Chapter VII

The Concept of Perfect Man
In The Waves
and
Between the Acts

The Waves

'I am the thing in which all this exists'.

The Waves, the most mystical of Virginia Woolf's works, is concerned with the secrets of the self revealing the suppressed truths. This superb imaginative treatise presents its author as a spiritual guide possessing a harmonious mind. In it the story of the world from the beginning has been told. Having its source in Pre-history it represents so many planes of reality.

Virginia Woolf had consciousness of the beyond - the beyond which is also within. Hers was an effort to go beyond time, to transcend it - having sense of unity with all things. Union of opposites is characteristic of mysticism. Mysticism and literature deal with the mystery of man. Whatever she has conveyed in The Waves is extremely profound and mysterious reminding us of Sufi treatises, i.e. The Unveiling of the Veiled (Kashf-al-Mahjoob) by Ali Hujweri and The Perfect Man (al-Insan-e-Kamil) by Al-Jili which emphasize the indivisibility of self. Analogies have

been found by N. C. Thakur between Virginia Woolf's vision and that of Persian Sufi poet Rumi and the Upanishadatic seers.

According to Thakur, in this novel, Virginia Woolf symbolizes a person's growth from youth to age, from sunrise to sun-set. Water, for her, becomes a symbol of Reality, the source of Creation. Man achieves fusion with the Eternal Spirit and thus continues to exist. Thakur feels that Virginia Woolf sees Reality residing in down or sky and when she says that life contains in it the essence of Reality she makes an assertion that she shall rest and continue to exist in Reality which echoes the Sufi faith about degeneration and regeneration ("Fana" and "Baqua")

Virginia Woolf was deeply interested in the passage of time in relation with personality. The symbolic pattern of the novel suggests it. After the symbolic interlude presenting a natural setting we find the remarks of the children.

'I see a ring', said Bernard, 'hanging above me. It quivers and hangs in the loop of light."

'I see a globe, said Neville, hanging down in a drop against the enormous flanks of some Hill'.

'Islands of light are swimming on the grass, said Rhoda, they have fallen through the trees'.

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3. Ibid., p. 6.
4. Ibid., p. 7.
Each one has his own universe. Children's remarks are suggestive of Virginia Woolf's absorption in the moment. She is concerned to reach the atoms as they fall upon the mind. Past, present and future have been blended together. Virginia Woolf is striving for a metaphysical unity, the natural piety which binds creature to creature and all created things of God. Her lost time has been transformed into the permanence of art.

_The Waves_ has an organic unity which suggests Virginia Woolf's search for wholeness. The devices which have been used to create a natural effect are - the heavenly journey of the sun, the stirrings of the waves, the colours of the horizon - presented simultaneously:

_The sun had not yet risen. The sea was indistinguishable from the sky ... gradually as the sky whitened a dark line lay on the horizon dividing the sea from the sky... The birds sang their blank melody outside._5

Here Virginia Woolf's participation in the objects of Nature reminds us of both Wordsworth and Iqbal. It is in complete harmony with the spirit of _The Holy Quran_ hence Iqbal's words:

_How unlike the spirit of the Quran, which sees in the humble bee a recipient of the Divine inspiration and constantly calls upon the reader to observe the perpetual change of the winds, the alternations of day and night, the

5. _The Waves_, p. 5.
clouds, the starry heavens, and the planets swimming through infinite space.  

In the 6th Chapter there is to be found the declining sun which sinks lower in the sky in the 7th Chapter. In the Chapter 8 the "shadows lengthen on the beach". The last Chapter presents the setting sun when the "waves sent white recesses into the caves and then rolled back sighing over the shingle". The novel ends with the words:

the waves broke on the shore.

Here the language of Divinity, i.e. symbolic language has been used. The non-finite has been presented through the finite. The symbolic setting of the sun and the waves goes side by side in the novel:

The sun rose higher, blue waves, green waves swept a quick fan over the beach, circling the spikes of a sea holly and leaving shallow pools of light here and there on the sand.

The sun, an object of sensuous delight for the children, becomes the embodiment of the wisdom of the universe. The same distinction is to be found in "Tintern Abbey" of Wordsworth. The symbolic journey of the sun suggests wholeness. The circle ends where it began. Often Sun has been interpreted by Sufis as God. According to

7. The Waves, p. 129.
9. Ibid., p. 256.
Arabi God is a light through which all objects are visible but He Himself is invisible. Iqbal, in his poem "Aftab" (The Sun) has called the angels to be the children of light.

Virginia Woolf, like Arabi, Wordsworth and Iqbal, participated in the life of natural objects by which her imagination was empowered to extract the unique essence of the objects of contemplation, to suggest the Mrs. "Brownness of Mrs. Brown".

Here, it is essential to introduce the six complementary personalities presented in the novel. Percival, the seventh one, never appears. His death and absence is felt by the other six on different planes. Gordon says:

... Virginia Woolf created her friends in her imagination; if such people do not exist she would have had to invent them. A fraternity bound by the memory of Percival was her idealization of Bloomsbury bound by the memory of Thoby.¹¹

Percival, "a secular saviour", according to Virginia Woolf, was to be a man of action had he lived. Had he lived his name would have been blessed by a great many blessed Indians, downtrodden races. He would have done justice to people and thus shocked the authorities. It was the image of an ideal reformer having an integrated personality not seeking power for its own sake; not to expand empire. He was against cruelty to women and children.

¹¹. Lyndall Gordon, A Writer's Life, p. 239.
Rhoda is at the deepest level according to Gordon. She is obsessed with visions being insubstantial. Her body is a prey to fear. She imagines herself to be tossed by the waves destined to be broken like a stone against the cliffs. She wants to flee to the desert and kill herself. Virginia Woolf explored a hidden side of her own mind through Rhoda (her obsession with morality from childhood, her suicide). Lyndall Gordon says:

The submerged Rhoda is the most memorable of the six figures in The Waves. Fading to the shadow in the bright light of reason, in the dark of elemental being she takes on the permanent forms of pristine nature: the moon, the remote hills, the burning desert, the waves.12

Louis, who loved Rhoda, was disgusted by the nature of human flesh sharing with her a sense of solitude and silence. His fascination for roots suggests great historical sense. As a child he feels he has lived thousands of years:

'I force myself to state, if only in one line of written poetry, this moment to mark this inch in the long-long history that began in Egypt, in the time of the Pharaohs, when women carried red pitchers to the Nile'.13

The body represents to Louis and Rhoda a hampering weight but to Jinny and Neville it is a delight. Neville is a refined poet, a lover. Percival's death has extremely

saddened him. He feels that the words of authority are corrupted by those who speak them. He says: 'I mock at this sad religion, at these tremulous, grief-stricken figures advancing, cadaverous and wounded ... and the trembling figure of Christ's mother was borne middle-nodding along the streets, there went by also the stricken figure of Christ in a glass-case.'

Susan and Bernard sum up the others, Susan is close to a simple reality whose name is Percival. Being a mystic she feels that silence is not painful, death not cruel and life has but one meaning. Like the famous Kashmiri Sufi poet Habba Khatoon she feels complete identification with Nature. She says:

'The bird chorus is over ... I think I am the field, I am the barn, I am the trees; mine are the flocks of birds and this young hare who leaps ... all are mine. I am not a woman but the light that falls on this gate'.

