CHAPTER V

FAITH OR MYTHOLOGY?

CONCEPTION OF HISTORY IN OS LUSÍADAS

That the subject-matter of Os Lusiadas is history is a matter beyond doubt. However, mythology is found to be the chief organizing principle Camões has adopted, in choosing and orchestrating the particular facts for his work. Mythology also points to his belief system which is exploited to justify (the narration of) the action of his heroes. It is part of the artistic technique of Camões that he has constructed mythology not only as determining the course of action (especially the voyage) but also as a means used by the protagonists in his work in justifying their respective actions. Mythology thus attains two levels of significance – one from the writer’s part and other from the part of the protagonists within the text. Further, it is the artistic beauty of Os Lusiadas that these two levels of the implications of mythology in the work are inseparably inscribed within the text itself.

The attempt to interpret history through myth signifies the artist’s basic human need to transcend the mundane. Among various mythologies used in the text the prominent ones are the Christian and the non-Christian which for convenience’s sake is termed as Faith and Paganism, respectively. A close reading of the text shows that between the Christian and the pagan, the centre always shifts and it is difficult to determine whether pagan mythology / faith is more prominent and salient than the other. Since one level is
mundane and the other transcendent, one can safely say only that the poet makes a strong attempt not just to present history at its bare secular dimension but more importantly, transcending the ‘particular’, goes on to present lessons of history (‘the universal’), too. Thus, one can see that a study of mythology in the work is indispensable in order to comprehend the extent, nature and pedagogical significance of history in *Os Lusiadas* in its totality.

Throughout the poem one can see the concern of pagan gods with regard to issues and crises in da Gama’s voyage. However, towards the end of the epic — but only towards the end — Tethys makes this confession to da Gama:

`Aqui, só verdadeiros, gloriosos
Divos estão, porque eu. Saturno e Jano,
Júpiter, Juno, fomos fabulosos,
Fingidos de mortal e cego engano.
Só pera fazer versos deleitosos
Servimos; e, se mais o trato humano
Nos pode dar, é só que o nome nosso
Nestas estrelas pôs o engenho vosso’. (X: 82)

Such a confession, at an immediate impression, seems unconvincing and even out of joint, after having witnessed the active interest of the pagan gods from the very beginning to the end of the drama in the action of *Os Lusiadas*. For, though history is the action and mythology its interpretation, one sees that whatever comforts the sailors had, are presented as if they were arranged by
Venus and her companions while the obstacles the sailors had to face, issue as
the result of the antagonism of Bacchus and his various machinations. In
addition, the final two Cantos are entirely devoted to a feast arranged by
Tethys, a song sung during the feast by a nymph, Tethy’s presentation of a
vision to da Gama and her rewarding of the sailors with the pleasures of Isle
of Love.

Without pagan mythology, Os Lusiadas cannot be a coherent work,
since the significant presence of the pagan mythology seems to organize as
well as to interpret the details of history in it. Attesting the idea that it is the
supernatural element in Camões’s epic that contributes to the conception of
history into a proper formulation in this literary source, William J. Entwistle
writes:

Had he avoided the supernatural, his poem would have lost one
dimension. The gods have never functioned quite credibly in the heroic
poem: in Homer they are comic relief. Vergil’s (sic) philosophy hardly
admits their efficacy, and they do little but molly-coddle his hero.
‘Machinery’ is but the means by which the narrative poet, being for the
most part limited to objective representations of his ideas, seeks to
escape into the eternal verities, to exhibit the true relationship of
events, and to present a contemporary posterity. (79-80)

Norwood H. Andrews, Jr. who thinks that the very sublime nature of
the historical event, namely the voyage, itself demanded an epic treatment
(whether by historians or by imaginative writers), remarks that the epic form
in its turn required ensuring a "heroic continuum which, beginning with Homer, extended in an unbroken line until it embraced not only the great Portuguese mariners but also such other national heroes as Afonso Henriques, Egas Moniz, Nun’Àlvares Pereira, etc."(65). Thus, the dreams, parallelisms and even the imaginative inventions of Adamastor and the Ilha dos Amores, etc. come to fit well in the *continuum* beginning with the earlier epic writers in the literary history. In this context, it is worth remembering the comment made by Landeg White with regard to the use of pagan mythology in *Os Lusiadas*: "It is important to note that the gods and goddesses never accomplish anything" (xv). As far as the visible / verifiable history is concerned, neither Christian grace nor pagan gods ever appear as accomplishing anything though interpretation of events (by Camões / da Gama) is done through mythology.

Indeed, one of the avowed purposes of colonization was evan*gelization* whether the purpose was perseveringly put into practice or not. On their arrival at Calicut, the first conversation between a Portuguese sailor and Monsayeed is remarkable:

Em vendo o mensageiro, com jocundo
Rosto, como quem sabe a língua Hispana,
Lhe disse: 'Quem te trouxe a estoutro mundo,
Tão longe da tua pátria Lusitana?'
- 'Abrindo, lhe responde, o mar profundo,
Por onde nunca veio gente humana,
Spreading of faith is said to be the avowed purpose of the Portuguese empire expansion: “Dada ao mundo por Deus, que todo o mande, / Para do mundo a Deus dar parte grande” (I: 6). To the King of the Mozambique Island, da Gama proclaims this faith in Jesus, for the proclamation of which needs no book as their God lives in their hearts: “A lei tenho daquele, a cujo império / Obedece o visível e invisível / .../ Deste Deus-Homem, alto e infinito, / Os livros, que tu pedes não trazia” (I: 65, 66). Such a rare kind of religious precept is followed throughout the work as one finds da Gama or his men not preaching visibly but rather doing and living that faith. For instance, the two sailors sent by da Gama to inspect the land of Mombasa, are seen trusting in the Providence of God in whom they believe: “Aqui os dous companheiros conduzidos / Onde com este engano Baco estava, / Põem em terra os giolhos, e os sentidos / Naquele Deus que o mundo governava” (II: 12). So though the pagan gods are presented as interested (favourably or adversely) in them, da Gama or his companions always attribute the credit of the success in their journey only to the God they worship. The sailors never appear worshiping or acknowledging the worth of gods other than the Christian one.

