CHAPTER VI

R. PARTHASARATHY : THE RECOVERY OF
IDENTITY
Rough Passage is primarily devoted to an exploration of the quest of the protagonist through a geographic and interior landscape. The poem is composed of three parts entitled "Exile," "Trial," and "Homecoming." In terms of linguistic sensibility and imagistic vitality, Parthasarathy has journeyed from the British mode of image-making in most parts of "Exile" and "Trial" to the Tamil mode in "Homecoming" composed of the native allusional ligaments and images. "Homecoming" is saturated with the questing ardour for native roots. The congregation of relatives at the funeral rites, the protagonist's reminiscences clustering round his cousin Sundari, his father's recitation of Tamil hymns, his mother's turmeric days and a host of incidents and events in personal life, an unmistakable revelation of the protagonist's true identity as deriving from his native roots, crowd the final part of Rough Passage.

In spite of the long duration over which the parts were composed, the poet insists that it should be "considered and read as one poem." He thinks that in
the poem twenty years' writing has finally settled. The protagonist wears the mask of a cultural emigree in the first part "Exile." The motif of journey dominates the first part and the persona's passage to London, his journey across some cities of Central Asia, his sojourns at Bombay, Calcutta, Goa, Madras, and Delhi map his journey during the crucial phases of maturation from adolescence to manhood. In "Trial," the persona undertakes a journey into the inner realms of his experience as a lover. Shorn of the elusive sexual delights of youth, the ageing persona experiences the pain of bodily weaknesses like his "forty-five-year-old heart" and "myopic eyes." He stands as a symbolic relic of the erstwhile glory of what seemed to be an image of a lover at the zenith of ecstatic experience. In the third part, "Homecoming," the persona wears the mask of a nostalgic lover of the past, individual and cultural, for exploring the possibilities of earning a viable vision of life and for finding out the validity of one's native roots for achieving authenticity as a creative artist. G.N. Devy says that Rough Passage "considerably succeeds as a poem because of the authenticity with which it articu-
lates experience, and also because the poem creates, as it proceeds, standards for its evaluation."

Throughout, the overmastering metaphor of home is realized in a series of variants of home. The protagonist is primarily a quester, like any uprooted alien is apt to be. He is engaged in the task of attaining and belonging to a home where he is convinced that he can live at peace with himself. In search of such peace, he careers through a "rough passage" abroad where his glorious expectations of finding a heaven for himself have been dashed. At home, he is equally disillusioned, wandering as he does from place to place where the evils of urbanization and commercialization have ruptured the bond between the protagonist and the natural surroundings, between the individual that he is and the multitude of human beings around him lost in a mechanical tread. The protagonist turns into an introvertive seeker of the real source of his identity in terms of his relationship as a lover with his beloved. He explores the realm of his youthful romantic passion and expresses the bliss of love which seems to guarantee immortality to an otherwise trite and perishable experience. His precious feelings of love are so vividly registered in his inner consciousness that he recreates
his sensuous enjoyment of the pleasure of love in its original intensity. After the episode of rapturous passion of love, he realizes that his existence is fraught with all the frailties that creep over his body as he ages. The detached and objective spirit of a pure extrovert of the "Exile" part changes into an intensely personal and introvertive probe into the ardour of romantic love. Then, on realizing the non-utility of the exclusive self-consciousness of a lover, the persona tries to correlate the personal with the social, the private with the public, the individual with the communal, the intimate with the common. He realizes a redemption through a marriage between the two clashing strains in the third part, "Homecoming." He reconciles himself to the sanctity of the ordinariness of his life.

The protagonist repeats his passage thrice, varying the mode and manner of his quest for the definition of his true self in relation to the other. The ritualized repetition of an act gives it the mythicized aura of a religious rite. Parthasarathy postulates that in our time a writer is an "exile... who takes his language and homeland abroad with him,
or writes in a language other than his own. Exile is seen as a rite of passage he must go through before he earns the right to speak. The urge to quest after a viable definition of self is stirred in the protagonist of *Rough Passage* by his dissatisfaction with the present situation. It spurs him on to an eager pursuit for earning a convincing and really satisfying condition.