Characteristic of Bernard is the multiplicity of self which enables him to be called a harmonious personality, a perfect man whose intuitive and rational faculties are in harmony with each other. Here are Bernard's broodings about himself:

'The complexity of things becomes closer', said Bernard, 'here at college, where the stir and pressure of life are so extreme, where the excitement of mere living

15. The Waves, p. 83.
becomes daily more urgent ... What am I? I ask. This? No, I am that. Especially now, when I have left a room and people talking, and I behold the moon rising, sublimely, indifferently, over the ancient chapel - then it becomes clear that I am not one and simple but complex and many. Bernard, in public bubbles, in private is secretive. That is what they do not understand, for they are now undoubtedly discussing me, saying I escape them, am evasive. They do not understand that I have to effect different transitions; have to cover the entrances and exists of several different men who alternately act their parts as Bernard. I am abnormally aware of circumstances. I can never read a book in a railway carriage without asking, Is he a builder? Is she unhappy ... But joined to "the sensibility of a woman (I am quoting my own biographer) Bernard possessed the logical sobriety of a man.... at the moment when I am most disparate, I am also integrated ... Very few of you who are now discussing me have the double capacity, to feel, to reason ... I also am too complex'.

Bernard represents the indivisibility of human sensibility. He, like the Perfect Man of Iqbal and Rumi etc., is an epitome of Universal Love which binds human beings to each other. He says:

'But when we sit together we melt into each other with phrases ... we make an insubstantial territory'.

'We are drawn into this communion by some

deep, some common emotion. Shall we call it conveniently "love". Shall we say it love of Percival because Percival is going to India?

No, that is too small a name. We have come together to make one thing not enduring but seen by many eyes simultaneously. There is a red carnation in that vase. A single flower, many - petalled, red, purple-shaded-a whole flower to which every eye brings its own contribution'. 17

In The Waves Virginia Woolf has thrown of all servitude of Time and Space and has imagined a completely interiorised world. She is trying to dissolve the problem of multiplicity of self. She has brought inner and outer in harmony which is achieved in rare moments by one of the favorite images that of globe (i.e. circle ) which we shape round, whole and entire. In each of us there are two beings - solitary and social. These two beings were in harmony with each other in Bernard making him a well-rounded and integrated personality. In him union of opposites has been consummated ( like Shakespeare's Rosalind and Portia). He says:

'I am a circle. It stirs. The circle is unbroken. The harmony complete'. (The Waves, p. 252)

Circle is symbolic of perfection. Bernard, Virginia Woolf's Perfect Man is temperate, earnest, quiet, plain showing mental and emotional balance. In him there is perfect reconciliation of disparities combining the

17. Ibid. p. 108.
sensibility of a woman and the sound judgement of a man. Virginia woolf was referring to the mind as luminous as it is rare in which masculine and feminine elements unite in perfect harmony producing an androgynous mind which can create, hence Bernard's stories and phrases:

'Let us now crawl, said Bernard 'under the canopy of the currant leaves and tell stories. Let us inhabit the underworld ... This is our universe ... lit with crescents and stars of light.'

Nevile opines about Bernard's stories:

'Bernard says there is always a story. There is the story of the man with one eye, the story of the woman who winkles. But Bernard goes on talking-up the bubble-images. The vulture is a camel, the camel a vulture", yet for when he talks, a lightness comes over one. One floats too as if one were that bubble, one is freed.

Bernard feels that he has been Bernard for many years, many Bernards. He has been "Charming, selfish, sympathetic, a good man, a foolish man, a success, a failure". He was always "capable of many embodiments To himself he was for many years a real person".

Through the stories Bernard is telling us about the suppressed truths and thus becomes the Vicegerent of the Absolute Being. By his phrases he wants to suggest that the

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21. Ibid. (4.47).
visible part of a person is not his real personality, but he possesses an unconscious also which is a treasure-house of feelings and experiences received through the journey of life. It is collective experience of the human race. Bernard, along with Iqbal's Perfect Man (insan-e-Kamil) seems to be saying that there is hidden within him a universe. He, like Rumi's and Iqbal's Perfect Man has attained sincerity by being unconcerned with worldly affairs (the world is not with him). He possesses sincerity of action which is mysticism whose opposite is hypocrisy. He has realised the vision of Reality in Universal Love. He is dauntless like Iqbal's insan-e-Kamil. Fear finds no way into his bosom. He charges against death and remains "unvanquished"\(^{22}\) and "unyielding"\(^{23}\) like Abraham. He realizes that by residing in Reality he would continue to exist. For him Death is not an annihilator. Life subsides into Reality as waves subside into the Sea - the source of creation.

According to Lyndall Gordon, in The Wave, Virginia Woolf broke down what she knew of human nature six ways so as to analyse the composite and then at Hampton Court, she fused the six as an ideal human specimen (Bernard). The six characters were supposed to be one. She felt it quite difficult to collect herself in one Virginia. Gordon further says:

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The Waves begins, like creation, with an unpeopled universe, which is then peopled. It is a narrative haunted by an eternal mind. Early in the first draft Virginia Woolf had said: 'I am the thing in which all this exists ... But to take this perspective was to endanger sanity. The price of that creative power, when it flagged, was to see herself as a mote on the tides of time.'

Then Gordon has quoted the following words of Virginia Woolf:

"Woke up perhaps at 3. Oh its beginning ... physically like a painful wave ... tossing me up .. Let me watch the wave rise."

Gordon further writes:

On June 1929 she plunged in utmost melancholy into the deep water of insensitive nature 'Lord how deep it is! she marvelled.- 'And as usual I feel that if I seek further I shall reach the truth ... That is a kind of nobility. Solemnity. I shall myself face the fact that there is nothing --I now begin to see ... (The Waves) rather too clearly'.

Gordon has probed deeper into the very being of Virginia Woolf relating her life with her works. She has discussed Virginia Woolf's concept of multiplicity of self throughout. That she is a well-read person possessing a

wholeness of Vision is unquestionable. It is true that *The Waves* is a "narrative haunted by an eternal mind". She has dauntlessly quoted Virginia Woolf's words "I am the thing in which all this exists" and "I feel that if I sink further I shall reach the truth". But her opinion that after *A Room of One's Own* and *Orlando* Virginia Woolf's interest in androgyny diminished is not acceptable. Besides that she has not related Virginia Woolf's ideal of an androynous mind with Coleridge. And, of course she could not be expected to relate this very ideal with the Oriental Sufis, especially Al-Jili and *The Upanishads*. References to Egyptology also are scanty.

Harvena Richter is of opinion and rightly that the perfect balance of male and female which makes up the total Bernard exhibits Virginia Woolf's concern with the androgynous nature. She feels that this ideal remained with Virginia Woolf throughout her career. She refers to Virginia Woolf's method of the "mythic double", the "archetype of the self" whose shadow projects the character into time and pre-history.

