Chapter II

_Satyam: Quest for Truth through Art_

Characters in the _Quartet_ are all engaged in the quest for Ultimate Truth (_satyam_) through the different means open before them. This chapter will focus on Darley and his journey to Truth (_satyam_), through art, artisthood and ultimate salvation, through the allegory of Yoga and Tantrism. Since Darley’s existential journey is wedded to his artistic endeavours, writing itself becomes self-discovery.

Art is divine, it is God-given. In a spiritually sterile world art has no place. The _Quartet_ is clustered with artists of all kinds—writers, painters, story tellers, orators, magicians and even kingdom-makers though to many their talents are dormant or closed up. They lack the artistic vision; their eyes having lost their power to see, their ears to hear and their hearts to feel. On one level, the _Quartet_ is a long journey of the Alexandrians towards achieving their goal of Self-Realisation through art. Durrell has often claimed that the _Quartet_ is all about how an artist grows up, making the novel a journey toward artisthood or becoming an artist. The novel is thus called a
Bildungsroman (Gr) ‘formation novel,’ which relates the upbringing and education of the hero or artist into the stage of maturity, like Herman Hesse’s *Siddhartha*, Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations* or James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and almost all the other novels of Durrell himself. The idea of artists developing into personalities of their own right comes straight from Otto Rank’s *Art and the Artist*. For Durrell, the artist is that man among men who struggles through the medium of his craft to understand and attain spiritual insight and grasp the underlying principle of the various levels of experience which constitute our reality. It is through the resource of these various levels of experience that an artist grows up. For any creative output, the God-given gift has to be kindled through spirituality. A true *bhakta* or a mystic who has a powerful artistic vision creates art of everlasting quality. Mystical revelations may be instantaneous as it often happened to Wordsworth on beholding Nature, or to Yeats while sitting in a crowded café or to Ramakrishna on seeing a flight of white cranes across the sky. It may take even years, but when it comes it remains an experience, a sweet mystic feeling beyond words. Sri Aurobindo believed that great poetry revealed the vision of life or God or Man or Nature and thus he is a seer of Truth. Tagore was another mystic poet who participated in the
joy of living. To be born in this world was to participate in the festival of life gifted to us by God. If in the Middle Ages, renunciation of life was advised to realise God, a total involvement in the joy of life and nature is now looked upon as the ideal means towards it. Durrell’s celebration of life is revealed to the fullest in the *Quartet*. The growth of an artist with a simultaneous spiritual realisation or Truth (*satyam*), turns out to be the dominant theme of the *Quartet*. The ultimate truth is God Almighty and it is only when this Truth dawns upon him that great art emanates. But initially an artist has to shed off his inhibitions of Ego and Time to enter the heraldic universe, when creativity becomes possible. Following the Upanishads, the Vedas and the Puranas, the *Tantras* conceive of “the sexual act as a sacred rite or sacrifice” (Bowes 253). It deals with its aspect of the all-permeating energy leading to spiritual illumination, as a means of traversing the path of control. Thus “the use of sex transcends the sexual act, for sex is a means by which we obtain transcendence” (Gavin & Frost xv). It taught its believers to experience the world and its pleasures and thus control their minds so that they could choose to partake or abstain. In fact, liberation could be sought through enjoyment of things in the world, even through food or drink, or sex or even sight, sound, pattern, colours, or even his own body.
The whole business of poetic realization contains tremendous risks. Don’t imagine that it’s easy. 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. (“Interview”, Lillios 6)

The theme of art or poetic realisation is blended with the theme of the quest or self-realisation the Tantric way, as revealed here by Durrell. It was with these words that Durrell tried to wind up an interview on the Quartet.

The Tantras highlight the concept of the cosmic power as a female principle necessary for the creation and evolution of life. This supreme energy or Shakti is worshipped in India as the Mother of the universe. Shakti is the consort of Shiva, the active aspect of the formless, attributeless Absolute. This cosmic divine energy in man is the kundalini, coiled up like a snake at the base of the spine. Almost every tradition speaks of the kundalini in one form or another. In Japanese it is ki, in Chinese chi, the scriptures of Christianity call it the Holy Ghost. It is the power of the Self, the Cosmic Consciousness in every individual. Through meditation and other spiritual practices, as in the Tantric yoga, it can be aroused to be led through a series of
chakras (circles) or nerve centres of the body. The moolathara chakra is the lowest one situated at the bottom of the spine represented by earth. The swadista chakra located at the back of the genital organ and manipura chakra at the navel mainly stand for power enhancing physical strength by water and fire respectively. The anahata chakra near the heart initiates the spiritual impulse in a man. It is when the kundalini penetrates the visuddha chakra opposite the throat that the mind enters into a state of peace.

The centre of ego in the body is the medulla oblongata, at the base of the brain. Evidence of this fact may be seen in egotists. Their pride causes tension in the upper neck just below the skull drawing the head backward (Swami Kriyananda 291)¹⁶

The ego and superego if inflated obstructs the path of the kundalini causing even its reverse journey. Crossing this hurdle is the most difficult, but if cleared the roused energy proceeds to the ajña chakra and finally to the sahasrar chakra leading to the Sahujya Avastha (state of total bliss or Cosmic Consciousness).

The awakened kundalini transforms us on every level of our being and this means that she will take care of our
worldly life as well … she transforms our outlook and makes us see the world around us in a new way. What had seemed difficult and frustrating begins to be enjoyable and full of flavour and we have now enthusiasm for our activities and pursuits. … She improves a student’s memory and concentration, she makes an artist a better artist, a doctor a better doctor…

(Swami Mukthananda 35).

Christopher Burns in his essay on “Durrell’s Heraldic Universe,” explains the Heraldic Universe at length and proves its allegorical intentions. Burns begins with a search for the abstract co-relatives of the Quartet. In 1936, we find Durrell writing to Henry Miller, his life-long friend and mentor about the Heraldic Universe already quoted in chapter 1. In 1937, Durrell writes that he inhabits the heraldic universe “like a bout of drinking.” In 1945 he makes himself clear in explaining the heraldic universe. There is a division into two columns labeled “THE MINUS SIDE” and “THE PLUS SIDE: PURE FORM.” In the minus side all preparations necessary for the positive move towards the universe are explained.

