Chapter IV

Sundaram: the Heraldic Universe

Ego, Time and Death will be the focus here. They have been Durrell’s obsessions as also obstacles in the path to the Heraldic Universe; the silent, speechless, time less world of bliss.

Lead me from the unreal to the real,
Lead me from darkness to light,
Lead me from death to immortality ((Manchester Upanishads 80).

Moksha (liberation) is the ultimate goal of human existence. The Scriptures and the sacred texts of the Puranas and Ithihasas show the ways to attain it. But by merely learning the Scriptural truths about the nature of the soul, the universe, and the Supreme Being and their relationships one cannot hope to attain moksha. One should be able to reflect intensely on these matters and cultivate viveka (discrimination), by which one learns to distinguish between truth and falsehood.

God is the great silence – Mounam Brahman. It is by entering into the depth of silence that you realise God. Purswarden exclaims
that the fundamental aim of art is to invoke this “ultimate healing silence” (Q 763). It is from this long eternal silence that everything begins and ends, hence man is drawn towards it. Huxley in *The Perennial Philosophy* says “The spiritual life is nothing else but the working of the Spirit of God within us, and therefore our own silence must be a great part of our preparation for it…” (247). Durrell himself once suggested that if one resisted the enormous current of worldly noise which is going on about one, “one might get closer to an understanding of oneself” (Adam 403). Silence becomes a pre-requisite for all creative activity which will ultimately be rewarded by the deeper silence of one’s own Being. “The man who in his work finds silence, and who sees that silence is work, this man in truth sees the Light and in all his works finds peace” (*Gita* 4.18: Mascaro 62).

The rewards of silence are not few. Once the timeless, spatial world has been known, one comes out of it to –

... look at the world with new eyes. You deal with people; you go to work; you carry on your thinking and feeling as a transmuted instrument in the hands of God. Inwardly there is profound silence. Outwardly there is the performance of activities as an instrument of the divine. (Chaudhuri 181)
Man’s life is an incessant voyage, a struggle in the dark to reach the light beyond that beckons to him; he need not look before or after for it, it is always with him, in his heart. The bright infinite light of God, the light of the eternal, dwells in everyone of us, only we don’t see it. In running after worldly pleasures man gets tied up in its labyrinth and gets distorted by the untruth. To move from untruth to truth should be the goal. Truth which spans the past, present and future and the whole universe, remains unchanged and imperishable.

The Alexandrians have all lost their ways in the world, yet they go ahead in their search, though the light is discovered only by a few. But how far do our characters travel or trespass into this “heraldic universe”? What are the hindrances towards achieving their goal? They are too ego-driven, diseased in love and sex, pressurised by time and death, yet they move ahead unconsciously in their dark worlds seeking the divine light beyond. As Bowker sums it up, the Alexandrians are set upon “the quest for wholeness through sex and art, and faced with the disintegrating ego and a world gone mad, the confrontation of death and the coming to terms with it”(358).

This is the dilemma they are faced with, and it is their struggle to free themselves from these weaknesses, that forms the central theme of the Quartet. When caught in the web of life, worldly pursuits
gain precedence in one’s agenda. But the nature of life is a blend of joys and sorrows, hopes and disappointments, leaving one dejected and lonely, as we found Darley in the beginning. Worldly pleasures are madly pursued, but when attained they hardly yield any real pleasure. Man’s search for everlasting joy ends when he seeks the feet of God. But the journey towards God is a long one for the Alexandrians. Initially any individual needs to be qualified to move towards the Heraldic Universe. An *agnipareeksha* (test through fire) of conquering ego, love, time, death-fear and emerging unscathed and purified for the ascent of the soul forms its essential precondition. The task is not an easy one; when some sacrifice themselves in the trial like Pursewarden, Narouz, Melissa; some emerge in new forms like Capo, Scobie, Melissa, Balthazar, while yet others still continue their trials to reach the final stage like Darley, Clea, Keats, Balthazar et al. Durrell’s ideas on Ego, Death and Time - the so-called obstacles to glory, and how some prominent characters react to these all-time human obsessions need clarification here.

Ego and Time are the two great hindrances to any creative activity. In metaphysical terms, since the Ego is the main cause of man’s limitations and delusions, he should unceasingly offer it up on the altar of infinity, from the ruins of which a new individual with an
enlightened consciousness will be born. As said earlier, the progress of the *kundalini* is very often blocked above the *ajyna chakra* because of the development of the ego and super ego barriers. Only by its removal, will it pass on to the *sahasrar* chakra, when full enlightenment becomes possible. But this is not as easy as it seems and only the truly purified may reach it.\(^{35}\)

In Eastern and Western mythology, the different kinds of Ego manifestations have been described. It is a divine - undivine or god-demon principle, for if cultivated properly it becomes a divine power and if abused, demonic. Capo is quite right when he quotes Paracelsus thus: “Innumerable are the *Egos* of man; in him are angels and devils, heaven and hell … ”(Q 812).\(^{36}\) The Alexandrians are victimized by the *gandharva* ego or the hedonic ego, for it makes a man worldly. His dictum of life would be “eat, drink, and be merry.” In the absence of intrinsic spiritual joy a vacuum, a void or emptiness of heart sets in compelling the individual to seek more and more pleasures. When external pleasures are overemphasized, pretty soon one reaches a saturation point and becomes bored. Darley reaches the island in such a state of utter despair wishing to exclude Alexandria and her bitter memories from his mind. This is Darley’s life in the beginning. He frees himself from his ego and senses and becomes aware of his Self
towards the end, eventually to reach the stage of enlightenment. Balthazar, Pursewarden, Mountolive, Pombal, Capo run after sensory pleasures, totally oblivious of the spiritual aspects of life. All love is narcissistic, with the exception of that of Darley and Clea, and hence they are all doomed to fail because they spring from the ego.

Leila’s *gandharva* ego gets transformed into the *tapurich* ego or fearful ego when her face gets disfigured by small pox leading to a withdrawal from the real world. People with the *promethean* ego like Narouz, Nessim or Mountolive use their heroic strength and extraordinary ability to discover power. But if an artist degrades himself into an “autist”(*Key 87*) a term that Durrell borrows from psychology which means *selfish*, art would be impossible, hence he becomes “aware of the necessity to transcend personality”(*Key 87*). Here again, the influence of Shiva mythology on the *Quartet* may be discerned. Lord Shiva, popularly depicted as *Nataraja* or Lord of the Dance, through His *tandava* or cosmic dance keeps in equilibrium his activities of creation and destruction. The picture of Lord Shiva dancing with one leg raised to the sky and other firmly rooted on a figure is the symbolic representation of the trampling of the physical ego of man. When the ego blocks the passage of ultimate enlightenment or goal of the artist the solution is to get the ego
transformed, not destroyed. In fact, the ego can never be destroyed but it is only the consciousness of the ego that should be removed. When Darley and Clea burn away their egoism and narcissism that they mature into real artists. Pursewarden the artist, realizes it and advices Clea thus-

The real obstacle is oneself. I believe that artists are composed of vanity, indolence and self-regard. Work-blocks are caused by the swelling up of the ego ... tell your ego to go to hell and not make a misery of what should be essentially fun, joy (Q 737).