Richter has brilliantly dealt with Virginia Woolf's concept of multiplicity of self. But expecting from her to have found analogies between Virginia Woolf and the Oriental Sufis and seers is expecting too much. The East, usually, has been ignored by the West.

27. Harvena Richter - *The Inward Voyage*, p. 121.
Herbert Marder feels that Virginia Woolf's novels are a record of search for wholeness. In her book *Feminism and Art* she has written a whole chapter entitled "Androgynous Vision" in which she has focussed her attention on *Night and Day, To the Lighthouse* and *The Years*. Marder has expressed her discontent with Virginia Woolf's interpretation of the androgynous vision. But to do it more frankly was to endanger her sanity. Such remarks "I am the thing in which all this exists" were omitted by her from *The Waves* before its publication. Such utterances of Virginia Woolf have affinity with the utterances of the great Sufis and the seers of *The Upanishads* "Ana Hiya" ("I am She") of Ibn'\'l Farid, "Subhani" (Glory to me) of Bayazid of Bistam, "Anal Haq" ("I am God") of Mansoor Hallaj and " aham Brahmasmi " (I am God) of Vak (Vagambhrani), the Vedic poetess and seer. All such utterances, which are evident of Pantheism (Intuitionism or Feminism), have been ridiculed and condemned throughout. Such words of Virginia Woolf - "I am the thing in which all this exists", if not omitted, would have surely aroused more ridicule and harsher criticism.

Virginia Woolf favoured an Isiac role of a woman writer. The ideal of an androgynous vision presented in *A Room of One's Own* was to create innumerable such writers who could resist to the suppressed truths (for the benefit of humanity). That Isiac role was fulfilled by Virginia Woolf in *The Waves* at its best. She wrote in *Moments of Being*:

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... If life has a base that it stands upon, if it is a bowl that one fills and fills - then my bowl without a doubt stands upon this memory. It is of lying half asleep, half awake in bed in the nursery at St. Ives. It is of hearing the waves breaking one, two, one, two and sending a splash of water over the beach and then breaking ... it is of feeling the present ecstasy I can conceive. 28

This memory is related with the following from Between the Acts, her last novel:

Miss La Trobe waved her hand ecstatically at the cows. 29 The words "ecstasy" is common between these two extracts. Here is another extract from Between the Acts:

Then suddenly as the illusion petered out, the cows took up the burden. One had lost her calf. In the very nick of time she lifted her great moon - eyed head and bellowed. From cow after cow came the same yearning bellow. The whole world was filled with dumb yearning. It was the primeval voice sounding loud in the ear of the present moment. 30

The great seer Virginia's pathetic utterance is:

'All you can see of yourselves is scraps, ors and fragments'. 31

These extracts are deeply related with the following from the Holograph Draft of The Waves:

28. Moments of Being, p. 75.
30. Ibid, p. 103.
31. Ibid, p. 103.
Many mothers and before them many mothers and again many mothers have groaned and fallen. Like one wave and then succeeding another. Wave after wave endlessly sinking and falling as far as the eye can stretch. And all these waves have been the prostrate form of mothers holding up with a groan as they sink back in the sea.32

The "dumb yearnings", the "yearning bellows" of the cows has parallelisms with the "groanings of mothers" whose prostrate forms are the waves. This analogy is archetypal and mystical. The story of the world from the beginning has remarkably been told by the author suggesting that due to "sinking" and "falling" of mothers (or decline of Intuitionism or Feminism) man's personality is no more harmonious. He is now mere "scraps, orts and fragments".

Professor S.P. Singh highlights Sri Aurobindo's views concerning "Higher Consciousness and "Light" symbolised by cow. Sri Aurobindo had presented an ideal of Perfect Man who could save God's world. His Perfect Man has close affinities with the Perfect Man of Iqbal on the one hand and of Virginia woolf on the other, Professor Singh writes:

Among the visions coming to the followers of Sri Aurobindo the vision of the Mother is the most frequent. He regards the "Mother as a direct embodiment of the Consciousness Force, the Supreme creative power of Sacchidananda ... Being transcendent, if she is capable of assuming universal form on the one hand, no less should she 32. The Waves. The Holograph Draft 1, p. 7.
be able to assume individual form on the other. For individuality as well as universality is considered to be implicit in the transcendent. 33

Prof. Singh says that according to Aurobindo while Christ, Chaitannya and Buddha etc. are special manifestations of God, the Mother manifests the Consciousness Force acting the "prime force" behind the spiritual development of her followers. The mother is the "most reliable spiritual guide." 34 In Virginia Woolf's work as well mother is conceived as origin or Higher Consciousness. The "sinking and falling of mothers" is related with the "dumb yearnings of cows" hence with the Isis-Cult of ancient Egypt. Hers was a search for a way out of sexual difference or for a continuity with lost origins. The "dumb yearnings of the cows" has been interpreted as the "primeval voice sounding loud in the ear of that very moment". Al-Jili also had interpreted the word mother as 'origin'. On page 9 of the Holograph Draft of The Waves are found these revealing words:

I am telling myself the story of the world from the beginning.

Virginia Woolf, while telling the story of the world from the beginning is searching for her own origins. This way she becomes the Vicegerent of the Absolute Being

34. Ibid. p. 62-63.
revealing the suppressed truths. Her Perfect Man is the spokesperson of the Absolute Being who is capable of saying:

"I am the thing in which all this exists".

Virginia Woolf's (and so also of Bernard's in The Waves) prophetic strain is akin to that of the Oriental mystics.

Bernard possesses that "sobriety of union" which has been referred by Ibn'l Farid - the great Arabic Sufi who regarded himself united with God. R. A. Nicholson has quoted him:

And if she speak 'tis I who converse. Likewise
if I tell a story, 'tis she that tells it".

The pronoun of the Second person has gone out
of use between us and by its removal

I am raised above the sect that separate.35

(Taiyyatul Kubra V, 174)

Nicholson feels that the sect that separate are those who look at things from the standpoint of duality as opposed to unity, so that they regard their act of worship as preceding from themselves not as being done by God in them.

Ibn Farid, according to Nicholson, identifies himself mystically with the Creative Will in all its manifestations:

And there is no speaker but tells his tale with my
words, nor any seer but sees the sight with mine eyes

And in the whole creation there is none save me that

speaks or sees or hears.36

Bernard says in *The Waves*:

Unfortunately what I see you do not see (the globe full of figures).\(^37\)

Ibn'l Farid is supposed to make himself one with the spirit of Mohammad. Nicholson says:

> At present it need only be said that according to the later Sufis union with the spirit of Mohammad signifies a relation to God somewhat like the relation to him which by the Christian fathers of Alexandria was to be implied in union with the Logos.\(^38\)

According to Nicholson what Ibn'l Farid describes is a personal religious experience of the utmost intimate kind. In his opinion the poem of Ibn'l Farid has a great psychological interest for students of Sufism showing the inner meaning of the Sufi definition of 'tawhid', the Divine Unity or Unity of Being.

