Rough Passage dwells on the question of language and identity and the crisis of the self that arises from being nurtured on two cultures. An attempt at understanding the role of this productive tension between two cultures in the construction of identity enables us to focus attention on the third and final part of Rough Passage which explores the phenomenon of returning to one's home. Fashioning one's self and being fashioned by family, the native language, and such other phenomena encountered in one's daily life constitute an inseparable intertwining, as Stephen Greenblatt's study Renaissance Self-Fashioning indicates. Self-fashioning in terms of the relations of heritage and its allied products in a particular society would cause an epiphany of identity to emerge. Self-fashioning, in a sense, is the expression of a craving for freedom and of selfhood. As Greenblatt says, "If there remained traces of free choice, the choice was among possibilities whose range was strictly delineated by the social and ideological system in force.... in our culture to abandon self-fashioning is to abandon the craving for freedom, and to let go of
one's stubborn hold upon selfhood, even selfhood conceived as a fiction, is to die."

Parthasarathy in "Homecoming," turns to the deposits of the native tradition in the shape of linguistic resources and cultural heritage. Failure and disenchantment notwithstanding, he explores with admirable tenacity what he considers to be a conscious attempt to come to terms with whatever is available and promising in the devitalized Tamil language and culture.

Rough Passage offers as much a graphing of national identity as the unfolding of the speaker's identity formed by some of the crucial tensions and conflicts in the course of his life. As a part of the quest for their identity, Indian poets in English like A.K. Ramanujan, Nissim Ezekiel, Arun Kolatkar, Dilip Chitre and Arvind Krishna Mehrotra have turned to their native cultural heritage. Thereby, they have explored the relevance of the past for the expression of their present crises and predicaments. Ramanujan's poem "A River" is not to be viewed simply as unfolding the humanistic self of the poet. The poet highlights the tragic reality of the loss of human and animal life in sharp contrast
to the romanticized version of the Vaikai river in floods appearing in conventional poetry. Thus an evoca-
tion of a river obtains in "A River" which contrasts the relative attitudes of the Tamil poets, old and new, to the sight of the river. In Ramanujan, a return to the roots happens to nurture in him his sense of irony, and through it a vision which recognizes the extent and acuteness of suffering.

In Parthasarathy's own words, Rough Passage is seen as his attempt to acclimatize the English language to his indigenous tradition:

In fact, the tenor of Rough Passage is explicit: to initiate a dialogue between myself and my Tamil past.... Above all, it attempts a redefinition of myself as a Tamil—what it means to be a Tamil after having whored after English gods. It likewise rips the mask of euphoria off the face of the Tamils to expose the sterility of their civilization which, since the twelfth century, had withdrawn into itself and, as a result, atrophied.²

"Homecoming" represents Parthasarathy's attempt to discover for himself the roots which enables him to establish
his identity. It mostly consists in his breaking loose from the shackles of a foreign tongue and acquiring the freedom necessary for his creative purposes through an acclimatization of the English language to an indigenous tradition. Instead of indulging in an ebullient celebration of his homecoming, Parthasarathy is critical in his evaluation of his rather incurable fascination for the English language which borders on slavery. He returns late to his native language and culture with his hunger for them still unassuaged.

As a leading Indian poet, Parthasarathy has tried to focus the attention of the fellow poets on the predicament of making the alien tongue express the urges, concerns, and aspirations that are peculiar to the Indian psyche. Ramanujan ranges over a variety of themes like the problem of identity, the relationship of the self with the other including family relationships, animal life and the metaphoric perceptions about the human condition they offer, religious beliefs, mythical values—all viewed in rational and sceptical terms. But he has not touched upon the issue of the viability of using the English language for expressing an essentially Indian sensibility. He has just contented himself with calling a spade
a spade and observes in reply to P. Lal's query, "I have no strong opinions on Indian writing in English. Buddha-deva Bose has strong opinions on why they should not; you are persuaded that they should. I think the real question is whether they can. And if they can, they will."