In the case of Parthasarathy we have the instance of a writer and an individual faced with the predicament of coming to terms with the ambiguous ambience of bilingualism and biculturalism. William Walsh speaks about the ability of Parthasarathy to illustrate "the clash of two civilizations" and also "the problem of writing poetry in a language different from one's own mother tongue." *Rough Passage* shows a remarkable adaptation of the English language to express the Indian temper. The finale of the poem contains a surprisingly revolutionary pronouncement about silence as the inevitable end of poetic effort. This, ironically, comes after the poet has succeeded in writing poems like "Homecoming 1," "Homecoming 3." William Walsh cites "Homecoming 1" as a living contradiction of
the poet's predicament. He commends the poem thus:

"Here is a poem in which he (Parthasarathy) speaks of this very predicament, but speaks of it with such inwardness and certainty as to abolish or make suspect the reality of the predicament he is describing." Parthasarathy, himself declares:

"Homecoming 3" about cousin Sundari is a Tamil poem written in English; in fact, the Tamil writer Asokamitran has done a very fine translation of this in Tamil, and few other sections from "Homecoming" have also been translated into Tamil and to my mind they read better in Tamil than even in English.

Parthasarathy feels that there is a point which transcends the problems of bilingualism. He says, "Apart from the experiences that we have been talking about in the state of bilingualism... there is a further point that ought to be talked about, namely the essential dissatisfaction with the tool of writing itself, with language; ... And all language, I think, reaches after the still centre of silence, when perhaps the need to write doesn't exist anymore." This conviction
is only an echo of what he put forward in his editorial introduction to *Ten Twentieth-Century Indian Poets.*

"Every poet sooner or later, suffers from aphasia or loss of poetic speech. Rather than let it happen un­expectedly, his poetry should from the beginning aspire to the condition of silence. A poem ought to, in effect, try to arrest the flow of language, to anaesthesia­tize it, to petrify it, to fossilize it." *8* After all the turmoil of the literary enterprise undertaken to chart the rough passage of his journey through different phases of his career, the speaker of the poem concludes:

> It's time I wrung the handkerchief of words dry. Dipped it in the perfume of silence. *9*

In terms of value realization, the speaker strikes us as an essentially ascetic and austere type of man who has overcome the temptations of settling down as a poet in England, of enjoying dizzy raptures of love, and writing poetry of clinical perfection. He confesses thus:

> However, there is no end to the deceptions I practise on myself.

("Homecoming 13," 60)
The ritualized repetition in *Rough Passage* of the speaker's efforts directed towards one end or another initiates him into the truth of the mystery behind the ocular phenomena. It makes him cast off what is unavailing and unworthy. Thereby his bare existence is enriched into a worthwhile life. As the persona repeatedly forages into the world of men and matters around him, he lights upon a correlation between fact and value. That is perhaps why he has taken recourse to repeating certain images and metaphors which get charged with newer meanings. Parthasarathy works on the connotational variations of the metaphor of passage which not only imply physical journey from one place to another but also movement and change from one state of mental and emotional attitude to time and space around him to another. The ruling metaphor, being passage, the protagonist is shown as a journeying observer in the mask of a cultural emigree in "Exile." Unable to escape from the colonial influence of the British Raj, the protagonist ends his journey with a resolution to impart quality to the other half of his quest during the rest of his life;
I must give quality to the other half. I've forfeited the embarrassing gift innocence in my scramble to be man.

("Exile 8," 25)

In keeping with the journey motif, the persona of "Trial" explores the realm of his romantic love with his beloved and seeks its values in the act of self-definition. He settles down in Madras and goes on a "private tour" as described in "Homecoming." Just as his native culture and language are in a state of neglect, he depicts how the cherished temple-cluster at Mamallapuram is no longer a place of sacred worship. The marvellous temple sculpture is now a source of passing attraction to the tourists. He learns from his lonely existence that he has been hunting after delusions. Now concrete reality engages his attention and reconciles his restless self to a melancholy realization of his status as an ordinary man.