The same doctrine of Unity of Being (tawhid) is the base of Virginia Woolf's thought. It has been presented through Bernard in *The Waves*. That inner meaning is the Absoluteness of the Divine nature realized in the passing away of human nature. Bernard, in his old age ponders about the meaning of life. While he sums up his life, he gives the essence of his life and presents Virginia Woolf's ideal of life and reality. While interpreting life he uses the language of children and lovers and describes the clouds

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\(^37\) *The Waves*, p. 204.

which rise, break and vanish every moment. He regenerates himself. He speaks in public and is mysterious and secretive in private. Joy and sorrow are the same for him. He says:

*I must tell you a story and there are so many stories of childhood and none of them are true. Yet, like children we tell each other stories.*

Real Bernard cannot be known by mere appearance but by the stories he tells, by his feelings, memories and philosophisings, by his "phrases". What he sees nobody is able to see. Ibn'l Farid says that there is no one save him that sees or hears. Both of them are suggesting that they are the seers, the visionaries and if they tell a story 'tis She that tells it'. They are the spokespersons of the Absolute Being. They are capable of transcending Time and Space.

If, according to Nicholson, through these verses Ibn'l Farid is supposed to make himself one with the light or spirit of Mohammad (the Reality of Mohammad) it also may be said that through the words spoken by Bernard Virginia woolf is supposed to make herself one with the spirit of Mohammad (which also had dwelt within Jesus). It signifies a relation to God which was to be "implied in union with the Logos".

Virginia Woolf's concept of Perfect Man in *The Waves* is akin to the ideal of insan-e-Kamil' of Iqbal in many aspects.

as it is all inclusive. Her 'insan-e-Kamil is a saviour of mankind, a messenger of love, peace, and justice. Heaven derives its light from the Divine Attributes which illumine his spirit. He is a free spirit challenging the forces of Nature, is capable of Divine Virtues as he transcends Time and Space, is in search of his origins, is rooted in Sufi training. By his dauntless actions he enhances life. He is a "conqueror of earth", "soft as rose, hard as stone", He is capable of creating a new world. Time is regarded as an organic whole by him. He gets complete absorption into the Absolute Reality by transcending Time and Space. Thus he is the saviour of mankind, the Vicegerent of God upon earth acquiring Divine virtues. He has perfect synthesis of intuition and reason in his personality.

The Perfect Man of Virginia Woolf as well as of Iqbal bleeds to see the "sinking and falling of mothers" (or the decline of Intuitionism or Wahdatul Wujud - unity of Being). Both of them feel anguish about their lost origins. Both feel a deep agony to listen to the "primeval voice sounding loud in the ear of the present moment".

Iqbal says in Javid Namah with anguish

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Vision in this world is suppressed,

Vision is subjugation and suppression. 

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41. Ibid, p. 89.
42. Ibid, p. 89.
43. Iqbal, Javid Namah (Persian version, Pub. Iqbal Academy, Lahore, 1982.)
There is a message of Universal Love and peace for the whole humanity which is a victim of cannibalism and Fascism at present.

*Between The Acts*

Virginia woolf's yearning for wholeness and perfection led her to realise that man in this modern world has lost his integrity, self-respect and wholeness, that he is fragmented and confronted by anxieties. She felt the need of an integrating force so that his wholeness may be restored. In *Between the Acts* she addressed the modern man in the following words:

"All you can see of yourselves is scraps, orts and fragments." 44

She has suggested that so long we remain 'orts and fragments' we shall never be able to rebuild civilization. She feels that corruption and ills of the world are due less to the bomb droppers, who do it openly, than to ourselves who do worse things slyly having lost our innocence, virtue, love and sincerity. Like *To The Lighthouse* and *The Waves* etc. *Between the Acts* also, besides being a lyrical novel, is a sufi treatise presenting Virginia Woolf's own porous personality. She has satirised in this novel vanity, selfishness, hypocrisy, greed, love of exploitation, and war - the vices which divide man from man. Real life, according

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to her is, the common life. We can not be whole and entire unless we have faith in the oneness of the world and humanity, i.e. Universal Love. All the creation, according to her, is the same everywhere. There is a spirit that pervades everywhere. The "bellowing cows" presented in the pageant are symbolic of the basic unity of all life:

"Then suddenly as the illusion petered out, the cows took up the burden. One had lost her calf. In the very nick of time she lifted her great moon-eyed head and bellowed... From cow after cow came the same dumb yearning bellow. The whole world was filled with dumb yearning. It was the primeval voice sounding loud in the ear of the present moment".45

As stated earlier, cow, according to Professor S.P. Singh's interpretation of Aurobindo's views, represents "Light", "consciousness" or the "Higher Consciousness".46 The lines from Between the Acts, if read and assessed in the light of Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the word cow, dawn their depths of meanings. Aurobindo, a mystic-seer, had presented an ideal of integrated personality or concept of Perfect Man who could save God's world, on whom is laid the burden of the past, the "burthen of the mystery, the heavy and the weary weight of all this unintelligible world which is lightened in the "blessed mood"47 (Tintern Abbey).

45. Ibid., p. 103.
46. Professor S.P. Singh, Sri Aurobindo and Jung, p. 65.
Isa, one of the Isiac personalities in Between the Acts, murmured:

"How am I burdened with what they drew from the earth, memories, possessions; This is the burden that the past has laid on me, last little donkey in the long caravanserai crossing the desert... That was the burden, she mused, 'laid on me in the cradle; murmured by the waves; breathed by restless elm trees.

By a close study of the passages quoted we reach the conclusion that there are parallelisms between the "murmuring waves" the "bellowing cows" and mothers ("sinking and falling mothers").

Professor Singh writes:

Among the followers of Sri Aurobindo the vision of the mother is most frequent. He regards mother as the direct embodiment of the consciousness force - the Supreme Creative power... Being transcendent, if she is capable of assuming universal form on the one hand, no less should she be able to assume individual form on the other. For individuality as well as universality is implied in the transcendent.48

The mother is the prime force behind the spiritual development of her followers. Mother, according to Al-Jili as well is the origin. Search for origins is very characteristic of Virginia Woolf (Mrs. Swithin again and again enquires about the origin of words). During the World Wars, according to Virginia, the whole world was filled with

"dumb yearnings" the "primeval voice sounding loud in the ear of the present moment," hence her deep interest in Pre-history, Egyptology and Isis-cult whose symbol is cow representing Higher Consciousness.

Virginia Woolf's fascination with the sea and with the primeval has been related to her "search for a way out of sexual difference or equality for a continuity with lost origins". She conceived mother as origin, the source of life as she had lost her mother at a very young age, hence "sinking and falling many mothers and behind them many more, endlessly sinking and falling (The Waves, Halograph Draft 1, p. 64.) Ms. Beer says: "Mothers, matrices, the acceptance of oblivion - these are connections crucial to Virginia Woolf".