Nissim Ezekiel, in spite of his inability to completely identify himself with the Indian ethos because of his background, which makes him a "natural outsider," has committed himself to continue to write on Indian subjects in English. He has exploited his deep knowledge of the Indian milieu. Kamala Das is forthright in her appropriation of the resources of the English language to suit her individual talent and she does not have any use for the academic niceties of the predicament which Parthasarathy deals with. Parthasarathy is seriously concerned with the "erosion of sensibility" as typically demonstrated in Manmohan Ghose's case. As he mentions it in his essay "Indian English Verse: The Making of a Tradition," poetry before the dawn of Independence, barring a few exceptions, employed imagery not borrowed from the deposits of a common tradition and as such it was a poetry produced by an emasculated nation suffering from "colonialitis."

This concern of Parthasarathy reflects the integrity of his artistic self. He complains about the absence of an
indigenous tradition, for according to him, no Indian poet in English before Independence produced verse which was "authentically Indian in inspiration and was also, at the same time, artistically viable." He feels that "Not till the 1970's do we find an exceptional flowering of talent which has been actively engaged in a dialogue with the past with the express intention of discovering its own identity and establishing, once and for all, the relevance of Indian English verse to the literatures of India." From his foregoing statements, we gather that Parthasarathy is an artist trying his best to relate his Tamil consciousness in English language. The poem "Homecoming 3" has been acclaimed as a remarkable success in this direction.

In "Homecoming," the speaker is caught in a dilemma and is torn between his intellectual allegiance to an alien tongue and his emotional affinity with native roots. Unlike Madhusudan Dutt's exultant and unreserved affirmation of his linguistic and cultural roots in Bengali, Parthasarathy's predicament and its possible solution are not so simple and assured. Madhusudan Dutt celebrates his final return to Bengali in unequivocal terms. But Parthasarathy, in the explication of his
predicament, shows his genuine urgency. While the native language was more or less a revealed faith in its infinite creative possibilities to Madhusudan Dutt, Parthasarathy sees, with the help of his knowledge of the glorious Tamil heritage, the sterility of Tamil. As he did not feel at home with his own native language, he turns his back against it and goes to London in the fashion of a voluntary exile. Having dieted on the gritty ash of disillusionment, he returns home in the fashion of a penitent prodigal son. He realizes that his native language and culture are decadent beyond repair.

Parthasarathy's exiledom has only affirmed the fact that his hunger for the Dravidic tongue remains unassuaged. It is not as though he is suddenly waking up to the importance his language and culture as a source of his creative power. It seems he is of the opinion that language should be so pressed into use that it serves as a verbal ideograph in a literary piece. His native Tamil is in a decadent condition as the commercial cinema has worked out a mutation of its idiom. After whoring after English gods, Parthasarathy feels new to "the agglutinative touch" of the Tamil language wrenched from its sleep in the Kural verses. Parthasarathy describes his return to roots in "Homecoming 1" thus:
My tongue in English chains,
I return, after a generation, to you.

("Trial 1," 47)

The speaker in these lines feels that he is still enchained to the English language. But he feels equally restricted in the possibilities of the usable range of his native language. Freedom from the shackles of fascination for the alien language has not automatically opened up for him vistas of creativity in the native language. Parthasarathy makes a determined bid to sort out his experiences, iron out bristling contradictions, bridge the yawning gap between ideals and reality, identify the really satisfying and enduring, and stand steady in the face of the tension between language and identity. He raises the question of how representative is the Indian English verse of Indian literature and answers the question by saying that in the seventies a definite attempt has been made by the Indian poet in English to study the ecology of the language and to acclimatize the English language to the Indian soil and sentiments by bringing about a process of acculturation. In this context, he cites the example of Ramanujan's poetry and his own and the attempt therein to go back to the Indian roots and introduce a refinement of speech whereby the English language becomes an appropriate enough
vehicle for connoting the Indian experience. In this attempt, a poet like Parthasarathy searches for his roots in his cultural antiquity.

Ransack the cupboard

for skeletons of your Brahmin childhood
(the nights with Father droning
the Four Thousand as sleep

pinched your thighs blue). You may then, perhaps, strike out a line for yourself from the iron of life's ordinariness.