Rough Passage is mainly devoted to the exploration of the protagonist to realize the ideal of settling down as an English poet. The poetic self of the protagonist quests for the discovery of a viable artistic
medium, while his secular self searches for a durable identity in the contexts of his relationships and roles as a son, father, and lonely human being. After an intense and feverish quest for self-definition, he settles down to the characteristically humble role of a pious Hindu. In his autobiographical poem, *Prelude*, Wordsworth has sought to unveil his "organically unified, developmental self." But modernist poets like James Joyce, W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot are seen to have presented a "dismantled version of the integral self." In *Rough Passage*, Parthasarathy writes about the significant portions of his adult life and the crucial stages in the development of his self. The central persona resembles the poet in many respects. In an explicit statement of his intention, Parthasarathy says, "...by and large *Rough Passage* maps out rigorously the course of an individual's autobiography. At the same time, it tries to shape that autobiography in terms of poetics.... I think the autobiography is kept rather low-key."12

In journeying in terms of the gropings of the fragmented selves, the protagonist guards himself against the emotional claptrap of a sentimentalist or against
the atrophying influence of intellectualism. At the obvious level, the poem maps out the journey of an individual growing up from adolescence to maturity. In an interview, Paniker asks Parthasarathy if "the spiritual aesthetic quest" forms a parallel movement to the time-space movement of the journey of the protagonist from his thirtieth year to his forty-fifth year. In reply, Parthasarathy says that in addition to the journey taking place across certain places, "the journey takes place within one's self, in one's own mind and it is this journey that one would like to map out with precision and rigour in an effort to understand oneself better, as an individual, as a human being." He continues, "if one looks back, one really floats around in the world, and what one tries to do is to gather together bits of one's self left around all over the places. So it's a kind of tightening up of one's self over the years, a truth which I would like to think, in my case, I probably try to arrive at through the use of words. And Rough Passage, in that sense, has perhaps a sort of spiritual dimension to it."

The first part "Exile" is cast in the form of an intimate and frank dialogue with the self. The
protagonist states his business quite clearly. Having arrived at his thirtieth year, he wants to attempt an honest self-evaluation. He does not yield to bouts of depression, cynicism or entertain any soaring ambition and exalted estimate of himself. He maintains a 'neutral tone' throughout. The false hopes and the miserable failures they engender accentuate the value of the niggardly vision of insight, earned at the end of his rough passage. The persona does not aim at a detail-by-detail account of his growth from his birth to a ripe age, but confines himself to the significant and quintessential. In his introspection, he hopes to be clear of the eddies of youthful passion. He wants to achieve a clear and objective idea of what he had been in the past and he has no use at all for self-exaggeration or self-exoneration. The dichotomy between the experiencing self and the object vanishes as the mirror and the image function almost interchangeably. With an open mind, he attempts to take stock of himself. What is a debit on the material side turns out to be a credit on the side of spiritual insight. The pattern of human life is essentially repetitive. Past mistakes recur and positive insights making for stable values may be found eluding the protagonist. These, together, constitute an individual's life in all its ordinariness.
As a man approaches thirty he may take stock of himself. Not that anything important happens.

("Exile 1," 13)

The task of taking stock of himself is not that simple for the persona. He is apt to be beset with the temptations of self-indulgence and self-glorification, or of self-denial, self-depreciation and self-abnegation. But the persona shows himself to be keen on getting at a self-image in all objectivity. The integrity of his self consists in his carrying on a relentless search for the core significance of the events and occurrences in his career. But experience reveals only the human tendency to commit mistakes. It is not always illuminating:

Experience doesn't always make for knowledge; you make the same mistakes.