All human searching for perfection as strain or disease, all concepts from Tao to Descartes, from Plato to
Whitehead aim at one thing: the establishment of a non-conscious, continual state or stasis: a point of cooperation with time. In order to nourish conceptual apparatus, moralities, forms, you imply a deficit in the self. Alors, all this work or striving —even Yoga— aims at finding Rest or relaxation in time. It aims at the ONE WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THAT IN THE FIELD OF PURE REPOSE? (376)\textsuperscript{17}

In the plus side Durrell continues to describe how the mind after attaining “rest” moves through three stages of consciousness to arrive at the heraldic universe. The laboratory of consciousness is not dangerous because it is based in repose.

It does not strain you because having passed through the impurities of the ONENESS OF EVERYTHING, you are included in Time. NOW FORMS EMERGE. Because ‘contemptible’ numbers are only way to label them, you can say 1\textsuperscript{st} state, 2\textsuperscript{nd} state, 3\textsuperscript{rd} state, like an etching. This is what I have called the heraldic universe. You cannot define these forms except by ideogram: this is ‘non-assertive’ form. THE HERALDIC UNIVERSE. (376-377)
The different states are not consecutive in space or time but one arrives upon it very gradually. The Heraldic Universe then, is the full consciousness of the Universe and one’s Self within the Universe. It comes upon the artist like a dream to which he responds fully and creatively, yet it can also be brought to him by raising his own consciousness through the different states. When Durrell published *Justine* in 1956, he described it to Miller as the “first stage of an etching” (qtd in Burns 377). Three more stages were to follow, Durrell warned. After reading *Clea*, Miller was very excited and applauded Durrell for the heraldic universe which by now was very clear.

In this context, Burns points out that there seems to be a great similarity between Durrell’s Heraldic Universe and the philosophy of Plotinus. While Durrell is not clear as to the different stages one must pass through to reach the universe, Plotinus is more explicit. He refers to the four faculties of the mind; the faculty of sense, the faculty of imagination, the faculty of reason and the faculty of self-knowledge. The first stage is the simple stage when man absorbs experiences without examining it. The second stage is when one remembers the sensations of experience and extends it imaginatively. In the third
stage, one detaches oneself from the experience to examine it objectively. And in the final stage, there is a sudden “cosmic consciousness”, or a new found Self-Realisation. This is the last stage which Durrell calls “the heraldic universe”.

Durrell was aware of this philosophy of Plotinus, though Durrell does not explicitly acknowledge his source. Burns traces out the novels in the Quartet following Plotinus’ ascend of the mind. The argument here is that though Plotinus may have been at the back of Durrell’s mind while creating the novel, Hindu philosophy and its concept of the yoga and the Tantra have strongly influenced Durrell more. The different stages of spiritual evolution in Durrell closely correspond to that of the yogic mind. It should also be remembered that Durrell in his later years built his own life on Vedantic lines. He even started practicing yoga and shirhasana (head posture), gradually freeing himself from his worldly evils to experience a new-found peace and calm.

Durrell propounds the Advaidic philosophy of Sree Sankaracharya through Darley. Aham Brahma Asmi, the ultimate essence of the Advaida reveals that there is but one truth that resides in man, the truth of God. The world around us is not the truth; it is all a maya or illusion. The individual is perfectly identified with
Brahman. Brahman or the Self could be realized through meditation. Concentration was the method of turning to one’s own interior self in search of the Absolute, and the absolute foundation of everything is found in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. It is a psychological technique where the enquiry starts with the various powers and experiences of the self itself. The human personality which constitutes the sense organs, the mind, the intellect and soul devotes most of its life-span in the pursuit of pleasures. Desire which becomes the cause of all his misery eventually prompts him to turn to his own inner self for relief. If we consider the great words of the Upanishads, *Tat Tvam Asi*, “That thou art,” we find that from the world outside we go into our inner world which is where ultimate peace rests.\textsuperscript{19}

In yoga, during the first stage, a person attempts to control the body, speech, and mind by the exercise of the will and acquires qualities like non-violence, truth, honesty and chastity. Naturally, then the person acquires a certain detachment of spirit, considered to be the second stage of the yoga. It also involves refraining from ego assertion, enmity, envy, greed, sensuality, anger or agitation. There is a control of the senses, absence of fear and contentment and the yogi enters into a state of undisturbed peace and joy which prepares him for the final stage of enlightenment. This is only a very brief and
general outline of the process, though the *Yoga Sutra* of Patanjali is more complex involving various steps leading to the final goal.

To be precise, the stages of the yogic mind correspond closely to Plotinus’ faculties of the mind. The four novels of Durrell may be said to be arranged in this pattern. *Justine* is the normal sensuous stage of an individual as perceived in Hindu *Yoga*, and classified by Plotinus as the faculty of the senses. *Balthazar* takes us to the first stage of the yoga, when Darley attempts to control his passions and recreates them imaginatively through Balthazar’s *Interlinear*. This is Plotinus’ second stage of imagination. *Mountolive* is the next stage of an objectified observer who has learned to keep his passions under control by a rational ordering of experiences. There is contentment and inner joy in Darley, whereby the mind is set for the final journey toward Self-Realisation. *Clea* takes us to the last stage of ultimate realisation and Plotinus’ faculty of knowledge where Darley as well as Clea, Keats, Balthazar et al undergo purification to reach the Heraldic Universe of Durrell.

