Chapter XIII

NEW NARRATIVE POETRY, TRAGIC VIEW OF LIFE AND ROMANTIC LYRICISM OF LOVE

Narsinhrao's attempt at introducing the English type of subjective poetry, along with the pioneering efforts of Dalpatram, Narmad and others, brought modern Gujarati poetry to a stage where its cleavage from the earlier poetic traditions was more or less complete and its future course of development clearly mapped out. "Kant"1 who followed, had not therefore to grope as his predecessors had to, for he found a ready soil on which he could work without having to toil with the spade and the hoe in breaking new ground. The collective efforts of his immediate predecessors, aided by a favourable cultural climate, had largely succeeded in lifting Gujarati poetry out of its old grooves and in directing it along a new avenue of expression which was typically English and demonstrated the potentiality of that alien plant flowering on the native soil, creating enough goodwill for it, whereby in a comparatively short time, it came to be domiciled and ceased to be adopted as a model, even as an ideal, and before long what was believed to be an extraneous spell, or an alien invasion, was discovered, in the larger sense, to be but a part of a common and universal poetic heritage, overleaping territorial bounds. 'The field is universal and allows scope to all such as feel the inward glow!'2

It is both interesting and significant to know that 'Kant,' at the very outset of his poetic career, had these very words of Byron inscribed as a motto on the front page of his note-book in which he wrote his poems.2 In Kant, modern Gujarati poetry seemed to have arrived at a stage where it was willing to imbibe all the

1. 'Kant' (Manishanker Ratnaji Bhatt) 1867-1923.
good things that English poetry had to offer and at the same time reluctant to be tied down to its apron-strings. In other words, modern Gujarati poetry was gradually ceasing to be a mere parasitical growth of English poetry and was beginning to assert its own identity and individuality, apparently bent on, as Keats once observed about poetry in general, working out its salvation in its own way. Currents and cross-currents are, however, the familiar features associated with the history of all literatures, but what is more relevant to note at this stage of the history of modern Gujarati poetry is the fact that traditional poetry, even in its struggle for survival was almost a spent force and that the new type of poetry akin to the English variety was consistently gaining ground.

Kant who graduated from the Elphinstone College, Bombay, in 1886, learnt his English and Moral Philosophy from eminent Englishmen, like Principal Wordsworth and Professor Macmillan. His love of English literature was not, however, confined to his text-books or his class-room. In a sonnet addressed to a friend (B.K. Thakore), Kant alludes to the 'peacock-notes heard in many a bower', explained later by his friend as referring to the delight of studying English, European and Greek literatures, which included not only the poets and playwrights, but also others such as 'Landor, Ruskin, Bacon, Berkley, Martineau, Gibbon, Herodotus, Pascal and Plato, Plutarch and Carlyle, Goethe and Tolstoi, Dumas, Lytton, Lessing, Hugo, George Elliot, Matthew Arnold and Sainte-Beuve, whom he had read fairly well.

Wordsworth, Tennyson, Milton, Shelley, Byron, Keats, Burns, Browning and Mrs. Browning were his favourite poets, while his admiration for Dante whom he placed above Homer and Virgil was so great that in a fit of self-disparagement he destroyed several hundred lines of his early poetic effusions. With his friend

Thakore, who was just then emerging from his Examination Hall, Kant went, it is recorded, for a long stroll on the sea-side when their topic of discussion was the poems in the Fourth Part of Palgrave’s "Golden Treasury".

Kant believed that there was no language so rich in its poetry as English and though he had found some poetry in Sanskrit which compelled his admiration, he was sure that it was only in English that one came across poetry that shook every fibre of one’s heart. It is perhaps inconceivable that such devotion to and admiration for English poetry could not affect Kant’s own poetic conception and creation. The fact is, Kant’s poetry bears a deep, though a subtle, impress of English poetry on it, which considering the intensity of its impact on his mind, might as well have wiped out all signs of originality and individuality from its output but for the wide-awake artistic conscience in him. It is this exactly which distinguishes him in the matter of the English influence, for instance, from Narsinhrao, whose poetic identity was almost submerged under it. Though Kant felt that Gujarati language was still in its infancy and to compose poetry in it was no easy task, and though he was personally not very enthusiastic about his own performance, especially when juxtaposed with the finest in the English language, he seemed to derive strength from the thought that the study of English poetry which made one so diffident of one’s own efforts, also provided a lofty ideal and criterion to be followed to one’s advantage. Besides having a native genius for poetry and an equipment of a sensitive heart responsive to all beauty wherever he found it, Kant had the necessary scholarship and critical faculty to give an artistic form to

5. Vide, 'I shall never accept anything but the beautiful wherever it may be found', 'Kantmala', p.294.
what he wrote. On the other hand, he was alive to the limitations of the medium of his communication and to the difficulty of composing poetry in that language, which he believed to be still in its infancy.\textsuperscript{1} The achievements of English poetry, which he had read ardently and assiduously and which had occasionally disheartened him in his own imperfect attempts, served for him as a school where he could learn and benefit himself.\textsuperscript{2} Kant's poetic taste and ideals were nurtured on English poetry.\textsuperscript{3} Kant's poetic technique is influenced by that of English poetry and his contemplation which is so characteristic of the modern mind, is nearer in its texture to the West, though it is not out of tune with the ancient Indian thought.

