Chapter-1

1  *Māya, Karma, Nirvāṇa* are terms that have been brought down from their original cosmic meaning to the human level, where it has acquired a psychological base. The world around us is *māya* or illusion, for God alone is Truth. All life is action or *karma*. *Karma* is the active principle or the total universe in action, where everything is dynamically connected with everything else. By freeing oneself from the bondage of *karma*, that is, on death, the soul after a series of births, deaths, and rebirths reaches a state of *nirvāṇa* when it merges in the Universal Soul. *Nirvāṇa* is also a state of consciousness or enlightenment or awakening as the one attained by Buddha.

2  Many are the themes of the symphony of the *Bhagavad Gita*, but the central ones are three: *jnāna, bhakti, karma* – or Light, Love, Life. *Jnāna* is knowledge, *bhakti* is devotion and *karma* is duty or work and the three are paths that lead to the Lord. *Karma* is considered above *jnāna* and *bhakti*, and has acquired a far deeper meaning which leads to one of the sublime conceptions of man.
The Universal Spirit is Brahman. The manifestation of Brahman in the human soul is Ätman. The essence of the Upanishads - *Aham Brahmasmi* meaning *I am Brahman*, conveys that Brahman and Ätman are one.

Emphasis added

Mark F. Lund in his article “Sackcloth to Cloth-of-Gold: Durrell’s Alchemical Quartet” and Ann Ashworth in “Durrell’s Hermetic Puer and Senex in *The Alexandria Quartet*” bring out the hermetic allegory in the Quartet. Tied to the Quartet also is the strange Renaissance medieval deck of cards, the Tarot. Durrell himself admitted his characters to be symbols and not just people.

*The Revolt* is a satire on science fiction, gothic, and romantic where the narrator Felix Charlock, a sound engineering expert invents a machine, the dactyl which records human whispers into typed pages, which in fact, is the novel itself. The novel is crowded with a group of emotionally and spiritually dead characters with no solutions to their lives.

*The Avignon Quintet* is a novel which encompasses Gnosticism, Nazism and mysticism with the recurrence of all the themes of the Quartet. The quest here is for the treasure of the Knight’s
Templar, with a gnostic understanding that the ego and will are sources of illusion. It further explores Tantric love which Durrell initiated in the *Quartet*.

8 *A Key to Modern British Poetry* is a collection of his lectures given at the British Council, Argentina where he worked as lecturer, for a brief time after the War in 1948.

9 Emphasis added. This confluence has been an interesting discovery of this research.

10 Philosopher, mystic, poet, and yogi, Aurobindo’s teachings and method of practice was not to develop any one religion or to form any new religion. One of the aims of his yoga was the development of the inner self and also evolve a higher consciousness than the mental, that is, a spiritual and supramental consciousness that will transform and divinise human nature. In *The Life Divine* and *The Synthesis of Yoga* he discusses it philosophically and in *Savitthri* presented it in poetic form.

11 *Deus Loci* is a 100-line poem which is an affirmation and celebration of the spirit of place, in preference to accursed and doomed religions.
Prospero’s Cell treats the years Durrell spent in the island of Corfu where his family shifted from England in 1935. A product of the creative imagination, the book is written in a multiple of literary genres. Durrell’s familiarity with the place and his scholarly essays on the selected parts of the island, the humorous anecdotes and the aesthetic philosophic discussions make the book truly memorable.

Reflections on a Marine Venus is a feast for a lover of landscapes. The book expresses a poet’s intoxication with the Greek island of Rhodes with a humanist’s appetite for history and an eye for character worthy of a novelist.

Bitter Lemons on the island of Cyprus also forms a clever apologia for British policy. The book became controversial and challenged in Cyprus and America. The Duff Cooper award was presented to Durrell in 1957 for Bitter Lemons by the Queen Mother.

These three island books reflect three phases of his wanderings, though more books for travellers and isolmanes like Silicon Carousel (1977), The Greek Islands (1978) and others were published intermittently. Durrell’s passion for islands was so strong that he himself identified his disease as isolomania.
T.S. Eliot was one of the greatest contemporary influences on Durrell. He carried on a long and lasting correspondence with him. Refer “A Fellowship in Time. Durrell, Eliot and the Quest of the Grail” by Carol Peirce in *Comprehending the Whole*.


Chapter 2

Otto Rank’s book *Art and the Artist: Creative Urge and Personality Development* published in 1952 happens to be one of the many sources for the *Quartet*. William Leigh Godshalk points out that the idea of incest and rebirth and the quotes are directly taken out from this book.
Egoists are often seen to look down at the world. To bow before others is a gesture of humility, thereby releasing tension in the upperneck.

17 Emphasis to *even yoga* added. This has been the incentive to probe into the techniques of the yoga thereby leading to this thesis.

18 Sree Sankaracharya is the oldest and the most important teacher of the Advaida school of Vedanta. His Advaida (non-dualism) philosophy which goes back to the Upanishads professes Brahman as the one and only source of everything.
The essence of the Upanishads *Tat Tvam Asi* if interpreted would mean *I am Brahman* or *I am Ātman* or I am God. Our little personality tends to disappear if the deeper meaning of it is imbibed.