("Homecoming 2," 48)

"Homecoming 2" gives an account of the poet's engagement with the question of language and heritage. The impotence described therein may be owing to his whoring after English gods. It may also be owing to his acute sense of the decadence of his own language and culture. He is a helpless witness to the cadaverous state of his Tamil being mobbed by the fleas of the commercial cinema folk. The bull, Nammalvar took by the horns is now no more than a mere statue, no longer a monument of unageing intellect:

There is the language, for instance:
the bull, Nammalvar took by the horns,
is today an unrecognizable carcass,
quick with the fleas of Kodambakkam.

("Homecoming 2," 48)

It is beyond one's ability, as the persona of the poem visualizes it, to restore to Tamil its literary flavour. In his quest as an emigrant, as a lover, as a creative artist, and as a human being, the poet has faced failure and disappointment. But there is a noticeable change in the degree of expectation, in the reach and accessibility of the object, in the perceptions of the self, and in their direct utility for the subject, that is, the persona. Throughout "Exile," the persona sounds discreet in his relationship with the other and always remains distant and detached. This part of his rite of passage ends with a significant resolve on his part to "give quality to the other half of his life." In itself, the decision marks a change in the attitude of the speaker, and he is painfully aware of the loss of innocence in his unrelenting pursuit of certain ideals which he cannot translate into living realities. His failure makes him wiser. Next he explores the enchanting realm of his personal experience of love, looked upon as a source of
self-definition. Soon it brings to his mind the sad fact of his weakening and ageing body. The quest for literary and cultural moorings places the poet in a predicament which is given expression to in "Homecoming." The predicament of being placed between two traditions is in a sense reflected in "Trial" where the persona expresses the feeling that a leap across the "fences of reassuring arms" (39) might only lead to "a wreath of empty words" (39). And words are mere ripples "in the deep well of the throat." (39) As such, towards the end of " Trial," there is an acknowledgement of tensions and a recognition of the need to write poetry with a refinement of language whereby the past, which is the "unperfect stone" (43), is polished to a point. Parthasarathy can neither wholly accept nor renounce that English "forms a part of his intellectual, rational make-up, and the Tamil of his emotional psychic make-up." This is a predicament expressed with a sense of immediacy and inwardness which, in the words of William Walsh, "make(s) suspect the reality of the predicament he is describing." As Parthasarathy puts it unequivocally, the quest for roots leads him to realize that choosing one's own language for poetic creation is fraught with limitations due to poetic sterility suffered by the language on account of its use in the popular mass medium that the cinema is. So in his quest for tradition and
the renewal of the self through such a quest, Parthasarathy returns not to the native language in a state of linguistic sterility but to the English language which still holds his tongue in chains.

In "Homecoming," a ring of confidence can be easily heard and the desire to clinch the issues at stake becomes urgent. The persona of the poem gives a clear call to his fellow practitioners to preserve their native identity. As an artist, he has shed illusions about becoming an English poet and has earned the insight that his creative fulfilment is possible only in a modest measure. The images of water sources like river, canal, well climax in the deep well of the protagonist's throat and also in his cultural and linguistic past. Parthasarathy cites specific instances of Ramanujan, Arun Kolatkar and himself to show their attempts at making English articulate native concerns. He impresses us here that he has earned the right to speak:

How long can foreign poets provide the staple of your lines?
Turn inward. Scrape the bottom of your past.
Ransack the cupboard
for skeletons of your Brahmin childhood

... You may then, perhaps, strike out a line for yourself from the iron of life's ordinariness.

