CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION:

ALIENATION AND COMMITMENT: INDIAN AND WESTERN PERSPECTIVES

It is a well known fact of history that "Indo-Anglian poetry", as Professor Gokak observed, "was born under a Romantic star." (1) The poets of the Romantic Revival and those of the Victorian era in England played a seminal role in inspiring and nurturing the Indo-English poetry of the mid-nineteenth century. Most naturally the birth of this poetry coincided with the Indian Renaissance movement led by Raja Rammohun Roy, Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekanand, Ranade, Tilak, Gokhale and others. This movement, as is already known, created a widespread socio-cultural dynamism in the country and manifested in the emergence of Brahma Samaj

and the Theosophical Movement on the one hand and in the birth of Freedom movement and the founding of the Indian National Congress on the other. It is to such a changed ethos the early Indo-English poetry responded so well that we had such eminent poets namely Toru Dutt, Rabindranath Tagore and Aurobindo who are largely reminiscent of nineteenth century romantic poets. P. Lal in his later comments on these poets rightly observed:

"Shri Aurobindo happens to be our Milton, and Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, Manmohan Ghose and Haridranath Chattopadhyaya our Romantic singing birds. They provide sufficient provocation to experiment afresh, set new standards, preserve what is vital in the tradition and give a definition to the needs of the present."(2)

As the years rolled by, India gained independence in 1947, wrote its constitution in English recognising it as its official language. It declared itself a Sovereign Democratic Republic in 1950 celebrating its unity amidst multi-faceted diversity to which fact English had contributed in a big way. Though the British were ousted physically from the Indian dominion English language and literature representing the best of Western Culture and science swayed the masterminds

of this country with the result that English came to be regarded as one of our national languages and Indo-English literature as one of our indigenous literatures like that of Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada and Hindi. Way back in 1938, an eminent Indian novelist, Raja Rao, commented, "...English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up - like Sanskrit or Persian was before - but not of our emotional make up." This kind of overwhelming sympathy and compliance with an alien tongue persuaded the Indian writers and critics to make it more amenable and pliable to our own ethos and environment. A host of young Indian writers, scholars and critics — apart from senior critics K.R. Shrinivas/Iyengar, Gokak and C.D. Narasimhaiah — namely P. Lal, Raghavendra Rao, Deb Kumar Das, Anita Seal, Shankar Mokhashi-Punekar(3) dealt with the idea of this alien tongue could be domesticised to serve Indian ways; Indian mores, modes and attitudes.

It is in this context R. Parthasarathy remarked, "An important characteristic of Indian verse in English in the mid-twentieth century has been its emergence from the main stream of English literature and its appearance as part of Indian literature."(4) This is a significant development

(3) The views expressed by these scholars are adequately summed up and commented upon by K.R. Shrinivas-Iyengar in Indian Writing in English, Fourth Edition (New Delhi, 1984), pp. 650-652.

(4) R. Parthasarathy, (Ed.) Ten Twentieth Century Indian poets (New Delhi, 1976), Introduction, p. 3.
that one cannot overlook in the post-independence days.

The Indo-English poetry during the 1950's, as distinct from its mid-nineteenth century phase, has realised the importance of being Indian in tone, tenor and complexion and that is to a major extent an achievement on the part of Indian writers writing in English. Parthasarathy further observed, "It has been said that it (Indo-English poetry) is Indian in sensibility and content, and English language. It is rooted in and stems from the Indian environment, and reflects its mores, often ironically." (5)

The emphasis on Indianness and search for Indian identity is a welcome feature of the poetry of the fifties. But the master spirits that inspired this poetry and shaped its form and tone were not merely English but they were Anglo-American poets. The Indo-English poetry of the fifties was as much influenced by W.B. Yeats, T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound and Auden as the early Indian poets were inspired by Milton, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron, Keats and Tennyson. Just as a something happened to European sensibility in the year 1910, according to Virginia Woolf, a similar thing happened to Indian sensibility during the post-Independence period. "Traditions of thought," Ujjal Dutt rightly remarked, "from which literary traditions follow, took a sharp turn in

(5) Ibid., p.3.
India in the late 40's (Europe experienced it much earlier). The Indian poets writing in Gujarati, Marathi, Bengali began to display an unusual openness to certain themes and ideas, certain modes of expression and experience that had no Indian precedent. These were given an Indian context but these were mainly from European and American literatures.\[^{(6)}\] And certainly the poetry of the 50's and after in all Indian languages showed up "themes and ideas," "modes of expression and experience" that had "no Indian precedent" but "only came from European and American literature." So, what came to be true of native Indian literatures was also true of Indo-English poetry. The sensibility which is often described as modern sensibility in Indian literatures, as Ujjal Dutt said, "as largely British American contribution" and "is interestingly naturalised."\[^{(7)}\]

