Chapter III

*Shivam: Quest for Love*

If writing is knowing for Darley, loving is knowing for Justine. Durrell like D. H Lawrence believes that human beings best reveal themselves in their relations to one another through the sexual act. It is a means of knowing one’s True Self. Justine’s journey towards Self-Realisation through the Tantric way is briefly traced out. The Multiple Ego concept of Freud exploited through Justine is highlighted and a parallelism to the Hindu Goddess is drawn. Shiva mythology, the obscure thread of the *Quartet* is exposed. The confluence of science and religion becomes more pronounced.

Durrell put forward several claims to the *Quartet*. *Balthazar* was introduced with the note that the *Quartet* was an investigation of modern love. We have indeed a panorama of lovers with their varied types of love. Love, in its grotesque and perverted forms, dominates the novel, from lesbian to homosexual and incest, though pornography is totally avoided. Durrell is found exploring multiple facets of modern love, the whole spectrum, from the carnal to the spiritual. As Soad Hussein Sobhy suggests, most of the love relations
in the *Quartet*, with the exception of Darley and Clea are doomed to failure because they all “spring from the ego not from the It and reflect the sick culture to which they belong” (“Groddeck’s It” 35).

Love in this doomed age of uncertainties, frustrations and disappointments would be far away from sincerity and loyalty. Every love in the *Quartet* reveals this deceptive nature of man. The destruction of these perverted affairs finally leads to the rounding off of a true and sincere relationship in the Darley - Clea affair. This is what makes the *Quartet* a real work of art. Indeed the underlying message is obviously that perverted love only destroys or stunts the growth of the individual and it is only when he is totally released from it that he matures into an individual or an artist. As long as Clea is involved with the seductive Justine she finds it difficult to develop her artistic gifts. The homosexual Balthazar reaches a point of suicide but only when he disentangles himself from a dangerous love affair, does he become a normal person. Narouz and Nessim, as Pursewarden and Liza have stunted personalities which eventually lead to self-destruction. Pursewarden’s suicide rescues Liza from incest and guilt and takes her to a marriage to Mountolive. Darley’s failures in his affairs with both Melissa and Justine prove it and eventually genuine love with Clea develops and matures only when he frees himself
totally from all women. In fact, many critics share the view that the book deals with all sorts of sexual aberrations, but as Dasenbrock points out, “Sex is there not to amuse or excite, but in the belief that through sexuality one discovers one’s own individuality - beyond social conventions and norms” (520). Sex is for the average man and woman, what art is for the artist - the way to transcend the norm and find fulfillment. Justine herself declares- “…to imagine falling in love as a correspondence of minds, of thoughts; it is a simultaneous firing of two spirits engaged in the autonomous act of growing up” (Q 46). Bowker in his Biography of Durrell writes- “From the outset sex for Durrell was not just a physical act, but part of the process of enlightenment essential to his artistic development” (43). This philosophy is reiterated by the Alexandrians throughout the novel. Clea clarifies –

Paracelsus says that thoughts are acts. Of them all, I suppose the sex act is the most important, the one in which our spirits most divulge themselves …Sexual love is knowledge , both in etymology and cold fact; ‘he knew her’ as the Bible says! Sex is the joining or coupling that unites the male and female ends of knowledge merely- a
cloud of unknowing! When a culture goes bad in its sex all knowledge is impeded (Q 739).

The search for wholeness which forms the dominant theme of the *Quartet*, differentiates them in their respective paths towards their goals.

The search is conducted by two classes of people, ordinary ... and gifted. The former seek their salvation through sex, the latter through art. Durrell himself says the book is an investigation of modern love, and this is true as far as it goes, for the physical act of sex is seen by his characters as the key to reality and therefore to the possibility of becoming whole by entering into a right relationship with the world as it is (Fraiberg 16).

When we first meet Darley, he is quite an ordinary man who begins his quest through sex and art but gradually he frees himself from his senses and matures into an artist. Unlike Darley, for Justine, Nessim, Mountolive, Leila and Narouz, it is not the sex drive but rather the power drive that motivates them. They are typical Nietzschean characters with their will to power. Their love affairs are only politically motivated, the most outstanding relationship being that of Justine-Nessim, for the state of Palestine. As for Justine her
parallel love affairs and even her marriage are only ways to realise her True Self.

Durrell’s greatest influence has been Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams* described as “the cornerstone of the science known as psycho-analysis” (*Key* 52). The idea of the splitting of the psyche started then. Two whole chapters in the *Key* are devoted to the discussion of this mystery called the ‘mind’. Naturally Durrell propounds these hot ideas, his obsessions through his writings. That is why Pursewarden says that “Personality as something with fixed attributes is an illusion…” (*Q* 210). Since for Durrell there is no such thing as a whole personality we need to break up the personality of Justine and show its different facets. “Nymph? Goddess? Vampire? Yes, she was all of these and none of them” (*Q* 694). Perhaps she is more.

When Justine reminds Darley of the “race of terrific queens which left behind them the ammoniac smell of their incestuous loves” (*Q* 23), she becomes a part of the historical past. In fact, Justine is a modern Cleopatra in a modern Alexandria, an Alexandria which stands for the world at large. While Justine has inherited all the peculiarities of both the place and its princess, Darley himself becomes a modern Anthony who can hear “the heart-numbing strains
of the great music which persuaded him[Anthony] to surrender for ever to the city he loved”(Q 18). Critics like Carol Peirce, Jane Pinchin have very interestingly brought out the Cleopatra - Justine chord in the *Quartet*. Justine, if once she becomes a historical - cultural figure reminding us of Cleopatra, Venus, Aphrodite or even *Shakti* or Kali, at another she becomes an earthly whore, a cruel conspirator or a clever cheat, and yet at another perhaps a devoted wife or a craving mother. It is when all these contradictory elements join together in one person that she becomes truly enigmatic. But as Clea says – “Under all these masks, there was only another woman, every woman …” (Q 694). When questioned about Justine by a writer and fashion editor from *Vogue*, Durrell remarked – “She is very typical of the Mediterranean, she is all over Cannes, I didn’t invent her, she is there” (qtd. in Bowker 411).

