Chapter Six

Toru Dutt and Emily Dickinson - A Comparative Analysis

The sense of isolation present in the works of the two poets differs dramatically in its subjects and in its creed. In Toru Dutt, this sense is visible through her various literary forms of expressions. Her ballads, novels and translations, try to proclaim the universal evangel of perseverance and love that can triumph over Alienation and Death. They convey an idealism in the romanticism of her poetry. Emily Dickinson dealt with the universal themes of Love, Life, Death and Immortality. Her deep probing of these mysteries can only occur through her self-inflicted isolation. She gave no creed but only the joy of living life one day at a time. She had learned this through her many personal crisis that left her faint and exhausted at the age of fifty-six, in 1886, the year of her passing away.

I. Father Dominance

Toru Dutt and Emily Dickinson shared a deep and intense affection for their fathers. Govin Chunder Dutt and Edward Dickinson influenced Toru's and Emily's poetic career in two different ways. The love towards these men was at once possessive and humorous, yet the affection was always felt.

"Papa makes such funny couplets on me and my doings!" (Toru Dutt)

"I am sure you must have remembered that father had "become as little children," or you would never have dared send him a Christmas gift, for you know how he frowned upon Santa Claus, and all such prowling gentlemen" (Emily Dickinson)
In *The Tree of Life*, the affection and understanding between Toru and Govin Chunder Dutt is poignant.

"My hand was in my father's, and I felt
His presence near me. Thus we often past
In silence, hour by hour. What was the need
Of interchanging words when every thought
That in our hearts arose, was known to each,
And every pulse kept time?...."

The interdependence between the father and daughter is well expressed in these lines.

Poem 267 portray Edward Dickinson's effect upon his daughter and vice versa.

"Did we disobey Him?
Just one time!
Charged us to forget Him -
But we couldn't learn!

"Were Himself - such a Dunce -
What would we - do?
Love the dull lad - best -
Oh, wouldn't you?"
Edward is often the subject of mockery in Emily's poems. She laughs at his idiosyncrasies with good-natured venom and pathos.

George F Whicher argues that the cardinal nature of Edward and Emily Dickinson is one. "To Emily Dickinson her father was a cardinal fact................. His gods were her gods; his granite integrity was hers also.................. But defiance of her father was defiance of what was deepest in herself, an instinct of rightness that could not be denied. She could not fail him. So sure and unquestioning was her response that she could dally with playful indirections, teasing him, or more often teasing herself, by suggesting possibilities of waywardness that she might carry out if she chose - only she did not choose. .................If her father's life seemed stark and rigorous in its sacrificial effort to sustain for a little time the precarious order of humane living, it was her part to contribute grace and wit, lightness and diversion.................. With the passing of years her allegiance to him deepened to a profound, unspoken tenderness. She came to understand and respect him as her own soul.................."

To Toru Dutt, her father was the living guiding star behind all her literary ardour and also in the mundane pursuit of life. In her brief span of life, Toru achieved much and had a wider experience of life than her Bengali contemporaries. Her early education at home in Calcutta along with her brother Abju and Aru paved the way for a vast imbibing of all types of literature. Govin Chunder Dutt took her and Aru to Europe for a live experience with European culture and education. Back home in Calcutta, Govin faithfully and steadfastly accompanied her in the study of Sanskrit literature and was the gentle spirit behind all of Toru's learning and writing.
"Without papa I should never have known good poetry from bad, but he used to take such pains with us (though he never through it was trouble at all, but was only too glad to help and assist us in our readings) when we were quite little ones. He has himself a most discriminating mind, and is an excellent judge of poetry." 4

Emily Dickinson saw in her father Edward Dickinson, "a distant-stately lover -" (Poem 357) just as God is seen in the poem. In many of her poems God and Edward bear likeness to each other. The frugality in the supply of bread by God in poem 791 (God gave a loaf to every Bird -/But just a Crumb to me-) can be compared with Edward's least demonstrative ways of showing affection to his children.

Poem 1462 can be inferred even of the unforgiving intrusion of Edward Dickinson in Emily's life, intruding where he is least needed but evading where his presence is most required.

"We knew not that we were to live -
Nor when-we are to die -
Our ignorance - our cuirass is -
We wear Mortality
As lightly as an Option Gown
Till asked to take it off -
By his intrusion, God is known -
It is the same with Life."
The poem was written after the death of Edward, contemplating his deathless effort upon her and the death she experienced in the working of her imagination, in spite of the immense distance that had lain between her poetry and the character of Edward.