The diagram shows the transitional stages of a yogic mind and its corresponding changes in the novel. The colour analogy is further explained in the End Notes.
In the beginning of *Justine* we find Darley undergoing change, but he is still under the influence of his senses. It may be said that his *kundalini* still resides at the *moolathara*, *swadista chakras* as they connect to one’s sexuality in a physical, passionate sense. In *Balthazar* the imaginative recreation of the past by Darley is due to the *kundalini* having left the *moolathara, swadista chakras* to reach the *manipura*. It is said to control the mind and direct the body and even repulses the body for its uninhibited behaviour. The heart *chakra* or the *anahata chakra* displays its influence in the individual when the passions are mastered and the victim is relieved of it. In *Mountolive* this is exactly Darley’s position for he begins to use his rational
powers and is more or less free from his memories of Justine. In *Clea* when the mastery over the senses become complete and Darley’s physical and psychical change is evidenced, it may safely be assessed that the cosmic energy has reached the *visuddha chakra*. But Darley still has a long way to go and the rest of the *chakras* are covered by him in *Clea* itself.

When *Justine* opens we meet Darley who has escaped to an island having said goodbye to his impulsive life. He writes-

> I have escaped to this island … I do not know why I use the word ‘escape’. The villagers say jokingly that only a sick man would choose such a remote place to rebuild.

> Well then, I have come to heal myself… (Q 17)

The word “rebuild” should be particularly noted. A great transformation has begun in him, the old should be totally eliminated to rebuild the new. The purgation is on. But it cannot be easily attained. Time should heal him of his wounds. Out of his fragmented self he should devise his own peace. “He suffers anxieties caused in part by the illusion that if he gets it right, he will be a whole man, a possessor and professor of Truth – even of that greatest of all truths, the Socratic ‘Know thyself’ (Lemon, “Durrell, Derrida” 63). So he sets forth on his goal. Though his conscience pricks him often, the whole blame is put on the city- “…none of us is properly to be judged
for what happened in the past. It is the city which should be judged though we, its children must pay the price” (Q 17). Religion too offers no solution, for when in Paris he had dabbled in Sufism and Mohammedanism, “...conscious that in them I might find a pathway which could lead me to a deeper understanding of myself- the self which seemed to be only a huge, disorganised and shapeless society of lusts and impulses” (Q 84).

This objective self-analysis reveals that Darley has traveled much ahead in his path to Self-Realisation. But he can assess things only through his senses. As said earlier, this is the normal worldly life of an individual or Plotinus’ first stage of the faculty of the senses from where he has to begin his journey. As Kaczvinsky points out, by rejecting Melissa and taking Justine as his love, he “… accepts a world that destroys his organic wholeness” (Kingdom 38).

Felix Charlock in *The Revolt* makes such a drastic mistake of choosing Benedicta for Iolanthe as his partner in life. Both men land in trouble through their disastrous relationships. Now the mentally wrecked Darley, on the verge of a suicide, is attempting to turn Justine into literature. He has to rework and reinterpret realities or truths available. Just as space and time have united, subject and object have become one. Every incident recollected is only partially true or not at all the truth, for it changes per the narrator, time, and space, as revealed in the next novel. Even the passionate encounters with
Justine, recollected by Darley, are under the confidence that Darley himself is her true love. In *Justine*, the influence of the *moolathara–swadishta chakras* is most obvious, like the -

…affirmative will of the ego…unwillingness to face the truth; the desire to possess what is not, rightfully one’s own; attachment to what is rightfully one’s own (including one’s own body; and the incontinent expenditure of energy, especially sexual (Swami Kriyananda.(289-290)

He has studied Arnauti’s novel *Moeurs*. Arnauti was Justine’s first husband and his novel supposedly draws a true picture of his wife Justine, in the name of Claudia. He comes across the folio of Nessim, reports of people like Clea, Balthazar, Cohen, Mnemjian and Pursewarden; all these reflect back on to his manuscript the knowledge that he has gained of the city. Nessim’s strange behaviour, Pursewarden’s suicide, Justine’s disappearance all throw him overboard. From the information and material gathered from various sources, Darley tries to bring in order and meaning, which is an artistic endeavour.

This introspection and self-analysis is the beginning of transformation. The sensual impact which was so strong in Darley is found to be lightening its hold and Darley is gradually freeing himself from the base *chakras*. Art offers no solution for he has discovered
himself a failure in it. Healing appears to be remote indeed. When a
great turmoil takes place within, one reaches a critical phase of self-
development. The goal of this catharsis is a purification of inner
nature which moves one to a gradual purification of the whole being.

The yogin must cultivate a habit of thinking in which
things would appear in their true perspective - the
attractions of the physical world, the pleasures of the
senses, delights of the body, and the pride of possession
would all disappear; … (Bhattacharya 62).

Women have wrecked his life, particularly the seductive Justine,
which in turn has ruined his artistic talents. “How difficult it is to
analyse these relationships which lie under the mere skin of our
actions; for loving is only a sort of skin language, sex a terminology
merely” (Q 160). Love is mere narcissism, utter selfishness. There are
only three things to be done to a woman, said Clea once. “‘You can
love her, suffer for her, or turn her into literature’, I was experiencing
a failure in all these domains of feeling.” (Q 25). This is Darley’s
belated and wise estimate of himself. He realises his failures and is no
longer disappointed by them.

Strangely enough, now Melissa enters his thoughts. Guilt
overpowers him. How cruel he had been to her. Melissa is dead and
gone but now Darley realises -“what remains unsolved in my life is
not the problem of Justine but the problem of Melissa” (Q 184).
Regret and guilt over the past is an important milestone covered by the ascetic in his path to self-realisation. Repentance is the great Christian act by which man is purified. Capo’s death and Justine’s disappearance prompt Darley to leave Alexandria. Luckily an offer for a teacher post in Upper Egypt reaches him in the island. But a physical escape was not to make Darley free from his wounding memories of Alexandria. Darley hears that Justine is greatly changed physically and mentally and has gained perfect happiness through community service, a totally unexpected turn of events. Darley receives the greatest blow her; he reflects - “... the last trap that awaits the ego in search of absolute truth”(Q 192). Darley, like the yogi, stands baffled before facts. Justine closes with a letter Darley receives from Clea, who is also undergoing a similar transformation. It reads thus-

And all this brings me back to myself, for I too have been changing in some curious way.... Somewhere deep inside a tide seems to have turned in my inner nature. I do not know why but it is towards you, my dear friend that my thoughts have turned more and more of late… (Q 194).