("Homecoming 2," 48)

The poem cited above illustrates two factors relating to the bilingual context of Parthasarathy's poetry. Parthasarathy does not seem to find the English language an effective mode of creative expression. The Tamil language for him is something of an "unrecognizable carcass." Like Ramanujan and Parthasarathy, Ezekiel, Keki Daruwalla and Kamala Das reject the context of anglicized India but do not show any evidence of tension in their use of English as the linguistic mode. But a harking back to the Tamil past, to the discovery of cultural roots, is on account of the creative writer's concern with the structuring of experience. As Sivaramakrishna points out, "the conflict between English/Tamil sensibilities perceptible in Parthasarathy's poetry is merely the tip of a complex aesthetic iceberg... If this extension is made one can further underscore the fact that in Parthasarathy's case it is not
that English is an alien auditory mode to express his deep rooted dravidic psyche; Tamil is equally ineffective. It is, therefore, the perception that language itself is an inadequate mode to structure experience that is the unifying impulse in Parthasarathy's poetry."\textsuperscript{11}

As Parthasarathy puts it, "'Homecoming' explores, after the tortuous labyrinths of solitude and disillusion, the sense of finally coming home. It attempts to communicate the burden of my Tamil and pan-Indian past."\textsuperscript{12}

In thus defining the nature of impediments to his success as a creative artist, Parthasarathy has come to terms with his Indian ambience. This enables him "to concentrate on the development of his self.\textsuperscript{13} One's private memories partake of one's cultural memory.

"Homecoming 3" is especially loaded with a reminiscential flavour. Here we have the striking instance of the writer's creative powers being "pickled in his language."\textsuperscript{14} The family reunion emphasizes Sundari's maturity to motherhood from her former state of a mere playmate of the speaker's childhood. This poem celebrates a typically South Indian, especially the Tamilian, congress of relatives. The speaker observes the fact that
his playmate, Sundari, "who had squirrelled up and down/ for­bidden tamarind trees." ("Homecoming 3," 49) has now sobered into a tall mother of three daughters who are seen "floating/like safe planets near her." ("Home­ coming 3," 49) Phrases like "rice-and-pickle afternoons" and pulling "familiar coconuts/out of the fire" ("Home­ coming 3," 49) evoke a typical South Indian atmosphere and show how the poet adapts the English language to a fine evocation of an essentially South Indian environment. Here the English language does not offer itself as a hindrance to the creation of an Indian flavour.

Parthasarathy's return to Madras, after a genera­tion, enables him to accentuate his memories of family ties and sense of spiritual values. "Homecoming 4" shows that the speaker has acquired a serene temperament from his father who, in turn, owes it to his unwavering adherence to his ancestral communal culture. The ritual fires erase the distinctive features of his father and sharpen his identity as the son of his father and define his own distinctive role as a father to his son. In a sense the poem traces the unifying impulses of heritage. The persona evokes the impact of his father's death on his existence. The navigational metaphor of compass in
the poem suggests the motif of continuity of tradition and the infinitude of journey:

I made myself an expert in farewells. An unexpected November shut the door in my face:

I crashed, a glasshouse hit by the stone of Father's death.

("Homecoming 4," 50)

Instead of losing himself in grief and falling a prey to sentimental adoration, the persona retains his sharpness of identity. He is even capable of a humorous observation about the stark fact of human mortality which is at once accurate and revealing. His positive attitude towards bereavement points out the dignity and majesty of his uncrushed spirit:

At the burning ghat

relations stood like exclamation points.
The fire stripped his unwary body of the last shred of family likeness.
I am my father now,

... ... ...

I shall follow. And after me,
my unborn son, through the eye of this needle
of forgetfulness.

("Homecoming 4," 50)

Even for striking out a line for himself from "the
iron of life's ordinariness," (48) the poet enters into a
dialogue with the past which defines the configurations
of the self's interactions with the social impulses and
the collective psyche. Linguistic predicament and cultural
continuities apart, the poet seeks to define his individu­
dual self which tends to lose itself after the fading out
of his near and dear ones from his private life. Once
he relates himself successfully to the cultural monuments
and influences, however decadent they are, he comes to
grips with the problem of defining his self.

Having lost interest in intimate persons and
objects, the persona of "Homecoming 6" becomes acutely
aware of his loneliness in his own home. So far, loss
has driven him from one state of failure and disappoint­
ment to another. He gains in spiritual resilience after
facing the turmoil of loneliness which has ironically become the badge of his identity. It is an irony of human life that men and objects, once dear and cherished, fade out of one's memory and the individual is left behind to bring himself in harmony with the urges of his own self:

Now that all the silver

at the back of faces I have loved
has worn off. Silent,
eyes saccadic, I stare at myself.