In writing to Miller about the stages of ascend to the heraldic universe, he further clarifies by using the analogy of colours. In the first stage one sees only the yellow in colour print, then blue and than a combination of yellow and blue to move on to red and finally a conglomeration of all the three shades of yellow -blue-red. But the state of pure repose is white or a consciousness of all colours. In Hindu mythology, the mystical transcendence is said to be a passage through three stages of consciousness represented by the colours black, white, red. Durrell may have pinched the colour analogy from here.

*Sravana, manāna* and *nididhyāsana* are the Vedantic stages of spiritual growth. If *sravana* is the hearing stage, *manāna* is the thinking stage and *nididhyāsana* is the meditation stage when one goes deeper and deeper into one's own Being.

Emphasis added.
23 Satva, rajas and tamas are the three gunās or elements of human nature. They are light, fire and darkness respectively. Satva is pure and it gives light, health and happiness to life. Rajas is the nature of passions, source of thirst and attachment, binding the soul of man to action. Tamas is born of ignorance and darkens the soul and binds man to sleepy dullness. From satva arises wisdom, from rajas greed, from tamas negligence, delusion and ignorance. Chapter 14 of the Bhagavad Gita elaborates on the gunās.

24 In the Encyclopedia of Religion (volt 5, p.14), Eliade differentiates on the terms ‘ecstasy’ and ‘enstasy’. Enstasy probed deeper may be distinguished from Samadhi. It can be imbibed deliberately by a mystic for miraculous powers, which is not of relevance here. The only significance lies in the fact that it is a self-created state like that of Darley’s.

25 Durrell’s prose is amazing. Even his unfavourable critics have lavished praise on his unusual and masterly command of the English language.

26 The bird is an archetypal symbol of man’s eternal quest for mature growth and self-realisation.

27 The human body is a source of tremendous energy, which will stimulate into action quite unawares. The aroused energy or
Kundalini of Darley has enlightened him for a short while. This is an important step to self discovery.

28 Emphasis to secret landscape added. It is the kingdom of imagination or the heraldic universe of Durrell.

Chapter 3

29 Founded in 332 BC by Alexander the Great, Alexandria was the capital of Egypt for over thousand years. Known as the “Pearl of the Mediterranean” it was the principal centre of Hellenistic culture from the time of Alexander. It became a part of the Roman Empire in 30 BC. From the first century the city was the home of growing Christian and Jewish communities. In the third century, Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Empire. From the fourth century Alexandria had been the seat of a Christian patriarch. In 641 it was captured by the Muslim Arabs and after the opening of the Cape route its trade rapidly declined. In 1798 it was captured by French troops under Napoleon and held by the French until 1801. Early in the nineteenth century it began to recover its prosperity and growth and became the main naval base in the
Mediterranean during both World Wars. The city was damaged in frequent air raids in War Second.

The Moslems in Egypt, filled with new strength and aggressive energy have been suppressing and humiliating the Copts. The Copts are, perhaps, the true ancient Egyptians members of a venerable Christian Church, hence they consider the Moslems as either intruders or renegades. As a counterforce to the Arabs, the Copts in the novel, are found to be supporting the Jewish underground, in Palestine. The Hosnaries are Copts, filled with so much moral indignation and humiliation against the Moslems, and the British who are their supporters. Nessim represents the crushed Coptic community in the novel.

From the nineteenth century, Alexandria was a focus for Egypt’s commercial and maritime expansion. It soon flourished into a prominent, cultural, intellectual, political, and economic metropolis. This has been immortalised by writers such as E.M Forster and Cavafy. Generations of immigrants from Greece, Italy and the Levant settled here and made the city synonymous with commerce, cosmopolitanism and bohemian culture. Alexandria was the site of the Great Library and the Lighthouse, one of the
Seven Wonders of the world. It was the romantic setting for the stormy relationship between Cleopatra and Caesar, and Mark Antony.

Constantine Cavafy (1863-1933), the true poet of Alexandria, who unites in him the Durrellian themes of art, religion, memory, time, and sex, is a living presence in the *Quartet*. Critics have pointed out that Balthazar is a version of Cavafy.

31 Jacob Arnauti, is a French Jew of Albanian descent who had written a novel about a Jewish woman in Alexandria, whom he had met, married, took to Europe and divorced. *Moeurs* is weaved into *Justine* and it in turn is weaved into Justine’s mind.

32 Yudhishtira, the eldest of the Pandava brothers is a personification of *dharma* (rightful duty) in the *Mahabharatha*. Yet he has a weakness for gambling which is exploited by Duryodhana when he challenges him to a gambling match, whereby Yudhishtira loses everything in the game.


34 On a psychological level, Justine is Jung’s Mother Archetype yearning for her lost child. She herself admits that a doctor has
diagnosed her as a “nymphomaniac”. But to borrow Clea’s words “to call her a nymphomaniac or to Freudianise her… takes away all her mythical substance - the only thing she really is (Q 61).

Chapter 4

To free oneself from the assertion of the Ego is not simple or easy. The Hindu Scriptures say that the vibrations generated by the chanting of Aum(Om) are of great help in cleansing the ego and super-ego obstructions above the ajyna chakra.

Types of Ego are the tamasic ego, tapurich ego, kuvaric ego, gandharva ego, pishajic ego, rajasic ego, promethean ego and asuric ego. They represent ignorance, fear, greed, sensuousness, lethargy, aggressiveness, strength, and ideology respectively.

The Tibetan Book of the Dead portrays the art of dying in such a way that death can be made a passage to life everlasting. It also shows the art of living the life of immortality, rising above death and duality.