If the four novels of the *Quartet* follow the yogic pattern, each novel in itself also follows it. If as Richard Pine suggests, the novel forms the “mindscape” of Darley, then this mindscape seems to be
undergoing a transition for the better. Unconsciously, a strong bond of affinity seems to be developing between Darley and Clea. It is a surprising revelation for both. Durrell – Darley pass through the “first stage of an etching,” to enter into the next stage of mystical growth.

It is true that the finer distinctions of Plotinus or the Buddhistic arupa – jnana in which the individual passes over more or less into a cataleptic condition are not so nicely drawn in Yoga-Sutra, but the general outlines are the same and even the gradual sense of nearing the goal is present. The doctrine of prajna or insight, is described as sevenfold. A yogi passes through the four stages of karyavimukti (release of insight from effects) and the three stages of cittavimukti (release of mindstuff) to reach the final stage of enlightenment (prantabhumi). To be simple— “… yogic prescription can be put in the formula ‘contemplate, concentrate, conquer’” (Bhattacharya 82). The individual has a knowledge of the things to be escaped; they have been thought out and the means of escape devised. This is where Darley stands in the first novel, and his escape to the island, a place away from the diseased Alexandria, is the means of releasing himself from the so-called impurities. Besides as Durrell strongly believes, the spirit of place has such a wonderful benign influence on people that it begins to act upon Darley
For the yogi, subjective meditation begins with the withdrawal of attention from the outside world. One focuses upon one’s own authentic self, upon the centre of one’s own inner being, or the spiritual essence of one’s own existence, which is Darley’s position in *Justine*. It is when the meditator closes his eyes thus, that archetypal images buried in our “collective unconscious” (of Jung) gain access over us. The treasures of accumulated wisdom of the entire human race is said to be hidden in the collective unconscious of man. Archetypal images like the serpent and the bird, the eternal child and grand old man, the heavenly father and the heavenly mother are symbolic of man’s eternal quest for maturity and self realization. These archetypes represent the latent power and dynamic potentiality of the human psyche. When artists express themselves through their art it becomes an eloquent appeal to the universal mind of man. Though Darley has such artistic ambitions, he calls himself a failure –

From among the many sorts of failure each selects the one which least compromises his self-respect: which lets him down the lightest. Mine had been in art, in religion, and in people. In art, I had failed... because I did not believe in the discrete human personality.... I lacked a belief in the true authenticity of people in order to
successfully portray them. In religion? Well, I found no
religion worthwhile which contained the faintest grain of
propitiation – and which can escape the charge? … But
the last, the worst failure (I buried my lips in the dark
living hair of Justine), the failure with people: it had been
brought about by a gradually increasing detachment of
spirit which, while it freed me to sympathize, forbade me
possession. (Q 159)

This passage reveals that though, Darley’s kundalini has been
aroused and has cut across the mooladhara, swadishta chakras, it has
not reached the manipura chakra. With Justine in his arms, he is
capable of introspection but it is a partial one and he is left in a
confused state. In Hermetic terms, the poison has surfaced and this
can be called a “period of purgation, purgatory. A great turmoil takes
place within us. This is a critical phase of our self-development”
(Chaudhuri 190). Jennifer Linton Fruin argues that Durrell employs
the hermetic paradigm in presenting his four novels. It is through a
four-fold process that the soul rises from its base matters to the final
godhead. The four stages are explained as (i) the prophetic (ii) mystic
or purgative (iii) the poetic (iv) the amatory.
Justine comes to a close with the cicadas throbbing in the great planes and the summer Mediterranean lying before Darley in all its magnetic blueness. The perplexed Darley, confronted with many unresolved riddles, exclaims with a tinge of disappointment and resignation - “I shall be here, as always, smoking by the water. I have decided to leave Clea’s letter unanswered. I no longer wish to coerce anyone, to make promises, to think of life in terms of compacts, resolutions, covenants”(Q 195).

In Balthazar, Darley’s mind is now set up for the next stage of ascend towards the heraldic universe which can roughly be identified as the first stage in yogic terms, where the will dominates or the second stage of the faculty of the imagination of Plotinus. A totally bewildered Darley cannot decipher the false from the truth. With Balthazar’s Interlinear before him, he moves on to an objectified version of the events. Balthazar’s comment “truth is what most contradicts itself in time” (Q216) is supported by another remark of Pursewarden, “If things were always what they seemed, how impoverished would be the imagination of man” (Q216). Now the poor school teacher wishes to free himself totally from the memories of Alexandria. He asks, “How will I ever deliver myself from this whore among cities” (Q 217), which has everything but happiness to
offer its lovers. Balthazar lands in the lovely island with his Interlinear along with the Justine manuscript, probably the just-finished novel Justine. It is all cross-hatched, crabbed, starred with questions and answers in different coloured inks. What Darley believed to be “truths” have been turned upside down. Balthazar adds so many other “truths”; most shocking of them all was that Justine never loved Darley at all; he was used as a mere decoy to cover up her real affair with Pursewarden and protect him from the jealousy of Nessim. And what more, Pursewarden never cared for her at all! A single chance has altered everything, has turned him back upon his tracks. To use Lemon’s words—“Darley is crushed. He does not yet know himself, does not know the history of his own experience; he is not yet ready to be pronounced a professor and publisher of truth” (“Durrell, Derrida,” 64).

Darley’s world is toppled inside out, the mystic is completely bewildered. The various stages of meditative attainment are part of a hierarchy of experience which includes our everyday states of mind as well. The unsteady and confused Darley is now totally distracted. How could he who was blindly and passionately in love with Justine, have received such bitter, unwelcome truth at that time? He studies his Justine—affair through different angles, for there are as many realities
as you care to imagine. The participator shifts himself to the position of observer for a detached analysis. At last he reaches a conclusion—“...of the many selves that she possessed, probably she had surrendered only one or part of it to this timid, scholarly lover with chalk on his sleeve” (Q 297). The Uncertainty Principle and the Multiple –Ego concept throw away all other probable reasons to the background.