As conveyed by Durrell, the twin aspects of art, is a shedding off of the Ego which in turn leads one to the goal of Self-Realisation. The purpose of art as propounded in The Black Book is not to depict man but to invoke God. Lucifer represents as trapped in a totally vicious world, victimized by an alter ego named Herbert Gregory, who insists that his death is egocentric and mortal.

But what exactly is this Ego? Durrell’s concept of the psyche and the ego are drawn heavily from Groddeck, Freud’s disciple who maintained that the Ego was the functioning of the “The It,” another “mysterious force” working in man, beyond the Ego.
The sum total of an individual human being, physical, mental and spiritual, the organism with all its forces, the micro cosmos, the universe which is a man, I conceive of as self unknown and forever unknowable, and I call this ‘The It’ … (qtd. in Key 74)

The Ego in fact was a mere mask which deluded the human being into thinking that he was responsible for what he was. He explains that his breathing, his heart-beat, his sleep are not willed by him. Freud who did not see beyond the Ego was led to situate the It within the confines of the Ego, which comes to an end with the death of the individual. But to make it more complex, it is said that the brain and the intellect are both created by the It; for long before the brain came into existence the It of man seems to have been active and thinking. The It therefore cannot be named the spirit or soul or some other being or entity.

Dr. Raymond Moody in his book *Life After Life* explains with evidences that there seems to be a life after death, for many of his patients who were clinically pronounced dead, have staged a come-back to relate their near-death experiences. One common factor of all these varied experiences is that the “dead” patient continues to have a
conscious awareness of his environment. They have experienced a “floating out” of their physical bodies, associated with a tremendous sense of peace. A “bright light”, not a person helped them into another plane of existence; while some were greeted by their loved ones who had died before. Moody in his Introduction to the book states that he does not want us to believe that there is a life after life, but that “the most intriguing facet of the human soul may be more clearly elucidated” (6). In this context one can examine Groddeck’s distinction between the It and Ego.

Groddeck argues that the It goes beyond the Freudian Ego, and dictates all activities of man. Further, this It-unit is a male–female unit, which can again be subdivided into two, four, eight and so on. Durrell points out that Groddeck’s philosophy “…bears a close resemblance to the Chinese Tao concept, which manifests itself in endless dualities. The It is a way, not a Thing” (Key 79). Shiva and Shakti of the Hindu Tantra are identical to Yang and Yin of Taoism. According to Tantra, the secret of spiritual enfoldment lies in the gradual harmonization of or integration of Shiva (pure intelligence or logos) and Shakti (pure energy, love or eros). God is the unity of the two opposites, masculine and feminine, variously known as Shiva and Shakti, Yang and Yin, Tab and Yum or Logos and Eros. Though
Oriental religions propound this male-female theory it is not accepted by Platonism and Christianity.

In an essay Durrell wrote in 1960, on the anxieties of the time, he stated that for man to live truly, he must first and foremost conquer his fear of death.

My own belief which has been influenced by the feelings of the psychologists of today, is that all human interest—whether personal anxiety on the part of the individual or explosions into war on the part of whole communities—is based on the fear and mystery of death. (qtd. in Kaczvinsky, “Panic Spring” 35-36).

Death has remained a favourite theme of Durrell throughout his oeuvre. Moreover Death is always associated with Time. Described as one of the great “unknowns” (Key 4) it is said to be “advancing upon us at the rate of sixty seconds to the minute, sixty minutes to the hour…” (Key 4). This statement betrays the fact that, Durrell more than any other person was constantly in fear of death. It was a haunting presence that followed him everywhere, it becomes an inevitable presence in all his writings.

As Friedman puts it, “Throughout his career Durrell deployed death as incident, theme, motif, setting, even character” (Fictional
Death 254). *The Pied Piper of Lovers* and *Panic Spring* convey the same *carpe diem* theme of enjoying life’s pleasures while you can, for death is imminent and near. In *The Black Book* Lawrence Lucifer aspires to be a writer and he declares, “This is the day I have chosen to begin my writing – because today we are dead among the dead; and this is an agon for the dead, a chronicle for the living…” (2). *The Black Book* originally subtitled *A Chronicle of the English Death* was described by Lucifer as the “log of that universal death, the English death, which I have escaped” (83). In a Note to the *Quartet*, Durrell says that “only the city is real” implying that the characters are all unreal (14). Since the *Quartet* was originally titled the *Book of the Dead*, it would not be too imaginative to describe all the characters in the novel as dead, or that they are ghosts or spirits who live a life after life (or death), which probably accounts for their strange inhuman behaviour. Justine says “the dead think of us as dead” (Q 164) and in another context that “…we are dead and live this life as a sort of limbo. Yet the living can’t do without us. We infect them with a desire to experience more, to grow” (Q 76). Towards the end of the *Quartet*, we find Clea in constant fear of death. She is scared, always looking behind her shoulders, as she feels the dead are everywhere. Barber Mnemjian, a significant character in the novel is told that he is
“shaving the dead while they are still alive” (Q 663). Pursewarden insists that an artist “seeks his real friends among the dead and the unborn” (Q 439). In Tunc, Felix Charlock makes love to Iolanthe which is a sort of “deathscapade” (137). The Avignon Quintet is a novel seen “from the point of view of death.” (Liviu 11-12). If every novel in the Quartet ends with a death, every novel in the Quintet begins with a death. Such is Durrell’s preoccupation with death.