Kant began writing poetry early and his poetic development was rapid. Enchanted by Dalpatram in his school-days, already disenchanted in his college-days, Kant's intimate acquaintance with English poetry, both in and out of his class-room, while studying at the College, probably played a significant part in accelerating his transition from the traditional to the new modes of poetic expression. His stay at Baroda, where he served as a Professor in an institution after graduation, was poetically one of the most fruitful in his career. The best among his poems were those that came to him at one whole incandescent heat of inspiration, which was for him always brief. Significantly, no poem of his runs to more than two hundred lines, where also there are moments of flagging and shagging of the energy which propelled him to touch uncommon heights of imagination and inspiration. Generally, he delivered himself in short lyrics which shone like well-cut diamonds. His tender love for his wife, which he enshrined in a number of lovely lyrics, was an anchor, which was lost on her death in 1891 when barely twenty-four, sending him adrift on the sea of sorrow like a fragile boat without sail or rudder. It plunged

\begin{enumerate}
\item Vide, 'Kantmala', p.328.
\item Vide, his letter : 'Kantmala', p.328.
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him into depths of melancholy from which, inspite of his second marriage two years later, he seems never to have recovered fully. In 1897, he was drawn to Swedenborg's philosophy and he felt that in Swedenborg and the Christian faith he had arrived at his spiritual eureka. His conversion to Christianity, which followed, precipitated a crisis in his life, where his domestic peace was the first casualty and his poetry the next. His newly acquired faith, instead of stabilising him, ironically in effect unhinged him to such an extent that, torn between his loyalty to what he believed to be true and the loss of affection from his family and friends which he equally prized, his poetic activity paralysed for a long time. It is true that he wrote a number of hymns and prayers informed by his new religious faith, but his poetic inspiration and the magic from his pen seemed to have left him for ever. Kant was rarely at peace with himself and the battles he waged with himself left deep scars and gaping wounds not only on his spirit, but also on his poetry. In trying to mount over his earlier pessimism issuing from a tragic vision of life, which was substantially not different from that of Hardy and the ancient Greeks, he landed himself on a spiritual platform from where, in his tragic isolation, he spoke of Christ and Swedenborg. Even if this secured him the faith which gratified him, it lost him the love of his dearest and nearest whom he had grappled to his heart. Destined, as if, not to have the best of both the worlds, his return to his old religious fold gained for him a prodigal's welcome from his friends and family, but dictated as it was by considerations irrelevant to his own convictions, what was gained was not compensation enough for the faith which was so painfully acquired and lost again. Kant's agony and torment, his love and longing, his faith and frustration, are vividly portrayed in his own poetry and private correspondence.1 2

1. Reflected in his narrative poetry, reviewed later in this thesis.
2. Collected in 'Kantmala'.

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Kant's literary output was small. Besides writing some inconsequential plays, an incomplete novel, translations from Plato (1921), Aristotle (1912), Goethe (1897), Swedenborg (1899) and Tagore (1919), he wrote a body of lyrical poetry of the subjective and objective type, collected in a solitary volume 'Purvapalp', which constitutes his chief title to fame. Kant was essentially a lyrical poet and singer of love, which is delineated in its many-sided splendour and moods. Even his devotional poetry springs from the same source, for in his love was sublimated into ardent devotion and devotion was based on love. It was not for nothing that the man to whom 'to love and to be loved' was a constitutional necessity chose for himself a pseudonym which meant a lover. He portrays this love sometimes through his own person and sometimes through his characters in what may be called his dramatic narrative lyrics. He wrote both secular and religious types of poetry, but everywhere the man who wrote them stands before his readers without a mask, with a heart in his mouth. Narsinhrao, before Kant, under the influence of Wordsworth, in his systematic coverage of nature had probably overdone the thing and in reaction, Kant turned to the poetry of man's inner life, which fitted in well with his deeply introspective cast of mind. He is with Shelley and Keats, rather than with Wordsworth, in his admiration for nature and like them he preferred to use it as a background to human emotions in most of his poems. Kant had an ear for music and what is more significant, his poetry has a musical charm, which sometimes reminds one of the music of Shelley and Keats. The harmony of sound and sense, the beauty of rhymes, judicious use of alliteration, the intelligent orchestration of vowels and consonants and the over-all felicity of diction, let alone the beauty of thought and depth of emotions in some of his poems, gave to Kant's poetry a sweetness and a grace all its own, in effect, bringing it nearer to English lyricism which was then its ideal and model. With his poem 'Vasantvijay'
or the 'Triumph of Spring' in 1899 when he was twenty-two, he struck a new note in Gujarati poetry. He has been sometimes hailed as the 'herald of Spring' in modern Gujarati poetry,¹ and the appellation is not undeserved. Besides some of his lyrics, which in their sheer romanticism, spontaneity and wistfulness of emotions and reflections bear a close affinity with those in the English poetry of the Romantic Revival, his most outstanding contribution was a new narrative type of poetry, newly classified in Gujarati as the 'Khandkavya', where a number of influences seem to have worked in a concert to produce an almost new genre of poetry, which is not easily to be classified in English terms, being an amalgam of several poetic forms.