The Portuguese could not make a landfall in Mombasa because of strong waves and wind. Though the natural phenomenon is explained in terms of pagan mythology (II: 22), da Gama / Camões who sees it as a work of Providence or even as a miracle (II: 29, 30) and realizes that neither long
experience, nor wit can be their salvation (II: 31) makes this prayer: "Conduzir-nos já agora determina, / Ou nos amostra a terra que buscamos, / Pois só por teu serviço navegamos" (II: 32). However, Venus assumes that she and Nereids are responsible for the safety of the Portuguese (II: 19), and the reader can also see Mercury as actively involved in the Portuguese cause (II: 59). However, what the sailors profess their faith is in "A memória do dia renovava / O pressuroso Sol, que o Céu rodeia, / Em que Aquele, a quem tudo está sujeito, / O selo pós a quanto tinha feito" (II: 72).

Da Gama himself acknowledges to the King of Malindi, this faith in Providence who is the Lord of the entire mankind: "'Aquela alta e divina Eternidade, / Que o Céu revolve e rege a gente humana, / Pois que de ti tais obras recebemos, / Te pague o que nós outros não podemos" (II: 104). While da Gama talks about the Spanish King Alfonso VI (1065–1109) and his knights who fought the Arabs, he gives more credit to their faith than to their desire for fame in the success (III: 2). It is in fact faith that invests Camões’s history with enhanced significance and a transcendence. Camões uses faith to interpret history and even to take sides with issues in history of ambiguous nature.

That Afonso I had to face defeat at Thessaly is history. But Camões can understand the downfall of such a great king by establishing a correlation between the event and faith: "Mas de Deus foi vingada em tempo breve: / Tanta veneração aos pais se deve!" (III: 33 ) and again, " Mas o alto Deus, que para longe guarda / O castigo daquele que o merece" (III:69). Similarly
Afonso I's victory at Guimarães is unconvincing through worldly wisdom, especially because of the fact that the number that fought at the King's side was so few even with the addition from the Spanish land. Hence Camões rationalizes, but with the principle of faith that "Não há peito tão alto e tão potente, / Que de desconfiança não se afrente, / Enquanto não conheça e claro veja / Que co'o braço dos seus Cristo peleja" (III: 109). Again Camões finds it difficult to comprehend how Afonso won the battle of Ourique (1139) with such a tiny army against a mammoth enemy force (III: 43). The crowning of King Afonso (III: 46) was historical; but history seemed to be difficult to be grasped without a vision which in turn is supplied by faith: "Ele, adorando quem lhe aparecia, / Na Fé todo inflamado assim gritava" (III: 45, emphasis added). In an identical fashion Portugal's coat of arms comes to combine history and faith (III: 53, 54).

Afonso I in his advanced years goes to battlefield again in order to rescue his son Sancho I from imprisonment. Again the victory of the Portuguese side seems to be unbelievable for Camões, for the soldiers that fought at the Portuguese side were so few in number. Camões refuses to attribute history to contingency, for he sings, "Que em casos tão estranhos claramente / Mais peleja o favor de Deus que a gente" (III: 82). Again at the battle of the River Salado (1340), the victory was beyond human comprehension because of the sheer 'size' (III: 111) of the enemy. Camões who believes that 'Christ was the comrade fighting at his side' (III: 109), thanks God along with the soldiers (III: 117). Similarly for the victory at the
Battle of Aljubarrota (1385), King João made pilgrimages to honour Him who awarded him the victory: “Com ofertas depois, e romarias, / As graças deu a quem lhe deu vitória.” (IV: 45).

Camões depicts the sailors to be inspired by such a conception of history before they embark on such a hazardous journey as to discover the sea route to India. Their attitude, though anticipated, is impressive, for they are now prepared to die for a Divine cause: “Aparelhamos a alma para a morte” (IV: 86), while on the shore, the onlookers, including the monks interceded for them: “De mil Religiosos diligentes, / Em procissão solene a Deus orando, / Para os batéis viemos caminhando” (IV: 88). It is clear that Camões writes the epic story of the Portuguese feats, clothed in the garb of faith. In this sense, da Gama in the poem projects, in fact, the faith of his creator Camões, as he prays to God to deliver him from the greatest nightmare in the voyage, the Cape of Storms personified here in the myth of Adamastor:

A Deus pedi que removesse os duros / Casos, que Adamastor contou futuros”” (V: 60).

The poem itself is a replica for how the objective of the Portuguese enterprise is conceived by many readers as their diverse responses - from faith to commerce- were made to the epic. The poem has already been attempted the nomenclature of “commercial epic” by William C. Atkinson (1952). However, the original Portuguese project as understood by Camões, attempted its hand at preaching the faith, though the commercial interest was its ostensible objective. For instance, Camões goes on to describe the nature
of God he believes in, rather theologically. Describing the arrival of the fleet at the mouth of river, between Santa Cruz and Sofala, Camões sings the glory of the Triune God, “No qual Rei outros três há juntamente” (V: 68). As he concludes the narration of his voyage to the King of Malindi, da Gama preaches his God, by way of acknowledging God’s providence throughout the voyage, to whom the credit of the success should be entirely attributed (V: 85). Yet another aspect of Christian faith – God as the final arbiter and last resource - is proclaimed through the character, Magriço, in Veloso’s story: “E quando caso for que eu impedido / Por quem das cousas é última linha” (VI: 55).

It is again the particular vision of history that compels Camões to transform the historical individuals into types or universal figures. Da Gama in his poetry is eager to preach the truth of Providence. In the words of Thomas R. Hart, “It is quite appropriate that Camões should speak of ‘Vasco da Gama.../ A quem Fortuna sempre favorece’(I, 44, a, d) since an essential part of Gama’s mission is to spread knowledge of the true God in Asia: history is the accomplishment of God’s will on earth” (93).

Deep at the centre of Camões’s faith is the conviction that man is just a bundle of fears and uncertainties (VI: 80). His only recourse, Camões thinks, is to make ardent prayers to one’s Creator. This is the situation of Vasco da Gama, as Camões imagines it in the last lap of the voyage (VI: 80). God does not answer him in words, which does not alarm da Gama, anyway. Since his God is Providence, he knows that God executes his will rather than
directly answers him in words. The faith nourishes da Gama as the protagonist in the epic, in proportion to its feeding of Camões’s conception of history. Very soon, the destination is spotted (VI: 92), and da Gama, kneels down to offer thanksgiving to God: “Os geolhos no chão, as mãos ao céu, / A mercê grande a Deus agradeceu / As graças a Deus dava, e razão tinha” (VI: 93, 94).