Darley is seen to be traveling from the first stage of the senses to the second stage of the imagination. Thoughts of Justine do not rouse him any more. Passions have given way to the power of the will. He surveys the different love affairs to arrive at a bitter conclusion—“Each of us like the moon has a dark side—could turn the lying face of ‘unlove’ towards the person who most loved and needed us” (Q 297). Shame and guilt torment him incessantly. How cruelly he had ignored Melissa for Justine and at last surrendered her to disease and death. Guilt is supposed to be the beginning of wisdom. He curses his foolishness in his choice between the two women in his life. Richard Pine remarks that Darley moves among women to discover his sexuality and among men ... to discover his place in the world (69-70). He sets out to gather facts which he hopes will assist him in the process. He learns about the Justine-Clea affair, Nessim -
Justine marriage, the loss of Justine’s child, Capo’s mysterious death, Pursewarden’s therapy to free Justine from the Capodistria succubus, Toto-de Brunel’s death, Justine’s role in it, and a host of other truths.

A bewildered Darley cannot decipher the false from the truth, hence he goes ahead to detach it, to view it objectively. Darley learns to use his imaginative powers from the available information, moving ahead in the role of an artist. “The psychological impact of his new perspective has a distinct literary effect. Hurtful as his new knowledge feels, it knocks him out of his egocentric complacency, thereby freeing him to use his newfound powers of empathy and inference” (Raper 75). This was Alexandria the uncommonly poetical mother-city exemplified in the names and faces which made up her history. Darley decides -“‘I must know everything in order to be at last delivered from the city’” (Q 216). He realises that the artist should have the temerity to try and impose a pattern upon which he infects with his own meanings. The artist in him is tuned up here.

In part three of Balthazar we find Darley left in a dilemma. When the aroused cosmic energy touches the manipura chakra a complex range of emotions trouble the person, as we find in Darley. Between jealousy (over Justine-Pursewarden affair), possessiveness and aversion the mind tries to assert its power. Should he take in the
Interlinear as containing the whole truth? But where and how was he to incorporate all these truths or half-truths into the novel he was writing about Alexandria? Or as Pursewarden remarked, should it be a “...medieval palimpsest where different sorts of truths are thrown down one upon the other, the one obliterating or perhaps supplementing another” ?(Q 338). Durrell in fact, tries to expose his theories through Pursewarden, as a means of justifying the experimental novel that the Quartet is. After all, what is truth? Everything that is thought and expressed in words is one-sided, only half the truth. It lacks totality, completeness and unity. Hermann Hesse’s Siddhartha, we find Siddartha explaining to Govinda thus:

When the illustrious Buddha taught about the world, he had to divide it into Samsara and Nirvana, into illusion and truth, into suffering and salvation. One cannot do otherwise; there is no other method for those who teach. But the world itself, being in and around us, is never one-sided. (143)

Now the question of form troubles the artist. The Justine manuscript was subjective; the Interlinear poses an objective truth to life. Truth is only partially perceived, now its frontiers should be extended. Just as Darley has through his recollections “deconstructed”
the events that transpired in Alexandria, so *Balthazar* “deconstructs” both the text of *Justine* and the reality behind the text. The artist has to rework his experiences to come to the heart of the truth. The man and the artist in Darley are found to be maturing. The mystic purges the soul’s vision of disunity and gives it power to see the unified reality that lies behind disparate appearances.

The seeker of truth now shifts his goal from the outside world to the inward self and a single aim takes the place of many conflicting aims and desires. The chaos of the mind should be reduced to order and harmony. Darley realises at last - “...the key I am tying to turn is in myself” (Q 217). The Advaidic philosophy dawns on him. Truth, the only truth is within us. It should be set down in cold black and white, until such time as the memory and impulse of it is spent; the only way to be faithful to time is to intercalate realities. The present state of Darley is no different from the *manana* stage of the Vedantic method of spiritual growth. In the first stage of *sravana* (hearing) the disciple hears, reads and is guided and exposed to the word of truth. In the *manana* stage he begins to think about its implications and significance upon what he has heard. Darley standing on the edge of the second stage of psychic transition now exclaims –
From the vantage point of this island I can see it all in its doubleness, in the intercalation of fact and fancy, with new eyes; and re-reading, re-working reality in the light of all I now know, I am surprised to find that my feelings themselves have changed, have grown, and have deepened even. Perhaps then the destruction of my private Alexandria was necessary (‘the artifact of a true work of art never shows a plane surface’); perhaps buried in all this there lies the germ and substance of a truth-time’s usufruct - which, if I can accommodate it, will carry me a little further in what is really a search for my proper self. We shall see. (Q 370)²²

In January 1958, Durrell wrote to Miller “… Mountolive is the fulcrum of the Quartet and the rationale of the thing” (qtd. in Burns 383). He further explained that it was the third movement (rondo) of a symphonic poem. In the first two novels through Durrell’s relativistic technique, the same space was covered with different explanations offered for the same events. We heard about Nessim’s conspiracy, his planned murders in Justine and Balthazar, the Cabal, Pursewarden’s suicide, Scobie and his weaknesses, Da Capo et al. But the Alexandria Darley sees is the sensual, immediate Alexandria of Justine. Nothing
else mattered much, though his own existence was in danger. Towards the end of *Balthazar*, we find Darley beginning to detach himself from the facts, a gradual transmission from the second stage of imagination to the next stage of reasoning. To be worthy of God, man’s reason should be pure. Reason is the faculty given to man to distinguish truth from the false, faith from fanaticism, imagination from fancy and truth from illusion. Darley has traversed almost half-way in his path to glory.

As the Gita puts it:

> When the vision of reason is clear, and in steadiness the soul is in harmony; when the world of sound and other senses is gone, and the spirit has risen above passion and hate; ... (*Gita* 18, 51: Mascaro 119)

In Tantric terms Darley’s *kundalini* may be supposed to have reached the *manipura chakra* at the end of *Balthazar* because then the person experiences a slight release of tension and stress along with a sense of morality.