Some of these, along with his poems on love and friendship, as also his devotional poems are briefly reviewed below in an attempt to show how in style, representation and poetic conception the poet had moved artistically closer to English poetry, which served him as a model and which, as an object of his emulation, influenced him in a variety of subtle ways.

(a) New Narrative Poetry

Kant's poems in this category, some of them the products of his early apprenticeship, are cast in a new poetic mould, which does not strictly conform to any of those classified in English or earlier Gujarati poetry - lyrical, dramatic or epical. In their narrative element, they are nearest to the ballads or tales in verse, handled by the English poets during the Romantic Revival; in their dramatic representation, where the attention is focussed on a single significant situation or incident, they approximate to the dramatic lyrics, eminently handled by Browning; in their episodical character, they resemble the idyls clustered

¹ Vide, 'Arvachin Kavita', p. 262.
around some central character of the Arthurian legends in Tennyson; in their speech put into the mouth of the characters, they are like dramatic monologues; while in their interpretative function performed through the intervention of the poet, they resemble the chorus in a Greek tragedy. Sometimes in their tone and technique, they look like fragments of an epic. They are not completely objective or subjective, dramatic, lyrical or epical; completely narrative, descriptive or reflective. They do not belong to the category of the old Gujarati 'Akhyanes' or to the lyrics of personal emotions of the English type. It may be recalled how in England, during the nineteenth century, there was an outburst of narrative poetry in its varied and almost bewildering forms, where the whole world was scoured for plot and pattern and the entire gamut of emotions attempted. They defy, as W.M. Dixon has pointed out, all niceties of classification, type merges into type, classified forms melt into a vague romantic outline to produce a lively panorama of scenes, characters and actions, where the old designations fail and the distinctions which prevailed prevail no longer, illustrating, what Croce called, the folly of attempting to distinguish among works of art by a system of classification. These poems by Kant pose the same problem for classification. Though they do not fall conveniently into any particular category classified in English poetry and though, as Kant himself once remarked, it is not always necessary that they should, they are probably a cross-breed of the lyrical ballad and the dramatic lyric, combining in a single poem the narrative interest of the former with the dramatisation and the psychological interpretation of the situation and character of the latter. Nothing like these poems of Kant was attempted earlier in Gujarati poetry and a new name had to be found to describe their species. Classified in

Gujarati as 'Khandkavyas', they made an instantaneous mark.

Products of his pen before his conversion to Christianity, the best among these poems¹ present a picture of life, which is oppressed with gloom unrelieved by any ray of hope. They lay bare 'a sorry scheme of life', where man interlocked in a titanic struggle with or pursued by a cruel and an unjust Fate is not free to work out his own destiny as he wills. Resentful of the yoke which he is powerless to overthrow, man offers a heroic fight, his very defeat, which was a foregone conclusion, covering him with glory that is denied to a sledge-hammer crushing a fly. It is a picture of life where men strive, seek, suffer and hear each other groan. It is the Greek tragedy enacted on a smaller scale, the equivalent of Hardy's vision of life, the overwhelming sense of Fate of the Shakespearean tragedy, put in Gujarati verse for the first time. Life at its core and in its totality appeared to young Kant as dominated by relentless Hap or cruel irony, which gave man freedom of movement enough only to run to his doom. This pessimistic and gloomy attitude towards life is, in its philosophic content, basically different from the theistic Indian view, which while admitting the existence of evil and consequent suffering in life, does not visualise evil as ultimately triumphing over good. Kant's view is therefore 'closer to that obtaining in the tragedies in the West.'² If Kant was, as he described himself, one of those 'born children of melancholy, pessimists in philosophy',³ his pessimistic outlook must have found sympathetic corroboration in some of the Western philosophic thought, which he as a student of moral philosophy at his college must have read. He wrote to a friend in 1890, the period of time when he was engaged in writing these poems, that he did not at all believe in any just or merciful power governing the universe; he believed only in the happiness of love, which unfortunately brought more sorrow than joy in this world.⁴

1. 'Vasantvijay', 'Atijnan', 'Chakravakmithun'.
Almost all his poems of this variety deal with this pathetic aspect of love and the tragic operation of an overbearingly unjust and cruel Fate which man is too powerless to overthrow and too helpless to alter. A few of these poems may be examined at a closer range.

(1) 'Rama' or the Beloved, depicts the love-lorn wife's restive plight at the late home-coming of her husband. The night was dark, the heavens were pouring and she was alone. It was past midnight and almost interminable hours of waiting took her mind back to those happy days when love was a full-blown rose and even a moment's separation was intolerable on either side. The wailing lady sought to disburden her heart in a song. Footsteps on the stairs at long last brought a sense of relief. The lady, unable to withhold her tears any longer, asked tearfully if she had done anything to deserve that neglect. The husband touched to the quick begged to be excused - a poor consolation to her who intuitively saw in her husband's cold indifference, as symbolised by his late-coming, a canker, which was imperceptibly eating into their love sealed with marriage. She realised that while her love grew with years like a tide, his seemed to grow colder and lesser with familiarity, like an ebb. The erring husband's mumbled defence in the poem is significantly lost in the patter of rain outside and the poem closes on a note of darkness, relieved only fearful flashes of lightning, which rend the heart of heavens above.