It is this fact of naturalised British-American sensibility — which is accepted by critics and scholars as Western sensibility — into the indigenous, native Indian sensibility that made Indian writers feel their dilemma more sharply. Mulk Raj Anand felt "the double burden on (my) his shoulders, the Alps of the European tradition and the


\[^{(7)}\] Ibid., p. 41.
Himalayas of the Indian past." Raja Rao felt the predicament keenly and suggested a way out for Indo-English writers in his manifesto-like introduction to Kanthapura. He observed, "We are all instinctively bi-lingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as Indians. We have grown to look at the large world as part of us."(9)

It is quite evident now, as the foregoing discussion indicates, that modern Indo-English poetry is born of a double tradition which means that it is Indo-European or Indo-Western tradition. Hence it is quite obvious that Indo-English writers cannot write like the English and certainly they cannot write only as Indians. Because of dissemination of thought and cultures with tremendous speed through visual and aural media from the post-50's and onwards during this century, the modern Indian sensibility is bound to inherit quite naturally the traits of the larger world tradition. But, as it is, any study of the creative sensibility of modern Indian literatures presupposes the necessity of an insightful acquaintance with modern European sensibility.


Alienation and commitment, to which the present study addresses itself, have been largely of European, or what is generally described as Western sensibility. The growth of science, the ever increasing influence of industrialization and machinery and the dissemination of scientific temper among people gradually led to forming of attitudes of alienation and commitment. These two are essentially European phenomena. They need not, of course, be mistaken for neat and tidy formulas prescriptive of a particular discipline or a recipe. They are a conglomeration and cluster of attitudes, a combination of thought, feeling, value and assumption which constitute a sensibility and its mode of action. Since the 1920's these attitudes and this kind of sensibility have been responsible in producing great works of European art and literature. The most conspicuous examples are the works of Sartre and Camus in France and the works of Auden and his colleagues in the thirties in England.

Most of the writers on Existentialist philosophy have accepted that "crisis" in human life is due to man's "alienation" from the world, which he has inherited to live in. John Macquarrie writing on 'Existentialism and Literature' considers T.S. Eliot, Samuel Beckett, and James Joyce alongside Kafka, as writers whose writings revealed the influence of this kind of sensibility of which alienation has a larger share. (10)

In England, the emergence of a new sensibility which, of course, included alienation and commitment — was recognised by Virginia Woolf, when she observed in one of her lectures, "In or about December, 1910 human character changed."(11) She explained that this change was due to a shift in human relations "between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children."(11.a) The change was really related to human sensibility and was part of a larger complex of changes "in religion, conduct, politics and literature."(11.b) Roughly the date marked the breaking up of old patterns and communal values. "The centre cannot hold,"(12) said Yeats. He felt the depth of the crisis and exclaimed through his typical mythic imagination, "And what rough beast, ... Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?"(12.a) Auden chose the title 'The Age of Anxiety' for a collection of his poems, rightly indicating the tempera of his times. The calm of the English countryside, of the pastoral world of the early times and its cosy attitudes came to be disturbed by the noise of industrialization of urban civilization. The phrases: "brutalization of human nature," "de-humanization of literature"(13) were indirectly the outcome of the larger process of alienation. The Waste Land was 'a lament', and a


plea to restore the old values in a world besieged with disintegration. The works of Virginia Woolf and Joyce in England, the writings of Sartre and Camus in France, the novels of Franz Kafka in Austria, the paintings of André Breton, and Picasso can be considered as part of the massive process of alienation that was taking place in Europe.

Alienation, thus, had an exciting role to play in European art and literature. Moreover it became as unavoidable part of man's life in the new world. To be acquainted with this phenomenon in all its details is necessary to appreciate its manifestations in art and literature. The Encyclopaedia Britannica helps us much in this respect.

The entry on alienation in Volume number one of that book, at the outset, lists 'six common variants' of the concept namely — "powerlessness"; "meaninglessness"; "normalessness"; "cultural estrangement"; "social isolation"; "self-estrangement." These variants, of course, will be made use of at appropriate contexts as the thesis progresses.