Often confront a stranger
in the scratched glass, older perhaps,
who resembles my father.

("Homecoming 6," 52)

The passage of time brings in its train attachments, involvements, and disappointments with a number of things. Yet the influence of father and mother persists in the attitudes of their descendants. The Mother's image in the persona's memory is composed of different associations like her "turmeric days/in Nanjangud," her extreme rusticity with his uncle "ensconced on her lap,"
her early child marriage, and his own smug childhood.
In reckoning with the filial influence on one's personality, Parthasarathy is akin to Ramanujan in points of technique and thematic colouring. The filial reactions of the persona in Ramanujan's poems are sharply divided between hatred and dislike of the father and warm love for the mother. But the persona of Parthasarathy's poems bears a warm and reverential attitude towards his mother and is affirmative and realistic in his approach towards his father. The father in Parthasarathy is a link with the past though somewhat blurred. Whereas in Ramanujan the image of distorted mirror is used in order to suggest the constricting influence of the father, in Parthasarathy the mirror is scratched, neither disfigured nor broken.

Vaikai river figures in Ramanujan's "A River" and also in Parthasarathy's "Homecoming 8." In Ramanujan, the dried up river makes him think of the contrast between the traditionally eulogized version of the river and the grim tragedy of the flooded river which takes a toll of human life and property. For Parthasarathy, the river Vaikai presents a sordid picture of ugliness and defilement. The spectacle of ugliness of the river is in a sharp contrast to its glory and sanctity preserved in the persona's historical memory.
... Every evening, as bells roll in the forehead of temples, she sees a man on the steps clean his arse.

... Also emperors and poets who slept in her arms. She is become a sewer, now. No one has any use for Vaikai, river, once, of this sweet city.

("Homecoming 8," 54)

The river symbolizes the flux of the protagonist's consciousness. It provokes the protagonist to contemplate the cultural degeneracy of the Tamilians. But there follows a mythical reference attributing sacred ritual significance: Bhagiratha's penance which brings the celestial Ganges to the earth for the performance of the purificatory rites of the forefathers. In "Homecoming 4," the persona describes how the sudden demise of his father entails the loss of a valued relationship and enacts a cyclical process of inheritance indicative of a pattern of continuity in change and an inalienable sense of roots.
In the first part, "Exile," the protagonist's effort to establish an intimate relationship with the landscape has failed. But in "Homecoming," he is revealed as an intimate observer of the scenic setting and environment. The imagination of the protagonist glows in rendering the natural setting and rock-cut temples at Mamallapuram near Madras as a fruitful source of contrasting past glory and the stark and unrelieved present. History leaves its indelible imprint on its monuments of unageing intellect. Myth and legend hover round places as memories in the minds of people in spite of the inroads made by natural forces to deface the precious symbols of a given culture and civilization:

Hawks in ripples circumscribe vision.
Painstakingly a wind thumbs paragraphs of bright sea.

The sky bends in adoration under a diminished sun.

("Homecoming 9," 55)

The temples that were patiently built and the sculptures that were finely wrought are now reduced to the state of
mere objects of fitful curiosity of humped tourists who occasionally visit them and vicariously seek to preserve their grandeur in snapshots:

... Rocks dream
in stone. Here, a king and his people built.

Only the casuarina endures, survives
the penance of Bhagiratha. The many-clawed sea

has picked the face of the temple clean.
Knuckly stones protrude
from under the skin of time.

("Homecoming 9," 55)

Such a marvel of sculptured beauty stirs in the speaker's mind a melancholy admiration. We come across the speaker showing the bright sea not only as a document of creative activity but also as an agent of vicious destruction of human creativity. The past glory about the place may have faded as a fact but it still retains its mythical halo. As Nicolas Berdyaev observes, "History is not an objective empirical datum, it is a myth. Myth is no fiction, but reality; it is, however, one of a different order from that of the so-called objective
empirical fact. Myth is the story preserved in popular memory of a past event and transcends the limits of the external objective world, revealing an ideal world, a subject-object world of facts.\textsuperscript{15}

.... Here, a king and his people built.