("Exile 1," 13)

While evaluating the past experiences in terms of their contribution to the growth and development of his identity and self, the protagonist reveals himself to be an evolved and sober subject.
In the very first poem of "Exile," the protagonist introduces the theme of love. By frequent dramatic portrayals during the course of the poem, love gains in its potentiality for giving knowledge of the impermanence of bodily pleasures. There is a suggestion of the theme of love being extended from the personal domain to the national and cultural domain of the speaker. The protagonist, like the average Indian of his day, visualizes himself as an obsessive lover of all that is English. However sensuous and passionate his love for the English culture may be, the end of the British Raj has left the protagonist lonely and he observes:

... These many years

you warmed yourself at her hands.
The luminous pebbles of her body
stayed your feet, else you had overflowed

the banks, never reached shore.
The sides of the river swell
with the least pressure of her toes.

All night your hand has rested
on her left breast.
In the morning when she is gone

you will be alone like the stone benches.

("Exile 1," 13-14)
One major iterative symbol in the poem is the river. In the first poem of "Exile," it represents the flux of the protagonist's consciousness. One of the deepest pleasurable experiences of youth is love. At the obvious level, the love of the dramatic speaker has been warm enough, be it his love for his mistress or for the British civilization and culture. The clamour of the city drowns the whispers of his beloved. His sense of alienation is elaborated in terms of personal, linguistic, social, and cultural factors. The departure of the British after Indian independence has made the persona feel one image of the mirror dissolving:

All night your hand has rested on her left breast.
In the morning when she is gone you will be alone like the stone benches in the park, and would have forgotten her whispers in the noises of the city.

("Exile 1," 13-14)

The image of seeing oneself in a mirror and the mirror-image dissolving with every stirring reveals how the poet moves in the direction of a defining of the self in different contexts because,
Experience doesn't always make for knowledge.

("Exile 1," 13)

The protagonist exiles himself from home for a number of reasons. The main reason to go abroad is his obsessive love for British life, literature, civilization, and culture. Repelled by the defects of Indian society, and culture, as it were, Parthasarathy feels uprooted and observes thus in his confessional piece, "Whoring after English Gods": "Spiritually bankrupt and powerless to absorb the shocks of the twentieth century, India was a 'nation of sleepwalkers', its people sick in the mind and helpless. The nation had, I kept telling myself, lost its will to live."15

Under the spell of the English culture, the protagonist of the poem, Rough Passage, lands himself in London. Once in London, he is confronted with the question of language and identity and the inner conflict that arises from being brought up in two cultures. "Exile 2" unfolds the process of disenchantment of the protagonist whose ideal conception of English life is blown off. Under the characteristic English social
environment. The protagonist's linguistic and cultural alienation becomes visible under the English sky where he begins to feel that "language is a tree, (which) loses colour/under another sky." (15) As though a heavy burden is cast off, the persona feels light at the moment of his liberation. Once for all, he realizes that his fascination for the English language is totally misplaced. The protagonist has a surprising revelation that his love for "English gods" is only a "whoring" during his youth. This shocking revelation has something to teach him, an exile. His experience during his stay at London has given him a lesson about the withering and greying of his Tamil roots. It has now become urgent for him to return home.

You learn roots are deep.
That language is a tree, loses colour
under another sky.

("Exile 2," 15)

While recounting such "a classical case of cultural shock," he also says,

However, the most reassuring thing
about the past is that it happened.

("Exile 2," 15)
The past is irrevocable. The deflationary tone indicates a measure of humility and a despairing revelation. Immediately after this, the protagonist realizes that the ideal England of his dreams is totally different from the actual England. He undergoes a process of growing out of one fond illusion after another, and he goes through a rigorous exercise in self-education, self-discovery, and dissolution of the alienated self so as to recover his native identity.

London, the capital of England, offers the protagonist a series of symbolic sights and scenes which remind him of the lingering colonial hegemony. Scenes of squalor, continuing colonial arrogance, lack-lustre remnants of imperial glory reveal the quintessential London life. London life is evoked in an impressive series of still pictures of deserted streets, figures of unwashed children. The hollowness and bankruptcy of London is conveyed through the images of "lanes full of smoke and litter," "puddles of unwashed/English children," "Victoria... an old hag/shaking her invincible locks," the Thames clogging "the chariot wheels of Boadicea to stone," ("Exile 2", 15-16) The mythicized glory of the British supremacy in the popular imagination of its
colonial citizen stands exploded. In the light of his despair and disappointment, the protagonist sees the naked truth about the real England.

