that is not easy for them. They have only one option—to be ready to eradicate it from all directions. Otherwise, it will demoralize them, override their individuality, and devastate their identity, thinking of them as secondary, Other, and non-essential creatures. It will force them "to bear the whip marks of culture on their bodies" (K. Satchidanandan 18), mind, and soul. Moreover, it would snatch away from them the share of the opportunities

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affecting them. To her, all—be it man or word or God—conspire against them. Thinking it, she writes:

> Tomorrow they may bind me with chains stronger than
>
> Those of my cowardice, rape me with bayonets and
>
> Hang me for my doubts
>
> Courage is the blood's silent flowing out of wounds
>
> And the homing bird of death that ends in haste
>
> A story half told
>
> But lays new white legends in its nest ("Tomorrow" 75).

The beyonding retreat works as the third segment in Kamala's poetry. As a process, it calls the women for self-contemplation to see whether it is their feebleness or something else stimulating their misery. Sometimes, they are responsible for their wretchedness. They forget the differences in their roles and duties and merge their mentality and emotionality at every stage of their lives as a beloved, a wife, a mother, or a mother-in-law. It is why she demands self-introspection from the members of her gender and race so that they may face such beliefs that demarcate the ways of their actions, hinder the cultivation of their self-reliance, and check the rays of their futuristic visions. Without it, they will have only one thing—complaining to their gods against their earthly gods. In this context, a lyric by Tagore is quite applicable in which he, seeing the plight of the Indian female folks, writes:

> O Lord! why have you not given woman the right to conquer her destiny?
>
> Why does she have to wait head bowed?
>
> By the roadside, waiting with tired patience,
>
> Hoping for a miracle in the morrow? (Justice J.N. Bhatt in "Gender Justice Turmoil or Triumph" 18)

But to Kamala Das, "no God seems too keen to preserve us" (164). Only they are to rise for their cause. As a fashion-cum-tradition, whenever men get a chance, they try to mortify women. They try to crucify them. Thinking this, in her poetics, she calls the members of her gender and race to action. To her, if they do not take action, they risk losing everything important to them. Men will forget their presence as human beings. Thus, through her poetry, she appeals to the women folk that they are never to yield before the agents of the patriarchy—men. Her thought reminds Maya Angelou, the black American writer, who writes:

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You may write me down in history

With your bitter, twisted lies,

You may tread me in the very dirt

But still, like dust, I'll rise….

You may shoot me with your words,

You may cut me with your eyes,

You may kill me with your hatefulness,

But still, like air, I'll rise….

Out of the huts of history's shame

I rise

Up from a past that's rooted in pain

I rise….

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear

I rise…(Still I Rise 41).

Like Angelou, Das also considers that men always spoil their individuality and identity with twisted lies, treading them in the dirt, shooting them with their words, and cutting them with their eyes. They do not tarry here. They try to kill them with their hatefulness, forgetting that, one day, these women will have such a rising, leaving behind everything, be it awful nights or something else. In other words, in the third sphere of her beyonding, Kamala Das calls women to action like Ulysses, the Greek legend, called his mariners to action, proclaiming:

We are, we are;

One equal temper of heroic hearts,

Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield (Tennyson 64).

This raga and saga of Kamala's beyonding does conclude here. It goes beyond. It assists her resistive individuality in attaining the happy isles of her thoughts. It leads her toward spirituality, assuring her it to be untouched by the hands of patriarchy. It is a different matter that her simmering soul manifests a unique blending of wetbeen spirituality and personal politics (her fusion of sensuality in portraying Radha and Krishna) that she passionately conveys through the myth of Radha and Krishna. Her poems: "The Maggots," "Vrindavan,"

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"Radha," "Krishna," and "Ghanashyam," reflect it well. To her, Vrindavan is not a fairyland but a land that "lies in every woman's mind" (128). It is the land of Krishna-Kanhaiya, for whom her "hardness at the core" (77) melts. Furthermore, as a part of her politics, her realization of being (both the lover and the beloved) transcends her corporeality from spirituality to metaphysics. In this context, she writes:

> Each time my husband,
>
> His mouth bitter with sleep,
>
> Kisses mumbling to me of love,
>
> But if he is you and I am you,
>
> Who is loving who
>
> Who is the husk who the kernel
>
> Where is the body where is the soul
>
> You come in strange forms
>
> And your names are many ("Ghanashyam"118).