In *Mountolive*, with the same characters, we are swept backwards to a time or past earlier than both *Justine* and *Balthazar*. Darley becomes a character wherein the observer turns observed, and events are viewed sequentially through an omniscient narrator. We
now realise that truths learned earlier had been relative, and hence subject to reinterpretations when new facts and new angles of vision are presented. But truths here seem to be more absolute as they emanate from an omniscient author.

Plotinus’ faculty of reason or the yogic path of detachment is more pronounced and the horrible side of Alexandria is exposed. It becomes a city of deception and squalor, a betraying landscape which turns emotions and memories to dust, beggars friendship and destroys love. Sex here is cold, ungenerous, bitter, farcical and conspiratorial. Intelligent and rational men like Mountolive and Nessim try to enforce a rational order in society, driving away tender emotions to the background.

Mountolive becomes important in the heraldic ascent of Darley only in the detached, objective and rational attitude he has developed to analyse facts from a distance. The anguished Darley at the beginning of Justine is no more. His wounds have healed to a greater extent; the social, political framework and his place within it becomes clearer. Detachment is knowledge that one has mastered the desire for objects one has experienced. When the kundalini reaches the anahata chakra the basic feeling is a relief over having mastered the base passions at last. It is said that the Spirit, our true Self resides in the
heart. For the first time one becomes conscious of it. All misidentifications with the ego drop and one begins to identify oneself with the Spirit. Doubts, worries, and fears are removed when the heart chakra is fully enlightened. The culmination of this process is when the purusha (the essential self) achieves detachment with regard to the activities of the gunās (satva, rajas, tamas) or prakrihi (material universe). Non-attachment is an existential principle which does not mean running away from truth or people, instead it is acceptance of life and things as such and as they come, without being attached to them. If we practise it, we can go through the changing circumstances of life without suffering from its adverse consequences. This principle is elaborately expounded in the Bhagavad Gita. Darley has successfully passed through the yogic states; in Justine we found the normal sensuous state of a man, in Balthazar we found him imaginatively recreating his experiences by detaching himself from them, in Mountolive he was objectified from everything to evaluate them from a rational point of view, and in Clea he undergoes final purgation.

If Justine was written probably around the year 1939 by Darley, Balthazar arrived immediately after with the Interlinear followed by a letter from Clea. As per her wishes, Darley reluctantly decides to
leave Cyclades with Melissa’s child. In *Clea*, we realize with a relief, that we are in the present, where we began, and moving with cyclical time. Einstein’s concept of time is cyclical which contains within it all time. The three sides of space have already been covered in the three novels. *Clea* opens with a beautiful description of the little island Darley is leaving behind. A return to Alexandria becomes inevitable; “Alexandria, the capital of memory!” (Q 657), a city which “hovered between illusion and reality” (Q 657). About his artistic powers he is still not sure, for all the writing he had borrowed from the living and the dead has amounted to nothing; instead he has been reduced to a mere “post-script to a letter which was never ended, never posted …” (Q 657). Finally *Clea* the last volume takes us across “the wasteland of modern war-torn Alexandria in its quest for values to take up the encompassing theme of the growth of the artist and man” (Peirce, “Wrinkled” 494).

In Alexandria once again, Darley becomes conscious of time. For any positive move towards the Heraldic Universe or for ultimate Self-Realisation, time is a hindrance. In Alexandria one cannot escape from the clutches of time and hence no movement towards the goal may be effected. Darley who is already on his path has been able to achieve it so far only as he had been away from Alexandria. Darley
wonders- “How long had I been away?...calendar time gives little enough indication of the aeons which separate one self from another, one day from another” (Q 657). More than any other person, more than even Justine, it was Alexandria “the princess, the whore” (Q 700) that charmed Darley the man, and Darley the artist. This ancient city was now changing under the brushstrokes of thought which besieged meaning and clamoured for identity. Idle thoughts pass through his mind, a mystical question looms large - “at what point does real life begin?”(Q 660). A deeply troubled, but determined Darley writes-“Between pity, desire and dread, I saw the city once more spread out before me, inhabited by the faces of my friends, and subjects. I knew that I must re-experience it once more and this time forever” (Q 660). Being engrossed in the superficialities of nature he had totally ignored or was oblivious of its inner depth. It is pointed out that in everyday experience, consciousness adverts towards the world. It is extroverted and projects outward towards sensory objects which is more or less ecstasy. “Enstasy” is a term coined by Mircea Eliade to suggest an introvertive and reflexive flow of consciousness whereby awareness turns back upon itself and reflects upon its own nature. Darley’s state of mind is no different from the “enstatic” one. Finally he assesses that he is a failure in art for he was quite oblivious of the
“inner truth of the city” (Q 658). An artist’s perception should not be partial ignoring the real, but artists are usually “driven towards personal lives nourished in the strange techniques of self-pursuit” (Q 658).

After a self-diagnoses he himself prescribes a psychic therapy to completely wipe out the past: a return once more to Alexandria and its inhabitants and thus shed it forever. The writer he was becoming was also learning to inhabit those deserted spaces which time misses. As the steamer nears the harbour, Alexandria swells up before him like “some mystical rose of the darkness” (Q 668). Durrell-Darley’s picture of Alexandria is painterly and cinematic. But her face is totally changed or disfigured by rockets and battleships. The will to power in our civilisation, witnessed in *Mountolive* is enlarged further in *Clea*, where human values and lives turn out meaningless and trivial.

*Clea* witnesses an overall change in setting, characterisation, temperament and technique. Darley’s physical change is noted even by Nessim. He is no longer stooping, with spectacles dismissed; signs of growing confidence and maturity. The awakened serpent power in Darley has cut across the *anahata chakra* to reach the *vissudha chakra* for it is then that one totally overcomes, understands and masters
one’s sensual pleasures. One is being purged and purified, though one has still a long way to go. Nessim has also vastly changed, reduced to a mere ambulance driver with an eye and a finger gone; one a change for the better and other for the worse. Darley moves closer to Truth while Nessim moves away from it. Though Darley is greeted with good news of his new appointment in the censorship department by the Ambassador, he is not delighted for “art really means freedom and it was this which was at stake” (Q 677).