Both The Waves and Between the Acts are related with the ancient Egyptian religion. Ms. Beer further says:

Between the Acts is set in June 1939 before the coming of war. The present is pre-history in double sense. Whenever the action of the historical pageant falters it is saved by the unwilled resurgence of the primeval: the shower of rain, the idiot, the cows bellowing for their lost calves... June 1939 is pre-history to a coming war which, the book makes clear, without hysteria, may mark the end of this society. The book is permeated with Lucy Swithin's

50. Ibid., p. 111.
reading of H.G. Wells. Virginia Woolf here amalgamates his *The Outline of History* with his *Short History of the World* and writes her own version rather than quoting Wells directly. Old Mrs. Swithin, so pious, repetitive and faithful, has an imaginative life swarming with sensual images of power and birth. During the book's twenty four hours she inhabits the repeated present of the day of pageant and the primeval worlds of her book's description.\(^{51}\)

Virginia Woolf's reading of *Moses and Monotheism* while she worked on *Between the Acts* is an important fact revealed by Gilian Beer. Freud's observation that man has a pre-history which is unknown must have helped Virginia Woolf's ideas about pre-history.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali starts Appendix V of his translation of *The Holy Quran* with the title: "Egyptian Religion and Its Steps Towards Islam". He writes:

... *In the most fantastic forms of religion appear gleams of His Light of Unity, calls to Islam, i.e. man's submission to the Will of Allah. From that point of view the religious history of Egypt... is most interesting. The religious history of Israel is an earlier chapter of the history of Islam. It is a healthy sign that modern Egypt is showing much interest in it... it will in time recognise in it a valuable unfoldment of religious ideas leading to Islam. With the gifted and artistic people like the Egyptians their...*\(^{51}\)

religious sense was led to a purer conception of man's eternal destiny until Mohammad's message was preached to them in the very language in which it was preached to them in Arabia. A process of unification was now consciously undertaken. ... In addition to the symbolism of animals there was the worship of the phenomena of Nature, the Nile and the Sun which became the supreme God in Egypt. Then there was the myth of Osiris who came to the earth for the benefit of mankind... His faithful wife Isis and his son Horus figure in mysteries. 52

In spite of his mystical and candid approach Abdullah Yusuf Ali has not done enough justice to Isis— the moon-goddess or the Great Mother who, in Virginia Woolf's words "inspires and pervades everywhere". His gradual perception of monotheism in Egyptian religion and its relation to Christianity and Islam is illuminating. According to him Moses came in such conditions in order to direct his people to the Unity of Being, to one who had been Many but still One (all this is remindful of Virginia's reading of Moses and Monotheism). Slowly and gradually the soil of Egypt was made cosmopolitan in nature, culture and philosophy. In this appendix V the author has discussed Christianity as well which began to displace the older Egyptian cults. The "new Christianity was evolved out of Christ's simple teaching" He says:

The Christian creed became narrower and narrower, less and less rational, more and more inclined to use earthly weapons to suppress the eternal truth of Allah.\textsuperscript{53}

In the forthcoming lines the author of the Appendix refers to the brutal murder of Hypatia, a beautiful, modest, eloquent philosopher and mathematician of Alexandria. It was for this reason, besides others, the inhabitants of Egypt generally welcomed the forces of Islam which was chiefly inclined towards justice to women (as Christianity had been in its original form which was rediscovered by Virginia Woolf at a later stage -- the original Christianity which was hailed and whole heartedly applauded by her in \textit{Between the Acts}.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali has been just in his observations. Jesus was not a chuavinist (neither he was a rival to his mother, but was made so). As supported by the recently discovered and translated \textit{Dead Sea Scrolls} (dated from 100? B.C. 70 ? A.D., discovered in 1947 in caves near the Dead Sea containing Scriptural writings) Jesus said:

\textit{Seek not the law in your scriptures, for law is not life, whereas the scripture is dead. I tell you Moses received not his laws from God in writing but through the living word}.\textsuperscript{54}

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{Ibid.}
\item This quotation has been extracted by Ms. Goodman from \textit{Dead Sea Scrolls} and included in her book \textit{A New Approach to Human Heart}, p. 1124.
\end{enumerate}
There are to be found with the manuscripts of New Testament which exist in the library of the Vatican, in Rome, of the texts dating from early Christian centuries containing writings which refer to otherwise inaccessible words of Jesus:

For I tell you truly, from one mother proceeds all that lives upon the earth. Therefore who kills, kills his brother and from him the Earthly Mother turn away... do the will of God..."55

The above information is given to us by a person who is deeply interested in spiritual truth. She writes:

One wonders at all the great truth and wisdom contained within the Vatican Library, yet not spread to the multitudes. But one must be grateful at least for the access of truth permitted searching scholars... It seems a non sequiter to teach falsehood while at the same time allowing suppressed truths to be researched. 56

It is this Christianity (whose epitomes in Virginia's novel are Isa and Mrs. Swithin) that was dawned upon the author of Between the Acts while she had been antagonistic to its prevailing form throughout her life. Now the "dumb yearnings" of the bellowing cows and "sinking and falling mothers" become extremely, meaningful. The distressed primaeval voice is sounding loud in the ear of the present moment while war and bloodshed and patriarchy as well as

56. Ibid., p. 1125.
fascism are separating mothers from their sons, while men are mere 'orts, scraps and fragments' and the wall of civilization in ruins to be rebuilt.

Virginia Woolf's interest in roots and origins, in "digging and delving" had led her to Egyptology. Tiers of Isis and Horus in British Museum had influenced her. Besides that some strong minded women - Clara Peter and Janet Case etc. also influenced her. She had read Marius, the Epicurian by Pater which contained eloquent descriptions of the rites of Isis. This book draws the reader to The Golden Ass by Apuleus - a major source of information about Isis. Isiac roles were very much loved by Virginia Evellyn Haller writes:

By placing aspects of Egyptian monumentality in her work, sphinxes, collasi, pyramids, donkey, sarcophagi, etc. Woolf builds an aesthetically Egyptian ambience into her novel that makes a cartouche surround the mythic figure of Isis, enabling her to make aesthetic war on imperialism, Christianity and patriarchy.57

Evellyn rightly feels that Virginia Woolf's choice of becoming a woman of letters intended to challenge the male dominated systems of thought for one informed by most coherent female myth by emphasising Isiac roles of artists and peace-gatherers. Isis, says Haller, was the life-enhancing female factor in comparison to Pharaohs and

57. "Isis Unveiled": Virginia Woolf's Use of Egyptian Myth" by Evellyn Haller in Virginia Woolf and The Feminist Slant, p. 113.
Qsiris. Isis, with the flooding of the Nile remained the source of life. Images of Isis and Horus became models for Madonna and the Child. Between the Acts has "most perceptible Egyptian ambience". Virginia Woolf in using the "mythical method" chose "as referent the loving, maternal and beneficent Isis" suggesting her name in that of the central character Isa. Another Isiac personality, according to Haller, is Mrs. Swithin who fondly reads Well's An Outline of History which discusses Isis in detail. Haller also refers to Virginia Woolf's acquaintance with Apulius' Golden Ass in which Isis speaks of her diversity of manifestations:

'I am she whose godhead, single in essence, but of many forms, with varied rites and under many names the whole world reveres.' (Bk 11, Ch.v - Tr. by Adlington Classical Library, London, p.546-547).