Although she starts this stanza with a physical touch, she soon turns it into spirituality that later on attains the metaphysical form. Such turning of the sense is nothing else but transcendental philosophy that dominates her poetry. More than this, her spirituality is ever with personal politics. She cunningly uses it for her cause. She shrewdly musings that a woman can be ostracized if she frequently falls for every man, but things may be different if she falls for the aspects of Lord Krishna. She treasures it in her heart and often applies it to defend herself against her physical hunger. For instance, while describing her encounter with one of her lovers in the book of her life story, she writes:

> You are my Krishna. I whispered kissing his eyes shut. He laughed. I felt I was a virgin in his arms. Was there a summer before the autumn of his love? Was there a dawn before the dusk of his skin? I did not remember. I carried him with me inside my eyelids, the dark God of girlhood dreams…… Oh Krishna, oh Kanhaiya, do not leave me for another…. we stood together to look at the sea. The sea was our only witness. How many times I turned to it and whispered, oh, sea, I am at last in love. I have found my Krishna (My Story 174).

She does not pause here. She goes beyond it. She tries to pull down the boundaries of social symmetry, legalizing the extramarital affair on the condition of catastrophic marital life. To give ground to her thoughts, in the poem "The Stone Age," she writes:

> Fond husband, ancient settler in the mind,

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Old fat spider, weaving webs of bewilderment,

Be kind. You turn me into a bird of stone, a granite

Dove, you build round me a shabby drawing room,

And stroke my pitted face absentmindedly while

You read. …. …. ….

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 (82).

Moreover, to hide such sensuality, she spreads the spiritual sheet of Radha and Krishna myth in her poem "The Maggots," presenting the triangle of Krishna, Radha, and Ayan, or Abhimanyu. In this poem, like the Sphinx, she asks the layered riddles of earnest corporeality-cum-spirituality-cum-metaphysics to the Oedipodes of his age:

At sunset on the river bank, Krishna

Loved her for the last time and left.

That night in her husband's arms Radha felt

So dead that he asked what is wrong

Do you mind my kisses love, and she said

No, not at all, but thought, what is

It to the corpse if the maggots nip? (52)

Here, she mythologizes her love and lust with far-fetched physicality, spirituality, and meta-physicality in a multilayered narrative style, depicting the assorted effects on a person of the same deed done by two. Moreover, here resides the trickery and technicality of her poetry that often deal with beyonding under personal politics only for her cause of justifying her ways of love and sex for that, as she thinks, her existence and essence dwell. Her beyonding is totally and completely manipulated. For it, she presents such pictures before the world that serve her cause only. Even though her spirituality, the last destination of her beyonding, is never aloof from her sensual being, the imitator of Yolo culture.

(IV)

In truth, all human existence is transcendence and immanence at the same time; to go beyond itself, it must maintain itself; to thrust itself toward the future, it must integrate the past into itself (The Second Sex 443)

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This persuasion by de Beauvoir is highly relevant to the essence of Das' being and beyonding. In her poetry, she demands equality with men regarding the transcendence and immanence of both sexes: men and women. Her literary being often questions the inequalities prevailing in Indian societies, but when it becomes aware of their absurdities, it begins to hanker after beyonding with greater hopes. Diving deep into her poetry reveals that the being and beyonding that she possesses is in a dialectical form. The self she owns intimately explores a desire to go forever beyond the worldly temporality, breaking free from the corporeal, affectional, and social confinements that try to tame her, putting in the dye of social symmetry. Her pursuit of beyonding is ever-rifted with the trauma of Fomo mentality yet transcending the self that she concedes beyond the reach of patriarchates, the material universe, and the physical laws. It is dualistic in her regime. Many times, she tries to obtain the transcendence of ego, self, and spirit to forget only the bitter (not the sweeter) experiences of this phallocentric world, and, many a time, she senses it as an opportunity for affirming the incomprehensible pathway of a sacred mission. But, her religiously mythical poems that deal with spirituality reveal that she takes the ore of spirituality to defend her sensuality. Whatever it is, she chooses everything—mean or mediocre—for her vision and mission. Ways and pays for it do not matter to her. In this context, she says: "I am a freak. / It's only to save my face, I flaunt, at / Times, a grand, flamboyant lust" (59). Seeing this, K. Satchidanandan writes, “This discovery has a social and a metaphysical dimension, both of which, in different ways, have grown along with her poetry to constitute a spiritual politics of the body and beyond ("Preface" 14).