II. Self-Effacing Mother

Kshetramoni Mitter and Emily Norcross, the mother of Toru and Emily respectively, were quiet, placid, and meek women. But there stops the similarity. Mrs. Govin Chunder Dutt, Toru's mother had influenced the poet in a very poignant manner. The thought of taking up the study of Sanskrit literature after Toru's return to Calcutta, in itself speaks of the dormant love that lay in the innermost recesses of Toru's soul, once kindled earlier by her pious Hindu Mother. She gave it light and form in her crowning volume of poems, the Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan as the silent tribute to Mrs. Govin's story-telling that evoked in Toru an abiding love for her country's ancient heroes and heroines. The last stanza in Jogadhya Uma ("Absurd may be the tale I tell") is a poetic dedication of the whole volume to Mrs. Govin.

It was difficult for Mrs. Govin Chunder Dutt to accept Christianity, after living with the dramatic and vibrant Hindu legends and folktales for long. In her later years she practised the Christian virtues more ardently and also translated into Bengali the book called The Blood of Jesus. She survived her husband and children for sixteen years and became well known for her philanthropy and missionary zeal. Her active influence upon her children is well expressed in the ballads and legends. Through these Indian legends which bore traces of Biblical readings, Toru spoke of the universal themes of faithfulness (Savitri, Lakshman) duty (Sindhu, Buttoo, The Royal Ascetic and the Hind) faith (Prahlad), simplicity (Jogadhya Uma) and resignation (Sita). In all
these ideals Mrs. Govin's part in moulding Toru's consciousness is incomparable. Mrs Govin herself would have possessed the strength of character and noble virtues, to find strong expression of these ideals in her daughter's poetry.

Emily Norcross Dickinson did not directly affect Emily's poetic career. But it can be said that Emily's rebellious poetry voicing a woman's indignation must have sprung from observing the quiet, submissive nature of her mother. Her rejection of her corporeal self (Me from Myself - to banish - / Had I art - Poem 642), her pitiful lamenting of deprivation of food (God gave a Loaf to every Bird - /But just a Crumb - to- Me- Poem 791). (It would have starved a Gnat-/To live so small as I- Poem 612) pictures a paradoxically seeing and unseeing mother. When for the last ten years of her life she was an invalid, her daughter-poet religiously took care of Mrs. Dickinson. The regular attendance upon her mother mellowed the daughter's heart, for when she died, Emily was past the age of fifty. Poem 1562, written after the death of Mrs. Dickinson is filled with pathos and wisdom that came to Emily in the maturity of her genius.

"Her Losses make our Gains ashamed -
She bore Life's empty Pack
As gallantly as if the East
Were swinging at her Back.
Life's empty Pack is heaviest,
As every Porter knows-
In vain to punish Honey-
It only sweeter grows."
In death, Emily paid a fitting tribute to her mother, which she was unwilling to part with in life.

"To the bright east she flies,
Brothers of Paradise
Remit her home.
Without a change of wings,
Or Love's convenient things,
Enticed to come.

"Fashioning what she is
Fathoming what she was.
We deem we dream -
And that dissolves the days
Through which existence strays
Homeless at home." (1573)

Without ever directly influencing Emily's poetic career, strictly adhering to the puritan aspects of child rearing which involved the inculcation of strong piety and strict obedience in children, Mrs. Dickinson influenced Emily's poetry in a different way. Emily's whole body of poetry came into existence because she rejected the persona of a submissive wife and a self-effacing mother, which she found ample in her mother's character.
Cynthia Chaliff, in her article *Emily Dickinson As the Deprived Child* draws on the food imageries found in a number of poems (Poems 538, 874, 612, 637, 579) adding, "Emily Dickinson's autobiographical poetry reminds us that the materially comfortable child can be more deprived than the economically disadvantaged child, and that the most serious deprivation is not material but emotional ............ Emily Dickinson's sense of being unloved can be traced to her childhood relationship with her parents, the seminal relationship that becomes prototypical for future relationships. The recurrent equation of food, and occasionally warmth, with love that we shall see in her poetry links Dickinson's sense of deprivation with the early exclusive relationship that exists between a mother and child, the ideal relationship to the poet."  

III. Aru Dutt and Lavinia Dickinson

a. Aru Dutt

Toru Dutt and Emily Dickinson shared a close bond of friendship and understanding with their only sisters.