(14,a) Ibid., p. 574
After listing these variants, the contributor traces the roots of alienation to ancient days of human history in the works of Plotinus and in the theology of St. Augustine and Martin Luther. According to these thinkers, man's struggle to identify himself with a transcendent, perfect being by dissociating himself from one's own imperfections marks the point of alienation.

Next to these thinkers, the powerful source of alienation was Hegel (1770-1831), the German philosopher. According to him there is an inherent dissociation between man as subject and man as object (that is, between man as a creative subject seeking to be and to realize himself and man as an object influenced and manipulated by others). The result is that man's own creations his art, language, science and so forth stand outside him as alien objects, as objectifications of what is essential and prior, namely, mind and individual consciousness. "This view", says the contributor, "rooted in German idealism and in a metaphysical perspective, became the basis for a radical critique of society and its institutions by those philosophers who received Hegel's ideas and gave them a socialistic interpretation." (15)

* (Pages now onwards, from 12 to 19, form a rapid and convenient summary of the article on alienation in The Encyclopaedia. The summary at places — for clarity's sake — is in author's own words and phrases without quotation marks!! But quotation marks are retained only wherever the thought is original and is found helpful in furthering our line of argument).

(15) Ibid., p. 574.
For Hegel, this idea of dissociation between man as subject and man as object is related to man's being himself, the nature of his existence on earth. Thus alienation, according to him, is an ontological fact. But the later German thinkers transformed alienation into a secular and materialistic idea. For Feuerback (1807-72), the source of alienation was the institution of religion. In religion man creates myths of divine power. "These religious myths", according to Feuerback, "are merely ways in which man projects his own humanity outside himself, locating his own capacities and sensibilities elsewhere." So Feuerback thinks that "overcoming of alienation required a humanistic religion of man not of God." (16) To be god-centred according to Feuerback marked alienation; what he needed to overcome alienation was man-centred religion.

Márk (1818-83), keeping aloof from Hegel's existential duality and Feuerback's religious projection, was of the opinion "that it was man's nature to realize himself in work; but the possibility of doing so was denied to him by the economic system. Thus, the key problem was alienated labour under capitalism: work was compelled rather than spontaneous and creative; workers had little control over the work process; the product of their labour was "owned" by others to be used against them; and the worker himself became a commodity in the labour market." (17) Thus, according to

(16) Ibid., p. 574.
(17) Ibid., p. 574.
Marx, alienation consisted of the fact that man did not fulfil his "species being" in work; the essence of man remained unrealized. (18)

So, Marx viewed alienation as a serious consequence to be faced in a capitalist society hence his emphasis on the well-being of the proletariat. The insight that Marx's view gives us is that in a highly mechanised society the essential creativity of man and the artist remains unrealized.

The second stream of thought emanating from Marx, as mentioned by the article in *The Encyclopaedia*, is that of noted French and German social philosophers, Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), George Simmel (1858-1918) and Max Weber (1864-1920) who were all contemporaries in the first half of the twentieth century. They are known as "mass society" theorists whose main concern was the well-being of man in an industrialized and technology-oriented society. Their thought is much useful and has direct bearing on the present study.

It is these writers who lamented — of course from the sociologists' standpoint — the passing away of traditional society and the consequent loss of the sense of community. "Modern man", according to them, "was isolated as he had never

(18) Ibid., p. 574.
been before — anonymous and impersonal in an urbanized mass, uprooted from old values, yet without faith in the new rational and bureaucratic order." (18.a) The clearest expression of this theme is in Durkheim's notion of "anomie", "a social condition characterized by rampant individualism and the disintegration of binding social norms." (18.b)

Next to sociologists' view, we have ideas from existentialist philosophers which have direct bearing on alienation. Earlier reference has already been made to them. These philosophers are Soren Kierkegaard (1813-55) and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980). It is the Hegelean division of man — the "subjective man" and the "objective man" — that forms the basis of their thought.

Brought up in a stern Christian environment, Kierkegaard held "that eternity is more important than time, sin is worse than suffering; man is an egoist and must experience despair; God is beyond reason and man." (19)

Keeping God, the creator, beyond man’s reason, Kierkegaard went on to assert that man alone, being independent of God, should make his own "choice" to render his life meaningful. The truth for Kierkegaard always remained subjective. God in Kierkegaard was naturally set aside without any ill will.