Only the casuarina endures, survives the penance of Bhagiratha. The many-clawed sea has picked the face of the temple clean. Knuckly stones protrude from under the skin of time.

... Humped tourists, Kodaks round their necks, prod the stone-carrion that once pranced on this extreme shore before the sea horses from Kambuja.

All round, among the casuarina groves, slow, but inexorably, trundles the elephant of history.

("Homecoming 9," 55)
One remarkable feature of this poem is the extreme polish and finish with which the writer has compressed his diverse points of view and observations about the landscape, the glory that once was, and the deterioration that has set in, the mythical aura and the scratchy and superficial interest of the tourists.

"Homecoming 10" focuses our attention on the speaker's self which decided to "look for myself/in every nook and corner/of the night." The speaker resigns himself to contemplative life. He gives up the outside world as a means of self-discovery and trusts himself to a quiet and contemplative mode of existence:

I have exchanged the world
for a table and chair. I shouldn't complain.

("Homecoming 10," 56)

The protagonist feels that he is oppressed by the rapid passage of time. His transactions with the outside world are rendered futile and reduced to mere "Noises, noises." The rapidity of modern living keeps him constantly on the move without allowing him any time to absorb
the significance of any activity. Throat, the home of speech, is again and again, shown to be impeded:

It's a dogfight
all over. Noises, noises.

A bus spits me out at my doorstep:
I enter awkwardly—the day,
an indigestible lump in my throat.

("Homecoming 11," 57)

After a rough passage in which he has been shuttling between expectations and disappointments, the speaker settles down and gives a thumbnail sketch of his life and career. He casts off his former self full of aspiration and liberates himself from the burden of his past. So far, he has been wearing academic glasses and having idealistic pretensions. His life is reduced to a ritual of rehearsed responses lacking involvement. In a fit of self-criticism, he declares that he has no talent for poetry.

He went for the wrong gods from the start.
And marriage made it worse.
He hadn't read his Greek poets well:

... How long it had taken
him to learn he had no talent
at all, although words came easy.

One can be articulate about nothing.

("Homecoming 12," 58)

The protagonist indirectly deflates the tall stature assumed by an academic poet who abjectly depends on his predecessors and flourishes at their expense. His poetry is heavily derivative. It should, however, be noted that even as the persona disclaims any original merit for himself, he has achieved it. Bruce King points out thus: "Although his (Parthasarathy's) verse is poetic in its metaphors, sound and stanzaic form, it also aims at a prosaic, pedestrian anonymity. While the revision of his style to squeeze out the 'literary' qualities seems to Parthasarathy in keeping with characteristics of classical Tamil verse, a major tendency of modern poetry has been towards the incorporation of the quotidian and the formerly unpoetic."\(^\text{16}\)

"Homecoming 13" reads like a dialogue between the protagonist's actual self and his idealistic self. The protagonist unveils his self which has been practising deception and falsehood. He subjects himself to severe
self-examination as a man and as a poet. One of the characteristics of *Rough Passage* as a whole is that it should be considered and read as one poem. Thus any individual section of the poem offers a paradigm of the total structure and sensibility. As D.W. Harding has put it, "At every stage the meaning must be capable of being telescoped back into the poem and be present to us when we read it, again—present to us with immediacy, not through a secondary process of reflection or decoding." Parthasarathy's poems trace a process of stock-taking and are thus an imaginative odyssey of the quest for the self but this odyssey is not in terms of a renewed Byzantium, an encompassing myth. It is a uniquely private, individual quest which reveals a striving for cultural roots. Ironically this striving for cultural roots takes place in terms of a craft consisting of "iconographic opposites" which reveals intellectual allegiance to English and emotional withdrawal of this allegiance.

Diffidence dogs the speaker in his quest for durable identity and in his definition of his self. He is faced with the ever recurring task of making meaning out of the obdurately hostile world and achieving
significant poetic output by imparting native flavour to language. Nothing is of any avail except willing immersion in the holiness of the day-to-day life filled with uncertainties. No more of the grand ambitions, projects, and severe self-criticism:

... For scriptures
I therefore recommend
the humble newspaper: I find
my prayers occasionally answered there.