Through the untimely death of Aru Dutt, Toru not only lost her best friend and literary companion, but also began to get premonitions of her own end. This gave an urgency to her writings that gave it some inconsistencies and rough edges which would have been smoothened down had Time befriended the poet. Her French novel *Le Journal de Mademoiselle d'Arvers*, written presumably after the death of Aru reveals in the character of Marguerite some of the gentle traits of Aru.
"God take us into his protection!" she sighed. Such, from childhood had been her last prayer before sleeping. "Marguerite portrays some of the quiet, reserved traits of Aru, as expressed by Govin Chunder Dutt in his Prefatory Memoir - "It was ever thus that Aru walked under Toru's protection and guidance. The fostering wing of the younger was stretched forth from earliest childhood to protect the more gentle elder sister." 7

M. Adrien Desprez spoke about Le Journal. "It is a simple and touching narrative in which the writer has poured forth all the treasures of young and loving soul. Nothing can be simpler than this idyll, and yet nothing can be more fresh: nothing can be more chaste, and yet nothing more full of passion. It is a soul that we find here, a sympathetic soul which appeals to us like a sister." 6

Thus we find that Aru was a happy companion and a sad memory to the poet. Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan could have been her way of fulfilling the old love reserved for the romantic and ideal past of Hindu India, which could have been Aru's too. It was the younger sister's way of acknowledging the deep love the sisters shared for the poetic and pagan soul of the Indian race. Her consecrated Christian heart took in all ancient beauty and idyllic imagination of her old faith. She felt the influences of Aru till her own end in all her literary aspiration and fulfilment.

b. Lavinia Dickinson

"When she (Vinnie) sighs in earnest, Emily's throne will tremble, and she will need, both L---- and F----; but Vinnie "still prevails."" 9
Lavinia Dickinson, the younger sister of the poet took the burden of daily living upon herself which left the elder sister ample time to listen intently to her inner voice and feel acutely the pangs of nature and life around her to express beautifully words like "Spring is a happiness so beautiful, so unique, so unexpected, that I don't know what to do with my heart. I dare not take it, I dare not leave it - what do you advise?" 

Vinnie was not a literary companion to Emily, but was her support and protection from the outside world. Though Vinnie did not share her sister's poetic leanings, it was her untiring effort after Emily's death that brought the poems to the world. Lavinia became aware of the vast conglomeration of poetic pattern that her sister has woven only after her death. The reason lies in her own words regarding the Dickinson Homestead. "She (Emily) had to think - she was the only one of us who had that to do; Father believed; and mother loved; and Austin had Amherst; and I had the family to keep track off." In another instance Vinnie's truth seems remarkable that the Dickinson family lived like "friendly and absolute monarchs, each in his own domain." Thus Vinnie "prevailed" for Emily in life and in death. In Emily's latter day life, Vinnie made Emily's supernatural appear natural and the unfamiliar seem familiar. To Emily's flights of fancy, she was there to provide a resting-place on firm solid ground, when the bird of imagination returns. There was little place for Vinnie in Emily's poetry. Perhaps, in the few hours spent daily in her poetic workshop, Emily would have preferred to keep Vinnie out of her inner world. She might have feared that the thought of her practical and protective sister-guardian might bring her thoughts to dwell on her most hated subject - *households*. Perhaps the only poem where Lavinia is mentioned, she is given only a passing reference beside her sister-in-law Susan Dickinson, about whose virtues the poet extols in the lines.
"One Sister have I in our house,
And one, a hedge away.
There's only one recorded,
But both belong to me.
"One came the road that I came -
And wore my last year's gown -
---------------------" (Poem 14)

This early poem goes on to explain the importance of Susan in the life of Emily. The complexity of Vinnie's influence upon Emily and her poetry can be summed up in R B Sewall's words. "She (Vinnie) kept track of them, (family) surely, but she was more than the family watchdog or drudge. As Emily's closest associate for more than fifty years, she became indispensable to her in many ways, if not in the same way as Austin was. As a personality, she was indispensable to the family's solidarity. And in one final way she was indispensable to posterity. Her complete belief in Emily during her life was transferred to the poem after Emily died. Without that belief, which approached fanaticism, we might never have had them."  

IV. Friendships

Toru Dutt

a. Mary Martin

Toru Dutt's creative genius was influenced by two friendships in the early and latter stages of her life. Her acquaintance with Miss Mary E.R. Martin during her stay in Cambridge paved the way for a lasting and beau friendship.
Friendships that blossom across the continents are rare and that which lasts, even rarer. Between Toru and Mary there existed an empathy that cut across the barriers of colour, culture, customs and continents. It helped both the women to grow and blossom in their respective careers and we remember Toru for her singular genius that held forth against her short, tragic life. The fifty-three odd letters that survive between the years 1873 and 1877 speak of an inner growth and maturity of vision that was reached through the unrelenting correspondence between these two friendly souls that sped across the countries to speak of little daily joys and annoyances of life. The vast studies in literature that Toru dealt with in the quiet years in Calcutta, the oppression and loneliness that Toru felt deep inside under the alien rule and above all the stoical upholding of life in all its abundance find expression in these letters. The eager replies of Toru to Mary's letters and reading and re-reading its contents till the next missive of friendship arrives, occupied much of Toru's time, to go in futile search of more friendship in the streets of the capital that was strewn with the never-ending tug-o-war between the ruled and the rulers, the declining morals and the annoying superstitions among the Bengalis.