Godshalk writes that great art “emanates from the artist’s fear of death” (106). If so, it may be said that Durrell’s attempt through art is to deny the power of death or is a challenge to death. Pursewarden and Scobie though dead, are more alive than others. Da Capo though dead still lives unknown to all. Thus the dead are not dead after all. If in art you can create a “fictional death” (Godshalk 105), so you can create even a fictional life, as does the Pole in Panic Spring by embalming his wife’s dead body. But even then death cannot be defeated for the mummy –wife of the Pole or the dummy Iolanthe has to face the inevitability of death. Felix like Capo requires death to escape from harsh realities of life. Friedman suggests that Durrell’s art is “…death defying, a Faustian refusal to condone or accept the finite, an over-reaching of self in search of permanence or at least survival” (Fictional Death 250).
But there is consolation indeed, in religion. Or rather it is the Hindu –Buddhist theory of rebirth that Durrell tries to project through his characters. In the Key Durrell continues “…birth and death would seem to be almost interchangeable terms” (4), for birth is soon followed by death. The Gita says “For all thing born in truth must die, and out of death in truth comes life…” (Gita 2, 27: Mascaro 50). This idea takes us further to the principle of karma. The fate of man and his future births depend upon the good or evil deeds he performs in his present life. After innumerable births and deaths, the Self reaches a state of nirvana or final enlightenment. Though Durrell does not elaborate on the theory of nirvana, he concludes by quoting Appolonius of Tyana thus:

There is no death of anyone, but only in appearance…
The change from being to becoming seems to be birth, and the change from becoming to being seems to be death, but in reality no one is ever born, nor does one ever die. (qtd. in Key 85)

This “being” is Brahman and it is when a spark of the Brahman changes its state into “becoming”- a body, that creation comes into effect. In reality there is no such thing as death for it is only a cessation to begin all over again. This atman after innumerable births
and deaths finally unites with the Brahman which is the upper *Nirvana* referred to in chapter 1. Durrell’s talk with Marc Alyn needs to be repeated here:

> What I was trying to achieve was a canvas that was both historic and ordinary; to get that I made use of every modern technique. To my eyes, Proust had exhausted the literary potential of our society; I had to find something else, to turn for example, to Einstein, or to go back to the origins: *The Book of the Dead*, Plato, to the occult traditions which are still alive in the East. (qtd. in Swedan 73)

Durrell no doubt is referring to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* since many ideas propounded in the *Key* run parallel to those of *The Tibetan Book*. The *Tibetan Book* throws light on the “great unknowns” (*Key* 4) or the unresolved metaphysical questions of life, death or life after death. Durrell’s original title of the *Quartet* may also have been derived from it.

As Friedman points out, “Death is modernist in the *Quartet*, characters disappear but remain hovering presences, or return in altered form” (*Fictional Death* 254). One important character though declared dead in *Justine* but remains a towering presence throughout
the *Quartet* is Pursewarden. He has been hailed uniformly by prominent critics as a great artist, a seer, a wise man, or even an elevated being who has reached the heraldic universe. Pursewarden is a successful writer, the sort of an artist Darley always wishes to be, also nurturing a secret jealousy for him. It is he who initiates Darley into the Heraldic World. He encompasses the spiritual, aesthetic and psychological worlds when he talks at length on the Heraldic Universe. G.S Fraser comments that in Pursewarden:

> Durrell has attempted to create an artist who is in Yeats’ phrase in *A Vision*, more or less exactly Durrell’s own ‘antithetical mask:’ an amalgam of Wyndham Lewis and D.H Lawrence, both artists who were preachers or prophets as well as pure artists, with a touch of Henry Miller added, and touches also (it has been suggested to me) of Dylan Thomas, Roy Campbell, and Byron (152).

But in spite of his success, Pursewarden is not able to harmonise his life and his work. His marriage is a failure and very soon we realise that his soul is not in his work. Darley says that he walks about with a reputation and a name, with a total void inside him. Therefore, Darley would not wish to be like him. Pursewarden is the *Quartet*’s primary symbol of the Self. In the beginning his suicide is explained as a sort
of egoism and guilt over his official failures, particularly over his false report of Nessim.

Narcissistic and egoistic of all the characters, the narcissistic theme is furthered in the theme of incest focused on Pursewarden and his sister. There is justification for that too in Eastern myths, as related in the previous chapter. Thus Pursewarden who had to protect his sister, since they were orphaned in childhood, wins over the situation and pays for it in the end by killing himself. Though at first we are given official reasons for the suicide, later we know that he has killed himself to allow his sister to pursue her own life with the dark stranger, Mountolive. Thus Pursewarden’s sacrifice of his life for his sister elevates him from his sin of incest. Durrell suggested that “Pursewarden’s suicide is the sacrificial suicide of a true cathar” (qtd. in Kaczvinsky, Kingdom 81). He is described as a true Gnostic, true as far as his theories on love and sex are concerned. Suicide for the Gnostic is supposed to be a poetic act, a return to wholeness or actualization. Moreover, in the Gnostic lore incest is a symbol of rebirth and creation is seen as a result of the union of brother and sister.

In Hindu–Buddhist philosophy, suicide itself is considered a sin and one’s life and succeeding lives depend upon one’s karma
(deeds). Besides an artist who is said to have reached the Heraldic Universe would never ponder on suicide at all. Pursewarden’s death is thus not the culmination of a sacrificial cathar only, but also that of guilt. Liza explains that the bliss of love lasted for so many years when suddenly “one day, like an iron shutter falling, guilt”(Q 790) overpowered Pursewarden. Since then he wanders off, marries, tries to escape, but the bond remains: love and guilt. Critics have variously explained the reasons for Pursewarden’s suicide but his letters to Liza and her lengthy confessions on it (Q 802, 803) clarifies guilt as the real cause. Besides in Durrell’s fiction, incest is always punished. Sharon Spencer has very convincingly exposed the tormented lovers in the Quartet as mythic archetypes and clarified how incest stunts the growth of the individual as proved in the case of Pursewarden or Nessim. Thus ultimately all happenings of our life are traceable to karma, though guilt renders chances for a partial or even total redemption from the sin. Repentance is the great Christian act by which man is purified and through his death both his sin and life come to an end. Thus we can conquer our karma and discover a new source of higher values - light, joy, love and peace which is what Pursewarden ultimately gains. Ann Ashworth argues that Pursewarden plays the role of Hermes, Son of Jupiter equivalent to
Egyptian Thoth. His personal, political, mystical assignments are those carried out by Hermes, thus highlighting his significance in the novel (71). Durrell himself has confessed that Pursewarden is his favourite character, besides it is through him that many of his pet theories are propounded.