This Mediterranean woman has to be placed initially in her unique environment because Justine is characterized repeatedly as a “true child of Alexandria” (Q 27). It is the city that dictates her character and behaviour. “Justine and the city are alike in that they both have a strong flavour without any real character” (Q 116). Durrell who strongly believed characters almost as functions of a landscape, chose Alexandria as the perfect setting for his characters.
because it was various and colourful, with its different cultures, civilisations, religions, philosophies and above all its sensuous mysticism.

Situated centrally on the northern edge of Europe this city at once sacred and profane, “founded by Alexander, ruled by Cleopatra and idealized by Plotinus” (Pierce “Wrinkled” 485), fascinated and intrigued Durrell much, for nowhere else one can come across such an odd combination of old Egyptian civilizations and cults of Platonism, Gnosticism, Hermeticism and the conflicting orders of early Christianity. This strange and exotic blend of European, Asian and African ideas, perspectives, languages, cultures and beliefs have been a rich source of material for a variety of great thinkers and writers through the ages.²⁹ As Jeremy Robinson remarks, there are three writers who have “rewritten” Alexandria, so to speak – Cavafy, Forster and Durrell. (4). Cavafy fills the Quartet with his unseen presence, Forster supplies Durrell with details of Alexandria’s history.³⁰ Durrell in turn recreates a real but unreal city of Alexandria with his rich and lavish poetry. But Alexandria is not a mere background for the action; she is much more than a felt presence, a spirit, a life, breathing life to the Quartet throughout. Alexandria, “princess and whore” (Q 700), is the real heroine of the novel, very
often invoked in profound poetic imagery. Durrell’s city is more a city of the imagination, like say Hardy’s Wessex or Naipaul’s India. As critics have pointed out, the *It* of Groddeck symbolised by Alexandria moves through the characters, talks through them, and feels through them. People are motivated more by their subconscious desires and impulses symbolised here by the city. The landscape becomes a means for exploring the inner lives of its inhabitants. But it is not a partial view either, for her dark, decadent and decaying side is also revealed in all its horrors, “this Egypt of deceptions and squalor, this betraying landscape which turned emotions and memories into dust, which beggared friendship and destroyed love” (Q 631). Justine very often acknowledges “the gravitational field which Alexandria threw down about those it had chosen as its exemplars…” (Q 22).

As critics have pointed out, E.M. Forster’s *Alexandria, A History and A Guide*, a book often referred to in the *Quartet*, is one of the main sources of Durrell on Alexandria. It describes the Ptolemies as a dynasty interwoven with terrific queens. There is Arsinoe whom Philadelphus married, Arsinoe III who faced the Syrian army at Rafe and lastly the greatest and enigmatic Cleopatra, like Justine herself, with whom the terrific race expires. When Justine is pictured repeatedly as a true child of Alexandria the implication and
justification is that, this fact dictates her behaviour, which is of vital importance here. For Durrell, Alexandria seems to represent sexual freedom as well as skepticism, intellectualism and exhaustion as portrayed through his characters. Thus for his investigation of modern love, Durrell chose the most ideal setting, the fabulous city of Alexandria, since it was the only city in the world that gave a supreme place to love. It is the “impossible city of love and obscenity” (Q 338) this “anarchy of flesh and fever, of money-love and mysticism, where else on earth will you find such a mixture?” (Q 314). It was this very quality, the *mystical sensualism* of the city which was Durrell’s primary attraction in choosing Alexandria as a canvas on which the painter- Durrell was to draw out his live-dead puppets to enact their conflicting and confusing drama of life.

Taking the wasteland of Alexandria as his laboratory, Durrell experiments with powerful contemporary ideas in order to subvert comfortable old notions of empiricism, rationality, and absolute space and time. From the ensuing chaos, Durrell creates a new synthesis. Einsteinian physics, with its rejection of absolute time and space, Jungian psychology, with its turn toward the mystic and occult ...(Lund 45).
E.M Forster points out that the literature of Alexandria was unlike the literature of Greece itself, a literature of love.

Ancient Greece had also sung of love, but with restraint, regarding it as one activity among many. The Alexandrians seldom sang of anything else: their epigrams, their elegies and their idylls, their one great epic, all turn on the tender passion, and celebrate it in ways that previous ages had never known…(qtd in Scholes, “Return” 417).