"I hope I shall be able to bring out another Sheaf, not gleaned in French but in Sanskrit Fields! If I succeed, then I shall follow your advice and sent two copies to Professor Max Muller and Monier Williams, respectively;" 14

A N Dwivedi responds thus, "She waged, her letters tell us, a heroic fight against the adverse circumstances, and when the end came she was quite ready for it......................... it is to be mentioned here that she, in her letters, is a tender-hearted little maid, merging into the woman, -
a woman still of tender heart and pure thought, but gifted with a keen insight to peer 'into the life of thing.'"  

b. Mademoiselle Clarisse Bader

There is something interesting in the pen-friendship that bloomed between Mlle. Clarisse Bader and Toru for relatively brief period of time. The cultural sensitivity which C G Jung spoke of in his On the Relation of Analytical Psychology to Poetic Art (where he uses the word 'archetype' to the various types of experiences in the lives of our ancient predecessors is inherited in the "collective unconscious" of the human race and finds expression in the myths, religion and literature of the time) was activated by Mlle. Clarisse Bader who successfully composed her Le Femme dans l'Indique Ancienne, extolling to the eyes of the intellectual world the noble virtues of woman of ancient India. To Toru's cosmopolitan mind, no amount of Christian training and faith would stop the flow of her romantic longing for the pagan idealism of her cultural heritage. So she wrote to Clarisse Bader who belonged to the country of her election, seeking permission to translate the work. Not only permission was granted, but a correspondence began that shows the nobility of pen-friendship. A brief correspondence survived where the last letter of Mlle. Clarisse touching the inner cores of a human soul; for Toru was taken away before it had reached Calcutta.

"Dear and Charming Indian Friend, - .................. What! can your illness have lessened in any degree the virility of the nature revealed in your portrait? Are those beautiful eyes full of fire, languishing? .................. What does it matter if, in the struggles where our only weapons are faith and charity, we feel sometimes the effect of fatigue, and physical suffering! .................. And I also, dear and interesting friend, I ask the Saviour to keep you
in the good health which no doubt he has already given you, and in making this prayer, I warmly embrace you. I enclose a little flower of my country. It is my favourite one and it is called *rhodanthe*. This pretty flower always appears to smile even when withered. I think that is in itself a true emblem of affection. The flower that I am sending you comes from my little private chapel. May it bring you a sweet benediction from the Saviour, as well as my faithful remembrance!

Mlle. Bader herself gives us a brief summing up of Toru's nature as seen through her letters. "Her letters revealed a frankness, sensibility, and charming goodness and simplicity, which endeared her to me, and showed me the native qualities of the Hindu woman developed and transformed by the Christian civilisation of Europe."  

No female companionship was possible for Toru in Bengal. Her own native Bengalis were delved in superstitions and deprived of education and freedom, entering into early matrimony, widowhood and its aftermath pains culminating in disease and death. As for her European counterparts, she believed that "there are no real English gentlemen or women in India" but those who sought the "yellow gold." A mind that was exposed to so much as that of our young poet's could hardly take in these wide chasms of dishonesty and lack of essential nobility in the society of pre-independent Bengal.

**Emily Dickinson**

Emily Dickinson's relationship with friends can be understood from the differences that exist in two singular odd statements made, one by the poet herself and the other by her well-known
literary mentor Thomas Wentworth Higginson. She wrote to Samuel Bowles, "My friends are my estate. Forgive me then the avarice to hoard them!" T W Higginson wrote home to his wife after his first encounter with Emily in 1870 that he had never been with anyone "who drained my nerve power so much............... I am glad not to live near her." He mentions further how without ever giving, she drew from him the power of genius or the power of the soul. Both Emily had in plenty Higginson’s superior ego must have prompted him to say so. He perfectly voiced the feelings of most of Emily’s friends. The difference that lies between these two statements is the difference that caused Emily’s physical withdrawal from her friends. It is impossible to assume that Emily’s keen mind did not become aware of Higginson’s attitude. Since Emily’s relationships with men and women went deep below the surface level of attending meetings or exchanging words, it can appear to many that they could not cope with being near her presence. Emily was unwilling to compromise.