(18.a, 18.b) Ibid., p. 574.

towards Him. The alienation sprang up in the very idea of man's independence which later assumed the form of freedom of choice. Kierkegaard was a theist but God was said to be beyond reason; beyond man. Thus God in him was reduced to the status of a benevolent and ineffective entity with the result that man was to become supreme by himself to choose and shape his own destiny. Further, the same theme with complete rejection of God substantiated Sartre's existentialism, Camus' idea of absurdity and Kafka's world view.

According to Sartre, self-estrangement for man is a natural state in a world devoid of meaning and purpose. The social revolution through economic change as proposed by Marx, or through the idea of clinical understanding as suggested by Freud cannot remedy the world of 'insanity.' The absurdity of existence is fundamental and man's estrangement with himself, the alienation, is the result. So according to Sartrean tradition of thought, to be "authentic" is to have a lucid consciousness that life is meaningless and yet to commit oneself through active choice. For Sartre, it is said, the choice was to resist Nazi rule or to remain identified as a Jew under the humiliation of anti-Semitism.

As Sartre says that man is to make his "choice", he says in the same breath that man is "committed" to it and he is "responsible" for his own "choice." So, man's
determination to act according to his choice makes him a "committed" being. And it is here the idea of commitment takes its origin and later became current in literature through Sartre by virtue of his being both philosopher and litterateur.

As against the atheistic existentialism of Sartre, there are theologians, Paul Tillich (1886-1965) and Martin Buber (1878-1965), who also speak of estrangement and alienation. "The background to Tillich's investigations", says Professor James Richmond, "is the notion of 'Being'; God is for him 'Being-Itself'; sinful man is estranged from his genuine 'being'; Jesus as the Christ brings 'New Being' to the world."(20) Like existentialists, Buber also thinks that modern man is 'at the edge' in his relation to God and needs salvation from mass depersonalization and dehumanization.(20.a)

Alienation, thus, weighed heavily on the minds of almost all thinkers of this century in Europe including the theologians. It is this phenomenon which gave birth to ideas like 'absurdity', 'suicide', 'dehumanization' and 'depersonalization.' In a way, the alienation perspective hitherto

detailed, no doubt, reflects a melancholy view of modern life. But one cannot fail to discern in it, as the writer in *The Encyclopaedia* observes, "a moral concern about the good life that is basically hopeful and visionary."(21) The writer concerned, here, seems to have in mind the views of the theologians like Tillich and Buber who thought of Christ as the saviour and bringer of solace to the estranged man. Considered on these lines, "alienation", as the article on the subject in *The Encyclopaedia* concludes, "is not exclusively evil, providing as it sometimes does the basis for creative insight and the impetus for social change."(22) No doubt, it does provide the basis for creative insight, and it has done so, if not exclusively, but mostly on the side of a sad view of life. Sartre, Camus and Beckett have given us plays and fiction not "basically hopeful and visionary" but ridden with frustration, anguish and agony. But none of these writers are escapists; they are seriously committed to life and art. They are not insipid but are exasperatingly engaging.

In the context of these exciting creations in Western literature and art, as we turn to our own literatures in Indian languages to see whether alienation has any role to play here, we observe that it has not that much effect on our lives as it has had on the lives of the people in the West.

(22) Ibid., p. 576.
Alienation, it seems, is an attitude not in tune with the Indian ethos. One feels somehow it is un-Indian. As opposed to this, we have feelings of harmony, consonance, oneness and integration, which are nearer to our sensibility. In a sense, the Indian idea of alienation is almost similar to the idea of alienation as thought of by theologians like Paul Tillich and Martin Buber. The individual soul, according to Hindu religious scriptures, separated from the Great soul on account of its Kārmic Bandhan desires its salvation only by merging itself with the Great soul, that is God. The whole of Bhakti literature that flourished during the medieval period in India is a song of harmony, not of alienation. It sings of the great bliss that the individual soul attains by merging itself with the great cosmic soul. It is in this context we agree with that writer in *The Encyclopaedia* who concluded his article on alienation with the remark, "there is in it (alienation) a moral concern about the good life that is basically hopeful and visionary." Here "alienation is not.... evil and it does provide the basis for creative insight."(22.a)

In the Indian context, alienation is scarcely emphasised and we are strongly inclined to describe our Bhakti literature more as literature of harmony than one of alienation.