This poem, the first among those 'pieces', called 'Khandkavyas' in Gujarati, presents a romantic theme in a romantic style, typically English in its blending of the pathetic fallacy of the natural background, interpretation of character and presentation of a situation. The lonely lady, waiting for her lover 'who cometh not' (Tennyson), 'soothing her love-laden soul in secret hour with music

sweet as love' (Shelley), her heart fluttering at the sound of footsteps on the stairs; in her pathetic situation, the very picture of a wailing woman waiting for her 'demon' lover beneath the waning moon (Coleridge), one meets with so often in English romantic poetry, while her fear that her lover's belated home-coming signified 'a rift in the lute that by and by will make the music mute and ever widening slowly silence all' (Tennyson), is something not different in tone, texture and poetic idiom, from the tragic truths spelt with tears in numberless English lyrics, which serve to emphasise the mercurial behaviour of those to whom love is only a part of their being and the pathetic constancy of those to whom 'it is their whole existence' (Byron). The flight of love which Kant's heroine bewails and the tragic irony implicit in it find, in some respects, a matching expression also in Shelley's delineation of the same predicament -

When hearts have once mingled,
Love first leaves the well-built nest;
The weak one is singled
To endure what it once possesst.

In giving to his poem a background of nature which sympathised with suffering of his unhappy heroine, Kant was in the distinguished company of the masters of pathetic fallacy such as Tennyson who, for instance, put his Mariana and the Lady of Shallot in similar situations, where the apathy they met with from their lovers threw into bold relief the sympathy they seemed to receive from nature. Kant was too conscientious an artist to beautify himself with borrowed feathers, but impressionable as he was, he would in all probability be influenced by some of the best things he read in English poetry which, on his own admission, he admired more than any in the world. Kant's poem, like a dramatic lyric, a single situation which represents a deep emotional crisis in the life of a devoted wife. Descriptive, narrative and reflective elements are subordinated to the main object of the poem,

which is to bring out the tragic irony of a woman's love, which faces frustration in its very hour of fulfilment. The poem has a unity of impression and emotion as also a new romantic idiom, which has little in common with the traditional Gujarati poetry on the same subject and is reminiscent of some of the finest of romantic lyrics in the English language.

(2) Another earlier attempt in this new poetic form, a piece under the old-fashioned title 'The Effect of Natural Beauty on the Mind', seeks to depict against the romantic natural background of moonlight in the wood, the romantic love, misunderstanding and reconciliation of a pair of married lovers. Here, the romanticism of the theme, background and representation, the changing Kaleidoscopic patterns of emotions presented in varied metrical manipulations, the autobiographical technique, the direct and uninhibited expression despite the moral framework of married love, Wordsworthian effect of nature on the mind - are all attempts at writing a variety of poetry, which is akin to the English poetry of the Romantic Revival.

The same romanticism of theme, background and delineation is evident also in some other poems. 'On the Banks of the Heavenly River' is presented in the form of a vision, where the influence of Pre-Raphaelite poetry, as in Dante Rossetti's 'Blessed Damozel', as also Coleridge's romanticism in 'Kubla Khan', particularly, the 'Abyssinian maid playing upon her dulcimer' whom the poet 'once in a vision saw', may clearly be felt. The beatific vision also reflects the poet's known admiration for Dante.

Another poem 'Devayani' portrays the blossoming of romantic love between two young lovers - Devayani and Kacha. The romantic episode, where the emphasis

4. Vide, 'Purvalap', pp.119-123.
is shifted from the ethical to the human aspect of the original story of forbidden love in the 'Mahabharata', is set in an equally romantic locale against the background of enchanting moonlight. It is a poem complete in itself as an idyll of love, dramatic in situation, lyrical in its movement and enjoys here a happy ending, which does not in the original.

(3) The two 'visions', which follow, are sombre in their colour and tragic in their implication. 'Fancy and the Musk-deer' and 'The Thirst of the Deer, or the Mirage' are both reinterpretations of popular Indian myth and poetic belief. The vision of the musk-deer, spell-bound by the hunter's music, which is its fatal weakness, and the poet's effort in saving it by killing its killer, ends only in the death of the animal, when the music also stops with the death of the hunter. This symbolically serves to underline for the poet the tragic irony of life that the good, in trying to combat injustice and evil, also destroys itself in the process - a philosophic view that underlies also the tragedies of Shakespeare.

Similarly, 'The Thirst of the Deer, or the Mirage' serves the poet as a text to bring out how man, like the deer running hopefully but ignorantly after the mirage, is the sport of the gods, who unmoved either by pity or prayer, are 'careless of mankind'. This view of life is akin to the Greek view of life and George Eliot's remark in 'Silas Marner' that 'there is no just God that governs the world righteously' - both of which were known to Kant, who had also once expressed himself in almost identical terms in a letter to a friend.

Not less romantic and picturesque in their delineation and setting, but infinitely more oppressive in their gloom are the three following poems, where the

3. Tennyson : 'Lotos-Eaters'.
poet presses into service myths, mythology and fables to demonstrate poetically the tragic irony of life, which offers only to deny.