Melissa’s death evokes pity and compassion in the readers. She is described as “a sad painting from a winter landscape contained by dark sky…”(Q 46). James Brigham rightly points out that her role in the novel is “as important as Justine’s, for Melissa is the key to the structural principle on which the Quartet is based” (14). If Darley had made the wise choice of welcoming Melissa instead of Justine into his life, it would have made all the difference and saved Darley himself and others from so much misery. Felix Charlock too makes such a fatal choice between the two women and lands in trouble. But a purification for Darley was essential to make him qualified to enter the yogic state of mind. Melissa, more than Justine, embodies the Shakti figure of the Goddess for she is exactly the incarnation of love and protection. “In her there was a pliancy, a resilience which was Oriental”(Q 48). She loves Darley not for his gains, but for his pains. Melissa’s role in the novel is mythical as well as mystical. Melissa is the name of a herbal balm by Paracelsus. Durrell had pointed out he
chose the name Melissa because it referred to an initiate in the Eleusinian Mysteries, revealing her function in the novel. “Her delicacy, her pallor, her Grecian beauty are emphasized by the surname Durrell gives her Artemis” (Bode 533). Composed mainly of the satva guna (justice, goodness) she never even once betrays fiery emotions. Even when Darley ignores her for Justine or disposes her off to ill-health she remains cool and composed with no word of complaint. Two significant occasions in the novel are related to her, once when she blurts out to Nessim that his wife is unfaithful to him. Second, when she discloses to Pursewarden, the Cabal’s role in arms-smuggling. The first changes her life inside out, by conceiving Nessim’s child and the second kills Pursewarden. She takes up the responsibility of bearing a child but also falls victim to a fatal illness and eventually dies. Cohen, Nessim and Darley all cast her away to death. Since every woman to Durrell is an incarnation of the goddess it is the divinity in her that declares to Pursewarden just minutes before his suicide that his “life is dead, closed up … I see death very close”(Q 531). If official reason stands as the only reason for his suicide, this is prophecy indeed for it is through her that Pursewarden realizes his greatest flaw of judgment in assessing Nessim and his actions.
“Indeed Melissa is more the whore with the heart of gold, who offers Darley the chance for true and genuine love” (Kaczvinsky, *Kingdom* 46) but he foolishly denies it. Years later when Darley reviews his actions and analyses the women in his life, he thinks of Melissa thus: “She loved my weaknesses because there she felt of use to me; Justine brushed all this aside as unworthy of interest. She had detected another kind of strength” (Q 160). Free from all sorts of anxieties she seems to have accepted the realities of life without complaints. Totally different from the rest of the characters in the *Quartet,* she is not the victim of a sick psyche, restlessly in search for wholeness or ultimate peace. Her mind is absolutely cool and balanced for she has already reached a point of complacency sought after by others. She seems to be under the assumption that she has to live out this life in all its facets, accepting it in all its harsh realities. By becoming aware of her situation she conquers her situation thus attaining the stature of a tragic heroine. She has covered all the hurdles towards enlightenment like Ego, Time, or even Death. What differentiates her from others is that she is least bothered about her self, not concerned about time and never depicts a fear of death, even when she knows she is dying. Like another Viola “She sat like Patience on a monument / Smiling at Grief”( Shakespeare *Twelfth*
Night, line 114-15). She seems to have accepted the Buddhist principle of samsara, the cyclical process of death and rebirth. Her stoicism and courage are recognized by Darley only after her death.

Not once is she tormented or guilty of the profession she has taken for herself. In ancient Cyprus, prostitution was a sacred act performed at the sanctuary of the Mother Goddess, whether she went by the name of Aphrodite, Astarte or what not. But whatever its motive, “similar customs prevailed in many parts of West Asia… regarded not as an orgy of lust but as a solemn religious duty” (Gaster 356). Guilt feelings can become an agency of constructive and fruitful action. It is guilt that prompts Darley to see Clea in Melissa’s place, to rescue her from the deep waters and finally adopt the child thus redeeming himself from his guilt. Melissa, no doubt is held up as a role model by Durrell.

The concept of duality is highlighted through the twin-characterisation of Nessim and Narouz. That Leila, the sophisticated lady should have borne these two sons is further amazing. Narouz is the primitive, crude Egyptian who chooses to stay close to the soil, and Nessim is the refined, thriving businessman, whose success has already earned him the envy of his equals. Narouz’s ugly features, especially his split upper-lip has perhaps deprived him of education,
turning him into a cynic. Their mother is proud of Nessim but ashamed of Narouz. Narouz also depicts his multiple personality because though he can be loving and considerate to his parents he can also be ruthless and cruel to his servants. When we see him as a youth, in spite of his bad looks we appreciate his devotion to his invalid father and fondness for his mother. His political and religious fervour add to his merits. He silently mourns for his father when he mutely suffers over his wife’s infidelity. All this becomes clear only in the third novel Mountolive, for our initial impressions of Narouz is that of an angry young man, fierce and unyielding. How mercilessly quick he is to cut off the ear lobe of a boy servant and how sadistically cruel in slaughtering a live camel. Michel Pharand feels that “Narouz’s cleft palate is a small emblem of his predilection for larger slicings and amputations, a brutality that extends to the way he deals with women” (65).

This inherent duality in Narouz reinforces the Shiva –theme in the Quartet. Narouz in his primitive destructive aspects resembles Virada Shiva in many respects. His bull whip which is his constant companion, his rough exterior, his pet snake at home, his scanty way of dressing, his physical strength and his destructive aspects clearly is a vision of Lord Shiva. But as in Shiva, this is only one side of
Narouz, for the other side, is a totally benign one, which reflects to Carol Peirce “the role of a Christ figure” (“Wrinkled” 493).

Narouz also becomes both a creative and destructive symbol, synonymous with Lord Shiva in whom many contradictory and conflicting qualities meet. His creative aspect is symbolised by his role of a farmer, who helps in creation. His constant care at the egg incubators shutting off all normal activities, reminds us of Lord Shiva engaged in the process of cosmic creation. He is powerful, wrathful and impetuous at the same time generous, gracious and benevolent.

As events unfold, Narouz develops a new and mysterious side to his personality; he gradually mounts in spiritual significance, and in him we clearly trace the enlightenment of the kundalini. His visits to the magzub, or the holy man to know the whereabouts of Justine’s child, his seeing the vision (denied to ordinary persons) of the child with the magzub, his becoming the disciple of the Taor, a woman saint, which finally climaxes in the electrifying speech, when he in truth enters the Heraldic Universe, are all ample enough to prove his mysterious powers.

Paige Matthey Bynum points out that Narouz’s character is typical to that of a shaman’s experience. In support of the argument she quotes Mircea Eliade - a shaman “marks himself off
progressively by some strange behaviour, he seeks solitude, becomes a dreamer, loves to wander in woods or desert places, has visions’ and ‘occasionally becomes violent’ ”(85). All these peculiarities we do witness in Narouz. The turning point occurs when Narouz delivers his speech to the Coptic community. With Pursewarden, who happens to be there by chance, we too wonder how this uneducated, inexperienced baboon would fulfill his duty of addressing the congregation. The scene is memorable which needs to be elaborated. Narouz addresses the mob in a cool, composed manner, gradually rising up, then suddenly he gives a hoarse cry of “Meded! Meded!” (Q 490). It is supposed to be an invocation for divine strength uttered by desert preachers after which they fall into a trance. And then-

... came a change – all of a sudden it was as if an electric current had begun to pour into his body, into his muscles, his loins. He relaxed his grip on himself and slowly, pantingly began to speak, rolling those amazing eyes as if the power of speech itself was half-involuntary and causing him physical pain to support. It was a terrifying performance...Then all on a sudden he broke through the veil and his voice gathered power ... The power and tension flooded out of him into the room: all of us were
electrified...sent us sprawling like music ... That voice! It went on autonomously, rising to a roar, sinking to a whisper, trembling and crooning and wailing. (Q 490).