Egyptian symbols of the abundance of life abound in Between the Acts increasing the Isiac presence. Like Isis and Horus, Isa and George (her son) become the models for Madonna and the child. Isa refers to the loving, maternal and beneficent Isis. While the innocent world of her son was destroyed by cold and hard-hearted Oliver, her father-in-law (reminding us of Mr. Ramsay of To the Lighthouse) by terrifying him being masked, she felt extremely hurt. The

58. Evellyn Haller, "Isis Unveiled" in Feminist Slant, p. 118.
59. Ibid., p. 118.
60. Ibid., p. 118.
child's world was the innocent world of grass, flower and tree full of sweet smells and lights; at whose heart there was for George 'a flower complete'. Isa was teased by Oliver. He called her boy a cry baby and coward:

"She frowned. He was not a coward, her boy wasn't. And she loathed the domestic, the possessive and maternal".  

Isa "loves as well as hates" her husband who is the "father of her children" but is mere fragment being separated from her by Mrs. Manresa who is all lust. Her yearning for a husband, (who may love her sincerely) is suggestive of her wholeness, a husband who may be whole and entire. For healing the wounds of her soul she was momentarily inclined towards the gentleman farmer, Rupert Haines, who was inaccessible to her. Out of her deep maternal love for her children she represses her desires and conquers her lower self-while her husband enjoys the company of Mrs. Manresa freely. While she comes to know that her husband had gone in front with Mrs. Manresa, she muttered, "the father of my children". Then, writes Virginia Woolf:

The flesh poured over her, now lit up, now dark as the grave physical body. By way of healing the rusty fester of the passionate dart she sought the face that all day long she had been seeking... Turning the corner there was Giles

---

attached to Mrs. Manresa ... Did they perceive the arrows about to strike them?"\(^{62}\)

Then both of them went away in a car leaving Isa in hiding with a bleeding heart - Isa the mother of Giles' children - the maternal Isis. Isa is the mother, direct embodiment of consciousness force, having "assumed individual form implicit in the transcendent". Mother is the prime force behind the spiritual development of her child (it reminds us of the mother who rose out of the waters of river Ganges). Isa, like Mrs. Ramsay, is the sinking and falling mother, the great Mother who "inspires and pervades everywhere".

Original Christianity, Islam as well as Sufism were inclined vehemently towards justice to women. Giles stands for narrower Christianity (which degrades women) inclined to use earthly weapons to suppress the eternal truth of the Absolute Being. Isa's are "dumb yearnings, the silent cries".

Moon is the main subject of Isa's poems which she hides from her husband. She is "burdened with what they drew from the earth, memories, possessions. That burden was laid on her by the past -- the last little donkey in the long caravanserai crossing the desert". It was "laid on her in the cradle murmered by the waves... crooned by singing women".

\[^{62}\text{Ibid., p. 151.}\]
The bellowing cows, who took up the burden, (the "murmering waves", the "sinking and falling mothers", the "individual embodiment of the higher consciousness, the supreme creative force), who saved the pageant (the world) at the crucial moment having great moon-eye heads, remind us of Isis' origin in Hathor, the ancient Egyptian cow-goddess (equally revered in India since the Vedic period). Isa's silent cries have parallelisms with the bellowing cows. She was capable of feeling deeply and expressing human sorrows poignantly. She laments the decline of the Universal love and intuition which has fragmented man and divided the world.

With the ideal of integrated personality Virginia Woolf intended to challenge the male-dominated, patriarchal, Fascistic systems of thought by emphasising Isiac roles of artists. Isa is the life-enhancing female factor possessing a harmonious personality.

It is merciful wife, sister and mother nursing her child that Isis appealed to those who had faith in her. In Between the Acts life is controlled by the figure of Isis -- Isa and Mrs. Swithin, reminding us of the Oriental Sufis, especially Ibn'l Farid who had said "I am She" and "I am God" (aham "Brahmasmi" of The Upanisads). The myth of Isis, the Great Mother Goddess, has relation with Mary and thus with that Christianity which has been eulogised in Between the Acts. Isis and Horus (so also Mary and Jesus - Madonna and the Child) were mysterious figures for Virginia Woolf.
hence the "bellowing cows" and the "murmering waves" - symbols of "sinking and falling mothers", of the decline of intuitionism, of Universal Love, of the loss of the absoluteness of the Absolute Being resulting in ruin of the wall of civilization, of man becoming mere 'orts, scraps and fragments."

*Between the Acts* was written during the outbreak of World War II in which Virginia Woolf's own house was ruined. Thakur feels surprised that this novel (which is very delightful according to him) does not reflect those hard times when Leonard Woolf kept enough petrol for suicide should Hitler win. There is not found any sense of insecurity or fear but "tranquil recollection and sober judgement" which are suggestive of integrated and porous personality of a mystic seer and a perfect artist. In this novel, besides inner and historic time, pre-historic time also has been captured presenting a unified vision of life. The major personalities in this quintessential novel are of Mrs. Swithin and Isa like Mrs. Ramsay, Eleanor and Bernard etc. Virginia Woolf felt the need for that integrating force that man needs today. Her vision of the Perfect Man is unique, fascinating and all inclusive advocating the unity of life offering the divided self and the divided world a possibility to restore their identity, their personality by reuniting the fragmented aspects of life. This very concept of Unity of Being, being rooted in the

63. Thakur, p. 141
antiquity, later presented by Ibn'l Arabi and Al-Jili etc. is to be found at its best in this novel. Virginia Woolf has tried to cure the diseases, spiritual as well as moral, of modern man by Universal Love so that he could be whole and entire. At a time when there was a threat of war, when man was a mere fragment she promised a full-blooded life, an integrated personality, well adjusted existence.

In *Between the Acts*, unlike her previous novels, Virginia Woolf is not against religion and Christianity. Her reverence for Mrs. Swithin's prayers, her crucifix, her compassion, Universal Love, her calm restoration, tolerance, moral courage and forgiveness etc. indicate that she had by then understood the original Christianity, its very essence. This change of attitude was the outcome of her persistent study of religious writers, historians and interpreters of Egyptology and Christianity. She had always been inquisitive about the original meaning of Christianity, about such sayings, "God is Love", kingdom of Heaven is within us". She felt that man is in need of a God. The religious faith needed by the world today has been represented by the most integrated personality i.e. Mrs. Swithin (who is a "unifier", is intuitive) in *Between the Acts*. In this materialistic age spirituality, faith and mysticism are vehemently needed for the survival of humanity, hence the concept of Perfect Man.

The Perfect Man, the integrated being, the origin of the universe, is the spirit of Divine Revelation inspired
by the light of Mohammad (Speaking as the Logos — the doctrine which was common between the ancient Egyptian religion, The Upanisads, original Christianity and the great Oriental Sufis). Al-Jili treats the Perfect man as the spirit whence all things have their origin. Mrs. Swithin and Isa of Between the Acts are such spirits whence all things have their origin, who are capable of seeing into the life of things. Iqbal, in his article "Al-Jili's doctrine of Absolute Unity" writes:

... In the first stage of his spiritual progress he (the Perfect Man) meditates on the name, studies nature on which it is sealed; in the second stage he steps into the sphere of the attribute and in the third stage he enters the stage of the 'Zaat; the Essence. It is here that he becomes the God-man; his eye becomes the eye god, his life the life of God, his word the word of God — participates in the general life of nature and sees into the life of things. It will appear how strikingly the author has anticipated the chief phase of Hegelian Dialectic and how greatly he has emphasised the doctrine of the Lagos— a doctrine which has always found favour with almost all the profound thinkers of Islam.64

Like Iqbal, the universe of Virginia Woolf's poetry is a God-oriented universe (Between the Acts is all poetry).