It shall be inferred, therefore, that (Catholic) Faith formed the essential part Camões’s conception of history because the composition of the epic was done at a time when Reformation was splitting Christendom and Camões chose to position himself on the side of the ‘official’ church. In the self-conscious stanzas in Canto VII: 2–14, he directly addresses the heirs of Lusus (VII: 2) and exhorts them to remain in ‘Christ’s fold’ (VII: 2) against not only the infidels, but also the Germans who revolted against Peter’s fold (VII: 4). In the subsequent stanzas he lashes against the protestant Kings of England (Henry VIII) and France (Francis I). Camões visualizes that it is the destiny of Portugal’s history to defend faith, as if Camões sees the need for redeeming the conception of Portugal’s history itself through faith. It is remarkable that he positions some thirteen stanzas of invocation that contains the document of such a conception between the spotting of Calicut and the preparation of the sailors to disembark on its shores. He concludes his invocation by proclaiming that the little land of Portugal will remain faithful to Christ: “Não faltarão Cristãos atrevimentos / Nesta pequena casa Lusitana” (VII: 14).
The implication is rather too clear: the overseas empire is made an offering, not to Portugal (as later viceroys and kings read the event) but lent to the Christ’s Fold (VII: 2), the Holy Catholic church. For, what Camões would like to see the Portuguese bringing to the new continent is primarily Christian faith: “Onde vêm semear de Cristo a lei, / E dar novo costume e novo Rei” (VII: 15). Therefore, the purpose of the Portuguese endeavour is clearly stated, as soon as they made the landfall at Calicut, in the words of the Portuguese envoy addressed to the Tunisian Muslim Monsayeed: “Vimos buscar do Indo a grão corrente, / Por onde a Lei divina se acrescente” (VII: 25). Such a purpose is logically derived, for the voyage itself has been interpreted as God’s doing (VII: 31).

Proclamation of faith continues even while Paulo da Gama interprets the banner paintings of the fleet to Catual. The narration is peopled with Portuguese heroes who, in times of crises, invoked the Blessed Trinity, relying wholly on God so that, as Camões is deemed to be professing, the entire Portuguese history is a miracle, wrought by God and not by human hand (VIII: 24). Thus, though the miraculous escape of da Gama and his fleet could be attributed, among various other factors, to the timely alert sounded by Monsayeed, Camões sees in it nothing but God’s intervention (IX: 5). Similarly, the wars fought in Os Lusíadas could be seen as wars fought in the name of faith. A mere example is the battle Duarte Pacheco Pereira waged to defend Cochin against the combined forces of Calicut, Beypore, Tannur and Cannanore: it was rather a battle of faiths (X: 14). Similarly, in nymph’s song
narrating the post-Gama history, God’s inscrutable wisdom (X:29) and His inscrutable judgments (X: 38) continue to be highlighted, for God has a purpose, as Camões would like to see, for it is God who fights for His Church (X: 40). Even Tethys, the mythological goddess, as she begins to grant da Gama a vision of the universe, attributes its power and glory to the only one God (X: 80).

Since history itself is viewed by Camões as a miracle, he encounters no difficulty in presenting Saint Thomas’s missionary activity in India as history, as miracles were believed to be part of his mission (X: 108–119). As ‘the greatest miracle of all’ (X: 114) is worked, the King himself is baptized whereby the original and the most authentic purpose of Portuguese empire expansion is fulfilled. As Fernando Castelo-Branco observes, the miraculous is part of the providencialismo – the system of attributing everything to divine intervention or Providence (“A Visão”. 120). Thus, the histories of D. Afonso Henriques, the vision of Bispo D. Mateus, etc. are shrouded in miracles. The purpose of Camões was to show that history is not the making of men but something ordained from heaven. As Camões sings,

Ser isto ordenação dos céus divina,
Por sinais muito claros se mostrou,
Quando em Évora a voz de uma menina,
Ante tempo falando o nomeou;
E como cousa enfim que o Céu destina,
No berço o corpo e a voz alevantou:
So one of the purpose of including miracles in historical narration, as far as Camões is concerned, is to convey the idea that history is concerned with human activity, but it is fulfilled only when it is ordained by the Heavens. The idea is again reflected in the prayer of Tethys where she asks the Portuguese to go and preach the faith, following the example of St. Thomas (X: 118,119). Camões also reminds his King what kind of priests and the courtiers should make the history of Portugal in future (X: 150, 151)

It is equally remarkable that a pagan mythology which runs parallel to Camões’s faith, is also used to define the nature and boundaries of history the poet is attempting. Mercury who for instance, in the first canto itself describes Jove, his “Father... Omnipotence” (I: 40) and as the creator of everything, entrusts the Portuguese to the providence of the God-Head (I: 38). As soon as the Portuguese decided to venture into the sea in search of a sea route to India, a debate of gods takes place at Mount Olympus. The venture is flagged off by Jove and will be supported by Venus. But Bacchus puts up the opposition; he is the god of wine and is supposedly the enemy of Christian faith as he is considered the lord of pagan world. He opposes the Portuguese because he is afraid that he will lose his shrines in India (I: 30). It is clear from the perspective of Bacchus what Camões thinks of the Indian peninsula and how the poet ratifies the Portuguese action (I: 31). Thus, for Camões, Bacchus represents metaphysically all the obstacles of one kind or
the other, the Portuguese had to surmount. The pagan mythology in *Os Lusiadas*, according to Norwood H. Andrews, Jr., provides the allegorical form to the historical narrative of Camões. Speaking on the rhetorical meaning of Bacchus, Andrews, Jr. states:

> If a conceit like the one involving Venus were posited for Bacchus, something on this order would result: *O filho de Luso que Baco odeia.* Bearing in mind the role played by Bacchus, such a phrase becomes the minimal expression of the difficulties faced by the voyagers. It means, simply, ‘the Portuguese who underwent hardships on their way to India.’ Just like the concept of Lusus as the sire of the Portuguese, the god and his hatred are pure rhetoric. (76)

Bacchus can be said to represent the old world that is passing – an old world afraid, self-reflexively, of losing glory and fame. In this sense, Bacchus is not afraid of the Portuguese adventures; his fear is that he would lose his place in the ‘epic’, which means that he would lose fame and immortality (I: 32). In the words of Andrews, Jr.,

> Bacchus opposes the voyage of discovery from the outset because he is afraid it will dwarf his own glory. It is important to note, however, that his fear is not based specifically upon the deeds which the Portuguese will perform, but rather upon the fact that those deeds will come to replace his own as the subject of heroic verse, the stuff of epics. (80)
Thus the Muslims were only toys in the hands of Bacchus: as the evil god declares, (I: 76). The deceptive Muslim whom the fleet encounters in Mozambique Island is only Bacchus in disguise (I: 77).