Without 'being', the existence of 'beyonding' is non-essential in Das’ poetry. The limitations she wants to transcend and the fulfillment she wants to find are experienced and defined by her being. With it, she continuously tries to mold her identity and attain emotional fulfillment and personal freedom. Her every exploration is centered on her inner self, i.e., 'being', from where emotions, experiences, desires, and conflicts naturally and conditionally arise. In such a condition, without affirming her being, any attempt at the latter becomes futile as her poetry constantly underlines such thoughts in whose absence she cannot attain true liberation. As breaking free from the inner truth, they become inaccessible. It must be stock-stilled in an earnest confrontation with it. Minute mensuration of her poetry reveals that if beyonding is detached from the essence of her self-hood, it becomes futile and non-essential. In other words, her inclination for transcending egresses from the inner conflicts and contemplation inherent in her existence, making transcending meaningful only when it stems from a bona fide

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comprehension of her being. For consideration, in her poem “Radha” while presenting the internal bonding of being and beyonding, she writes:

The long waiting

Had made their bond so chaste,

And all the doubting

And the reasoning

So that in the first true embrace.

She was girl

And virgin crying

Everything in me

Is melting, even the hardness at core

O Krishna, I am melting, melting, melting,

Nothing remains but

You (77).

Reading between the lines of this poem reveals that Das’ penting-up being attains earnest tranquillity in the inclusion of beyonding presented as Lord Krishna. The former can never be detached from the latter as it depends on the former for its existence. As a universal spirit, they jointly support her creative universe. It is another thing that her sense for beyonding takes on a more explicitly mystic magnitude in her later religious poetry that she composed after her proselytization in 1999. Islam, the religion of love and peace, shattered all her hope for love. It enlightened her in such a way that she said: "God has no connection with any religion. There is no respect for women anywhere" (qtd. in Vijay Nair's "Kamala Das: A Life in Verse" 03). She starts to seek not just love or fulfillment through human relationships but a profound, unworldly transcendence with the aim of unification with the divine. This change from personal to metaphysical chews over her constant search for meaning beyond the boundaries of her physical existence. This is the root cause of her captivating poem: "A Request" in which, unveiling the futility of physical love, she explores a ray of hope for beyonding:

When I die

Do not throw

The meat and bones away

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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).

Moreover, old age, death, and nothingness find a good place and position in Kamala's poetry. But her musings about death are astounding. To her, death is not death as they think. To her, it is beyond the breaking of breaths, the departure from the earth, and the things disturbing mortals. To her, it is a facet of transcendence that trans her being, becoming a means of beyonding beyond that lies the broad ocean of unknown truth to wash away all the worldly tints. It makes no difference to her as she has been involved with it since her earlier days. She is very familiar with it. Owing to this, in her poem "Life's Obscure Parallel," she pens: "Life's obscure parallel is death. / Quite often I wonder if what I seem to do is living/ Or dying (104). She does not tarry here. Going beyond it, she says:

Each truth

Ends…with a query. It is this designed

Deafness that turns mortality into

Immortality, the definite into

The soft indefinite. ("Nani" 95).

Through these lines, she conveys that cross-examination of the truth transcends certainty. It clears the truth of the truth and transcends mortals into such a timeless space where turbulent desires get tranquillity. To her, designed deafness to the worldly ways is also a means of beyonding as it possesses such a talisman that turns perception into reality, definite into indefinite, and mortality into immortality. Thinking it, her spirit of the beyonding is ever with the thought of her corporeal being from where she gets the invincible power to fight against the male domination that perpetually hurdles the rays and ways of her life and its belongings and arrant hope for the happy isle of beyonding that is to solve her all problems. What is more, her deafness to the says and ways of the world saves her from falling into the worldly abyss from where the path of liberation and beyonding is hard. Just as Mariners had a strong

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connection to the beacon light, a similar bond exists between being and beyonding in her poetry. While voyaging through the worldly troubled waves, it guides her 'being' in attaining the happy isle of her dreams. In addition, the tools that she uses for her beyonding are especially lorn love, staid separation, death wish, and inclination for suicide. They are indistinguishable parts of her mortality in whose absence being and becoming of an individual like her can not remain aloof. The same thought process is evident in her poem "Farewell to Bombay," in which she portrays the city of Bombay, now called Mumbai, as a place from where every soul departs in tranquillity. Addressing it, in the initial lines of the poem, she says:

> I take leave of you, fair city, while tears
>
> Hide somewhere in my adult eyes
>
> And sadness in silent as stone
>
> In the river's unmoving
>
> Core (47).

It is not easy for one to take leave from this world. Departure, be of any kind, is grieving. Memories both bitter and sweet, sorrows both sensible and insensible, and karma both pious and impious gently follow it. Like the curs, they butt in the streets of the dreams. Like the great horned owls, they slit the poise and grace of the beyonding. But it makes no difference to Das. With a plan, she thinks she will set for her final journey. She writes:

> Like an elephant not bidding goodbye while
>
> Taking off for that secret edge of forests
>
> Where they slope into a sure but invisible
>
> Sea, I shall go too in silence leaving not
>
> Even a fingerprint on this crowded earth,
>
> Carrying away my bird-in-flight voice and
>
> The hundred misunderstanding that destroyed
>
> My alliance with you and you and you…("Death is so Mediocre" 64).