(22.a) Ibid., p. 576.
It is clear by now that alienation is mostly a western phenomenon, and it made its appearance more conspicuously in twentieth century Western literature. Mr. Seeman remarked, "In one form or another, the concept of alienation dominates both the contemporary literature and the history of sociological thought." (23) Now one can say that what is true of contemporary Western or European literature is true of Indian literatures including Indo-English poetry. As has already been noted, we know that contemporary Indo-English poetry had at its back the "Anglo-American contribution" (24) to inspire it.

The foregoing perspective of alienation as detailed by the writer in The Encyclopaedia has been quite instructive to us. On the basis of this, we are inclined to draw the following conclusions which we may use further in our present study:

1) Hegel's division of man into subjective self and objective man suggests that art could enshrine the essential man — keeping aside man as an object influenced and manipulated by others. But the point to be noted is that the 'Hegelean man/artist' was oblivious of the idea of alienation as we understand the concept today.

(24) See Ujjal Dutt's remark on page 67 of this thesis.
(ii) The Marxian man/artist is normally alienated in a capitalist system. Hence the creativity of man remains unrealised in an industrialised and mechanised society. It is apparent that Marx foresaw the danger to man's creativity in a technology-oriented society.

(iii) The Kierkegaard man/artist makes his own "choice", being quite independent of God. This choice has potentialities of becoming a significant quest in life and in art as well.

(iv) Sartre's man/artist has both the options open to him — good or evil. Sartrean art has exciting potentialities — divine as well as ghastly.

With these conclusions on the concept of alienation, we propose to move further to study the other important concept of commitment in our present study.

The idea of commitment in literature was originally conceived by Sartre in his essay on existentialism and humanism which had its first English edition in 1948. (25)

Man, as Sartre thought, realising that human life in this godless world is "meaningless" and "purposeless" is driven

to make his life "meaningful" by choosing to live as he pleases. In doing so, he makes his own "choice" irrespective of its ethical or unethical considerations. The "choice" is subjective and absolute. To this man is committed even at the risk of death. The commitment thus made presupposes a "responsibility" which the chooser executes unflinchingly. On the basis of such a line of thought Sartre wrote his plays and fiction. Thus his ideas of "committed literature" emerged through his philosophy of life and gained currency in the world of art and literary criticism.

The terms "commitment," "committed writer", "literature of commitment," strictly speaking, should carry the existentialist connotation. But at the hands of writers other than Sartre and Camus, these terms were to lose their existentialist connotation to accommodate slighter or wider variations meant by their users. In the 50's and after, these terms came to be applied for fiction and drama which have generally heavy political and reformative bias.

Now-a-days it is commonly accepted that a committed writer is one who has dedicated himself to the work of advocating a faith, a belief, specially of a political ideology or a social reform. It is in this context the term committed is rather loosely associated with dramatists like Shaw, Brecht, John Osborne, Arnold Wesker. It is also used with reference
to writers of fiction namely Andre Malraux, Doris Lessing, George Orwell, Angus Wilson who are known for their political and altruistic leanings. (26)

Because of the term's origin in Sartre's atheistic existentialism, its association with anti-establishment is quite evident. Hence it came to be used these days to designate leftist politics and left-wing ideologies. "Commitment," says J.A. Cuddon, "is common to work of writers who belong to the so called communist Block." (26.a) But rarely has the term been associated with poets and poetry except in the case of Auden and his colleagues in the thirties who professed left-wing attitudes and participated in people's war against the right-wing leadership of General Franco in Spain.

But the term seems to have been reviewed and probed adequately at the hands of a very perceptive English critic John Mander in his book on the theme: **Writer and Commitment** (London, Secker and Warburg, 1961).

*The book, as the author tells us, aims at a "careful unravelling" of "a contentious bundle of questions." (27)


* Pages from now onwards contain a critical analysis of Mander's most perceptive book with conclusive comments of our own on page 32 and 33 of the thesis.
that are usually evoked by the term. The author thinks that the term is required "to be shown just and necessary" though his "insistence that commitment is neither Left-wing nor exclusively political in connotation may serve to allay certain misapprehensions." The book, as it is, is "an enquiry into the possible meaning of the term in relation to certain English writers of the past thirty years." The author, perhaps for the first time in literary criticism, undertakes a difficult task of applying the term to poets and poetry and succeeds to a larger extent in investing the term with legitimate aesthetic status and dignity. Mander firmly believes that "in specific instances, it is meaningful to ask of a writer: to what is he, in last resort, committed?"

In the book, he asks this question of two poets, Auden and Thom Gunn, and argues out his case to add rightful dimensions to the term commitment.