Thus, as much as the destiny of the Portuguese endeavour had been predetermined in the wisdom of the Providence, the obstacles had also been prearranged by evil forces. As in the case of the Mozambique Muslim, it is Bacchus who comes in disguise to mislead the Portuguese (I: 104). Thus, in a sense, Camões acquits the Africans as well as the Indians from having a direct role in jeopardizing the Portuguese ventures. Bacchus who knows that one of the purposes of the Portuguese voyage was to meet the Christians of Prester John, somewhere in the African continent, disguises himself as a Christian at Mombasa (II: 10). Thus a blunder the Portuguese possibly might have almost committed could be explained away. As they near the Malabar Coast there is again an assembly of gods – this time at the underwater palace of Neptune. Bacchus is the sole speaker in persuading the underwater gods to conjure a hurricane in order to destroy the fleet once and for all (VI: 32). However, the divine design succeeds and the Portuguese arrive at the destination. But Bacchus continues to stir up many an adverse factor against the explorers. Camões thus discovers a transcendent and metaphysical means of explaining away various hindrances the Portuguese had to face at Malabar. Behind all these were the machinations of Bacchus. It is he alone that insinuated many anti-Portuguese conspiracies. His appearance in a dream to a Muslim priest is only an example (VIII: 47). To sum up the metaphysical
role of Bacchus in Camões's conception of history: "E porque das insídias do odioso / Baco foram na Índia molestados" (IX: 39), and it was, as if, the god-given right or responsibility of the Lusitanians to liberate, "As províncias que entre um e o outro rio / Vês, com várias nações, são infinitas: / Um reino Mahometa, outro Gentio, / A quem tem o Demónio leis escritas" (X: 108).

Mythology was perhaps inevitable as Camões found it also as essential part of Virgil, Ovid and others, in creating epics. Venus, for instance, who supports and guards the Portuguese is also the patron of Virgil's Aeneas just as the assembly of gods in Os Lusiadas closely resembles the divine council in Ovid's Metamorphoses (i: 168–85). The Roman Venus's particular interest in the Portuguese could also imply that the Portuguese are the great inheritors of Roman virtues. Compared to Bacchus, Venus represents the calm and peaceful features in nature (IX: 24). Thus, whenever the sailors faced obstacles or even occasions of ease, repose and happy denouement, Camões would like to relate it on a transcendent plane with the idea of involvement of Bacchus / Venus. Venus, above all is fascinated by the "Roman virtue" or spirit in them (I: 33). While a landfall in Mombasa meant a trap, they were carried off the shore by wind. Camões sees the situation poetically and metaphysically (II: 19). She pleads with her father Jove (II: 35–41) and her father assures her that in future the Portuguese would be able to establish an Eastern Empire (II: 52). Now Mercury is sent and the Captain is timely warned of the destruction that awaits him in Mombasa (II: 61–63). Later
when towards the end of their journey they faced hurricane, Venus and sea
nymphs appease the Titans, with natural involvement, with love (VI: 91).

Venus, thus, stands for the very inherent nature of epic poetry to
transcend the mundane. In the words of Andrews, Jr., Camões had stated that
the Portuguese language was “only corrupt Lain...[just as] João de Barros had
already defended his mother tongue on the same grounds” (Andrews, Jr., 82),
Camões must have been only happy to further the affinity of the Portuguese
language with Lain, by making it natural for his poetic imagination to
accommodate Venus “…to personify the pride of that part of the ancient
world which can find in the voyage of discovery and resultant imperium (sic)
the continuation and expansion of its own heroic achievements” (83). Thus, as
the voyage is accomplished and Bacchus loses his place in the immortal
world, the Portuguese become the subject of the epic – that is to say, subject
of fame and immortality. It is then logical for Venus to award the Portuguese
with the Ilha dos Amores / the Isle of Love, for the Portuguese deserve to be
treated as belonging to what Rome itself once upon a time stood for. For, the
Isle of Love, in the words of Andrews, Jr., “…is also plainly an allegory of
fame since it is the reward for ‘feitos grandes’ and ‘ousadia forte e famosa.’
On yet a deeper level, it is the symbolic achievement of that immortality with
which, in Camões’ eyes, the ancient poets endowed their characters from
Aeneas and Romulus to Jupiter himself” (83, emphasis addes).

The presence of pagan mythology in Os Lusíadas has always been an
issue of contention among various Camonians. Frank Pierce, in his article
“The Place of Mythology in *The Lusiads*” mentions only a handful of the critics like the 1572 censor of the Holy Office, Frei Bertholameu Ferreira, the great Spanish commentator Manoel Faria e Sousa, English translator William Julius Mickle, the English critic C. M. Bowra and the Portuguese scholar Hernãni Cidade who, according to Pierce, rightly understood the meaning of the pagan mythology in Camões’s work. The pagan mythology in *Os Lusiadas*, according to Pierce, is the vehicle of Christian scheme of formulating historical subject (99). If it is the very nature of poetry to be rhetorical and allegorical, then, the pagan mythology is easy to understand only as an allegory of Christian theology. Such vehicles, conceptions or worldviews are necessary for a meaningful or significant presentation of history to save it from being a mere dull presentation of facts. William Julius Mickle’s translation of the epic (1776), according to Mickle’s own letter addressed to the then-Prime Minister of Portugal, Marquês de Pombal (dated November 14, 1775), was done as a response to Voltaire’s adverse criticism against the placing of pagan mythology in Camões’s epic along with Christian faith on equal terms (Quintanilha, 1972, 68). As Julius Mickle states, elsewhere,