It is said that when one is possessed by a mysterious power or spirit, one will act and speak involuntarily. Sometimes even an alien language, probably the language of the visiting spirit would be uttered, while the person would be totally unaware of it all. The awakened kundalini in Narouz which passes through the chakras finally reaches the sahasrar chakra to attain the Sahyujya Avasta. It is described by Durrell, though not in precise terms thus:

... a pulse beating within a greater will which only the poetry of the psalms could invoke and body forth. To awaken not merely the impulses of the forebrain with its limited formulations, but the sleeping beauty underneath - the poetic consciousness which lay, coiled like a spring in the heart of everyone (Q 578-579).

“The sleeping beauty underneath” is nothing but the kundalini or shakti that is coiled like a serpent or ‘spring’ at the base of the spinal chord or in the middle of a person’s body, as said earlier. No doubt, the Tantric symbolism was at the back of his mind when describing this aroused state of Narouz, though Durrell has no intention of
exposing it in the *Quartet*. Nessim who is astounded acknowledges that he was ignorant of his brother’s newly developed power.

It is when the *kundalini* reaches the top of the brain and as *Shakti* unites with *Shiva*, the transcendent, the spiritual realization in the form of experience, of pure being, consciousness and bliss takes place (Bowes 263).

Narouz is soon killed by the end of *Mountolive* but he continues to be a presence in *Clea*.

Among the characters who return in “altered form,” the foremost is Clea. Clea passes through hard times, suffers and *dies*, but is *reborn* and emerges purified and stands illuminated at the threshold of the heraldic universe. In *Justine* she is just a minor character who “lives without loves or family ties, without malices or pets concentrating with single-mindedness – upon her painting which she takes seriously, but not too seriously”(Q 108). But in *Balthazar*, she emerges as an artist, or a painter to be precise, who has been hampered by her affair with Justine. Her *kundalini* resides at the *mooladhrara, swadishta* chakras now. This homosexual love so much affects her that she has to stop painting altogether and even the portrait of Justine which she started then, has been left unfinished. Darley tells Clea that he has two problems that interconnect—his art
and his life. So, Clea’s life influences her art and vice versa. A harmony should be achieved between the two for a spontaneous overflow of talents. What she experiences is a void, a total vacuum inside her and her youth devoid of any fruitful experiences cripples her. A total involvement in the world is essential for any art to flourish.

Her early portraits of Scobie, Justine, Mountolive and others reveal the simple personality that she is. But her true works of art are her clinical drawings and perhaps as Durrell observes her “utilitarian object has freed the painter from any compulsion towards self expression” (Q 109). Gradually, she herself prescribes the remedy for her inaction. Under the delusion that a total knowledge of life, particularly through a sexual relationship will activate her dormant creativity she takes the crucial decision of destroying her virginity. She approaches men like Pursewarden and Amaril. Pursewarden evades her while Amaril helps her. A quick abortion also follows with the least regret, but with regained confidence she declares to Darley—“It is funny but I realized that precisely what wounded me most as a woman nourished me most as an artist”(Q 739). Frederick Karl rightly observes that Clea is a “more fleshed Justine” who is much “hackneyed” to feel that a sex relation will make her creativity flow.
Two qualities Clea shares with the other characters are “a failure to feel responsibility and an allegiance to her own sensation” (52).

Clea feels immeasurably grown up after this experience, though she still has her periods of inactivity. Her creative energy leaves the base chakras and almost nears the *manipura* only because she gains some confidence and self-esteem after this incident. But soon after she loses her self-control. She begins to exhibit symptoms of a serious nervous breakdown. She has hallucinations, feels death close-by, has strange visitations from the dead and at times even loses her consciousness. All this is identified by Paige Matthey Bynum as peculiar in a *shamanic* crisis (92). Narouz’s deep passion for Clea and his sudden death, besides the strange prophecy of Scobie, may all be explanations to her strange and mysterious behaviour. Her guilt over her refusal to see him at the time of death, in spite of frequent requests probably troubles her. The dying cry of Narouz for Clea was too haunting to be ignored. Clea could never yield to Narouz; the beauty could only shudder at the beast. It therefore turns out to be a real life – death struggle for Clea. Guilt purges the mind and soul and the enlightened *kundalini* goes ahead. Darley belated arrival diverts her attention for a while. When she realises that her inner self is being drawn more and more towards Darley, she checks herself and
applying her will she tries to move away from him. She is the strong woman who will not yield to the passions. The \textit{vissudha chakra} is the seat of diplomacy, pure relationships and playful detachment from others. Now she tries to solve her critical situation alone, by asking Darley to leave her. The will is stronger than passion for a truly Nietzschean woman.

The concealed intense passion of Narouz for Clea, reminding us of Othello’s love for Desdemona was never to flower. Ordained with mysterious powers already, Narouz was not prepared to surrender Clea to this world. As prophesied by Scobie, he tried his best to wrench her away from real life, even after his death. It happens when Clea and Darley choose that particular spot in Narouz’s island for the last swim together - the climax and turning point in the lives of both Darley and Clea.

Before the departure they plan a swim in Narouz’s island where the turning point occurs. A harpoon gun of Narouz’s, carelessly handled by Balthazar pins her hand to the hull of a sunken ship from where Darley has to save her life by no other means except by severing off her hand. The incident achieves significance in many ways than one. In one way it confirms our mystical doubts over the continuation of a life after death, and the realization of the prophecy
that Clea will be dragged over to death by Narouz’s spirit. Second, it effects a drastic change in the lives of both Darley and Clea. Darley frees himself from his guilt of surrendering Melissa to death by rescuing Clea whom he now sees in Melissa’s place. “Darley only now has been absolved from the guilt which has impeded his growth and development” (Kaczvinsky, *Kingdom* 80). As far as Clea is concerned it is a confrontation with death and a revival of life. After lying lifeless for a long time, meanwhile putting in their best efforts, Darley and Balthazar are at last forced to acknowledge her death. But there happens a miracle, whereby death and rebirth occur simultaneously, and Darley relates it thus-

> Then after a long time, we heard a faint whimper. It must have hurt, as the first few breaths hurt a newly born child. The body of Clea was protesting at this forcible rebirth. And all of a sudden the features of that white face moved, composed themselves to express something like pain and protest. (Yes, but it hurts to realize) (Q 852).