Supporting Alvarez's statement that Auden is more "a journalist than a poet," the author acknowledges Auden as "the most talented English poet of his generation, certainly the most gifted English writer to have allied himself with the Left-wing in the period under consideration." But

(30) Ibid., p. 15.
this meritorious aspect of the poet does not stop Mander from observing that Auden misses the mark of "being a major poet." The reason is that "it is not a lack of talent that precludes us from considering Mr. Auden a major poet, but lack of commitment." This is the most crucial judgement which Mander believes that "it will serve to give shape and content to the term." "At bottom," he further continues, "it is a question of responsibility. Before we ask in what the commitment of a writer consists, we must be convinced that he is, in fact, committed, that he is in the existentialist's sense responsible. For commitment is grounded, on this view, in responsibility, though it is not identical with it. And it is only, I think, in certain sections of Mr. Auden's work that this requirement is satisfied."

It is significant that Mander cautions us here not to consider 'responsibility' identical with 'commitment.' This is enough to purge the term of its existentialist associations and keep it open to aesthetics.

Like Alvarez, Mander discerns in Auden "a tendency to be mere interested in his subject matter rather than personally involved." And this tendency to show mere

(30.a, 30.b) Ibid., p. 15.
(31) Ibid., p. 15.
(31.a) Ibid., p. 28.
interest, not involvement, is typically a journalist's tendency. A true writer is generally "involved in" or "committed to" his subject matter. "Once this criticism is granted, one need not be surprised," says Mander, "to find that Auden's works do not add up to an ouvre, as Eliot's and Yeats's do." (32)

Mander's main contention is that it is not "interest" but "involvement" that goes to the making of writer's commitment. "To be involved in" means "to be committed to." This, in turn, he believes, pre-supposes subjectivity on the part of the writer. "It is this failure in subjectivity," says Mander, "that conditions all his (Auden's) work. Auden never wrote, as Alvarez pointed out, a good personal poem; the existence of the other person is merely stated, never felt. ...... And corresponding to this defective subjectivity is an equally defective objectivity." (33)

Mander suggests that the artist's world is the world-of-his-own, where his subjectivity has mastered, and not succumbed to, the world's objectivity. "This," he says, "one finds in Eliot's or Yeats's and misses in Auden's———Because Auden is not at one with himself; as a poetic personality, he (Auden) is unable to create a world of his own in which we can believe." (34) Therefore, "owing to lack

(32) Ibid., p. 36.
(33) Ibid., p. 38.
(34) Ibid., p. 39.
of involvement and the consequent absence of subjectivity, Auden's achievement remains fragmentary, though some of his fragments have distinct individual merits. In short, Auden's poems do not, as they stand, add up to anything that can be called "ouvre."(34.a)

In contrast with Auden's work, Mander finds in Thom Gunn an "extremely individual poetry."(35) The reason is, he sees in Thom Gunn "the new subjective emphasis.... which is likely to give the idea of commitment a wider meaning and clearer outline."(35.a) Mander's discovery through Thom Gunn's poetry is that there could be commitment without political or social ideologies being attached to it. "If commitment is to have a purely political connotation," Mander affirms, "then Mr. Gunn is certainly not un ecrivain engage. But he is a writer deeply committed to a private quest for value in a "valueless world."(36) In this sense he is one of the most "committed" English writer of our time. "If he (Mr. Gunn) has anything to sell" says Mander, "it is his own experience: but this experience is so intimate and so inward that it can only be communicated, if at all, in signs and parables, and never in "messages." Yet communication is, of course, crucial: Mr. Gunn is intent on exploring his own subjectivity and to do so he must find an objective correlative."(37)

(34.a) Ibid., p. 39.
(35.a) Ibid., p. 177
(36, 37) Ibid., p. 180.
Mander rightly thinks that the poet's subjectivity plays a crucial role in shaping his 'objective correlative' which is the poet's creation — his poem, or artist's work of art. As the critic interprets the poet's signs and parables contained in the poem (i.e., the poet's 'objective correlative') he (the critic) recognises "that the poet is describing not only his own experience but Everyman's."(38) Mander strongly feels that "Even the poet of subjectivity offers a kind of insight that is historically and socially meaningful. He is as much concerned with commitment as any man: indeed, more than most, in that he appreciates its universal human significance."(38.a) Hence, "commitment," as Mander understands "is universal" but "the poet of subjectivity chooses to explore its inner rather than its outer face."(39) This is the nature of commitment that Mander discovers in Thom Gunn's poetry.