. . . . . . .

Hereafter, I should be content,
I think, to go through life
with the small change of uncertainties.

("Homecoming 14," 61)

The persona of Whitman's Song of Myself, after shooting forth in various guises of common humanity, affecting moods of a common corporeal being and nearly exhausting impersonations of all the categories of his nation's characters, settles down to a humble lot. He begins in a nonchalant fashion and ends his journey on a note of humility:

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.

("Song of Myself," 96)

The protagonist of Rough Passage is all calm after all his passion is spent. Over the years, the idealistic concerns of the speaker have lost their gleam. It is the routine of everyday life that asserts its sway over him. The glorious bubbles are pricked and the practical concerns of everyday life claim his whole attention:

To see the world as it is, upside down, I prefer to stand on the head than walk.

("Homecoming," 62)

In spite of the dreary passage of time, the protagonist successfully makes poetry out of the "iron of life's ordinariness." ("Homecoming 2," 48)

A poem breaks out, incandescent, on the typewriter, stripping night to the thinness of dawn.

("Homecoming 15," 62)
Even writing poetry means a limited and partial mitigation of his inward conflict. As though it is a distillation of his experience, he wants to realize silence, reminding us of Beckettian use of silence as language. This is a striking movement farther away from his original pronouncement on the predicament of bilingualism and biculturalism. The following lines underscore the speaker's passage from speech to silence:

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

("Homecoming 15," 62)

The ghost of his infatuation for English still haunts Parthasarathy and incites him to mock at the "unenglish arse" of a widely acclaimed English newspaper in India.

Now, hopefully, I clutch at straws of unevent: the rattle of a teacup, or the Hindu as it shifts its unenglish arse to break wind. I've rolled my fate
into a paperball and tossed it out the window.

("Homecoming 15," 63)

Although "Homecoming" is obviously concerned with the celebration of the protagonist's return home, it is, at a deeper level, a sobering of a human being into a balanced individual.

In Rough Passage, Parthasarathy presents his image in immediate relation to himself and, in so presenting, juxtaposes a traditional image and a contemporary idiosyncratic one in such a way that a personal and eventually a moral paradox unravels itself. Among such traditional images which have their significance in the exploration of the relations of the self with the other and in the definition of the self itself is the image of the tree with its related images of river, snow, bridge, and "familiar coconuts." These images not only reveal the cultural rootedness of Parthasarathy but also point out how memory is quickened by an intense preoccupation with exiledom, loss of tradition, and the consequent inability to communicate meaningfully. The sections on the river
Vaikai, Immamalapuram in "Homecoming" illustrate how there is a way of rediscovering the past by introducing images of permanence into the flux of experience. The sense of continuity and permanence suggested by the network of traditional images effects a fusion of the personal and the transcendent so that the poems in "Homecoming" escape from a sense of self-imposed loneliness and exile and become harbingers of renewal. After the pastoral scenes of family life and the decadent Tamil culture, "Homecoming" returns to the present, to the poet's task of shaping a poem:

I have exchanged the world
for a table and chair. I shouldn't complain.

("Homecoming 10," 56)
REFERENCES


Michael Madhusudan Dutt's poem in Bengali translated into English by Marian M. Uterwedde.

Bengali Language

O Bengal, many-jewelled! All the treasures of your store
In folly I have ignored; in befuddlement of mind
Craving foreign riches I roamed abroad, and were
The guise of a beggar, unhappily self-assigned.
Long days I wasted, leaving happiness behind;
Sleeplessness and hunger of mind and body bore.
Forgot the lotus-pool to play with mosses by the shore.
Followed barren rules, honoured the unrefined.
The spirit of your house in a vision called me then:
'0 my child unnumbered treasures are in your mother's hoard:
Why then as a beggar are you wandering abroad?
Turn back, misguided child, and find your home again.'
Gladly I obeyed, and so at last with clearer sight
In my mother's tongue discovered depths of beauty, jewel-bright.