He decides it is to Justine he must go first, because to shed her is to shed the destructive fantasies that had grown up around her. When the excited and tensed up Darley meets Justine, Darley realises with a relief, the tremendous metamorphosis that has come over him. The purification is complete. Even the exotic perfume, Jamais de la vie which once aroused him is now nauseating. Surprisingly enough, he even wished to wound her, to subjugate her by his indifference. On evaluating the reliques of sensation, Justine admits how she enjoyed deceiving him, to which an epitaph is added—“… which of us was the greater liar? I cheated you, you cheated yourself” (Q 693). A non-chalant Darley only ruminates—“These observations, which at another time, in another context, might have had the power to reduce me to ashes, were now vitally important to me in a new way.” (Q
The detached way in which he analyses his past relationship reveals how far Darley has traveled in his path to Self-Realisation. Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutra* points out that, detachment is knowledge that one has mastered the desire for the objects one has experienced. Darley’s *purusha* (the essential self) has detached itself from *prakriti* (material universe). Totally released from them, the Heraldic Universe now lies within reach.

Though as a man Darley has matured, he is not mature enough as an artist. He laments—“I somehow can’t match the truth to the illusions which are necessary to art without the gap showing … But an artist who can’t solder the elements together falls short somewhere. I’m on the wrong track.” (Q 708). Darley’s observations have always been wrong. As for his failure in love, it was not Justine to be blamed, for he himself had created an illusionary picture of her, of which she was unaware. He had fed upon this picture, matured it, and grew it, only to be disappointed in the end. Heisenberg declares that it all depends upon our powers of observation or rather as the Upanishads say, it is the unconscious mind (*It*) that functions in every individual. In the *Key Durrell* quotes Groddeck thus: “Every observation is necessarily one-sided, every opinion a falsification.” (83). Darley observes that the lover and the loved, observer and observed, throw
down a field about each other from which they infer properties of their love and proceed to a generalised conception of something, constant in its qualities and universal in its operation. A self-created fiction emanates in which we seek to content ourselves. Darley surprisingly realises that his old love is not only dead and gone, but disgust and revulsion has supplanted it. Justine is now a closed chapter of his life. After her final confession as she lies in Darley’s arms, on her sole insistence, Darley imagines her to be “…defenseless as a patient on an operating table ... a woman at last, lying there, soiled and battered, like a dead bird in a gutter, her hands crumpled into claws. It was as if some huge iron door had closed forever in my heart” (Q 699). Note the archetypal symbol of the bird, a symbol of maturity repeated here, combined with the dry wasteland of Eliot which is what Justine represents for Darley now. Swami Kriyananda’s words are relevant here - “Every sense pleasure, once the desire for it has been overcome, is transferred into a subtler kind of delight, a thousand fold greater than before…” (283).

As the purification gets complete Darley sets out on his final move towards the heraldic universe. It is with Clea that he has been developing a pristine relationship which eventually helps him discover himself. If an iron door had closed forever on Justine, on seeing Clea
after all these long years his heart heeled half seas over for a moment and it was like “unlocking a door which had remained closed and bolted for a generation” (Q 711). Strangely enough he sees Clea in place of Melissa; Clea thus becomes a ‘resurrected Melissa’ through whom Darley can expiate his sin. In the background of war-torn Alexandria with the thunderstorm of guns and sirens, igniting the pale skies with lightning flashes they make love. Looking on the sleeping Clea, the bird image is reiterated; she reminds him of a “wild bird exhausted by its struggles with a limed twig” (Q 727). Unlike his earlier loves, he realises that his new love is based on honesty and sharing. With confidence he exclaims: “I knew that Clea would share everything with me, withholding nothing – not even the look of complicity which women reserve only for their mirrors” (Q 730).

Now Darley can feel the buoyancy of a new freedom possessing him. In the Hindu religious tradition spiritual realisation can be achieved by man only if he transcends desires for happiness in the world. One may fall in lust but should rise in love, the love of God. Desires are merely expressions of the ego, which is a finite limited thing composed of the three gunās of nature - satva, rajas, tamas. As Pursewarden says, “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...” (Q737). As long as one accepts the ego as oneself, one is caught up in its finitude and limitations. The soul even on the threshold of enlightenment, must stand firm on its determination to merge in God. “With the acceptance of the transcendence of desires as a goal one comes to accept oneself as a potentially infinite being which is veiled over by the finite character of the ego”(Bowes 297 ). Until now Darley was obsessed with himself and his worries. Darley’s pursuit of love and truth was ego-driven. But when he transcends his Ego to become unconscious of it, he arrives at the Ultimate Truth. Only by extending out one’s self with a full participation with the external world, can one widen one’s horizon. So with all the vasanas or precipitates of the past removed Darley’s mind is now conditioned for the final Self-Realisation.

The real jolt in Darley’s life occurs when he comes across Pursewarden’s diary of “unpalatable truths” (Q 774), where Darley himself is referred to as “Brother Ass”. It is through Pursewarden that Durrell conveys his theories on art, artists and artisthood. In them Darley sees real life itself, not a studied representation of life, where no visible demarcation between illusion and reality can be discerned. Poetic or transcendental knowledge cancels out purely relative
knowledge. Who dares dream of capturing the fleeting image of truth in all its gruesome multiplicity? Fiction lay neither in Arnauti’s pages nor in Pursewarden’s; it was life itself that was a fiction. Darley laughs at himself for being a fool all along, groping in the dark for truth when the real fact or truth lay in himself. With this realisation Darley has transcended the visuddha chakra easily because long back he had become aware of it. All guilts have been removed and he has developed diplomacy along with detachment. The goal of mysticism is the final union with the Ultimate or Truth that resides within man-Aham Brahma Asmi. Every religion ultimately ends here. “Brahman is the end of the journey. Brahman is the supreme goal” (Upanishads 20). It is only after passing through the different stages of purgation can one reach the ultimate end or the heraldic universe. Pursewarden says that the fundamental aim of art is to invoke this “ultimate healing silence” (Q 763) in one’s own self. Here the theme of art blends with the theme of self discovery. The relationship between Art and Life is the process by which one matures both as an artist and as a man. Nirvana means wisdom, enlightenment, knowledge of our true self. Pursewarden’s words influence Darley to such an extent that he tells us that he awoke with a start, implying that he has been elevated to this new stage of consciousness. As you wake up to that higher plane
of consciousness you feel a veil of ignorance lifted from your eyes. It is an experience beyond all dualities. But even as Darley has a glimpse of the illumination of God, as a writer, he feels betrayed. Pursewarden’s words again come to mind—“The heraldic universe can strike from any point, above or below: it is not particular. But without it the enigma will remain” (Q 773). Darley’s mind is now unstained and clear. Forgiveness and compassion make up Darley. Forgiveness is the power to let go of anger, hatred and resentment and to discover in humility, the nobility and generosity of spirit. The ajyna chakra dissolves all remaining conditionings of the mind and Ego, habits and misidentifications. It is the narrow gateway which opens the way to consciousness, to ascend the final destination.