Mander further attempts to examine the nature of another type of commitment which is generally attributed to the works of George Orwell, Angus Wilson, John Osborne and Arnold Wesker, who are mostly novelists and playwrights besides being critics, essayists, and travelogue writers. They are not exclusively poets, unlike Thom Gunn. Time and again they have voiced their proneness to political and social

(38, 38.a, 39) Ibid., p. 180.
ideologies. John Osborne is described as the playwright of angry young men's generation. Arnold Wesker has greater sympathy for the working class and the underdog. George Orwell tells us in his essay on "Politics and Language" that, "In our age there is no such thing as keeping out of politics." In "Writers and Leviathan" he remarks, "there is no such thing as a non-political book."(40) Likewise, Angus Wilson, when asked whether "a novel is primarily a moral statement" he replied, "I should certainly agree. .... From my own point of view I am unable to understand any novel, any work of art created out of human beings, which does not reflect the moral standpoint of the author."(41)

These writers state that all art must have a political purpose but at the same time they are "quite capable of saying that propaganda is the ruin of art."(42) Mander says that "both statements will be made with the same conviction that any man who refuses to accept them is either a fool or a rogue."(43) Strictly speaking, to accept both these statements means to accept the contradiction which is obviously absurd. But there seems to be a subtler wisdom in this apparent contradiction. The "political purpose" and the "moralistic statements" to which the writer is adhered

(40) Quoted by John Mander in The Writer and Commitment, p. 82.
(41) Ibid., p. 113.
(42) Ibid., p. 84.
(43) Ibid., p. 84.
are not permitted to make any aggressive appearance in the works of his art as they are so much "striking" in their critical or political manifestos. Mander finds that "even the most absolutely objective 'documentary' writings of Orwell, at their best, are constituted of the author's subjectivity like Pepys or Evelyn's Diaries."(44) In the best of the works of Osborne or Wesker, their commitment does not appear to be as something imposed from outside. Osborne's well known remark about his hero, Jimmy Porter, holds true of his best work as well. Osborne says, "To be as vehement as he (Jimmy Porter) is, is to be almost non-committal."(45) To be completely engaged and absorbed in the work without being conscious of the egoistic will seems to be the secret of Mander's idea of commitment. Commitment does exist in all great art and artists but not as "a message," or "a doctrine" but like something that is engagingly and artistically persuasive throughout the work of art.

In Mander's eyes it is the text, the artist's work of art, that is more important than the ideologies and doctrines he professes to adhere to. It is the critic's business to see whether this ideology or doctrine serves best or not the artistic relevance of the work. That is the reason why Mander always emphasises "the priority of the subjective principle"(46) in art. "To test the unity and

(44) Ibid., p. 107.
(45) Quoted by Mander p. 188.
consistency of the subjective principle," he remarks, "we have to fall back on the idea of commitment."(47) In this sense, commitment comes to mean that complex abstract mass that is formed and sustained through man's motives, intentions, ideologies and doctrines. Mander observes, "Commitment stands, then, for the basic cast of mind, the fundamental convictions of a man, still perhaps in pre-philosophical, pre-conceptual form, to which he has come in the exercise of this existential responsibility."(48) So, subjectivity in man that fulfils the existential responsibility is a crucial factor in commitment. However unique and massive be ideals and doctrines, they need to be 'dissipated' in Coleridgean sense in the author's subjective principle which ultimately helps in forming artist's commitment. Mander's view of commitment though slightly puzzling is highly subtle and helpful: "In a sense commitment is what remains in the work of the author's subjectivity after the author has done his utmost to eliminate it."(49) Perhaps it seems to mean awareness with capital A, that seems to pervade through, shaping the work of art.

The discussion we have had so far has gone a long way in providing a few insights which would be helpful to us in deciding the nature of commitment of the poets we have chosen for our study.

(47) Ibid., p. 107.
(48) Ibid., p. 107.
(49) Ibid., p. 107.
The Sartrean commitment has no doubt its own artistic, poetic potentialities which could be extremely fascinating as well as agonising.

There is then the commitment of Orwells, Osbornes and Wilsons. Here, commitment could be of an ideology or a doctrine. The disadvantage of such a type of commitment is that it is likely to be propagandistic.

Perhaps Mander's idea of commitment is one that is singularly free from extraneous considerations. It is unique by itself which properly fits in the world of aesthetics. It is highly subtle and meaningful. Its features can be identified as follows:

(i) According to Mander, commitment is a principle of subjectivity; hence a fructifying force in art.