Sensualism and mysticism are the two traditions of Alexandria and this strange combination of “religious materialism” (Key 70) is the way of life as depicted in the novel. Nessim says: “Love is a wonderfully luxuriant plant, but unclassifiable really, fading as it does into mysticism on the one hand and naked cupidity on the other” (Q 389). Love made its way into epic poetry in Alexandria through the *Argonautica* of Appolonius, which inspired Ovid and Virgil to immortalize love. Heliodorus’ *Ethiopica* and Longus’ *Daphnis and Chloe* and a papyrus, called “The Alexandria Erotic Fragment” all probably written around the second and third centuries, combine the erotic subject matter with rich prose (Scholes, “Return” 417).
Durrell has borrowed and reproduced more from Hindu myths and mythology than from any other source available. Durrell’s indebtedness to Indian myths is revealed when we discover the many parallelisms in the Middle-east and Eastern cultures presented in the novel. The prevalence of the same myths in Europe and in India and the striking similarities in many traditional myths and images around the world cannot be dismissed as mere coincidences; instead they reveal the basic unity underlying all cultures and religions. “Love in Indian thought has always been viewed as an inner experience which has to be achieved through special discipline and culture” (Mukherjee 287). We find this strange passion vibrating through the literature of India, both religious and secular. Some sections of the ancient texts like the Vedas, Upanishads, the Epics, the Brahmans, the Puranas and the devotional hymns like the \textit{Soundarya Lahari} by Sankaracharya are studded with graphic sexual imagery. The sacred and the sensuous are thus seen as integrated elements of human existence which is what Durrell also tries to convey through his writings. In the Medieval period writers, poets, dramatists, painters, sculptures and other artists, whatever their language and idiom gave full vent to their creative talents, suffused with sexual metaphors. Kalidasa and Jayadeva stand out as exemplars of this genre. Durrell’s work though
free from pornographic descriptions, deals with all sorts of sexual deviations, disturbing to the normal psyche. Durrell’s treatment of sex has aroused a good deal of hostile criticism which resulted in the banning up of *The Black Book* in England. The Rig Veda accepted to have been written between 5000 BC and 4000 BC, records the first story of primeval incest between Yama, god of death and his twin sister Yami. Vedic texts also refer to the beginning of creation by yet another act of incest wherein the First One or *Brahma* commits union with his daughter. In Greek myths the story of Isis and Osiris, Ptolemy and Arsinoe are related to his sister Liza by Pursewarden justifying their incestuous relationship. Thus Durrell’s indebtedness to myths is great whether it be occidental or oriental. Western critics have largely exposed the Greeko - Roman influence on the *Quartet*, while the Eastern influence needs to be exposed fully. As Durrell wrote to Eliot -“I think there are points of dogma which are pure Taoism and Buddhism – and haven’t been glimpsed by the West yet – except by people like Bruno. But you know all this! ” (qtd. in Peirce, “Durrell, Eliot” 72).

The Hindu texts are not restricted to heterosexual interaction; homoeroticism too is implied in several tales of the *Mahabharatha*, *Puranas*, *Yogavasistha* as well as the early Jaina texts. The important
point is that there was in Hindu tradition a philosophic and pragmatic acceptance of the relevance of desire, with eroticism as its natural attribute, even as there was an equal emphasis on the need to overcome desire with asceticism. Justine, though a sexual turnstile through which every Alexandrian has to pass through, is given to religious and mystical thoughts. Her disgust and revulsion at her own uncontrollable nature is revealed in her evaluation of herself “… my obscene jumble of conflicting ideas: all this sickly preoccupation with God and a total inability to obey the smallest moral injunction from my inner nature …”(Q 122). Justine, who is drawn out as a true Gnostic, strongly believes that the world and mankind are the result of an unfortunate blunder “… the work of an inferior deity, a Demiurge, who wrongly believes himself to be God” (Q 39).

Gnosticism had some basic similarities with Hinduism, primarily since both are as old as humanity itself. (a) It is knowledge (or gnosis) that essentially frees oneself from the evil material world and bodily existence. (b) The knowledge must be of the inner self or soul like meditation. (c) The self or the I or the spirit or soul is divine (Brahman) (d) It is fate that makes the soul suffer in this world, but through a righteous life, the soul can be led to salvation, akin to the Buddhist- Hindu concept of Karma and Transmigration. Gnosticism
differs from Hinduism in that, a Gnostic looks upon suicide as an act of redemption to rescue the soul. But it finds links in Hindu Tantra when it believes in the mystic philosophy of sex. Both knowledge and pleasure are attainable through the creative act. Sexual union becomes a symbol of liberation, understood as a union of *Shiva* and *Shakti*, or *Prajna* (passive female element in Tantric Buddhism) and *Upaya* (active male element). Thus love, death and sex, the obsessed themes of Durrell drew him to both Gnosticism and Tantrism.

As said in the beginning of Chapter 2, the Tantras highlight the power of *Shakti* or the goddess as even above *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Shiva* as revealed in the Upanishads or the *Mahanirvana Tantra*. Justine, no doubt, embodies the power of the Goddess in her which is proved through several passages in the text. Justine is best evaluated by Leila when she says: “... she is an adventuress; like a small dark snake coiled up at the centre of Nessim’s life ...”(Q 276). The snake in Gnosticism and Tantrism represents energy or *kundalini*, which is what Justine is to Nessim. Justine’s attempts to discover her True Self, through the Tantric-yogic perspective, linking her to Hindu-Shiva mythology and the Goddess will be highlighted here.

We first meet Justine through the senses of Darley. She is his passion, the embodiment of Alexandria, the sensuous, feverish,
neurotic aspect of the city. A Jew and migrant to Alexandria from an obscure past, she has imbibed its culture more than any other true Alexandrian. Mentally distraught by a childhood rape, she is under a “Check,” as Arnauti, her former psychologist-husband has diagnosed, which prevents her from ultimate realization in love.31 “The speed with which she moved from one milieu to another, from one man, place, date to another, was staggering” (Q 61). Like a true Alexandrian she flirts with a number of men in search of “a talisman that will stir her into life” (Fraiberg 19). In the course of this reckless journey she puts many in trouble. Her marriage to Nessim is yet another trial to know her true self, but now there is another excitement; the excitement of politics and danger along with sex. Over and above all, as she confesses, it was an attempt to “escape from the cycle of the world into some quiet corner where I can possess myself” (Q 245). As soon as the marriage pact is made, which is nothing more than a business venture, she begins her duty of spying upon Darley and Pursewarden, as per her husband’s orders. Darley’s capture is described in a dramatic way. Darley recollects how she seized upon him while munching olives in a shop, persuading him to follow her. On reaching the great house, the Justine -Nessim
residence, she called out for her husband while Darley followed her like a fool, still munching his olives:

We went from room to room, fracturing the silences. He answered at last from the great studio on the roof and racing to him like a gun dog she metaphorically dropped me at his feet and stood back, wagging her tail. She had achieved me (Q 32).