64. Dr. Mohd. Iqbal, article "The Doctrine of Absolute Unity As Expounded by Abdul Karim Al-Jili" in The Three Articles of Iqbal, pub. by Iqbal Academy, Hyderabad, printed by Intekhab Press, Hyderabad, p. 5.
Mrs. Swithin, an Isiac personality in this lyrical novel is a God-in-toxicated personality, a real Christian, hence the following:

... The stage remained empty. The cows moved in the field. The shadows were deeper under the trees... Mrs. Swithin caressed her cross. She gazed vaguely at the view. She was off, they guessed, on a circular tour of imagination - one making -sheep, cow, grass, trees, ourselves, all are one. If discordant, producing harmony, if not to us, to a gigantic ear attached to a gigantic head. And thus she was smiling benignly. The agony of a particular sheep, cow or human being is necessary and so she was beaming seraphically at the gilt vane in the distance -- we reach the conclusion that all is harmony could we hear it ... Her eye now rested on the white summit of a cloud. Well, if the thought gave her comfort William and Isa smiled across her, let her think it.65

Mrs. Swithin gives us an insight into Virginia Woolf's vision of life. She is the first major personality in her novels to carry a cross (which is ridiculed by her brother). She represents the simple religious faith which the world needs today. The pageant to collect funds for the village church is a significant device in this novel.

It would be appropriate here to throw light on the idea behind it. The pageant organised by Miss La Trobe attempts to give unity to history. The diverse elements of her

audience are held together while her play is in progress. She had made the audience see (into the life of things), a vision giving relief from agony. The rustling breeze is heard in the branches. Her failure was that she could not make Mr. Oliver see the vision which was applauded by his sister Lucy Swithin. An autobiographical element is all prevailing. Throughout her life she tried to make people see a world of values which was related with natural things -- a world whole and entire. It was the outbreak of War and she had in her efforts to make the people see the whole truth. *Between the Acts* reflects the decadence of her age. Pointz Hall is a beautiful old house but in hollow. "Nature had provided a site for a house, man had built his house in a hollow. Nature had provided a stretch of turf half a mile in length and level till it suddenly dipped to the lily-pool". Miss La Trobi's efforts to unite her audience in a single vision is defeated by the feelings of lust, hatred and hypocrisy (of individuals who emerge and triumph in the intervals between the acts). They read in the morning paper about the rape of a girl. Europe is being raped by the dictators. At any moment that land would be raked by guns into furrows. Music plays the role of unifier, a synthesiser". *It wakes us, makes us, see the hidden, join the broken* ... How can you deny that brave music, wafted from the bushes is expressive of some inner harmony. Miss La

Trabe signalled "music" whenever the audience split up in 'orts, scraps and fragments'. Music since ages has been a forceful device of healing. It was favoured by many saints and sufis (especially Rumi). Virginia Woolf wants to say that the fragmented personality of man may be made whole by the healing balm of music and harmony. Through the pageant she has ridiculed society very delightfully. She makes the children and elves expose the audience by mirrors. Like a saint she traces out the fall of glory and vanity. She shows the rise and fall of great houses and of golden ages evoking a sense of transitoriness of human life and vanity of individuals. This way she herself comes before us as a spirit of Divine Revelation. The pageant is the pageant of the world which is marvellous but which is vanity. She has suggested that Mrs. Swithin, a prayable being, is directing the pageant of life. Humanity, according to her, persists when the kings and Queens leave the stage of the world:

... Digging and delving (they sang), hedging and ditching we pass... Summer and winter, autumn and spring return
... All passes but we, all changes... but we remain for ever the same...

Palaces tumble down (they resumed), Babylon, Ninvevah, Troy... And Caesar's great house... all fallen they lie...
Where the plover nests was the arch... through which the Romans trod... Digging and delving we pass... and the Queen x and the Watch Tower fall...69

69. Virginia Woolf, Between the Acts, p. 103.
Virginia Woolf’s ideas about time and change, about pre-historic time and the evolution of life are revealing. Mrs. Swithin’s reading of An Outline of History in which Isis has been hailed, is suggestive of her own Isiac and integrated personality. After the description of the rise and fall of kingdoms the words died away. Only a “few great names Babylon, Nineveh” etc. float across the great space...

The audience sat staring at the village whose mouth opened but no sound came... And the stage was empty. Miss La Trabe leant against the tree, paralysed... Beads of perspiration broke on her forehead. Illusion had failed. This is death. She murmured ‘death’.70

For Virginia Woolf, as for Iqbal and Aurobindo along with Rumi, life and death do not matter too much. While one is incapable of seeing into the life of things, of seeing the truth, it is death for him, death of his soul, of his self. Self dies when illusion fails. Sri Aurobindo says in The Life Divine:

“Illusionism itself, even if we contest its ultimate conclusions, can still be accepted as the way in which the soul in mind, the mental being has to see things in a spiritual pragmatic experience when it cuts itself from the Becoming in order to approach and enter into the Absolute.”71

The following is what Virginia Woolf says in Between the Acts:

70. Ibid. p. 103.
... Grating her fingers in the bark she damned the audience. Panic seized her. Blood seemed to pour from her shoes. This is death, death, she noted in the margin of her mind: when illusion fails. Unable to lift her hand, she stood facing the audience.

And then the shower fell, sudden, profuse. No one had seen the cloud coming. There it was black, swollen, on top of them. Down it poured like all the people in the world weeping Tears, Tears.

O that our human pain could here have ending, Isa murmured. Looking up she received two great blots of rain full on her face. They trickled down her cheeks as if they were her own tears. But they were all people's tears weeping for all people. Hands were raised ... The rain was sudden and universal. Then it stopped. From the grass rose a fresh earthy smell...

Nature once more had taken her part”.72

Complete identification of Isa's tears with people's tears on the suffering humanity is suggestive of her Isiac and integrated personality possessing Universal Love. Here Virginia Woolf, along with Isa, becomes the God-intoxicated being, her eye becomes the eye of God, her life the life of God, her word the word of God. Iqbal says:

(The hand of God is the hand of Perfect Man.)

Isa's and Mrs. Swithin's "general participation in Nature" is

exquisite. Their selves are alive as the self of Iqbal's Perfect Man is alive. Iqbal says:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{نَزَّلَتُ نُورُ اِلْحَرَّمِ مَرْحَباً عَلَى بُيُوتٍ} \\
\text{فَيَجَّلُنَّ فِي نَفْسٍ خَافٍ}
\end{align*}
\]

Though death may lay its hands on thy body, Access it has not to the centre of thy being.

Universal Love keeps the body alive, courageous and capable of defiance helping us realise the limitations of reason. "Love impels us to make a sudden leap in the dark and this ecstatic gesture discloses to us the secret depths of the unknowable ... it enable us to establish between our consciousness and the object of perception an intimate relationship... love or 'ishq' helps us penetrate to the innermost recesses of the sanctuary. This reckless onrush into the unknown region by ishq is juxtaposed to the calculated, prudential moves of reason."