This phrase “it hurts to realize” is repeated in the *Quartet*, and it was clarified by Durrell in a talk with Ann Lillios. When Durrell was asked why Clea had to lose her hand, his reply was-
The whole business of poetic realisation contains tremendous risks. As Darley, as Pursewarden says, “It hurts to realize”. And in the Tantric game when you start on the kundalini you can trigger insanity, you can trigger massive schizophrenia. Basically, you work it with somebody who already knows, who’s been there, who can guide your steps. (qtd. in Lillios 6)

This realization is the Tantric realization of one’s own shakti or power through which one turns out to be a full-fledged individual or artist. Thus it can be stated with emphasis that Tantric symbolism is very much dominant in the Quartet. Clea is rushed to the hospital to occupy the same narrow bed, the death-bed of Cohen and Melissa, and returns to life a new and changed personality.

There occurs a tremendous change in Clea. After this incident she is no longer the old person. She has changed inside out, entirely free from her old horrors and fears. The old Clea is no more; she is with Narouz in his island. Kaczvinsky suggests that she is unable to live imaginatively because of her fear of death and she uses “sex as an escape from reality, from death. Like many of the other characters she is eventually forced to acknowledge the reality of death, to situate it in the present, and thereby come to an appreciation of life...”( Kingdom
Evidently she seems to be undergoing some sort of transition and it is nothing but the journey ahead of the kundalini that we witness in her. “…the metamorphosis came about with comparative slowness. It waxed and waned like a tide, now advancing now retreating”(Q 838). The lost hand has been transplanted with a new one, but to her dismay she discovers that her new artificial hand can paint as wonderfully as never before. After a long interval she writes to Darley thus-

I have crossed the border and entered into the possession of my kingdom, thanks to the Hand. Nothing about this was premeditated. One day it took up a brush and lo! pictures of truly troubling originality and authority were born…All the roads have opened before me, everything seems now possible for the first time.(Q 874)

Darley himself makes his final leap to the ‘magical kingdom’ after reading this letter, though Clea feels sure about him. With confidence she writes-“…I have a feeling that you too perhaps have stepped across the threshold into the kingdom of the imagination, to take possession of it once and for all” (Q 877).

Through Self-Realisation she discovers a renewed love in Darley. It is a new love of companionship and sharing, not the
narcissistic sensual love that the Alexandrians have always known. Darley-Clea love is the only genuine and sincere love relationship in the novel. In Clea, Durrell very clearly exposes the transcendence of the creative energy or *Shakti* through its different stages to its final awakening of joy or reunion with the Ultimate energy, when creativity becomes possible. Personal fulfillment demands a kind of death-in-life, without which passion, in this case artistic passion cannot thrive. Clea reaches the Heraldic Universe at last.

Another memorable character in the *Quartet* is Scobie who fuses in him the two poles of Alexandria, sensualism and mysticism. Besides he personifies the sexual duality in men as presented in the *Ardhanareeshwara* form of Shiva. He is a cop, the Head the Secret Service but ironically enough, he does not gain stature as a clever police officer but rather as a wayward officer who cannot resist his “tendencies” (Q 225). Though bent double with rheumatism, seventy-year old Scobie roams the docks in outrageous female garb in search of sailors, and even sleeps with men. “But for all his eccentric trappings, Scobie is one of the few who manage to handle sexual appetites in a purgative manner” (Pharand 69). But this symbol of sexuality meets with a tragic death only to be reincarnated as a saint and fertility God. Absurdity indeed, his bathtub in which he used to
make wine becomes his holy shrine where pilgrims visit him regularly. Though humour and irony overlap the sexual and mystical, what is projected is a total defeat of death, by means of rebirth which becomes a reality even in errants.

Another dead (arranged death) but reborn character is Da Capo, the old porn (short for pornographer). He is called Da Capo because of a sexual prowess reputed to be as great as his fortune. In his usual humorous and ironic style Durrell says -

Capo has the purely involuntary knack of turning everything into a woman; under his eyes chairs become painfully conscious of their bare legs. He impregnates things. At table I have seen a water-melon become conscious under his gaze so that it felt the seeds inside it stirring with life! (Q 37-38)

His family is noted for the number of suicides in it. With pride Capo acknowledges that his father was a great womanizer, who when very old made a model of a perfect woman, life-size in rubber. She was strikingly beautiful and named Sabina after his mother, and took her everywhere with him. Death is challenged and incest is reiterated. Though he is introduced as Justine’s relative, little do we realise that he is the villain behind Justine’s “Check”. A cabalist and close
associate of Nessim in his hideous activities, his death becomes inevitable at that point of time. His death arouses doubts in us, later we know there is mystery in it, and in Clea it is confirmed when we hear that he is living in an isolated tower, practicing homunculi.

The hermetic allegory is climaxed in Capo through his innovative experiments under the guidance of an Austrian baron. Critics like Ann Ashworth, Ann Gossman, Mark Lund have elaborated on the underlying hermetic theme of the Quartet. To wind up, Capo who had been journeying to Self-Realisation unknowingly by chance, now regrets his past, to confess thus- “I did not know then that my path was not the path of Light but of Darkness”(Q 807). He is one who has trespassed into the Heraldic Universe.

True to his name John Keats becomes John Keats only towards the end, when he surrenders truth for beauty or when he harmonises them in his life. It is a transformation from the real world of a reporter to the imaginative world of an artist. When we see him in the beginning he is a journalist, a real reporter sniffing in the air for truth which might be born any moment. Though in Balthazar we are told he is dead like Capo, in Clea he is reborn. It is only when he goes to the war-front and comes face-to-face with death that he undergoes transformation. He says - “It has made a man of me ... more a writer!
My soul is quite clear...I have begun it at last, that bloody joyful book of mine ... not a journalist’s any more, a writer’s” (Q 796).

As Durrell always argues, it is only when we situate death in the present and overcome its fear, do we truly become creative. Keats has learned his lesson. He says - “Life only has its full meaning to those who co-opt death” (Q 797). Turning inwards is the only way to understand the truth of one’s atma (soul) which is immortal and that death pertains only to the body. Death is inevitable but the irony is that only with this perishable body can one strive to attain immortality. Changes are for the body only while the soul remains unchanged. There is no need to be frightened of death. One has to strive to attain liberation—a state from where there is no return. This message of the Hindu scriptures is conveyed through Keats. Though Durrell tried to challenge death through his writings he was well aware of this truth.