It was a capture indeed which Darley realises only too late. Animal imagery is repeatedly employed in describing Justine. The foolish Darley plunges into an “intense, explosive, destructive” (Kaczvinsky, Kingdom 40) affair with this dangerous woman that thoroughly upsets his life. Justine goes ahead with her second duty of ‘seducing’ Pursewarden who also stands in the way of the Copts, the “dispossessed foreigners” (Q 553), in realising their dream of a Palestinian state. She sets about on her track very excitedly like a gun-dog, the typical Nietzschean woman on the twin goals of power and self-realisation. Though well aware of the dangers of her “sexually thrilling”(Q 558) game, it was this very danger that fascinated her. Sharing Nessim’s secret mission appealed to her as the most profound and total kind of love. Flouting all morals she sleeps with Darley, Pursewarden et al. When she becomes aware of Nessim’s
eyes following her everywhere, she falters and grows rebellious. She confesses to Darley once- “Perhaps our only sickness is to desire a truth we cannot bear rather than to rest content with the fictions we manufacture out of each other” (Q 698). It is the It of Groddeck working in her. This awareness elevates Justine from her lower self to a higher self.

It is time to assess Justine as having passed through the first stage or even the second stage of the yoga to make an objective evaluation of herself. The kundalini has crossed the moolathara or swadistan chakras, though it does not reach the manipura stage. But even as her will hovers around the senses or the moolathara, swadista chakras, her experiences in sex is initiated “… not from the customary sensuality which afflicts lovers but as if the physical contact could ease the pain of self exploration” (Q 112). Her fickle, unpredictable and enigmatic nature makes evaluation difficult. She continues to be incapable of delivering her true self, causing pain and anxiety to Darley and her lovers. Through her multiple love affairs and through her lessons in hermetic philosophy in the Cabal, she enters into the first and at times the second of the yogic stages, the sensual and imaginative stages respectively. Though she may be found moving
ahead to the next stage, there also happens a simultaneous return. For Darley says-

But her instability had a magnificence that was truly arresting. The more I knew her the less predictable she seemed; the only constant was the frantic struggle to break through her autism. And every action ended in error, guilt, repentance. (Q 61)

Guilt and repentance, are virtues that reveal the psychic transition in the individual. Often she is seen to be moving ahead to the *manipura chakra* because it is then that an inner sense of morality is born. The *chakra* represents the energy of fire at the navel and it may be said that Justine has reached this stage. At times she remarks-

> It would be silly to spread so much harm as I have done and not to realize that it is my role. Only in this way, by knowing what I am doing, can I ever outgrow myself. It isn’t easy to be me. I *so much* want to be responsible for myself. Please never doubt that (Q 76).

Nessim is as enigmatic as Justine, for he, who had excluded love from their union even during the proposal of marriage, now complains- “… the woman I loved brought me a faultless satisfaction which never touched her own happiness” (Q 147). The couple drift
apart mentally. Nessim’s suspicions regarding Justine and Balthazar, and Balthazar’s missing key recovered from Nessim, all make him more and more hideous and mysterious a figure. Justine rebels against all this, but through this very thing, which hurts so much, she tries to find her way back to Nessim. Later she confesses to Darley—“At the bottom of my rubbish heap of a heart there was really Nessim, and the plan. My inner life was rooted in this crazy adventure” (Q 697).

James A. Brigham has rightly assessed that—“Throughout the work of forty five years, in poems and plays as well as in his novels, Lawrence Durrell has brought together the Eastern and Western traditions of the Goddess” (“Femmes Philosophes” 9). Brigham goes ahead to expose only the western-ness of the Goddess. In spite of their innumerable experiences every woman is purged and reborn into a new woman. That is why Hilda (The Black Book) though a prostitute, is compared to Virgin Mary or Melissa is given the name of Artemis. This concept of Durrell is traced back to Groddeck whom he preferred to Freud, and whose theories he believed in. Groddeck says:

Those who have learned that there is an eternal female quality apart, from its embodiment in any individual woman, will also know that inspite of any bodily
experience, in spite of love affairs or even motherhood, this essence of woman is unchangeably virginal (qtd. in Brigham, “Femmes Philosophes” 8).

Arnauti, her former husband remembers in Moeurs his meeting with Claudia (Justine)- “I was bewitched by the illusion that I could really come to know her; but I see now that she was not really a woman but the incarnation of Woman …” (Q 61).

Like the Hindu Goddess known through her different avatars personifying different qualities of nature, the satva, rajas, tamas; Justine displays her varying moods much more complex than the goddess herself. She now plays the role of Kali, the fearful form of the goddess, seated upon a tiger with her protruding tongue. Animal images particularly the wild ones like the tigress, the lioness or the man-eating cats of Arsinoe are often employed to present Justine.

Justine’s ego is hurt when Nessim becomes secretive and begins to spy upon her. She turns vengeful. Her will is under fire and she begins to betray her demonic powers. The Goddess is discovered in her rajasic mood. Terrified at her metamorphosis, Nessim subconsciously recognizes that she is neither mawkish nor sentimental. Nessim decides that Justine, “the Jewish fox” (as addressed by Arnauti, Nessim and Narouz on different occasions) has
to be disposed of. The fear of death haunts her which proves the way for a self analysis. She blurts out before the mirror-

I have done so many things in my life ...Evil things, perhaps. But never inattentively, never wastefully. I’ve always thought of acts as messages, wishes from the past to the future, which invited self discovery. Was I wrong, was I wrong? (Q 164)

Like the Goddess with divine powers of creation and destruction, she claims that what she has done has not been wasted. As for herself it has been food for thought. This self-realisation takes her further in the journey toward the Self. The kundalini almost reaches the anahata chakra, a very crucial and deciding stage as there is always a tendency of its reverse journey. Nessim’s meaningful silence, his hideous activities and most significantly with the fear of death close by, she disappears all on a sudden leaving Darley, Nessim and others bewildered.