The religious revival in Amherst during her latter teens also caused estrangement in her friendships. She found herself standing outside the ring as her close friends began to proclaim themselves for Christ and "change" which made her exclaims later, "I believe the love of God may be taught not to seem like bears." Ultimately she lived her life as expressed in poem 569.

"I reckon - when I count at all -
First - Poets - Then the Sun -
Then Summer - Then the Heaven of God -
And then - the List is done -

"But, looking back - the First so seems
To Comprehend the whole -

The Others look a needless Show -

So I write - Poets - All - "

In poem 1768 (Lad of Athens, faithful be/ to Thyself) and poem 1101 (Between the form of Life and Life/ The difference is as big) the poet's upholding of the mysteries of Life and its enjoyment supersedes its doctrines and forms which the puritans esteemed, at the peril of enjoying the good aspects of life. This is Emily's world of imagination that found expression in her poetry as she saw God and the fixed laws of nature so essential to the well being of the universe enacted in her mind. Herein lies the truth of her utterance that moved Mark Van Doren to say, "She was religious without a God-life as she lived it was mystery and consecration enough. She could not imagine anything greater, or for that matter more beautiful and terrible. She moved among presences of which her church said nothing, but which she knew as primitive people know their deities." 19

a. Early Friendships

The deaths of Sophia Holland, Leonard Humphrey and Benjamin Newton in the early years of Emily's life left indelible marks on her sensibility. She was fourteen when Sophia passed away and two years later, she still spoke to Abiah of "a fixed melancholy" that haunted her after Sophia's passing away. The death of Leonard Humphrey in 1851 gave her cause for pondering over loss and death. It was like a whiff of cool air when she made the acquaintance of Ben
Newton, referred to as her "gentle, yet grave preceptor." Soon after, in 1852, he died, leaving an "amethyst remembrance" in her hands to keep.

"I held a Jewel in my fingers -
And went to sleep -

I woke - and chid my honest fingers,
The Gem was gone -
And now, an Amethyst remembrance
Is all I own -"

Whicher adds, "Newton, then, was the first to put in words, a wish to which the secret bent of her nature responded with a thrill of high excitement, so that she never forgot that supreme concentration of her forces." 20

b. Later Friendships

From her early twenties Emily began to seek the friendship of older men whom she came to regard as her Master, Lover, Father, Literary Mentor and God. She saw all these personae in one man at once or each man was regarded as representing different persona. One man or more was deified by the poet all her life to fulfill her poetic urge. She never realised her affection or love for these men. She wrote to them her letters and made poems through her idolatry of them. The remarkable men who appealed to Emily's sensitivity were Charles Wadsworth, Samuel Bowles, Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Otis Phillips Lord.
1. Charles Wadsworth

"Tried always and condemned by thee
Permit me this reprieve
That dying I may earn the look
For which I cease to live." (Poem 1559)

Wadsworth was to her the beloved Clergyman, Shepherd and dearest earthly friend. He could have been also the Master and the Genie of her poetry. From 1854, the year she probably met Wadsworth till her own death in 1886, he remained the most influential man of her adult life, apart from her own father. Poem 1559 reveals the unmistakable virtue of Wadsworth who remained true to his set doctrines in life. He was one to whom duty was the guiding star that steered him through the straight path of life. Even a charming poet's (Emily Dickinson) soulful distress calls were kept subdued by this Philadelphia preacher.

It is to be understood that this clergyman friend's acquaintance and a few meetings in the course of thirty years were sufficient to ignite some of Emily's deep quest on Life, Death and Immortality and therefore produce poems that pondered and wondered at creation's mysteries. Her poems only answered partially her own quests and thus they remained all the way. She wrote to Charles H Clark, "................... thank you for the tidings of our other fugitive, whom to know was Life." 21

Wadsworth's sermons Emily must have listened to a few times and probably read his published volume of sermons, for some of her poems draw parallels from his preaching (Poems
In some, she personalises her situation to his thought as in poem 553 ("One Crucifixion is recorded - "). Here she explicit the Crucifixion of her emotional and spiritual self at the departure of Wadsworth to Calvary Church in San Francisco, which to Emily was a far off place in the conception of her imagination. A pun on the word crucifixion is exhibited here. (One Calvary - exhibited to stranger - .................. There's newer - nearer Crucifixion/ Than that - ")

Richard B Sewall puts it more convincingly, "Meanwhile, all we can say with confidence is that she needed someone all her life with whom she could share her spiritual problems and disbelief honestly and on her level - " to keep Believing nimble." And at a crucial point, the very time when their first meeting was most likely, she would have been especially susceptible to the kind of Christianity Wadsworth preached and to the kind of man he was." 22

2. Samuel Bowles

In 1863 Emily wrote to Bowles, "Since I have no sweet flower to send you, I enclose my heart. A little one, sunburnt, half broken sometimes, yet close as the spaniel to its friends." Ironically, she was not all that to Bowles. He with his world-wise intellect, travelling across the countries could hardly take in Emily's sentimentality. Nor was Emily, a poor broken body. Her affection for the Springfield editor, which turned into the love of a woman for a man, was lived with all its frustrations in the mind of the poet, to write her poems.