(4) 'Atijnan' or 'The Supersensory Knowledge', an episode from the 'Mahabharata' provides the material for another poem, to portray young Sahadev's agony arising out of his power to foresee the disaster impending upon those whom he loved, and yet found his powerlessness to prevent them, bound as he was by a condition which forbade him to reveal what he knew. His knowledge of the evil without the power of preventing it imposed upon him a burden from which, sensitive as he was, he sought relief in self-inflicted death through a deadly potion. While Sahadev symbolises the tragic burden of knowledge which is incommunicable, he also illustrates man's awareness of the evil and his pathetic impotence against it. Shakespeare's Brutus, in a similar situation, seeing Caesar's ghost in his tent on the eve of his war with Antony, was quick enough to take a warning, but unable to do anything about it beyond exclaiming, 'Evil, thou art afoot; take thou what course thou wilt'. When at last confronted with the evil he foresaw, he had but one recourse left to him - to die a Roman's death on the sword held for him by unwilling hands. Sahadev's example also shows how an intolerable sense of frustration drives sensitive souls to forget themselves or seek some relief, beautifully hinted at in Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale' and in Hamlet's desire that the 'too solid flesh would melt, thaw and resolve itself into a dew' to end it all rather than 'suffer the slings of outrageous fortune'. Kant's Sahadev, in the nature of the internal conflict he experiences, is Brutus and Hamlet rolled into one, for all the three of them in varying degrees, represent, the tragic ineffectiveness of the mere awareness of the malaise of life without the power or means of preventing or curing it.

2. "A drowsy numbness as though of amlock I had drunk, or emptied some glass of the warm south with bubbles making a at its brim, etc."
(5) The best among these is 'Vasantvijay' or 'The Triumph of Spring, 1889' a story from the 'Mahabharata' retold with a difference. King Pandu, who had repaired to the forest for penance with his two queens and lived peacefully in separate apartments, once found himself suddenly losing control over his repressed passion and, troubled by dreams at night, sought to pacify his rebellious instinct by taking an early morning walk through the woods. The King sat on a rock on the bank of a lake, trying desperately to compose himself. The year was at Spring and the woods were astir with new life. The cuckoo's song was a flame of passion and the frolic of life at the new burst of beauty in the woods was too intoxicating in its impact on the blood for him to resist. A cool dip in the lake seemed temporarily to restore his equilibrium only to be lost, on his return, at the sight of his queen Madri alone in her hut. Prevailing upon his hesitant queen to accompany him to the woods and later resting in a bower, the King urged his young queen to sing. The song ironically served only to fan the fire of passion, which the King was desperately seeking to pacify. The queen alarmed at this, cut short her song, pathetically reminded the King of the curse under which he laboured and the vow he had taken. The queen's warning, the King's knowledge of the curse and his own vow, his self-restraint and his austerities, were too weak even in their ensemble to withstand the upsurge of a blind sexual passion within him. The King grabbed the queen and the curse fulfilled itself in his instantaneous death.

Here, Pandu's curse and vow, which enforced celibacy of him, failed tragically against the power of the Spring which triumphed and his destiny brought about his end, rough-hew it how he would. The malignant omnipotence of the curse

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and the tragic ineffectiveness of the King's vow, with the queen's timely warning thrown in, in the face of a crisis precipitated by his repressed sexual urge, suddenly raising its ugly head in disturbing dreams at night, synchronising with the burst of Spring, are brought out in this poem with all their psychological subtlety and tragic implications. The tragic fate of Pandu, in whom the spirit grapples with the flesh, is symbolic of the fate of those in whom the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. The war within Pandu has to be seen in the context of the curse and vow and his subsequent fall in the context of his repression of his all too human instinct, which had not reached the stage of sublimation. The Spring significantly, therefore, played an important part in precipitating the crisis, which compelled him to choose between the call of the spirit and the call of the flesh and the fatal choice he made, like the tragic hero in Shakespeare, fulfilled the curse and met with fate which he was all the while at pains to avoid. If the curse on Pandu is taken symbolically as something which a man seeks to avoid but which Fate drives him to, the tragic consequences which follow are not different from those in Tennyson's Lady of Shallot, whose full awareness of the curse on her failed similarly in preventing her from acting in a way which only brought her the fate which she was all her life keen on avoiding. Pandu had renounced the world and his sexual pleasures, but the intoxicating appeal of the Spring proved too strong for him to resist. Browning's Fra Lippo Lippi, as a monk, had renounced the world and vowed to attend to the spirit, the Church engaging him significantly in painting St. Jerome, beating his breast with a stone to subdue his flesh. Once in Spring, however, Fra Lippo Lippi's flesh asserted itself and he became a beast, forgetting, for once, his vow. Fra Lippo Lippi's crisis of the conscience, pointedly precipitated by the Spring, as in Pandu's case, does not, however, assume the proportions of a tragic disintegration, as Pandu's end, which, in that respect, resembles the tragic end of Antony's...
infatuation, which lost him an empire. The poem which is one of Kant's best poems, is not just a reiteration of an old story, which in the original is disposed of in only twenty-four verses. It served him as a means of communicating a vision of life, which seems to have then troubled him like an obsession.