Towards the end of Justine, when Clea meets her in Palestine, we find her changed, physically and spiritually as well. What happened during the interim period is quite unknown. The much sought - after Alexandrian beauty grows fatter in the face with chopped hair like rat’s tails.
No trace remains of the old elegance or *chic*. Her features seem to have broadened, become classically Jewish, lip and nose inclining more towards each other ... She had achieved, she claimed, a new and perfect happiness through ‘community service’; the air with which she said this suggested some sort of religious conversion (Q 192).

This total change in Justine is unexpected and surprising indeed. The greatest change could be discerned in her face - a peace of mind gained through community service through which she seems to have achieved a “new humility”(192). This marvelously changed Justine has no doubt traversed the *manipura chakra* to reach the *anahata chakra*, because it is only then that the mind experiences peace and calm. Humility, nobility and generosity of spirit with forgiveness are mastered by the *yogi* at this point. The goddess is discovered in her *satva guna*. One experiences the “first stirring of spiritual impulse” (Bowes 263) which has prompted her to take up community service. But it does not last long. The soul which stands on the threshold of enlightenment must stand firm in its determination to merge in God which is impossible in the case of Justine.
As long as the ego has not been transcended in soul-consciousness, but retains its centre in the medulla, one is not safe from maya’s snares. Unfortunately the mind when in a ‘Yudhistira mode’-that is to say, when feeling calm and uplifted -may consider itself safe from temptation, and end up being tricked again into a long descent (Swami Kriyananda 291-292).

In Clea when we meet her, she has changed again, but for the worse. Her kundalini which had reached a crucial point turns back to a long descent. Nessim brings her back to Alexandria where they resume their former secret activities. Justine’s spiritual degradation is too deep, for in spite of self- attempts towards purgation and purification; a necessary pre-requisite for Self-Realisation, she fails absolutely, pushing herself deeper into the abyss she has created for herself. The Alexandrians are doubly separated from life by the isolation imposed by the consciousness and by the personas they assume. Justine remains trapped in this labyrinth though she tries hard to escape from it. Not later with the discovery of the conspiracy followed by house-arrest, comes the collapse of the will, the focal point of Justine-Nessim relationship. Later she confesses to Darley then:
Then Nessim came over the border to get me. He found me like a mad woman. I was in despair! And he thought it was because of the failure of our plans. It was, of course, it was; but there was another and deeper reason. While we were conspirators, joined by our work and its dangers, I could feel truly passionate about him (Q 696).

In Clea the tamasic mood of the goddess is revealed when Justine turns bloody and rebellious under house arrest. Both Nessim and Justine are maimed. The heavy smell of perfume and the drooping eyelid altogether transforms her expression into something like a leer. Physical change is marked by a subtle psychic change. A truly repentant Justine seeks pardon of Darley for having made him a fool. But repentance is always short-lived for Justine. There develops a contrary side. She cannot tolerate Nessim at all now, as he is –

...completely flavourless not in touch with himself at any point. Then he has no real self to interest a woman, to grip her ... it was as an actor that he magnetized me, illuminated me for myself. But as a fellow prisoner in defeat-he predisposes to ennui, migraine, thoughts of utter banality like suicide! That is why from time to time I drive my claws into his flesh. In despair! (Q 696).
The *tamasic* mood of the goddess reaches its culmination here. She again becomes *Kali*, the fearful goddess who uses her natural weapons of the tongue, teeth and claws to tear her enemy to pieces. Like the goddess herself, Justine combines in her all the three *gunas* in equal measure and betrays them on different occasions.

All love in the *Quartet* is narcissistic. Lovers only mutually help realise one’s capacity of loving oneself. Just as Justine can love only the created image of herself, she can respond only to the man she imagines Nessim to be. Once that image is shattered she surrenders him. Justine does not need reality as such; she has lived so far only in deceptions and can continue only as such, even if it may be possible otherwise. It can be interpreted as an escapism from harsh realities or that the world of deceptions suit her better. By the end of *Clea* when we meet the couple next, on Darley’s re- return to Alexandria, he finds them in a passionate embrace, oblivious of the rest of the world. Justine is radiant and cheerful once again. “It was as if, like some powerful engine of destruction, she had suddenly switched on again. She had never looked happier or younger” (Q 876). Laughing heartily she discloses to Darley that they have started something new, “something much bigger this time, international.” (Q 876). Alexandria will no more be the boiling pot; it will be to
Switzerland and to pastures new. The wheel turns full circle in Justine’s case. The beginning is the end and the end as the beginning. The creative energy which began to flow up, gradually takes a reverse turn to reach its former degraded state; the state of happiness for her. “When power and ambition are stimulated without proper spiritual insight, there is a chance of this power going to one’s head. An individual who is intoxicated with power strays from a true spiritual path” (Chaudhuri 198). This is exactly what happens to Justine. To conclude it may be said that Justine’s real passion is nothing but power and politics. Nessim rightly identifies it in Justine when he proposes marriage to her-

Subconsciously he knew too, that the oriental woman is not a sensualist in the European sense; there is nothing mawkish in her constitution. Her true obsessions are power, politics and possessions—...Q 554).