On the New Year Eve, the protagonist hears an old man whose remarks lend credibility and authenticity to his reaction to the colonial pride of the British Empire. The old man, obviously a stranger to the protagonist, is made to sum up for him the ugliness and the degradation at the heart of English life. Though the English, French, and Portuguese colonial rulers have retreated to their homes, their linguistic, cultural legacy persists in the consciousness of an average Indian. In spite of their fall, their colonial pride is very much the same. This pride stares him in the face. Earlier in "Exile 1," the city in his own country made him forget the whispers of his beloved. Now he becomes a little objective and more aware of the phenomenon of the city which has an impact on his consciousness, as evidenced by the greater clarity of the details he offers in "Exile 2":

The noises reappear,
of early trains, the milkman,
and the events of the day become
vocal in the newsboy.

("Exile 2," 16)

If on foreign soil, language as a tree withers and branches become "hoarse," at the level of everyday events the newsboy symbolizes vocality, and later in "Homecoming" the newspaper becomes a sacred article of faith.

... For scriptures
I therefore recommend

the humble newspaper, I find
my prayers occasionally answered there.

("Homecoming 14," 61)

Back home, the protagonist learns that the same sort of negative details of London are found in the life in Bombay. The city he has quarreled with and left in a fit of despair now becomes the object of his loving study. If the feelings of infatuation, alienation, and disappointment set the tone of the first two poems of "Exile," the slow budding into personalized warmth is seen in flashes in "Exile 3." We notice a sure ring of affirmation in the persona's tone. His lady
love confirms the effect of the real and quickening share of his new knowledge for the first time on his personality. The persona celebrates his renewal and awakening to life. "I had been around for thirty years, and felt literally burnt out. Only poetry offered a kind of knowledge I despaired of finding anywhere else: knowledge of oneself. At any rate, that is all I expect of it."17

And our bodies in the sand, as a full moon teased the Aegean. Across the seas a new knowledge, sudden and unobtrusive as first snow transforming the landscape, rinses speech, affirms the brown skin and the heart beating to a different rhythm. ('Querido,' she had said, 'whatever common things our love fed on you have changed.')

("Exile 3," 17)

The river Thames, once a symbol of purity and national life, is now seen to be a scene of gross vulgarity. The images of water recur in the form of quanats of Persia, the wells in the alleys of Madras which
"hiss" an old civilization, the sweet water of his beloved's flesh, the throat imaged as the well of his linguistic functionality, and the once-sacred river Vaikai, now reduced to a picture of negligence and disregard. The persona recreates his experiences of rivers, wells, and the first fall of snow in order to chart the course of the awakening of his self. Contraposed to these positive images, the persona makes use of the images of deadness, petrification, putrefaction, and, corruption of the vital sap of language and culture. Similarly, he employs the tree-metaphor in a wide variety of contexts. In London, when the persona has some sort of a culture shock, he expresses, in terms of the metaphor of the tree losing its colour, his realization that one's native language and culture undergo an unwholesome process of going grey. On his return home, he observes the trees laden with dust in Malabar Hill and hence the spring season has gone unnoticed. Typical of the sensibility of an exile, the protagonist visualizes the metaphors of vegetation in terms of their ageing and devitalization or the tan or hue they acquire. The protagonist notices how the natural verve of the spring season is shadowed by the artificial fountains of colour
in the park ("Exile 3," 18). "Exile 5" depicts the city caught up in the coils of smoke and thus presents a sense of suffocation. A consequence of this is the protagonist's disenchantment with the city which is a ghetto, suggesting racial segregation. The winding streets ("streets unwind like cobras/from a basket" "Exile 5", 20), the unfurling clouds communicate a picture of confusion. Amid this scene, the protagonist is confronted with the question of language and finds it no more than a noise. The hoarseness of the branches of the tree of the earlier section "Exile 2" now turns into a noise. In spite of the burst of spring season and the dawning of new knowledge, the persona finds that the "pelagic city" Bombay is immobile. He fails to establish communication which would have paved the way for a joyous participation with the other:

Like a hand at rest, the pelagic city
is immobile. Between us there is no commerce.