(6) 'Chakravakmithun' or 'The Pair of Chakravak Birds' is based on an ancient poetic belief, which sees in the mythical pair of birds called 'Chakravak' a symbol of abiding love, proverbially united during the day, but doomed to separation during the night. Kant visualised one such pair in the poem, put it in a romantic setting of the hills and valleys, through which ran a sparkling river. The poem opens with a certain evening, whose fall is an ominous reminder to the winged lovers that the fateful moment of their separation had arrived again.

The dark moment of their separation, which was arriving nearer with only a few fleeting moments of twilight keeping it at bay, found the winged lovers desperately clinging to one another in a pathetic bid to ward off their outrageous fate which would overwhelm them before long. Their love now could brook not a moment of separation and fate would not let them be together. Submitting to their unjust, cruel and malicious fate being simply unthinkable, the lovers realised that in the order of things, dominated by such a blind relentless power, there was no hope for the free unfettered fulfilment of love in life. They would defeat the cruel machination of Fate by turning their last moment together into an eternity of union through death, which could then separate only their corpses.

Taking a last look at the vanishing sun, the two birds then suicidally plunged headlong into the abyss with closed eyes. In their precipitous descent, they opened their eyes for a moment and saw something like light around them, which was, in fact, an illusion which flattered only to deceive.

1. 1890, 'Purvalap', pp.113-8.
2. After his conversion to Christianity, the poet changed the conclusion of the poem, which however does not seem to fit with the spirit of the poem.
Here, the tragic effect is not sought to be achieved through the incidence of the birds' death, but through their heroic, though ineffectual, struggle with an overwhelmingly unjust order, which is blind and inexorable in its operation. Commenting on his own poem, the poet wrote to a friend that he did not believe that there was any just or merciful power at the helm of affairs in this world. He believed only in the happiness of love, which unfortunately led to more misery than happiness in life.  

(b) Love Poems

Kant's genius was essentially lyrical and his subject was generally love. Even his tragic narrative poems are preoccupied with this theme in one form or another. The man to whom 'to love and to be loved was a constitutional necessity' and whose 'gloom was the result of not being adequately loved' by those whom he loved, would naturally give of his best when writing on love - love which is directly reflected in poetry, as in the case of kindred souls like Shelley and Keats.

Love in its domestic field found its expression in Kant's poems on his two wives and his family. The poetry of personal love, where the poet without any mask sang of his own emotions of love in his own person, which was earlier adopted from English poetry by Narasad and Narsinghdeo, found its most moving expression in some of the finest love lyrics of Kant. In his romantic representation of love and in the delineation of its emotions Kant generally follows the English lyrical pattern, bringing out the beauty, agony, ecstasy, sadness and sweetness of love, which does not, however, stray beyond the moral bounds of legitimate love.

(1) His poem entitled 'Doubt in Love' reveals the poet's deep attachment to his family, which cannot tolerate the thought of separation or loss of love from

them. The poet says that for the sensitive soul for whom to live and to love are synonymous terms, the wounds inflicted by love are the most difficult to heal. The sensitive poet, indifferent to what the generality of men say or feel, feels hungry for love, like a child, from his dear ones, the least doubt about the reality of their love causing him great pain. The eyes unaccustomed to tears even in adversity soon fill with tears at their slightest unkind remark. Such a man cares for none excepting his beloved and family. Possessed of their love, he would defy everything, if only they would treat him like 'a delicate flower'.

The poem comes straight from the poet's heart and strikes not only a personal but also an autobiographical note in a lyrical vein. Kant's conversion to Christianity had created a domestic crisis, which threatened to rob him of the warmth of love of his dear ones without which he found impossible to live. The appeal, like the cry of a lost child, addressed to his dear ones, hints at the great store he laid by their love, and reads like one of those heart-rending utterances of Shelley. The opening lines of the poem, containing an analogy that in nature wounds are healed up, the branch which is cut sprouts again, reminds one of Scott's analogies in 'Coronach' that the summer-dried fountain reappears when the monsoon returns, but it is otherwise with human beings, who find it difficult to recover or retrieve what is once lost. Not only the loss but even doubt in love makes a sensitive lover miserable, for he feels with Tennyson that,

"In love, if Love be Love, if Love be ours, Faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal powers, Unfaith in aught is want of faith in all'.

and therefore declares,

'trust me not at all or all in all',
doubt in love, being intolerable.
Another poem entitled 'Udgar' is a lovely lyric, one of those happy results of the influence of English romantic lyricism and yet neither a shadow nor an echo of the same. The sheer word-music of the poem renders it, like the highest beauty in any poetry in any language, untranslatable. Here, what is actually translatable is the thought or the idea, which divorced from its expression loses its individuality to be a mere universality without distinction.

In this poem, which is addressed to his first wife, the poet observes that lost in her heart and solely loving her, he did not care for the love of the world. Meanwhile, the time for forging new bonds of love was over. He does not, however, regret it. His eyes only looking at her, all his pain disappears at her loving glance.