"I have no Life but this -
To lead it here -
Nor any Death - but lest
Dispelled from there -
Nor tie to Earths to come -
Nor Action new
Except through this extent
The love of you." (Poem 1398)

Judith Farr quotes the poem *Wild Nights* (Poem 249) adding "its theatrical opening spondees worthy of turbulence and storm, justifies Dickinson's heritage as an admirer of Emily Bronte and *Wuthering Heights*. The seas that separate or unite Charlotte Bronte's heroines and their masters also come to mind. Here is a scene reminiscent not only of the intensity of the Brontes' world but also of hundreds of dark canvases by the Hudson River and Luminist painters."24

3. T. W. Higginson

In June 8, 1862, Emily wrote to Higginson, "Your letter gave no drunkenness, because I tasted rum before. Domingo comes but once; yet I have had few pleasures so deep as your opinion, and if I tried to thank you, my tears would block my tongue."25 But whatever surgery the learned critic gave, Emily continued in her strain for the remaining quarter of the century. Higginson appears to be the last mentor she sought for poetic sympathy. Ben Newton was no more and Bowles' overcrowded mind could not reach her ethereal one. That Higginson too would be unsympathetic was a fact well known to Emily. But her correspondence continued with enclosed poems all through her life. She needed Higginson's practical approach to writing as a foil to her own twist of fancy.
"Best Gains - must have the Losses' Test -
To constitute them - Gains -" (Poem 684)

"Not "Revelation" - 'tis - that waits,
But our unfurnished eyes - " (Poem 685)

Emily furnished more philosophy of life than Higginson could analyse her poems. Addressing herself as his scholar for the most part, occasionally signing as your gnome and so on, Emily was posing to draw the man of letters' attention to her work and self. Soon Emily gave up all hope to publish during her lifetime, but she continued sending the critic some of her poems from the workshop of her all-encompassing solitude.

Higginson in his Preface to Poems by Emily Dickinson (1890) wrote "A recluse by temperament and habit, literally spending years without setting her foot beyond the doorsteps, and many more years during which her walks were strictly limited to her father's grounds, she habitually concealed her mind, like her person, from all but a very few friends;........." 26

4. Otis Phillips Lord

After the funeral service of Emily Dickinson was over and before the lid was put on the casket, Lavinia, the poet's sister had placed two heliotropes in the still hands of her sister 'to take to Judge Lord' who had passed away two years before the poet. Last but not the least rooted affection was for this respectable magistrate of Salem.
"Of God we ask one favor,
That we may be forgiven -
For what, he is presumed to know -
The Crime, from us, is hidden - " (Poem 1601)

Written in 1884, probably before the death of Lord, it is possible that Emily felt guilty of enshrining yet another deity in her heart. In life's autumn, she became attached to this elderly widower. Emily always needed a man in her life and all of them, except Lord, rejected her - Edward Dickinson, Charles Wadsworth, Samuel Bowles, T.W. Higginson. Poetic justice was done by her refusal of Lord's autumnal proposal.

R.B. Sewall quotes poem 1599 (Though the great Waters sleep) and poem 1623 (A World made penniless by that departure) and a few others (Poems 1633, 1632, 1638) adding "Her love for him was tonic and his influence invigoration, but she kept that both on this side of the idolatry she feared. In a way, every one of the major relationships in her life, with all they cost her in anguish or ecstasy, was not only a stimulus, involving each time a new and very personal Muse, but also a threat to her life as a poet, an invasion of the privacy without which she would not function. She weathered every one and continued on as a poet. She did the same with Lord."

V a. Toru Dutt – Spiritual Alienation

Toru was able to grasp the essential values of Christianity and held fast to them in her personal life. It was this trust in the Christian Salvation that helped Toru during her last years of
suffering and sickness. But her spirit had always listened to the romantic ancient songs and tales of her own country, which had its roots in her ancestry, and in her mother’s story telling. Thus she remained true to her conscious and unconscious mind and brought out her last tales found in *The Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan*. In these tales she has miraculously woven the essential truths of her new found faith which does not in any way mar the beauty of the pagan nature of the tales.

Note the Christian overtones in the poem *Savitri*.