The Upanishads uphold the four purusharthas as the supreme aim of life for which humans must strive. They are dharma (virtue), artha (wealth, power), kama (pleasure) and moksha (salvation). Dharma, artha and kama are to be viewed as authentical pursuits co-existing harmoniously as part of a balanced outlook. The Manusmrithi, the first law look of the Hindus says that the best is to
follow the trivarga (dharma, artha and kama) which will automatically lead to moksha. They should be practiced in such a manner, that they harmonise with each other, and none should be pursued in exclusion. The Alexandrians have totally excluded dharma from their lives to run crazy after artha and kama, while moksha has been implanted at the very depth of their consciousness. As Fraiberg rightly observes: “... if the book is an account of some of the different ways in which wholeness, and therefore fulfillment is sought by the Alexandrians, Justine is the most outstandingly unsuccessful of them all” (16).

Among Durrell’s women characters Justine is the most widely, variously and interestingly discussed by critics. Clea’s comment on Justine would be apt here-

After all Justine cannot be justified or excused. She simply and magnificently is ; we have to put up with her, like original sin. But to call her a nymphomaniac or to try and Freudianise her, my dear, takes away all her mythical substance - the only thing she really is. Like all amoral people she verges on the Goddess. If our world were a world there would be temples to accommodate her where she would find the peace she was seeking (Q 68).
This is not an isolated commentary on Justine as such. The whole of the *Quartet* echoes with such sayings, prompting us to transfer her to a totally different realm of existence, clothing her with the “mythical substance” that Durrell himself lavished upon her. The Goddess parallelism in Justine therefore requires further exposition and clarification.

Unlike the Western tradition the Eastern tradition bestows all power and strength on the female rather than on the male. The Hindu Goddess is at times a consort or a fertility symbol - a benevolent, horrific or even malevolent a figure. The tradition is replete with a number of goddesses who are associated with Lord Shiva. The most celebrated one is that of Parvathi, his wife. In Parvathi, the goddess we have the true celebration of Indian womanhood. She is of extreme sensual beauty and her endowments are not merely physical but spiritual. Sri Sankaracharya’s *Saundaryalahari*(waves of beauty) is the gem of a work in ancient Indian literature that glorifies the highly sensuous and unsurpassed beauty of the Goddess, whom Indians worship and adore. The breath and soul of the Indians, the most popular *Gayathri Mantra* chanted by the Hindus, is a glorification of the Goddess:
Om Tat Savithur Vareniem

Bhargo Devasya Dhimahi

Dhiyo Yo Nah Prachotheya.

( Let our meditation be

On the glorious light of Savithri,

May this light illumine our minds)

The Devimahatmya (the greatness of the Devi), a treatise on the origin and function of the Devi or Goddess shows her in her true splendour and brings out the wider implications of the concept of the Shakti, that moves the world as a female principle. The female principle is here represented as the best that is in man, because it brings into its task greater ease, more tact, and better understanding.

Among the many strands of thought woven into the fabric of the Quartet, Shiva mythology is the golden thread which unites it right from the beginning to the very end. The thread of Tantrism only lies under it. The above passages reflect Justine as an extraordinary woman with extraordinary powers, like the Goddess herself. But though Parvathi is Shakti or power herself, being Shiva’s consort it is she who makes Shiva creative. For the purpose of creation, he brings into action an aspect of his Shakti (inner power) without which
Shiva himself, though Creator and Destroyer, is powerless. The female principle is “the embodiment of the concentrated essence of male power which, when functioning as female, can accomplish what energy in its pure male form cannot, in the maintenance and preservation of order in creation” (Bowes 257). In Eastern society, particularly in India, following her cultural-religious tradition the female is the Shakti or power of the male. Women play two roles in her relationship to man: inwardly uplifting and outwardly involving. If as mother and spiritual partner she nourishes, heals and cares for him; as partner and consort she provides the impetus and inspiration for all his actions. Nessim’s plans to marry Justine is only to reinforce his strength, power and credibility among the Jews. This is how Nessim proposes marriage to Justine-

I want to be frank. I have no interest in real life...I am visualizing a relationship far closer in a way than anything passion could invent- a bond of common belief...I wish to put myself utterly in your power (Q 552).

That Nessim identifies the female Shakti in Justine here is quite obvious. “Now my life is in your keeping” he goes on. It is a total surrender to the feet of the goddess in whom he recognizes “the
oriental woman” who is “not a sensualist in the European sense” and whose “true possessions are power, politics and possession”(Q 554). And throughout the novel Justine continues to act as Nessim’s Shakti. Justine’s role in the Quartet is thus to materialize the political dreams of Nessim and be a creative power in goading and assisting her husband just as it is Parvathi’s role in assisting Lord Shiva in his karma.

Though Durrell is careful enough to avoid obvious references to the Shiva myth, one accidental slip may be seized upon here. Excited by the adventurous life offered by Nessim, Justine visits him at his great house where they make fierce love. Justine plays her role of Shakti to the fullest, while Nessim is totally overpowered and subdued. Ironically enough, we find a reversal of the sex role here -

He felt her on top of him and in the plunge of her loins he felt the desire to add to him - to fecundate his actions ... to give life to those death-burdening struggles of a truly barren woman. Her face was as expressionless as a mask of Siva. It was neither ugly nor beautiful but as naked as power itself (Q 557).

Hinduism and Taoism join hands here. Nessim is cold to love as though like a Taoist monk he had mastered the art of controlling his
passions but the love is so fiery that “the will and mind burned up as if they had been dipped in quicklime” (Q 557). The celestial love-making comes to mind. The *Shiva Purana* and other texts dwell at length on the love play between Shiva and Parvathi, a union which lasted for several thousands of years, until the very earth got tired of the weight of their unending amorous exertions. Justine at once can be identified with both Shiva and Shakti as seen in the passage. Only on the physical plane this love becomes selfish and brutish rather than being benign or creative. The result is not creation but destruction or death, which is sexually thrilling to both Nessim and Justine.