The sentiment of romantic devotion and total surrender to the object of love, which finds a fervent and convincing utterance here, though in direct line with the tradition of romantic love lyricism in English poetry, is something that issues straight from the poet's personal experience and finds a matching expression in a language which breaks itself into rhythmic patterns, like music moving from bar to bar. The sweet soft cadence of verbal notes, which hardly rise above a whisper, and the undulating movement of verbal music, which moves like a ripple from line to line, are achieved through the instrumentality of an old Sanskrit metre called, 'Shikharini', which is, in places, boldly but happily broken into halves. English poetry which offered varied gifts to modern Gujarati poetry, could not, of course, give its metres to Gujarati poetry, but it could certainly inspire it to experiment with its own Sanskrit and indigenous metres to evolve new metrical structures for something new which it had begun singing. Kant's inspired

effort to break the 'Shikharini' into halves by rhyming one half with the other as two successive lines, gave his poem a rhythmic pattern of short broken lines followed by long ones, as in Shelley's 'Skylark', e.g.

'Like a glow-worn golden
In a dell of dew
Scattering unbeholden
Its aerial hue
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view.'

(3) 'The Indolent Boatman', presents the tragic picture of the poet himself, under the guise of a mariner, who lost his beloved on the voyage of life through his negligence. The poet and his beloved - (the poet's second wife) - ply their pleasure-boat, passing by ports which meant nothing to them. The poet, fired neither with the spirit of gain, adventure or competition, but for pleasure, had crossed the seas and seen wonders, spending days and nights with the friends, who since then had deserted him. The poet had only his beloved left with him on the journey of life. They sang and felt happy, went round many islands and passed by many ports. She lulled him to sleep on her lap when he was tired and plied the boat alone. He woke up in darkness to fall asleep again, indifferent to her plight. Once, she tearfully pleaded to go ashore in the society of men, but the poet was sleepy and paid no heed to her. When he awoke, he found his beloved lost and overwhelmed with grief, he plunged into the water to end himself.

This ballad-like love-narrative is steeped in the romantic melancholy reminiscent of Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner', Matthew Arnold's 'Forsaken Hermann' and Keats's 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' in the picture of the woe-begone lover, though the imagery and motivation here are partly different. The hero's voyage with his friends, touching different ports, seeing many islands, passing time together in gossiping, unwilling to go ashore, is also the story of Ulysses, in

Tennyson's poem, who arriving in the Lotos Island, weary of wife and home, thought it best with his companions to sleep and dream indolently. The tragic end hereof is of course different.

(4) 'The Widowed Deer' conceived in the same melancholic strain, is a self-portrait of the poet, depicting his state after the death of his first wife. The widower (deer and the poet) condemned to loneliness of life without hope or cheer thinks of his beloved, who was the one whom he could truly call his own. The poignancy of feelings and pathos, the autobiographical character of the poem, which no art of camouflage of a fable can hide, are deeply moving. The poem is an impersonal representation of a personal loss. To let the animal or bird interpret the story of men is an old literary device, often used when the poets fight shy of describing their personal emotions in their own person or sometimes deliberately to give an edge to their own story. If Shelley and Keats could identify themselves with the skylark and the nightingale, Kant could as well do it with the widowed deer.

(5) 'The Separation' seems to depict once again in a different form the poet's sense of loneliness in life, bereft of his beloved wife. The moon and stars are always there in the night like familiar faces to see, but not so the face of the beloved who is in heaven. The poet wonders if his deceased beloved also felt the same pangs of separation as he does. - The answer, which is a later addition supplied by the requirement of his Christian faith, suggests that his beloved is there with the Lord, where there is no night.

The first part of the poem suggests that while there is no change in nature, since it is immutable in its cycle and beauty, it is not so with the lives of men, who suffer, change and die - a thought in some parts, reminiscent of Wordsworth in

his 'Ode' where he spoke of the eternal beauty of the moon looking with delight round her when the heavens are bare and of the equally beautiful waters on a starry night, while man changed and suffered for his lost vision. Scott, similarly, in his 'Coronach' bewailed the loss of life which would never return, being subject to a law different from one operating in nature. This poem, which originally ended here, was after the poet's conversion to the Christian faith lengthened and altered to the new tune of hope and faith. The second part of the poem reads like a reiteration of the theme in Rossetti's 'Blessed Damozel', while the first part continues in the pessimistic vein, with which it fails to harmonise, depriving the poem of the unity of impression.1

(6) 'Ganviman' or 'The Celestial Song'2 is another poem which bears traces of the influence of Dante, Dante Rossetti and Swedenborg in the idealised picture of the other world, where the poet's wife has repaired. Tired of life, the poet thinks of his deceased wife and yearns to be with her, if only her celestial song can come down to earth and lift him like an aeroplane to heaven. The poet, like Wordsworth in his 'The World is Too Much With Us', finds the world a stagnant pool, too narrow for the soul yearning for vastness and freedom. The poet's discontent with sordidness of life, his longing for escape on the viewless wings of the song, the picture of the heaven of perfect bliss, his love for his beloved wife including the background of nature, depicted in this poem are the familiar components of English romantic poetry, which modern Gujarati poetry was seeking to represent in its lyrical poetry since Narmad and Warsinhrao.

Prof. Thakore was among those who believed that the alterations effected later in the poem, as in a previous poem 'Chakravakmithun', have done nothing to enhance either the beauty or the appeal of the poem.