"He for his deeds shall get his due
As I for mine; thus here each soul
Is its own friend if it pursue
The right, and run straight for the goal;"

"...................................., give me strength

My work appointed to fulfil,
That I may gain the crown at length
The gods give those who do their will."

b. Emily Dickinson - Alienation from the Religion of Doctrines

Born a Puritan, Emily rejected the asceticism in Puritanism early in life. She wrote to Abiah on a Sunday evening in 1852, "As I told you, it is Sunday today, so I find myself quite curtailed in the selection of subjects, being myself quite vain, and naturally adverting to many
worldly things, which would doubtless grieve and distress you: much more will I be restrained by
the fact that such stormy Sundays I always remain at home, and have not those opportunities for
hoarding up great truths which I would have otherwise." 28 She remained at home by choice and
none can intervene into her fiercely independent streak of wilfulness to do something.

As early as 1860, it is with this same anguish that she wrote,

"I shall know why - when Time is over -
And I have ceased to wonder why -
Christ will explain each separate anguish
In the fair schoolroom of the sky -

"He will tell me what "Peter" promised -
And I - for wonder at his woe -
I shall forget the drop of Anguish
That scalds me now - that scalds me now!" (Poem 193)

There were many forms of Anguish in her life and it is uncertain to know how many were
explained to her while below. Certainly she was a pupil who had a load of unexplained anguish to
take home to the fair schoolroom of the sky at the time of death, when she wrote to her Norcross
cousins "Little Cousins, - Called back.". She would not have recorded these words, if she had a
very oscillating conception of Salvation. It was a religion of doctrines that she abhorred and not
the religion of faith, which was her own. It was also not a lonesome faith. It is as pleasant as the feeling expressed in poem 1760.

"Elysium is as far as to
The very nearest Room
If in that Room a friend await
Felicity or Doom - "

Emily's withdrawal was from the world of doctrinal religion and not from the world of friendship which she treasured, as seen in the letters written to her friends.

VI. Death and Immortality

A sense of alienation or isolation is visible in the works of Toru Dutt and Emily Dickinson. In Emily this sense goes deeper just as her works are more extent and varied than Toru Dutt. Isolation in Toru's works is inevitable due to external factors more than internal ones. It is the reverse in Emily Dickinson.

Personal and religious factors (which have already been treated in the previous pages) contributed to a large extent, the feeling of estrangement in the two poets from the mainstream of society. Political, Social and Linguistic factors also scattered its way into the lives and works of these two poets.
Apart from the two domestic tragedies (the deaths of Abju and Aru), Toru Dutt's family supported and encouraged her literary leanings. *A Mon Pere*, the concluding sonnet in the *Sheaf* is a tribute to her father's loving encouragement. Kshetramoni Mitter's story-telling is remembered in the last stanza of the legend *Jogadhaya Uma* ("Absurd may be the tale I tell"). The French translations also bear touching resemblance of family life. Toru's choice of the poems was intensely personal. (Andre Theuriet's *A Mon Mere*). Her novel *Bianca* gives a beautiful pen-portrait ofGovin Chunder Dutt's character.

"Bianca, although younger, was so grave, so sedate, so womanly, so independent that he looked her as his Counsellor; sometimes even he would ask her advice in some important matter;"

Emily Dickinson's family members lived "like friendly and absolute monarchs" as a confederation of independent states. Living in the Homestead, without social life, she still had to conform and be the dutiful daughter of Edward Dickinson. The complexity and number of her poems was a secret till her death. To write poetry such as Emily wrote, she had to withdraw. Her womanly garb hid a mystic's heart. Alienation to Emily was self-inflicted and a necessary appendage to write her kind of poetry. Her resentment was established in poem like 724 where Edward's false mode of authority is transported to the creator of the Universe.

"It's easy to invent a Lie -
God does it - every Day -
Creation - but the Gambol
Of His Authority -

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"It's easy to efface it -
The thrifty Deity
Could scarce afford Eternity
To Spontaneity -

"The Perished Patterns murmur -
But His Perturbless Plan
Proceed - inserting Here - a Sun -
There - leaving out a Man -"

Here in this poem, Edward's fatherhood is likened to God's creation of the universe. Both are symbols of authority. According to Emily, creation is spontaneous, being so imperfect, just like Edward sailing through his college life, marriage, fatherhood and political leadership in his set pathway. He does not need the murmurs of those whom he hurts on the way, (like unheedding Emily's poetry) just like the perpetuity of Creation itself moves according to God's Perturbless Plan.

Toru Dutt and Emily Dickinson, though separated by the vast chasm of age, country, culture, language and faith, they share many similarities in their life and works.