Darley patiently waits on. The unexpected moment for self-discovery occurs when Clea is rescued by Darley by severing her harpooned hand to rescue her from drowning. At a crucial moment of time when Darley and Balthazar become utterly dejected and disappointed, Darley rises to the occasion. Darley writes: “It was as if I were for the first time confronting myself -or perhaps an alter ego shaped after a man of action I had never realized, recognized…” (Q849), emerges in him and he resuscitates her by pumping air into her lungs like “the pitiful simulacrum of the sexual act” (Q 851). Here
creative energy and sexual energy go hand in hand, as in Durrell’s concept, implying its rejuvenating significance. Darley is thus initiated into the heraldic world through this unusual and surprising act of bravery. There is a sudden awakening which gives Darley a glimpse of the *kingdom of the imagination*.\(^{27}\) No longer passive, but a man of action, he has proved that he is the man for her.

Through a self-imposed separation effecting a sharpening of love, they realize at last their genuine passion for each other. Months pass by with no word from Clea. Darley takes the initiative to write to her, but then comes her reply which finally becomes the turning point. She writes of her crossing the border and entering into the possession of a kingdom which has such a mystical, magical effect on her that even her wooden hand can paint “pictures of truly troubling originality and authority” (Q874). She continues – “As for you, wise one, I have a feeling that you too perhaps have stepped across the threshold into the kingdom of your imagination, to take possession of it once and for all” (Q877). This letter moves Darley so deeply that all on a sudden an impulse overtakes him like the twitching aside of a curtain:

```
But it was to be a little while yet before the clouds parted before me to reveal the secret landscape of which she
```
was writing … It had been so long in forming inside me, this precious image, that I too was as unprepared as she had been. It came on a blue day, quite unpremeditated, quite unannounced, and with such ease I would not have believed it. I had been until then like some timid girl, scared of the birth of her first child.

Yes, one day I found myself writing down with trembling fingers the four words (four letters! four faces!) with which every story teller since the world began has staked his slender claim to the attention of his fellow men. Words which presage simply the old story of an artist coming of age. I wrote: ‘Once upon a time…’

And I felt the whole universe had given me a nudge! (Q 877) 28

This “secret landscape” is the heraldic universe or the state of nirvana attained by Darley. The cosmic energy has reached the sahasrar chakra. It is last milestone in the evolution of human awareness, which gives a direct, absolute perception of Reality. Our True Self, which is eternally pure and unaffected by anything is glimpsed. It is there like a shining diamond hidden within us, reflecting the magnificent beauty of the Brahman. At this mystical, magical
moment of Self-Realisation all creativity becomes possible. The man
turns artist and the artist turns man. The evolution of Darley gets
complete here. Allegorically, Darley has entered the timeless,
spaceless world of peace and rest, the sahujya avastha. Atma dipa
bhava was Buddha’s advice to his disciples on his deathbed. Over
and again he emphasised that the light of truth is in the heart of every
one of us. Buddha came to show us how to discover that light
ourselves.

Love is Truth, it is also Beauty. The aim of Art is not only the
expression of Beauty, but the expression of the unity of life which is
the highest Truth. Secular love unites the lovers Darley and Clea to
the rest of the world and to God or to that state of mind where there is
neither the lover nor the loved. The highest state of religious mind is
experienced then, which cannot be put into words, because what is
said in words is not the truth. This is the “heraldic universe” of
Durrell. Truth, Love, Beauty, and Art become one.

Durrell told Anna Lillios that through the words “Once upon a
time” Darley was joining the community of poets. It is the
announcement of the continuum (“Interview” 6). These four words
become a sort of a password that qualifies Darley to enter the
“kingdom of imagination” or “the heraldic universe”. An artist is no
ordinary person; he is a preacher and a prophet. He enriches lives by bringing greater meaning and understanding to life. Art instills man with greater values, confidence and hopes for a better future. Art helps man make sense of himself and the world around him. Finally, the purpose of art as Durrell pointed out in *The Black Book* is not to depict man but to invoke God. “The object of writing is to grow a personality which in the end enables man to transcend art” (Q 306). “One writes to recover a lost innocence” (Q 475) says Pursewarden. Art is only a portal through which one passes to reach the heraldic universe, but creativity becomes possible only when one passes through innumerable hurdles like, the transcendence of worldly pleasures and the transformation of the ego which have been covered by Darley. The *Quartet* is crowded with artist figures - Nessim is a painter, Narouz a preacher, Melissa a dancer. There are minor figures like the old village singer, the holy man Magzub and even Cavafy, the old poet of the city. The “kingdom of imagination” is within reach, but one should strive towards it. An artist is born only then.

The Tantric –yogic allegory is obscure and only experimented in a mild way in the *Quartet*. But in the *Quintet* it is fully exposed, and a synthesis of the metaphysical and scientific worlds made
complete by Durrell. If Darley’s move towards *nirvana* or the Heraldic Universe is very gradual it is very quick in the case of Justine, and its aftermath turns out to be very interesting as the following chapter reveals.