Lord Shiva, generally classified as the God of Destruction in the Hindu Triad, is the *parama yogi* (highest of meditators), an ideal example of the most concentrated and disciplined effort at self-discovery and suffering to reach the ultimate goal of the timeless world of unity with the Heavenly spirit. *Saivism* thus taught that by intensive, inwardly directed self-effort an individual could become aware of his being as an enduring entity through the yoga. As the Lord of the Yoga, He accumulates immense sexual potency which is creatively released in marital contact with Parvathi.

Shiva is also known as *Rudra Shiva* which manifests His energy and fierce form in the destruction of the cosmos. In His violent dance
called the *Tandava* (cosmic dance of Creation and Destruction), the cosmos is destroyed totally, and here again Parvathi’s role is to pacify and tame her spouse. Nessim’s union and cruelty over Narouz is eased up by Justine when she even suggests of assuming the role of a destroyer (*Kali*) to end the issue for ever. Thus, through realisation of the Goddess one comes to realise oneself. Justine while playing the multiple roles of pacifier and destroyer can transform others without herself being transformed. She expelled people from their old selves. Arnauti, Nessim, Darley, Clea, Balthazar, Pursewarden all come under her magnetic influence to undergo transition.

Shiva, who has hundreds of names depending upon His attributes is also known as *Mahakaala* (great time or conqueror of time). *Devi* or *Kali* is also the goddess of death. *Kaala* and *kaama* (desire) are the two forces that man has to master to enter the timeless world of eternity. Lord Shiva mastered both; He subdued *kaala* or *yama* in the Markandaya episode and burnt *kaama* by drawing him into His bond. Durrell has repeatedly told us that the *Quartet* intends to capture time. It is by subduing *kaala* and *kaama* one can enter the timeless world of the Heraldic Universe. The word *Kali* is derived from the word *kaala* which means *time*, while it also denotes the colour *black*. Justine is the black beauty of the novel, totally
oblivious of time as such. But she also represents the ignominious world of time, which when shaken off reveals one’s true self to oneself, as in the case of Darley. *Kali* devours time while helping the spiritual seeker to enter the timeless world of Spiritual Realisation, as Justine enables both Darley and Clea to reach their ends. Time, Ego and Death are correlated in Durrell, hence they need a wider analysis which will be made in the following chapter.

Shiva is also invoked as the Lord of the Soma or Lord of nourishment to bestow food, wealth and other blessings. With Soma, called the progenitor of heaven and earth, he is connected with marriage ceremony, where he is asked to lead the bride to the bridegroom and makes her prosperous. The common ancestry of Vedic Hindu religion of India and the Persian religion of Mezdaism is revealed through the sacred plant of the Soma. Soma remains “one of the greatest unsolved mysteries in the field of religious history” but still remains a common religious lore of both ancient India and Persia. Soma is referred to as the food of the gods in Heaven, but when pressed and drunk by ancient worshippers was believed to gain powerful attributes of God. Durrell refers to Alexandria as the “city of the Soma” (Q 67) and “site of the Soma” (Q 38), exposing the underlying Shiva-myth in the novel. Shiva mythology is a unique
blend of mysticism and sensualism. In the strange city of the Soma the inhabitants are victims of this strange combination of the occult and the worldly. Though Justine is presented repeatedly as a true child of Alexandria her past and lineage remains unknown. But she had been a street child who migrated to Alexandria, to conquer ‘Prince’ Nessim and his kingdom. Thus the bride has been led to the bridegroom and she has been made prosperous by landing at the land of the Soma.

Durrell reveals his deeper knowledge and affinity with ancient religions, though the implication of Soma in the text otherwise remains obscure.

God is the unity of opposites, masculine and feminine, and it is the harmonious blending of the two that makes an ideal human being. The religious concept of duality or the “split personality” of Freud when analysed reveals striking parallelisms between religion and science. Groddeck says,

The very word sex suggests the violent splitting asunder of humanity into male and female. Sexus is derived from secare, to cut, from which we also get segmentum, a part cut from a circle. It conveys the idea that man and woman once formed a unity that together they make a complete whole... (qtd. in Key 62).
The very same idea becomes one of the teachings of the Cabbala. “For man was created in the image of God, and the divine image has both a male and a female aspect.” (“Tzimtzum” 2). Soon after, however, God separated the female side from the male, recasting them as two distinct beings, man and woman. In marriage, the divine analogue is made whole again, as man and woman regain their original state as a single entity. But even as the split occurs, if it is proportionate, the individual will be released from much tension and bewilderment. The Ardhanareeshwara (hermaphrodite) or Uma-Maheshwara (Parvathi-Shiva) form by which Lord Shiva is worshipped reveals this mysterious conjunction of the male-female in every individual. Durrell considers the human psyche as bi-sexual and has defined man as “Eros-breath, a being Eros powered, Eros dowered” (qtd. in Morrison “Mirrors” 510). As Shiva- Shakti of the Hindu philosophy, Taoists believe that in human personality there are two apparent forces, Yang and Yin, the masculine and female principles respectively. Yang is the power of light or the rational domain while Yin is the power of darkness or the intuitive domain. As long as there is a conflict, a disharmony between the conscious mind and the unconscious psyche one suffers from inner dichotomy. This is the conflict that we encounter in Justine, Nessim, Darley and others.
If Justine is the “most masculine and resourceful of women” (Q 23) Darley and Nessim are too feminine. Darley writes- “She talked like a man and I talked to her like a man”(Q 26). Nessim cuts a successful public figure but in private life a hopeless failure. He admits that Justine is too strong for him in too many ways (Q 33). Poor Nessim founders in Justine’s arms “with his curiously soft-almost virginal feminity (Q 557). In Scobie this male-female conflict is so dominant that his nocturnal adventures in the guise of a woman and his death, turn out to be a classic example of this dichotomy in man. Clea talks of how she was drawn to Pursewarden because “women instinctively like a man with plenty of female in him”(Q 735).