While Emily Dickinson was obsessed with the themes of Death and Immortality that found ample expression in her poetry, Toru Dutt's working genius was overshadowed by premonitions of early death, which gave an urgency to her writings. As a result, her poetry has
many inconsistencies. Tom's belief in Immortality of the Soul through the salvation of Christ was unshaken, that helped her through her tragedies, loss and physical pain. Emily toyed continually with the idea of eternity, that her poems are full of Immortality's various aspects.

Death figures in many of Toru Dutt's writings. It was impossible for the poet to stop pondering over Death. Though it was not an obsession, as it was with the American poet, yet it followed her as a grim shadow, creeping into her works, which was her very essence of living.

Toru Dutt's earliest work *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* is the product of the writer's personal whims. The choice of subjects therefore reflects Toru's susceptibility to those factors that touched her life. F. de Gramont's *Sonnet -Freedom*, Josephin Soulay's *The Two Processions* speak of untimely death and reconciliation with death.

Emily's acquaintance with untimely death was felt at the loss of her childhood friends Sophia Holland, her "gentle, yet grave Preceptor " Benjamin Franklin Newton and her Academy Master Leonard Humphrey. She did not have a more intimate game with death as that of Toru. Yet, it was Emily who was fascinated by it and carried it to mystic heights in her poems. Poem 23 (*I had a crimson Robin *), Poem 148 (*All overgrown by cunning Moss*) speak of the untimely death of Ben Newton and Charlotte Bronte. Poem 990 treats of 'dying young', (*Not all die early, dying young*) and poem 1111 (*Some Wretched creature, saviour take*) is an invocation to postpone the arrival of death. In poem 1370, (*Gathered into the Earth,*) she speaks of Death's lonesome glory filled with Awe that is equivalent to God Himself.
Tom's novels *Bianca* and *Le Journal* also treat the themes of Death. Aru's early death moves like a sombre shadow over *Bianca* where the early chapters dwell on the death of Inez. Marguerite, the heroine of the French novel also dies young. The death of Aru had cast a shadow in these fragmentary tales.

In Tom's *Savitri*, Death holds court and is personified in God Yama. He comes gallantly and majestically to claim the soul of Satyavan. Moved by Savitri's genuine praise of Him, he releases Satyavan from the bond of Death and blesses Savitri. The God of Death is described as a gentle, grave being.

"His skin was dark as his face bronze;
Irradiate, and yet severe;
His eyes had much of love and grace,
But glowed so bright, they filled with fear -"

To Savitri, Death is also the supreme god who conquers human souls "by patience, kindness, mercy, love, and not by devastating wrath." (Savitri)

To Emily Dickinson, Death is a gentle courtier. In poem 1445 (*Death is the Supple Suitor*), Death is personified as the lover who at first *Stealthily woos* and then with successive hammer strokes, wins. In her famous poem *Because I could not stop for Death* - (712) Death is the *Civil gentleman* who waits and without haste, carries the soul away.

VII Social Alienation

While Toru's alienation from society was external, Emily's estrangement was internal. Neither form of isolation can be said to be fixed nor was it melancholy. In Europe Toru hardly
experienced any form of social isolation. She had her chosen friends like Mary Martin and acquaintances like Sir. Edward Ryan. It was in her own native Calcutta that isolation became prominent in Toru's life. Her poems *Savitri* and *Near Hastings* brings out Toru's nostalgia for the ancient Hindu society where "Fair India's daughters were not pent/In closed zenanas" (*Savitri*) and the kindness experienced in foreign countries (England and France) than in her own. The alien rule and the disparagement faced by Indians must have affected her sensibility.

Emily Dickinson rejected society because she could not conform. She was unwilling to compromise. Sewing Societies and Dainty Conventions bored her. The usual camaraderie of society like Commencements and Thanksgivings and social calls did not suit her analytical turn of mind that probed "to see into the life of things."

Her letters mention incidents where she exhibits a growing reluctance to attend church services, being conscious of herself. She once watched the arrival of the first train to Amherst, hiding behind a bush.

"I sat in Professor Tyler's woods and saw the train move off, and then came home again for fear somebody would see me or ask me how I did." 30

Toru's concern with Death lies in its inevitability of it early in her life. Her life was a careful preparation for its early arrival with hope and faith. She believed in the immortality of her soul and in the Christian Salvation. Her Christian concept of God and His unlimited mercy finds expression in *Prahlad* and *The Tree of Life*. Her faith remained unshaken and simple till her dying day.
Emily’s concept of Death was more complex and personal. It was an obsession all her life. She was curious about her friends’ last moments and was almost in love with Death. She tried to ravel and unravel its mysteries all through her life.

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