("Exile 3," 18)

The protagonist fails to strike or establish any meaningful relationship with his own beloved and with the city of Bombay. All the while, the roving eye has been
devouring every object and in the process comprehending its significance in keeping with the native tendency of the self to relate itself to anything that is apt to define and foster identity, and thereby put an end to the plaguing sense of void.

Even after the "rinsing" of speech, the persona does not arrive at the point of reciprocity with the city, the other. He is frustrated because of his inability to open up a dialogue between his self and the other. His twin pursuits of creative fulfilment on the linguistic level and resolution of the existential tensions on the personal level continue. In his endeavour to realize the harmony between himself and the world around, the protagonist stumbles upon things such as his experience of love, and his experience with language, culture, and creativity. The protagonist does not turn inward to seek a source of redemption and liberation from his own state of loneliness. He tries to dissolve his unease by seeking the experiences without in the hope of finding a sure source of comfort. He observes every phenomenological item with all the empathy at his command but misses the establishing of a loving bond with it. He is yet unable to internalize his new-won revelation that one
must turn to one's roots which are deep. Yet he feels that there is a chance of striking a bond of intimacy between his inner self and the outer world:

... I return to the city I had quarrelled with, a euphoric archipelago, to the hard embrace of its streets, its traffic of regulated affections, uneventful but welcome.

("Exile 4," 19)

As Ellman Crasnow remarks, "the task of the modern poet will be to concern himself with existential need of "finding what will suffice." Since this cannot be done by prescription, the need will be met by fiction; hence the artifice, 'the act of finding' becomes itself the focus of interest. Nor that interest is merely conceptual; for the artifice, also constitutes the literary object itself, 'The poem of the mind in the act of finding..."18 Hence the persona journeys from one Indian city to the other actuated by a concern for earning an insight. Thereby he hopes to earn a vision of life which ensures harmony between his self and his immediate environs.
Typical of a modern poet, Parthasarathy exhibits a concern to objectify the subjective and to define the psychology of everyday life, as Malcolm Bradbury suggests.

In striking a bond of mutuality between himself and the city, the persona has to order the diverse phenomena of the city into an intimate world of his own. Then only, can he shake off his frustration and dogging alienation. But his perceptual antennae receive only the indications of his alienation. The first poem of "Exile" shows his lady love as a flesh and blood personality. On her departure, the protagonist is left with an aching sense of loneliness:

All night your hand has rested on her left breast.
In the morning when she is gone

you will be alone like the stone benches in the park, and would have forgotten her whispers in the noises of the city.

("Exile 1," 13-14)

Something quite striking has happened to the persona in his assessment of the city of Bombay. What
was a dark silence except for the whispers of his beloved
drowned in the noises of the city is at present seen in
more vivid, eloquent detail. It is endowed with a person-
ality of its own expressed by a series of metaphorical
encodifications:

The city reels under the heavy load
of smoke. Its rickety legs break
wind, pneumatically, of course,
in the press of traffic.
The sun burns to cigarette ash.
Clouds hiccough, burp
from too much fume.

("Exile 5," 20)

The chaotic urban setting turns out to be an
objective correlative of the persona's predicament. The
city of Bombay, full of smoke and fume, is emblematic
of the mess of confusion. It is too sick to allow the
protagonist to assert his identity and consequently
define his self. In terms of the change evidenced in the
personality of the protagonist, the interaction between
him and the city becomes fruitful. The observing self
of the protagonist tries to apprehend the significance of the fragmentary chaos of city life and evaluate it in terms of the opportunities it holds for his own self-knowledge and self-definition. In terms of George Lukacs's observation, we witness a very intricate process of "inherent dialectic" in the mode of progress achieved from the initial stage towards the denouement in the poem.