A significant character who undergoes reformation is Balthazar, a Jewish doctor, a Gnostic and a live member of the Cabal. In Durrell’s classification of modern love, Balthazar falls under the homosexual category, for he scoffs at love to declare – “Lying with one’s own kind, enjoying an experience, one can still keep free the part of one’s mind which dwells in Plato, or gardening, or the
differential calculus” (Q 82). His obsession with the world of time is symbolised in his father’s watch which he carries with him. His anxiety over its key when lost, betrays how farther he has to travel to reach the timeless world of heraldic reality.

When Darley returns to Alexandria in Clea, he encounters a tremendously changed Balthazar with white hair, false teeth, and clumsily bandaged hands. It is the total change, psychic as well as physical, which baffles Darley. Balthazar himself who has successfully overcome all his weaknesses assures him that he is a changed personality. Through love he has learned his lesson, ironically enough, for he had always laughed at all love-relationships. His desperate affair for the Greek actor turned him into a drunkard, induced self-mortification and even attempts to take away his own life. The resurrected Balthazar has learned his lessons from life like-“Life is the master. We have been living against the grain of our intellect. The real teacher is endurance” (Q 706) and, “Acceptance of the world can come from a full recognition of its measureless extents of good and evil; …” (Q 706) and so on. Here again, only after a vain attempt at death, whereby death comes face to face with the individual that a transition is evoked in him. Death destroys but also recreates.
At last Balthazar decides to celebrate his new life, or as he puts it, his “resurrection from the dead” (Q 707) by accepting “the largest lunch” offered by his friends. Thus Balthazar is regenerated and returns to the clinic as a wounded healer to heal the wounded. He will be a better doctor as he has peeped into the Heraldic World. He achieves wisdom and enlightenment.

“This world is the will to power and nothing else besides. And you too are that will to power, and nothing else besides.” writes Nietzsche (qtd. in Stern 81). This is absolutely true as far as Justine, Nessim, Mountolive, Maskeleyne, or Memlik Pasha are concerned. Nessim is a successful businessman with an excellent public image but his private life is an absolute failure. His life is devoted to the Palestinian cause; all his actions, even his marriage are ultimately for that single aim that wholly destroys his life. He devotes his life for the Palestinian cause but staggers before another weakness, his concealed incestuous love for his mother- “Yes, I sometimes think I shall never be able to fall in love properly until after my mother dies - and she is still comparatively young”(Q 549). This cripples him altogether. Nessim is not concerned with the self or its quest since he is too involved in worldly affairs. But at times a voice in him whispered, “This is no journey for the feet, however. Look into yourself,
withdraw into yourself and look.’ But this was the one act of which he knew himself for ever incapable” (Q 148).

Durrell always associates Time with Death and Death with Time, as said earlier. He says, “Time is the measure of our death consciousness ... time is only a kind of death measurement” (Key 4). When Arjuna refuses to fight his brethren, Lord Krishna warns him; “I am all-powerful Time which destroys all things, and I have come here to slay these men. Even if thou dost not fight, all the warriors facing thee shall die” (Gita 11.32: Mascaro 92). Thus Time can be equated to Death. Whatever has been pre-ordained or whatever is fated will never undergo change.

Huxley says, “There is no greater obstacle to God than time” for “time is what keeps the light from reaching us” (217). Hence in our quest for the Ultimate we have to do away with time altogether, which is why the Alexandrians are totally oblivious of time and dates. Darley writes “in the great quietness of these winter evenings there is only one clock: the sea” (Q 19-20). Significant events are recorded as they occur in the mind of the narrator, and often they do not follow in chronological order. The time reference that exists is not based upon a calendar; but based upon a comparison of remembered events. On
another level, it is a total flouting of time altogether in the postmodernist mould, though Durrell’s intentions are far beyond them. Again as Huxley writes, “Three things prevent a man from knowing God. The first is time, the second is corporeality, the third is multiplicity” (217), all of which thwart the Alexandrians. The vision of the Alexandrians becomes clear - they seek to escape from the world of time into a timeless world of ultimate peace and rest.

Durrell complains that, man is tempted to regulate his ideas of time by the face of a clock and the pages of a calendar. No chronology, calendar time or dates are mentioned in the *Quartet*. Narouz says- “...let us not be reminded of the flight of hours. God made eternity. Let us escape from the despotism of time altogether” (Q 261). In the Hosnani house we find all clocks stopped together.

Time takes a new concept in Durrell’s world which is no longer linear but cyclic. All life is fusion as well as flux. The past combines with the present to form the outline of the future. Einstein’s three-space one-time theory has totally revolutionised our whole attitude to the universe. He suggested a marriage of space and time into a four-dimensional volume which he called a ‘continuum’. Einstein’s theory has thus joined up space and time as well as subject and object. It
showed us that the picture that each observer makes of the world is subjective.

Even if different observers all take their pictures at the same moment of time, and from the same point in space, these pictures will not be alike—unless the observers happen to be moving at the same speed. Only then would they be identical. (Key 28)

Durrell urges us to strike a nodding acquaintance with the new theory which is already showing up in the writings of Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot et al. That accounts for the many recurrences of scenes in the *Quartet*. Same events may have multiple versions, another reason for its repetition. For example, the love scenes of Darley and Melissa are repeated verbatim in Darley–Clea meeting. Melissa’s death on the same hospital-bed of Cohen’s death; repeated phrases like, for an obvious example, Justine being called “a tiresome hysterical Jewess” by herself, as well as by others in different contexts. Any number of examples may be pointed out which are quite obvious even to a casual reader.

By joining space and time or subject with object Einstein has revealed that the concept of time is not the linear past-present-future one but a new time or a cyclic time which contained within it all time;
time past, time present and time future. Quoting Giordano Bruno, the Renaissance philosopher, Durrell points out-

In every point of duration is beginning without end and end without beginning. It is the centre of two infinities. Therefore the whole of duration is one infinite instant, both beginning and end, as immeasurable space is an infinite minimum or centre. (Key 35)

Thus a simultaneity of all time is the peculiarity of the new concept. When T.S. Eliot builds his “Four Quartets” on the phrase, “In my end is my beginning” we realise this simultaneity of time. That’s why the Quartet closes with the words “Once upon a time” which contains within it, a beginning and an end. Now this cyclic feature becomes more and more obvious in all art forms of the age.