(ii) Faiths, ideologies, doctrines are essential to the making of commitment in literature. But they get "diffused and dissipated" in Coleridgean sense as the subjective principle begins to operate and the commitment emerges.

(iii) The subjective principle which constitutes commitment does carry with it an existentialist responsibility but this need not be identical with that type of commitment as per Mander's warning. It is here that Mander renders the term aesthetically viable.
With this Western view of commitment in mind, as we turn to ponder over its Indian counterpart, we find that this (commitment) is rather deep rooted, unlike alienation, in Indian ethos. But the Indian view of commitment differs from the former to a great extent.

Commitment in the Indian context seems to be a much larger and magnanimous concept. It tends to cover a wider range of human life at its existential level. Unlike alienation, commitment is an old Indian concept with its mundane as well as religious moorings. The Indian way of life is to a large extent a well ordered and disciplined unit. This is achieved, according to the Holy Scriptures, through practising of four chief objectives: namely Dharma (Duty/Religion); Artha (Money/Meaning); Kama (Desire/Mundane needs); Moksha (Liberation/Detached state).

Thus what is true of life is true of art and literature as well. The ancient Indian art and literature cherished these objectives. In a way, the Juggernaut of Indian poetics and literature moved on the four massive wheels of Purushartha. Kalidasa's noted play _Abhijnanashankuntalam_ ends with a didactic exhortation which can be taken as a typical motto of all Indian art and literature. The Bharat Vakya at the end of the play states a prayerful
wish laying the final emphasis on the liberation of human soul:

May the kings of this earth
Rule their country in the interest of their people.
May the word of the learned
Be respected by all.
May the self-created God
Liberate me from having my second cycle of birth. (50)

(Act: VII)

The statement (the Bharata Vākya) suggests three things prominently: the king; the wise and the learned; the crisis. It has indirect bearing in the play on King Dushyanta; second on the wise and learned sage, Maharshi Kanva; thirdly on the final resolution of the crisis that developed through King's forgetfulness. The play has its dramatic and didactic intentions which came to be fulfilled at the end. The king behaved in a responsible manner; the word of the wise was respected; and the crisis was resolved.

The whole idea of commitment comes home to us without its conspicuous presence being felt by us anywhere in the play except at the end in the form of Bharata Vākya (50)

प्रकाशी प्रकृतिविलय पार्श्वितः
सरस्कृतिः श्रृतिनवतः भविष्यतः
गमापि य अप्य नीलोतिष्ठः
पुनेव परिवत्तणक्रियान्स्वः सत्वांकः अबिलान शाकुलम्।
where, after all, it was a matter of dramatic convention. There are, in Indian literature, poetical works like Geeta Govind, Megha Doot, Ritusanhar noted for beauty of rhetoric, diction and melody. There are also plays — plays of Bhasa and Bhavabhuti — where excellent technical skill blends with profounder observations of life. But the overall Indian ethos demanded of art, its commitment to Purusharthas.

Now, as we approach the Indo-English poetry in our time, especially the poetry of 1950's, we find this concept operate in a different manner.

In the pre-independence days, the Indo-English poetry rejecting the deadwood in Indian tradition tended to concentrate on the revival of Indian myths and culture through humanistic perspectives. In the post-Independence days the Indo-English poetry, among its other aspirations, has been conscious of its Indian identity which is an expression of one aspect of commitment. Reconciled to his Indian conditions, Ezekiel declared:

I have made my commitments now.
This is one: to stay where I am,
My backward place is where I am.

Residing far away in Chicago, Ramanujan amusingly observed:

I must seek and will find
my particular hell only in my Hindu mind.
Kamala Das playfully recited her credentials:

I am Indian born in
Malbar, I speak three languages, write in
two, dream in one

Keki Daruwalla hugged his mother land in frustration:

Then why should I tread the Kafka beat
Or the Waste Land
When mother you are near at hand
One vast sprawling defeat.

That is the way how commitment has broadly worked
its way in Indo-English poetry.

Equipped with these comprehensive perspectives
of alienation and commitment, the thesis proposes to study
in detail how modern Indo-English poets, especially these
three poets — Ezekiel, Ramanujan, and Parthasarthy —
have absorbed and articulated these contemporary modes of
sensibility and proved themselves relevant and worthy of
their artistic endeavour. The following chapters concentrate
on examining the poetry of these poets in the light of
conclusions we have arrived at in this chapter.