Notwithstanding the fact, she wants to depart secretly, "leaving not even a fingerprint on this crowded earth" (64), transporting her "bird-in-flight voice" (64) and "the hundred misunderstandings" (64) that broke her alliance. In this context, K. Satchidanandan writes:

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> This continuous encounter with physical decay also forces the poet to look beyond death into a state of spirituality that has little to do with conventional religions. She believes that by confessing, by peeling off her layers, she reaches closer to the soul and 'to the bones supreme indifference (23).

She knows well that physical love cannot conform to her desire that haunts her dreams and reveries, making her often feel: "The summer begins to pall" (38) with the thought that she will have "an end, a pure, total freedom" ("The Old Playhouse" 38). Despite this, the conflicts do not leave her. Like kinetic energy, they disturb the peace of her mind and the oceanic soul. They hurl her into the depth of duality. Owing to that, she writes:

> Bereft of soul
>
> My body shall be bare.
>
> Bereft of body
>
> My soul be bare ("The Suicide" 107).

The calibration of 'bare and bereft' and 'body and soul' together reveals the interconnectedness of being and beyonding that her poetry treasures in its breast. It is another thing that she finds her body imprisoned:

> As the convicts studies
>
> His prison's geography
>
> I study the trappings
>
> Of your body, dear love,
>
> For, I must someday find
>
> An escape from its snare ("The Prisoner" 128).

But her desire to go to the sea beyond the river is never out of her consciousness. It resides in her dreams. It resides in her reveries. It haunts her mundane life. It haunts her extraordinary life. Under its palpable design, she writes:

> Go swim in the great blue sea
>
> Where the first tide you meet is your body,
>
> The familiar pest;
>
> But if you learn to cross it
>
> You are safe, yes beyond it you are safe,

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For even sinking would make no difference ("Advice to Fellow-Swimmers" 100).

Undoubtedly, sinking makes no difference to her, for she believes that no ocean of the world can harm one who has firm faith in such an ocean that flows beyond the boundaries of this temporal world. Thinking it, she writes:

There is a love greater than all you know

That awaits you where the road finally ends

Its patience proverbial; not for it

The random caress or the lust

That ends in languor (Anamalai Poems, 140).

The 'greater love' that she presents here is not limited to intercourse only. It is multifaceted and covers all the spheres of her life: physical and metaphysical, ethical and unethical, and political and nonpolitical. It resides beyond the boundaries of being, i.e., dwells with beyonding, surmising ever with being but premising in beyonding. Repressed and unconscious longings that disturb the former's sphere, like dreams, find actuality in the latter's regime. She is no exception to it. Her poetry every so often plays with these contradictory musings.

After all, in the poetical realm of Kamala Das, the carrefour of being and beyonding discloses a profound expedition of identity, femininity, and the search for authenticity and facticity. She knits her experiences in such a way that they gently embody the kernel of being as she chews over on her odyssey with social anticipations and the restrictions that patriarchal society imposes upon women like her. The sense of self on which she ratifies her poetic tower is juxtaposed with a hungriness to excel in her limitations, leading to the instants of beyonding where she endeavours to seek enfranchisement through love, longings, self-expression, self-assassination, and black despondency. The application of mind-blowing images and imageries, frank and furious language, and first-person autobiographical confessional writing style become a windfall for her in articulating the tension between the humdrum reality of existence and the ambitiousness for emotional and incorporeal freedom. At long last, her poetics works as a touching souvenir of the convolution of womankind competence, where the interaction of being and beyonding cultivate a profound apprehension of the self and the world, tantalizing readers and perusers to steer their identicalness within these mentioned intersecting spheres, i.e., in the poetry of Kamala Das, Being is an ever-evolving exploration of self-hood, particularly as a woman navigating complex emotional landscapes. Simultaneously, beyonding

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depicts her restless thrust to transcend these constraints, to look for love, unification, or incorporeal satisfaction beyond the demarcations of her immediate experience that wants "No more masks, no more mythologies" (qtd. in Preface 21), no more bonding, no more commanding, but only freedom and equality. Thus, her works substantiate the tension between surviving within the extremities of the self and longing to excel in them, devising her poetics a rich rumination on the condition of womankind. However, she is not the sheep but the "shepherd of being" (qtd. in Sikka 58), hoping for the wool of beyonding. The rest depends on the million people with the billion views.

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