After writing these illuminating comments the following couplets of Iqbal have been quoted by Professor Ansari:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{فَلَمْ يُخْرَبَ أَنْبَاءُ نِمْرُودَ بِسَمَّى} \\
\text{عَقِلُ يَهُوَ أَشَاثُ لِبَعْيَ اِلْهَيْلِ}
\end{align*}
\]

Fearlessly did Love leap into Nimrod's fire

Reason -- it is still a spectator from without.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{مِرَارَةَ اُمَرُرُ سُورَانَانَ بِهِذَا بَالَّ} \\
\text{سُهُهُمُ حَيَّ جَالِلَ اِدْرَكُ حَيَّ جَالِلَ}
\end{align*}
\]

Love is above thought of gain and loss Life is being, but sometimes it is the surrender of being.

A man of Love is a "free man". "Love is his guide" and reason his slave. It is a way to self-realization - The

73. Professor Asloob Ahmad Ansari, An Existential Approach to Iqbal in Iqbal Essays and Studies ed. by Prof. Anasari, Ghalib Academy, New Delhi, 1978, p. 127.
basic trait of an integrated being. The intuitive process reveals the nature of Ultimate Reality.

According to Lucy Swithin reason can not see beyond the Z. She is a "unifier", her brother Bart a "separatist". She has immense courage and defiance she possesses Universal Love. When her brother attacks her faith, she does not lose heart:

'The forecast', said Mr. Oliver, turning the pages till he found it, 'says: variable winds; fair average temperature, rain at times... He put down the paper and they all looked to the sky to see whether the sky obeyed the meteorologist. Certainly the weather was variable. It was green in the garden; grey the next. Here came the sun -- an illimitable rapture of joy, embracing every flower, every leaf. Then in compassion it withdrew, covering its face, as if forebore to look on human suffering. There was a fecklessness, a lack of symmetry in the clouds, as they thinned and thickened. Was it their own law, or no law, they obeyed? Some were wisps of white hair merely. One high up, very distant, had hardened to golden alabaster, was made of immortal marble. Beyond that was blue, pure blue, black blue, blue that had never filtered down; that had escaped registration. It never fell as sun, shadow or rain upon the world, but disregarded the little coloured ball of earth entirely. No flower felt it; no field, no garden".74

This kind of participation in the objects of Nature, this one-making, is an outstanding trait of an integrated personality. Mrs. Swithin's "lives in others, in things. She is always herself." After the lines quoted above the novel reads:

Mrs. Swithin's eyes glazed as she looked at it. Isa thought his gaze was fixed because she saw God there, God on his throne. But as a shadow fell next moment on the garden Mrs. Swithin loosed and lowered her fixed look and said:

It's very unsettled. It'll rain. I'm afraid. We can only pray, she added and fingered her crucifix.

And provide umbrellas', said her brother Lucy flushed. He had struck her faith. When she said 'pray', he said, 'umbrellas', She half covered the cross with her fingers. She shrank; she cowered but next moment she exclaimed.

"Oh there they are -- the darlings.
The perambulator was passing across the lawn.75

Isa looked too. What an angel she was -- the old woman. Thus to salute the children, to beat up against those immensities and the old man's irreverences, her skinny hands, her laughing eyes. How courageous to defy Bart and the weather.

Mrs. Swithin's Love of Nature, of God and of children is that of a mystic, a saint. She felt an illimitable rapture of joy on the visibility of the sun which seemed to embrace everything and then covering its face to forbear to

75. Virginia Woolf, Between the Acts, p. 55.
look on human suffering. She saw God there. The sun was to be an embodiment of the wisdom and the spirit of the universe. The Sanskrit word 'Sutr' has been translated by Iqbal as Sun. Often ancient sages and sufis have interpreted God as light. According to Ibn'l Arabi God is light through which all objects are visible but He Himself is not visible. Iqbal has called the angels the children of light. Mrs. Swithin also has been called an angel by Isa. It is the typical Wordsworthian grasp of a relationship between the contemplated mind and the contemplated objects, an attempt to bring out the unique essence of items of observation.

Mrs. Swithin, unlike her brother, is capable of entering the world of a child (or see into the life of thing). Like Mrs. Ramsay she is a healer -- an epitome of Universal Love which does not negate anything or anybody. She thinks not only of providing sandwiches etc. for the people in the barn but also of feeding the fish in the lily pond:

"The fish had come to the surface... "Wait my darlings", she addressed them. She would trot into the house and ask Mrs. Sands for a biscuit.76

Loving both human being as well as animals, fish etc, she represents an integrated being (possessing an androgynous vision) "who prayeth well, who loveth well, both

76. Ibid. p. 149.
man and bird and beast". She consoles William Dodges who says to her, "but you've healed me... Thakur says:

"He feels cleansed and healed as would a sick man before the grotto of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes. He feels purified. He becomes able to see the beauty of the visible world which took his breath away."

Like Iqbal's Perfect Man both Mrs. Swithin and Isa are "boundless oceans" consisting an universe within themselves -- dynamic merciful, loving and courageous. Like Jili's Perfect Man, they are capable of seeing into the life of things. They possess Higher Reason or 'Ishq'(

Miss La Trobe, "the queerest mixture of them all", organises the pageant and attempts to give a unity to history and in the end shows the present time its scattered individualities. All the diverse elements of her audience are held together for creating synthesis. Those diverse individualities "orts and fragments" are collected together into one Miss La Trabe (or Virginia) -- as we are extension of one another. Virginia's was an effort to 'make people see' so that they could save the pageant of the world, to save God's world like Aurobindo's and Iqbal's Perfect Man on whom "is laid the burden of past, the burden of mystery, the heavy and weary weight of this unintelligible world". Like Isa, she is a poet possessing

77. Coleridge: The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.
80. Ibid., p. 136.
an androgynous vision and is burdened "with what they drew from the earth, memories, possessions". The "burden was laid on her in the cradle murmured by the waves or by the "sinking and falling mothers". Like the "bellowing cows" who had taken up the burden she represents "Light", Consciousness or "Higher Consciousness". The supreme creative power assumed individual form -- the peace-gatherer, the creative artist -- an epitome of Universal Love. Virginia Woolf's Perfect Man, the origin of the Universe, is the spirit of Divine Revelation, the Light of the Logos (the doctrine common between all the Scriptures. In *Between the Acts* Isa and Mrs. Swithin are the spirits whence all things have their origin, who participate in the general life of Nature and "see into the life of things" like Wordsworth, the mystic seer and Al-Jili's Perfect Man.

Virginia Woolf's concept of Perfect Man is fascinating and all-inclusive offering the divided self and the divided world a possibility to restore their identity by reuniting the fragmented aspects of life. This very concept of Unity of Being, rooted in antiquity and presented later on by great mystics and sufis, is to be found at its best in this novel. Virginia Woolf has tried to heal the diseases (spiritual as well as moral) of the modern man by Universal Love or 'Ishq' so that he could be whole and entire.

81. Ibid., p. 114.
82. Ibid., p. 114.