‘A truth of history is preserved, yet what is improper for the historian, the ministry of Heaven is employed, and the free spirit of poetry throws itself into fictions which make the whole appear as an effusion of prophetic fury, and not like a rigid detail of facts given under the sanction of witnesses’. (qtd. Pierce, 103)
In other words, in pagan mythology Camões found new symbols to offer special treatment of the issues he encountered in the history of Portugal as well as that of the voyage of da Gama. Moreover, for Camões and his contemporaries, as Hernâni Cidade observes, history had a special definition in which the miraculous was intrinsic to history. As Pierce quotes Cidade, "...este maravilhoso é o que se considerava intrínseco à historia, parte integrante da realidade que é a sua substância" (qtd. Pierce 107, emphasis added). This means that Os Lusiadas is not merely a symbolized history; on the other hand, the history in it may be understood as symbolizing something beyond itself. Such a transcendence points towards Christian faith against which the pagan mythology has only a subservient role to play. Thus, as Frank Pierce remarks, Bacchus represents the Devil in Christian faith while “Venus can be taken for the Virgin or the Spouse, that is, the Church or Religion” (ibid. 113). History thus conceived transcends the sphere of mere facts or the act of chronicling, and reaches out for the significance and the universal (with moral lessons). In other words, as Pierce observes, Camões “is telling another ‘history’, that of poetry, of which the pagan gods are just as much a part as they are no part of extrapoetic history” (112). Camões himself sings:

Ouvi, que não vereis com vãs façanhas,

Fantásticas, fingidas, mentirosas,

Louvar os vossos, como nas estranhas
Musas, de engrandecer-se desejosas:
As verdadeiras vossas são tamanhas,
Que excedem as sonhadas, fabulosas;
Que excedem Rodamonte, e o vão Rugeiro,
E Orlando, inda que fora verdadeiro. (I:11)

Roger M. Walker who objects to the allegorical reading of the poem merely in terms of Good and Evil, proposes an approach from the perspective of Plato’s theory of Ideas. He begins his essay, saying that “The fusion of classical myth with an orthodox Catholic view of history as the working out of God’s purpose has been fiercely attacked by some critics and ingeniously defended by others” (83). He thinks that a solution would be possible only if one turns the attention to Plato, but away from Virgil. He thinks that there is no doubt about the great extent of the Virgilian influence. But the question of how the Virgilian material should be used must have come to him from Plato. Walker who thinks that “Myth, like religion, is essentially a matter of belief”, maintains that the gods are not allegories but, as Camões himself sings in IX: 91, gods are “ideal perfections of humanity” or even “human beings who have been immortalized by fame because of their great deeds on earth” (86). Thus, according to Walker, “They also exist in their own right, independently of our human minds, which seems to put them nearer to Plato’s Forms than to the purely intellectual fabrications of allegory” (87).

There are three ways of mythical gods interacting in the affairs of men in the poem. They act independently of human beings as in the council of
gods, they intervene in their affairs but without their knowledge, as the intervention in preventing the Portuguese entering the harbour of Mombasa and lastly, there is a direct contact with them as in Ilha dos Amores, which according to Walker, is the climax of the poem. For, with it comes the Knowledge, a weltanschauung. In his words,

...it is nonetheless a fact that God never appears personally or intervenes directly in Os Lusiadas. ... . He is represented by Venus. His noblest creation, the Form of the Good. Man on earth can achieve knowledge only of this Form, not of God Himself, who is only revealed to man after death. ... . A more orthodox theological explanation might be to say that this knowledge is really grace which enables man to overcome the weaknesses in him through Original Sin.

(89)

Walker also notices that "...Gama's selection as a leader to his emergence as a fully qualified philosopher-ruler, on the lines set out in the Republic" goes well with "Gama's intense nationalism and love of his country [which] is also necessary feature of the philosopher-ruler" (91). He also thinks that the educational development of da Gama is parallel to the stages of 'illusion', 'opinion', 'reason', and 'intelligence' as described by Plato in his famous simile of the cave. Walker also justifies Camões's preference of Ptolemic conception of the universe rather than that of Copernicus, for Plato's theory presupposes a geocentric universe in which in tune with the Platonic
conception, "...Camões seems to see the world of mythology, the world of
Forms, as a bridge between God on the outside and man at the centre"(93).

Camões was of the stance that human toil deserves mundane as well
as heavenly rewards; one cannot wait solely for heavenly reward alone. The
idea is transferred into a mythical framework of the Isle of Love prepared by
Venus and her son Cupid. The sailors have a banquet of love, food and
singing granted by Tethys and other nymphs (IX: 18– X: 1-144). The
happiness of da Gama and the sailors on accomplishing honour and achieving
eternal fame could not better be conveyed than through such an allegorical
scheme.

Natural and human obstacles as well as favours are metaphysically
viewed through mythology in the poem. Resorting to a theological
conception of history, a similar transcendence – which is an essential nature
of artistic imagination – is achieved at the level of human choice exercised for
the sake of honourable deed and eternal reward which together shape history
in a theological conception. It is in this light, the adverse treatment meted out
to the category of the Muslim, has to be viewed. As Landeg White puts the
issue, "The most troublesome aspect of The Lusiadas to the modern reader
must surely be Camões’s treatment of Islam" (xviii). Reinforcing the
historically accumulated hate of the Portuguese against the Muslims, almost
all the problematic encounters of the fleet on the way to India are projected
to have something to do with the Muslims. The Mozambique Island gives
them a Muslim who was but proved to be a deceitful pilot (I: 94) and, at
Mombasa, the Muslims try to trap the Portuguese by disguising themselves as the Christians of Prester John (II: 10). As they reached Malabar the Muslim traders seem to have been provoked as they find that they had to face competition in trade from their traditional enemies; the Portuguese also seem to have felt the same. The Portuguese find it easy to attribute the source of their difficulties at Calicut to a possible Muslim conspiracy (VIII: 77). There was a strengthening of the suspicion as the Portuguese were tricked to be delayed as the Muslim traders on Malabar shore anticipated the arrival of a fleet “que viessem / De Meca as naus, que as suas desfizessem” (IX: 1).

However, the two most important factors that contributed to the realization of the voyage and a safe return from Malabar were Muslims. The Sultan of Malindi whom the Portuguese found honourable and kind (III: 130) and to whom da Gama gives a long oration on the history Portugal and the voyage, supplies them with a loyal pilot (VI: 5) without whom one cannot possibly imagine where the Portuguese would have landed instead of India. It is this Muslim pilot who identifies the Malabar coast for the Portuguese (VI: 92) (In the words of Landeg White, “Da Gama’s pilot was long reputed to have been Ahmed Iben Majid, the greatest Arab navigator of his day and author of numerous treatises on the Indian Ocean. He is now thought have retired in 1465”. p.245). It is again a Mohammedan from Tunicia speaking Spanish who acted the interpreter between the Portuguese and the Malabaris in Calicut (VII: 46; VIII: 1). It was Monsayeed himself who alerts da Gama against the Muslim traders who were already conspiring.
Portuguese (IX: 5, 515). He goes to Portugal with da Gama and becomes baptized (IX: 15).