All these new theories in science lead us nowhere but into the field of Eastern religions. Indian culture conceives of creation and dissolution as essentially cyclic in nature. Orphism, Pythagoreanism and Platonism also believed in the concept of rebirth. If cyclic time contains a beginning and an end it is the same as the Hindu- Buddhist-Gnostic philosophy of birth-death-rebirth, which is what Durrell has been trying to say.
The wheel of life or *samsara* symbolises the cycle of birth, life and death. When one revolution of the wheel is completed, life begins again with rebirth which depends upon one’s action or *karma* in this life. *Karma* can be distinguished as good or bad, but the basic cause of all misery in the world is one’s desire, which can be eliminated by following the Noble Eightfold Path of Buddha. The *karma* of past, present and future events are connected by the law of cause and effect. Bad action or *karma*, at times generates regret or fear which is called “metanoia” or “change of mind” without which there cannot be even a beginning of the spiritual life. (Huxley 294). This change of mind is evidenced in the characters of Darley, Pursewarden, Balthazar, and Clea. Buddhists hold that the retributive process of *karma* can span more than one life-time. Rebirth or reincarnation has always been an important tenet in Buddhism, often referred to as the walking wheel of life (*samsara*). It is the process of being born over and over again at different times and in different situations, possibly for many thousands of times. This process continues until *nirvana* is reached, which signifies the cessation of rebirth and hence suffering. The concept of rebirth is unfamiliar to many westerners, but not to Durrell or T.S Eliot or W.H Auden or W.B Yeats who were all familiar with
Indian mysticism. Since Durrell’s anxieties were focused on the question of death, this is what he had to say -

You have to be a Christian to be anguished about death. Inevitably since for Christians, death is the end of everything; there remains only Hell and there you are!… Indians ... come back to expunge the error. One remakes one’s life…” (qtd. in Bowker 402).

The concept of rebirth and its philosophical foundation is found in India, where the theory of transmigration of souls had presumably existed long before it was written down in the Upanishads in around 300 BC. When Freud published his *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1900, he toppled all our concepts of the psyche. His theory of the collective unconscious affirms the question of rebirth, or transmigration of the soul. As Durrell asks- “How was it that a twentieth century man living in a modern city, was often found to be dreaming things which were being recorded as the myths and religious beliefs of some savage tribe in Africa?” (*Key* 54). Even the ideas of the split-psyche and birth of the unconscious discovered by Freud have their roots in the Upanishads. The Mandukya Upanishad states that the waking state is taken to be the lowest expression of the real
self. In dream and deep sleep stages, the Self gradually mounts to the fuller realization of itself. This idea is no different from what Durrell explains to Peter Adam “…the present is which we live and act is an absolute illusion. We are phantoms really. And perhaps it is only when we’re asleep or in our dreams that we realize the fact” (409). When Ray Morrison argues that Justine is a Schopenhauerian woman, he quotes Schopenhauer thus- “Consciousness is the mere surface of the mind, of which, as of the earth, we do not know the inside but only the crust” (42). Here he highlights the same theory of the mind considered in three parts namely – the conscious, subconscious, and the unconscious represented by the waking, dreaming and, deep sleep stages respectively, as revealed in the Mandukya Upanishads. By transcending these three states one reaches the super conscious vision or the fourth stage of the mind. Thus, what is the real world but an absolute illusion as Durrell says. Maya involves and bewitches people in various affairs of life and ultimately liberates us from it. She plays the double role of enchantress as well as saviour.

“The escape from the cycle of birth and rebirth into Nirvana promises a new timeless condition which is not subject to intellectual or linguistic qualification. Reality, they tell us, is illusion or
appearance” (Key 33). The world of nirvana is thus a promising world for Durrell, an escape from the world of maya to a real world that he most desires. The world of nirvana is sundaram, the beautiful and peaceful abode of God. Durrell said, “All human searching for perfection... aim at one thing: the establishment of a non-conscious, continual state or stasis; a point of co-operation with time,” (qtd. in Burns 376). Etymologically, nirvana means the blowing-out or blown-out condition, the extinction of the four-fold fire of ignorance, passion, conflict, agony, in which we live our life of bondage. We suffer only because we have forgotten the true essence of our Being; we have forgotten what we essentially are. This loss of identity is at the root of our suffering. There are two types of nirvana, the higher nirvana and the lower nirvana as expressed in chapter 1. Lower nirvana is something one can attain here and now in this world. The moment one attains enlightenment one attains nirvana and liberation. Liberation is like waking up from a dream, suddenly discovering a new transcendental plane of consciousness as evidenced in Darley and Clea. Swami Muktananda describes it beautifully thus:

As the kundalini rises to the sahasrara you begin to see a divine effulgence ... In the centre of that effulgence lies a
tiny and fascinating beautiful light, the Blue Pearl, and when your meditation deepens you begin to see it sparkling and scintillating ... The Scriptures define the Blue Pearl as the divine light of consciousness which dwells with everyone. It is the actual form of the Self, our innermost reality, the form of God that lives within us (41-42).

This ecstatic state of spiritual union has to be experienced by oneself and cannot be understood otherwise, though great saints have given insights into this state that are invaluable for spiritual seekers.

Higher nirvana is the one attained after countless births and rebirths, washed away of all sins, purged and purified for the final union and bliss with the Lord. It is a world of nothingness, sunya or samadhi or perhaps the ultimate healing silence of Pursewarden, or the true dying unto life or the life everlasting. Eliade says that yogic enstasies, samadhi, is the final result and crown of all the ascetic’s spiritual efforts and exercises (522). Yoga, in a broad sense in a preparation that a spiritual aspirant makes to realize the Self (Atman) – to be released from the cycle of transmigration. Durrell always wished for it, perhaps the Alexandrians too are craving for this ultimate nirvana. Louis Fraiberg is right when he says that “It is this
life beyond love and beyond art which is celebrated in the Alexandria Quartet” (35).

Very near the end of his life Durrell said - “My real objective in life has always been a sort of religious quest, if it could be described as such. I used religion in a purely selfish way, in the hope of curing my complexes” (qtd. in Pine 55). He was so taken in by Eastern philosophies that towards the end of his life, he had become almost a Buddhist and a Vedantist. A regular practitioner of yoga and shirshasana (headstand pose), Durrell could remain on his feet for almost forty minutes at a stretch, every morning around the year 1976. At Chateau de Plaige in Burgundy, he was instrumental in building a Buddhist temple and greatly pleased that Buddhism had just planted a foot in Europe.

Durrell said-

I chose the relativity proposition because it seemed to me that the ideas …which were leading us, in a way back to India , were coming precisely out of the heavily deterministic mathematics of …Freud and Einstein…

(qtd. in Vipond 55)

Durrell has done his best in exposing this harmonious blend of Eastern metaphysics and Western physics. This thesis has highlighted
the profound impact that India, her rich culture, heritage and religion had on the *Quartet*. 