Justine, thus it may be said, “resembled one of those ancient goddesses in that her attributes proliferated through her life and were not condensed about a single quality of heart…”(Q 136). The Hindu Goddess has her own different forms or avatars. Numerous are her aspects, varied her personality, multiple her attributes, and many her names. This description of the Goddess may easily be mistaken for Justine’s since she plays so many different roles together, leaving all others and even herself baffled. Goddess Kali was born when Lord Shiva looked into himself, thus she is his mirror-image. Arnauti and Darley first see Justine through the mirror. The Alexandrians are
doubly separated from real life, or they live in an unreal world of the mirror from where they try to reach out to the real world. The mirror has an added spiritual significance in the novel since it is a medium through which one comes to discover oneself in Hindu religion. The unavoidable presence of the mirror in a Hindu temple proclaims the truth of a world beyond the world of maya. Ray Morrison who has exposed the mirror motif in the novel points out that there are one hundred and twenty mirrors used throughout the tetralogy which are important to a variety of concerns. (“Mirrors” 500). A quote on the mirror from D.A.F. de Sade’s Justine to prefix the text of Balthazar itself reveals the highly symbolic role of the mirror in the novel.

The mirror sees the man as beautiful, the mirror loves the man; another mirror sees the man as frightful and he hates him; and it is always the same being who produces the impressions. (Q 208)

Following Freud, it was Durrell’s aim to break up the stable ego and show its different facets. Sitting before the multiple mirrors at the dressmakers she indirectly comments on her own nature-

Look! Five different pictures of the same subject. Now if I wrote I would try a multi-dimensional effect in
character, a sort of prism–sightedness. Why should not people show more than one profile at a time? (Q 28).

Darley laments that she has surrendered to him “only one of the many selves she possessed and inhabited” (Q 297). The multiple –ego concept is worked out through the mirror motif in the novel. She can be cool and calm though rarely, yet terrific and dangerous together. How is it possible to play so many different roles together? Though she has been harmful, Nessim exposes her other side when he says-

“Nor can I say, that she harmed nobody. But those she harmed most she made fruitful. She expelled people from their old selves. It was bound to hurt” (Q 33). True, like the merciful goddess she has cared for people, particularly Darley in his journey to his Self, though she herself does not move higher towards her goal of self-discovery. Thus her multiple roles of saviour, lover, prostitute, wife and a clever cheat make her a truly enigmatic character. John M. Rose points out that Durrell follows Plotinus in portraying the characters as living two types of lives. Calling them “amphibious”, he explains that they have-

One life spent in restless activity, moving from one event or plan or relationship to the next. The other life is spent in being part of something larger of which they are only
dimly aware, if they are aware at all.... Ubiquitous Justine is the obvious example. She is never at rest whether designing liaisons with Darley or plotting revolution for the Copts, Justine’s life is a jumble of purposes. (78)

The myriad expressions of feminist spirituality like Diana of Rome, Isis of Egypt, Kali or Devi of India, or Madonna of Europe, has all assimilated into the figure of Justine. The concept of the Mother Goddess which had existed since prehistoric times visualises the Goddess as the ultimate end to shed our pangs and sufferings. She is a maternal, protective figure always ready to forgive, forget and love. To complete the Goddess imagery of Justine, it is important to highlight her maternal instincts. Among the multiple aspects of her personality, it stands out as the most outstanding, powerful and noblest quality of all. If we analyse the character of Justine deeply, we arrive at the conclusion that all her activities are the offspring of her maternal love. Whatever role she plays, whether as nymph, goddess, temptress, or cheat, it is as a mother that she out-shines all. How fondly she talks of her child she has lost—“...somewhere in the length and breadth of Egypt, it must be suffering terribly, alone, perhaps ill-treated” (Q 245). In tears, she confesses to Clea that her
marriage to Nessim was only to utilize his riches to trace out her child. When the bitter truth of the child’s death is brought to light she deludes herself into believing otherwise and clings on to the false hope of the child’s return. She goes ahead pushing the reality into her subconscious and even goes to the extend of bribing Mnemjian to keep it a secret. “But this thing, once dead seemed suddenly to deprive me of all purpose. I recognized it, but my inner mind kept crying out that it was not true refusing to let me recognize it even though I already had consciously done so!” (Q 765). Thus Justine, over the years grows into a bundle of repressions, oppressions and depressions, moving ahead in deceptions and lies, never for once revealing her true self to anyone. She deceives others as well as herself.  

It is only to Pursewarden that Justine finally opens her heart - her past, her present. Without hesitation Pursewarden charges her of being a party in enjoying the seduction which generated the guilt that denied love to her. Though shocked at this downright judgment on her she more or less admits the charge. Pursewarden was indeed applying a hypnotic cure for her long - drawn out illness by “releasing suppressed thoughts which when they came up to the surface and were accepted by the conscious mind, appeared to lose all
their poisonous sting”(*Key 51*). She is also made to visit the child brothel where her child had died. Thus Pursewarden succeeds in effecting the cure, freeing her from the Capodistria-succubus and her self-deceptions. She emerges a fully changed personality. Since truth is unstable by its very nature as Durrell says, what the *real* Justine is, cannot be concluded. With Justine, Durrell has undoubtedly created one of the most exciting and enigmatic women in modern fiction.

Justine’s journey to her Self becomes only a partial success. Her unfathomable nature compels one to probe deeper into her nature in all its aspects, which would indeed make an exciting study. Love as a pathway to selfhood is not always a success. Other hurdles like Ego, Death and Time should be mastered as well. The following chapter makes a sweeping survey of the journey of the other prominent characters toward Self-Realisation.