Notwithstanding these Muslim factors that should have alleviated Camões’s choler against the Muslim world in Os Lusiadas, the adverse stance may have some remote historical reasons as well. Historically speaking, to quote Landeg White, “In the sixteenth century the Turkish Empire was Europe’s rival power. The crusades ended in catastrophe with the fall of Constantinople [Christian eastern capital] in 1453” (xviii). However, Landeg White speaks of many Christian decisive victories against the Muslims by the time of Camões’s writing. Moreover, by this time, Europeans themselves began to flock to Andalusia, “a centre of learning in all its branches” (xix). White continues to comment:

Even in this context, Camões’s hostility is disturbing. Muslims are consistently presented as astuto, falso, enganoso, malicioso, pérfido, sábio, sagaz, torpe and gentes infernais. The only fiel Muslim is Monsayeed from Morocco, who turns Christian after helping da Gama escape from Calicut. (xix)

White also adds saying that Camões’s labelling of all Muslims as Moors’ is suggestive adversely. Perhaps, as White implies to say, Camões was too self-conscious of belonging to a small and less powerful nation compared to many European as well as Arab countries. He, therefore, wanted to assert the superiority of his nation by the depiction of a negative image against the Muslim political power such as the Turkish Empire and against the
old Muslim intellectual power such as Andalusia, in order to make the nationhood of Portugal as aggrandized and dramatized as possible. However, history would speak for itself as to whether the extreme animosity against the Muslim cost the nation of Portugal too dearly. However, from another perspective one can see that what is projected is not Muslim hate but against such a milieu together with mythology, Camões’s faith is foregrounded. Thus, Camões’s Christian faith, metaphysical presentation of pagan myths and the historical background of Muslim hate together form the totality of Camões’s conception of history.

His conception of history is furthered by entirely an original myth Camões invented in the character of Adamastor (V: 39–61). Adamastor was invented in order to represent the greatest nightmare the navigators had once upon a time while rounding the Cape of Storms. The Portuguese sailors had reasons to be afraid of the Cape which was later named as Cape of Good Hope by João II. As V: 43 indicates, “Pedro Alvares Cabral was driven back from the Cape in 1500, with the loss of four ships, to become inadvertently [though one may add that such a version about Brazil’s discovery is strongly contended among historians] the discoverer of Brazil” (White, 244). And as V: 44 records, “Bartolomeu Dias, who first rounded the Cape in 1488, was aboard one of the ships[of Cabral] which foundered in 1500” (ibid.). There were many more misadventures and historical fates. According to critics, Adamastor represents two worlds. At one level, he divides the world with Eastern Ethiopia or Africa of fable (with Moses, Solomon, Sheba, myth of
Prester John etc.) on one side and Western Ethiopia, representing the savage, unexplored Africa on the other. They are divided, geographically, by the Sahara Desert in the North and by Cape of Storms in the South.

At another level Adamastor marks the boundary between the known and the unknown for he describes himself, "Eu sou aquele oculto e grande Cabo, / A quem chamais vós outros Tormentório, / Que nunca a Ptolomeu, Pompónio, Estrabo, / Plínio, e quantos passaram, fui notório. / Aqui toda a Africana costa acabo" (V: 50), and his curse is that since he is not prepared for honourable deeds (V: 52), he is always barred from the pleasure of knowledge (V: 59). In the words of Landeg White, "As The Lusiads opens, with the navigators already in the Mozambique Channel, the Cape of Storms has come to mark the boundary between the known Africa of the west coast and the unknown Africa bordering the India ocean. Adamastor charges the Portuguese with breaching 'what is forbidden', desecrating 'Natures' secrets', a charge rich in meaning to the Renaissance reader" (xvii, emphasis added).

Landeg White also notices that "Everything Venus and Bacchus do subsequently is confined to Africa and India..." (xvii). As Frank Pierce notices, there are critics like Faria e Sousa who identify Adamastor with Mahomet or Mohammedanism (116). However, Pierce regards Adamastor as allegory of evil and the impossible; integrated to the Camonian vision of history, the giant seems represents a particular historical reality. In the words of Pierce,
Camões has conceived Adamastor as a pure personification which, because it is irreducible and can withstand other figurative accretions, remains *unchangeable* for all generations...he exists in 'history' in a way *impossible* for them. Adamastor allegorizes simply as *Evil* in some form and does not require to be allegorized away. (116, emphasis added)

Adamastor, according to Clementine C. Rabassa, represents a historical reality that had inevitably to be subdued by the modernity of the Renaissance spirit of exploration. As Rabassa remarks, “Although Adamastor’s genesis is the product of Camões’ imagination, he becomes rather substantial when he is transferred from the mythological plane to function as a *historical and geographic reality*” (203, emphasis added). In this sense, he stands for the immobility of medieval ideology and contributes to the unity of the poetic vision of the *Os Lusiadas*, by functioning as a conception in contradistinction to the principle of movement or ‘cynegetics’ that pervades the entire poem. Movement, chase or hunting which is the general binding principle of the poem, according to Rabassa, attains a climax with the various chases in the Isle of Love. It is in juxtaposition to immovable/immobile Adamastor, Isle of Love becomes a principle of irony which contributes to the organic and dynamic structure of the poem. In the words of Rabassa,

Anticipating this [the union of da Gama and Thetis] post-cynegetic state of *harmony* between mortals and divine beings is the ordered
confluence of earth and water on the Isle of Venus which is the antithesis of Adamastor’s *chaotic* ambience. ... . As opposed to a *barren* and solitary Cape that can only engender death and destruction, the Isle of Loves is *vital* and represents the source of *immortality*. (206, emphasis added)

Thus, both Adamastor and Isle of Love constitute two phases of history in the poetic vision of Camões – while Adamastor is a thing of past (with the successful crossing of the Cape by the Portuguese), the “mobile Isle of Love” is the poetic experience of a successful ‘dis-covering’ the Orient (Rabassa, 204)

Now, with the ‘discovery’ of India through a sea route, comes the ‘interval of joy’ (IX: 18) which is an allegorical *Isle of Love* prepared by a banquet, singing and love making with Tethys (who is also antithesis of Adamastor) and her companions. Isle of Love (IX: 18 – X: 1–144) is said to be a *synthesis* “between the physical and the intellectual, the sensual and the philosophical, the imaginative and the moral, the ‘Roman’ and the Christian visions of the world” (White, 252). The Isle of Love has been, perhaps, critically one of the most provocative elements in the epic. To cite a comparatively a recent response.