With the change of the scene to Goa in "Exile 6," the landscape becomes articulate with the sea-gulls in the air, the boats heaving, "immaculate bells from hilltops/flagged with pale crosses," ("Exile 6," 21) and the statue of Camoens, the Portuguese poet, surrounded by a number of churches. When the protagonist stops to take a picture, he is struck by "a storm of churches." The post-colonial Goa is still under the influence of the Portuguese in terms of language and religious ethos. The protagonist realizes that the native element is totally supplanted by the dominant alien civilization. Dr. Vilas Sarang observes thus: "The constant play of metaphor which is the hallmark of his (Parthasarathy's) poetry, delights and surprises. The metaphors do not pretend to profundity, and are not used collectively for some wider statement. 'A storm of churches breaks about my eyes' is
only another refreshing way of saying that one sees a lot of churches in Goa." However, a "storm" of churches hints at the kind of picture of Bombay city visualized in "Exile 5" with the difference that a loosening of the knot in the throat enables the poet to achieve here a rinsing of speech and thus proceed in the direction of the unveiling of the self.

"Exile 7" depicts an old civilization hissing "in the alleys and wells." When the protagonist was in Goa, his eye was accosted by a storm of churches. In Madras, the persona faces the sickening prospect of a surfeit of religious emblems. "The eyes ache from feeding too much/on the ripe fruit of temples." ("Exile 7", 22) In ironic contrast, now cardboard-and-paper goddesses (naturally/high-breasted) look down on Mount Road ("Exile 7", 22) In the "Exile" poems the bewildering confusions of the city have always parallels in the language, reducing itself to a noise. In "Exile7," if the sea is "tired," the language seems "skimmed" and worn out and reduced to the state of a shadow. This is because "The hourglass of the Tamil mind/is replaced by the exact chronometer/of Europe." The use of the word 'wogs'
"Exile 7", 23) the British insult for foreigners, describes the poet's sense of his own alienation for which colonialism and Westernization are to blame. The "Exile" poems thus deal with a sense of alienation suffered abroad and at home. The references to language, occurring as a leitmotif in these poems, suggest the poet's twin pursuit of facing the problem and effects of colonialism and also the deterioration of language. In the evolution of the poetics of the self in Parthasarathy, the awareness of a tension between the two cultures begins to be noticed and it gives rise to the phenomenon of a study of the ecology of language.

In some respects, "Exile" foreshadows "Homecoming" and provides the necessary impetus to the movement of the poem as well as to the quest of the protagonist in a surer and more promising direction. Every human action is based on a presupposition of its inherent meaningfulness, at least to the subject. In terms of the imagery of the immersion of sacred ashes which marks the end of the temporal journey, the protagonist of the poem "Exile 8" refers to his endeavour to give quality to the other half of his life, by perhaps conducting his quest for meaning and for the recognition of his self not in the spirit of
"To-morrow to fresh woods, pastures new," but in the spirit of a return to the roots, to homecoming:

as I walk, my tongue hunchbacked with words, ...

... ...

I shall carry this wisdom to another city in the bone urn of my mind.

... ...

My life has come full circle: I am thirty

I must give quality to the other half. I've forfeited the embarrassing gift of innocence in my scramble to be man.

("Exile 8," 24)

All the previous scenes, incidents and events in the evolutionary history of a search for the self confer on the protagonist a determination to invest the other part of his life with quality. He attempts to achieve emotional integration with the life around him by forfeiting the embarrassing gift of innocence in his "scramble to be a man." In this discovery, he dispenses with the journey metaphors and enters upon a phase of according significance to trial and self-recognition through love. This enables the poet to recognize that
Nothing can really be dispensed with. The heart needs all.

("Exile 8," 24)
REFERENCES


7 R. Parthasarathy in "The Parthasarathy Passage: An Interview with the Poet," p.91.