It is the revenge of the poet who, after ascertaining that the world is run by economy and technology, that success is the fruit of labor and the capacity to suffer, that the ideal requires, in order to be realized, not only sincere faith, but also talent and superior strength – at times with
recourse to cruelty and other reprehensible behavior [in fact, the writer alludes to “certain reprehensible actions of the Portuguese”, elsewhere, in the same article] – returns to the values of spirit and love when it’s time to reward the navigators and their captain. (Santos, 140)

Camões seems to believe in a sort of cause-effect (purposiveness) theory of history. According to such a conception of history human act has its effect or recompense. A meritorious act – which is a preparedness to die to safeguard honour will have reward in this world (Roman) and also in the world to come (Christian). Commenting on the meaning of the Isle of Love, Frank Pierce remarks: “The poet...explains, in an important passage (IX.89-95), that this scene is an allegory of reward and fame” (117, emphasis added). Elsewhere he continues to say: “By declaring that Tethys and Nereids are nothing but fictions, Camões puts a strain on the understanding, since he is also reducing or changing the reality of his historical figures by associating them with personifications of Reward and Fame (120, emphasis added). History has a purpose and a responsible human action is intentional: “last 4 lines IX: 17”. Since Camões makes a distinction throughout the work between faith and mythology, the Isle of Love signifies the material reward and recognition in this world: lines 5, 6, 7 of IX: 19. The Isle of Love is the creation of Venus and her son Cupid (IX: 20) though allegorically, the setting connotes the Christian recompense which is ‘fame’ and glory eternal. The Isle is not a place of “perverse desires” (IX: 29) as is the case with III: 100, VII: 53 and IX: 34. But in Venus’s words to her son, the metaphysical
synthesis of the worldly and the other-worldly purposiveness of history is connoted: "IX: 39", an idea which is reinforced in "last 2 lines, IX: 84. The poet himself states the allegorical meaning and true representativeness of the Isle of Love: "IX: 89". In the subsequent stanzas the poet speaks of the ways of channeling and orienting history / human action for the sake of "fame" in this world and "immortality" in the world to come (IX: 95). It is also remarkable that the subsequent history is looked at – through the song of the nymph (X: 6–74) and the vision of Tethys (X: 75–142) – from the vantage point of Isle of Love which signifies but the finality of human action / history. Man should make the choice not looking at future but looking from future. For, Camões has used pagan gods and goddesses not as active participants in history but only as elements of imagination and poetry, as Camões himself makes the point in CantoX:82. Therefore, the best way to categorize the poem is, perhaps, to see it as a kind of Christian conception of history. To quote Frank Pierce again,

Given the Christian concept of human history, any non-Christian supernatural can only find a place in the scheme of things as serving and subordinate element, not in its own right. Thus, Christian history is allegorized with the help of the pagan gods (as the censor of 1572 [Frei Bertholameu Ferreira] saw clearly)...as the rhetorical expressions of Providence, the forces Christian virtue and endeavor. (122, emphasis added)
Myron Malkiel Jirmounsky has pointed out that in comparison to Virgil, Ariosto, Tasso and others, Camões’s use of the pagan supernatural powers differ remarkably. Camões, according to him, is able to connect them to Christian faith sincerely and passionately (6). At the same time, Camões does not attach any transcendental value to the supernatural powers – meaning to say that these forces do not intervene human activity, but run equal to or parallel with the natural forces. The gods do not go beyond the natural. In other words, as Jirmounsky puts it, supernatural powers and pagan gods are not powerful in themselves, but are used to interpret history through Christian faith to which the pagan gods are made subservient in Camões’s art.

António José Saraiva who identifies the historical background of Camões’s use of mythology with the Renaissance ideal of man’s triumph over nature and human ignorance, goes even to the extent of thinking that it is not the historical characters but mythological gods who give life and unity to Os Lusiadas (53). Camões’s use of mythology is influenced by the medieval conception of nature which was believed to be guided not by external forces but by internal forces (“o universo está cheio de almas”) – such was part of medieval vision shared by minds like Saint Thomas Aquinas and Leibnitz. The Renaissance ideal demanded that man subdues nature, and every successful expedition showed that men become immortal while gods/nature become human/subdued. Thus, Camões’s use of mythology, according to Saraiva, helped the poet to glorify the spontaneity of the nature, an independent world where there are no contradictions, no opposition between body and soul (54).
*Os Lusiadas* certainly, presents the reader with history as is already seen in the earlier chapters. It is the particular nature of *Os Lusiadas* as a source of history that the work presents history through a mythical organization. In other words, myth is the major organizing principle of history in *Os Lusiadas*. The purpose is to give meaning or rather lasting significance / eternity to history. Mythical names and references are, therefore, a regular feature of *Os Lusiadas*. In III: 57, for instance, Lisbon is said to have been founded by 'Ulyssipo' (Latin), that is, Ulysses, and in just four stanzas (III: 140–143), there are about twenty mythical, biblical and historical names (with mythical dimensions) referred to.

The idea is to transform **history itself to the level of myth** or universal memory. This is a very important feature of history in *Os Lusiadas* that, while mythology is used to organize the history in the epic, history in it is itself presented in the garb of mythology, so that the historical events and figures assume a mythical dimension. The effect of such a poetic technique of fictionalizing history is that history becomes not something to be just recorded 'objectively', but a matter to be cherished in the memory. For instance, the tragic story of Inês de Castro which is told through many mythical characters (III: 131–135) assumes a mythical dimension. Paul Mazery thinks that in the first four Cantos, Camões evokes the origins and the initial history of Portugal, beginning from the first king, Afonso Henriques, ending with the beginning of the Portuguese expansion in Morocco and the Atlantic. However, he observes that, "Of these events **the most dramatic** is the crude murder of Inês de Castro, loved by Prince Pedro, at the hands of
Álvaro Gonçalves, Diogo Lopes Pacheco, and Pedro Coelho. When Pedro became king in 1357 he eventually killed those three in a savage manner” (14, emphasis added).

A similar method is adopted to describe and interpret the story of the execution of Rui Dias (III: 46–49). The purpose of Camões in writing Os Lusiadas is not just to document history but to give that history a form effecting lasting memory and eternal glory:

‘Queimou o sagrado templo de Diana,
Do subtil Tesifónio fabricado,
Heróstrato, por ser da gente humana
Conhecido no mundo e nomeado:
Se também com tais obras nos engana
O desejo de um nome avantajado.

_Mais razão há que queira eterna glória
Quem faz obras tão dignas de memória._’ (II: 113. emphasis added)

Thus there is hardly a historical person or an event that is not presented through some mythological equivalence. Canto X: 121–135 present ‘legends’ from various countries in the ancient world, African and European continents, of Ganges, and of Saint Thomas in India. Portugal, of course, is the subject of a grand narration in the epic, which is but impossible without the histories of the vanquished or other ‘inferior’ countries. In other words, Portugal can hardly be claimed as superseding other histories, in order to claim a subject position suppressing others. This is because, as António José Saraiva remarks, “...o poeta é superior ao herói, porque este e a sua história servem
principalmente para dar matéria ao poema” (54). In this sense, one can say that Camões gives primacy to poetry, and not to history, or rather a poetic presentation of history. The work was bound to offer, thus, readings of history or, histories, through the twin techniques the poet adopted in presenting history through mythology and, transforming history itself into a form of mythology.

It may also be remarked here that Medieval and Renaissance allegory does not necessarily demand one-to-one correspondence. The purpose, on the other hand, is to reinforce our understanding of the unity in the conception of history. For instance, as Landeg White remarks. “The debates on Mount Olympus and in Neptune’s underwater palace allow him [Camões] to emphasize the significance of da Gama’s achievement as a turning-point in human history…” (xvi). This means that, as Norwood H. Andrews, Jr. comments, what befits Camões’s work is an “allegorical interpretation of myths” (72). According to Andrews, Jr., Camões has not used pagan gods for actuality but to convey certain meanings and senses that meet the poetic and allegorical purpose, though critics like Bowra, think that “…Camões’ gods and goddesses are neither fictions nor allegories nor famous men and women of the past but celestial powers who in their several spheres carry out the commands and will of the Supreme Being” (73).

The idea that, mythology, especially the juxtaposition of pagan and Christian mythology, spoils the artistic unity of Camões’s epic is as old as Voltaires’ Essay on Epic Poetry (1727) where the French writer states, in the words of Monica Letzring. “that Os Lusiadas is defective because it lacks
unity ... because it mixes pagan and Christian machinery” (162-163). An answer to this objection may be found in William Julius Mickle, English translator of *Os Lusiadas* (1776 / 1778), who stressed on the allegorical dimension of the pagan mythology serving the Christian faith. To state Mickle’s position, quoting Letzring,

The mixing of machinery is justifiable, Mickle argues, since the pagan machinery is allegorical (and hadn’t the great epic poet Milton done the same thing?). The charge that the epic lacks unity Mickle answers by measuring the poem against the rules of Aristotle (via Bossu) and by comparing the poem, with classical epics, especially the *Aeneid*. In both cases *Os Lusiadas* passes the test: it fulfills all of the Aristotelian requirements, and it compares very well with the *Aeneid*. (163)

Indeed many readers of *Os Lusiadas* still follow the example of the great commentator on Camões, the Spanish Manoel *Faria e Sousa* in 1639 by interpreting the pagan mythology as vehicles of Christian mythology. Thus Jupiter signifies God and Venus guardian angel or Blessed Virgin etc. To Camões, faith is paramount. As for the pagan mythology, Camões himself pronounces its fate when the gods themselves are made to say that they are only the natural bodies and forces whose movement is possible only by the will of the Almighty Father (X: 90,91). Further, they proclaim that they serve merely to create delightful verses and it is the imagination of the reader that grants them a place in heaven. In the words of Tethys.

‘Aqui, só verdadeiros, gloriosos

Divos estão, porque eu, Saturno e Jano,
Júpiter, Juno, fomos fabulosos,
Fingidos de mortal e cego engano.
Só pera fazer versos deleitosos
Servimos; e, se mais o trato humano
Nos pode dar, é só que o nome nosso
Nestas estrelas pôs o engenho vosso.' (X: 82, emphasis added)

Dino F. Preti who in his article, "Camões e a Realidade Histórica" analyses the presence of chronicles in Canto II, makes the observation that the miraculous was part of Renaissance chroniclers in the court of D. João III. In spite of Renaissance rationalism, the Portuguese chroniclers still maintained a religious, moral and medieval conception of history. Among them, as Preti observes, João de Barros who emphasized the human element the most, could be termed even as an 'epic historian'. To quote Preti's words, "De início, sentimos em João de Barros, efetivamente, o historiador épico, preocupado em dar uma visão dos acontecimentos que nunca deixe de transparecer o alto valor humano, heróico do homens portugueses" (183, emphasis added). That is why, perhaps, Camões made maximum use of Barros. History of the Portuguese Renaissance still continued to be explained in terms of deus ex machina. The only possible exception was Damião de Goes and his refusal to interpret history in terms of the miraculous, suffered serious confrontation with the Inquisition (168-169). History, by itself, does not need to offer reasons and explanations.

By way of conclusion it may be pointed out that Vasco da Gama in the epic never explains the difficulties at sea or land as intervention of gods and
goddesses. As a modern reader knows, da Gama’s (and, by extension, the Portuguese empire’s) setbacks were due to different forms of commercial, bureaucratic and natural disasters, for a moral understanding of which, however, a poetic rendering of the same is indispensable. But, plotting a story out of history needs selection of facts to suit the shaping of verisimilitude. Camões created a verisimilitude of history with the help of pagan mythology and Christian faith among other things. In the process, history itself assumes the form of mythology and is converted into a transcendental conception of history with lessons for the future readers. Camões seems to insist on the mundane as well as eternal rewards for every honourable human action. His conception of history, therefore, is based on the need to exercise the will to choose (not for any self-interest, but) for the sake of the betterment of the society, for he believes that every responsible human action is purposed. Os Lusiadas, though is a work on the past, with its technique of narrating the past in the guise of a prophecy to be fulfilled in the future, calls the reader to look at the present not just from the past (as historians do), but more so, from the vantage point of future.