2. Vide, ibid, p. 152.
'(7) 'The Eyes of the Dear One', a poem of rare charm, owes its origin
to an intolerably painful personal experience of the poet, who since his conversion
to Christianity found his dearest friends deeply aggrieved at his action. His
wife cried day and night and the poet could not bear, of all things, the sight of
tears in his beloved's eyes. A fleeting fancy that his beloved also might adopt
his new faith was a hope which soon turned to despair. Yet, so deep was his love
for her that the thought of separation from her was intolerable to him. This
pensive lyric reveals the unresolved conflict between the poet's devotion to a
faith to which he was committed and the loyalty to love to which his personal
emotions were affiliated. The tearful eyes of the beloved in the poem represent
both literally and symbolically the poet's tragic dilemma, when he had to choose
between Love and Truth, without neither of which he could do. The eyes of the
beloved, often used as the cradle of romantic love, have rarely been put to such
poetic purpose as in this poem to depict the infinite passion, the infinite pain
of a heart that yearns for love, a heart which could bear to see its highest ideals
and dreams come to nothing, but not the tears in the eyes of the object of its love.

(8) The love-lorn heart of the poet again seems to disburden its heavy
load of misery in a poem entitled 'Our Night' where he wistfully remembers a
certain full-moon night with his beloved, when they talked of the present, dreamt
of the future, the two hearts beating to one tune of love. This poem on the
poet's deceased wife, through which runs 'I remember, I remember,' like a refrain,
as in Thomas Hood's famous poem 'I remember, I remember, the house where I was born':

reveals the pageant of the poet's bleeding heart through pensive brooding over a happy past, which has taken his beloved also along with it.

(9) In 'An Invocation to Tears' the poet observes that in the midst of peace which the night has conferred on the sleeping world, he cannot sleep for all his efforts to do so, his heart in love with someone not letting him rest. His wistful memory goes back to the time when light at heart everything in life delighted him. The oppressive weight on his heart now, by contrast, does not even find relief in tears. The poet then, for relief, invokes the aid of tears, his childhood companions who often consoled and comforted him. He then finds tears streaming out of his eyes. Soothed with the welcome relief, the poet begins to reflect on love and finds that life without love is in vain. Thinking of many things in turn, the poet finally falls asleep.

Besides reminding one of Wordsworth's poem on sleep as also his contrast between the time when the earth and every common sight had the glory and the freshness of a dream, and the time when the glory from the earth appeared to have passed away, in his 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality', this poem entitled 'Invocation to Tears' is an impressive synthesis of Shelley's invocation 'To the Night', Tennyson's 'Tears, idle tears' and Thomas Moore's 'The Light of Other Days'. Shelley's restless soul invoked the Night to give him the peace which Kant here seeks of the tears by invoking them - his tears, unlike those depicted in Tennyson, being not idle, but very useful. The poem seems to have probably the closest


2. 'Tears from the depth of some divine despair
   Rise in the heart and gather to the eyes,
   In looking on the happy Autumn fields
   And thinking of the days that are no more.' - Tennyson.
affinity with Moore's poem

'Oft in the stilly night,
Ere slumber's chain has bound me,
Fond Memory brings the light of other days around me:
The smiles, the tears of boyhood's years,
The words of love then spoken;
The yes that shone,
Now dim'd and gone,
The cheerful hearts now broken!
When I remember all
The friends so link'd together
I've seen around me fall
Like leaves in wintry weather.'

(10) A place may be found here for Kant's translations of Mrs. Browning's three sonnets, namely, (1) If thou must love me, let it be for naught Except for love's sake only'

(2) 'Say over again and yet once over again That thou dost love me'.

and (3) 'Is it indeed so? If I lay here dead Wouldst thou miss any life in losing mine?'

The curious thing here is that excepting one (No.14), the other two sonnets, as they stand, are not rendered completely as sonnets into Gujarati, the poet dropping off a line or two from his complete translation and leaving them at twelve and thirteen lines.

(c) Poems on friendship

Kant was an earnest, intense and a passionate lover, who treated love and life on equal terms and whose love expressed itself in deep emotional attachment to men and women without distinction. The same passionate longing for warmth and understanding, the same delicacy of feeling, which is expressed in Kant's poems on his beloved, is also revealed in all its intensity in his poems on friendship for men, particularly in those addressed to his most intimate friend Prof. B.K. Thakore, whom the poet seems to have loved with an almost feminine...

1. Nos. 14, 21, 23 'Sonnets from the Portuguese', 'Purvalap', pp.150, 148, 149 respectively.
fervour, the only parallel for which may be found perhaps in Shakespeare's sonnet to his friend, or in Wordsworth's attachment to Coleridge.

This out of the common spiritual and emotional attachment between man and man is set forth in all its implications in a sonnet entitled 'Offering', which is addressed to Kant's friend Thakore. Here, the poet recapitulates his pleasant journey through the places of natural beauty with his friend, which evidently in imagery and expression, compares with the lines in Keats's "On Reading Chapman's Homer". The poet reminds his friend how in his company he admired the splendour of the dawns reflected on mountain-tops and listened to the reverberating echoes of the sound of peacocks from bower to bower. Prof. Thakore observed that the bowers referred to in this sonnet stood for some of the finest specimens of the literatures of England, Greece and Europe which they had read together and the peacocks alluded to were not merely poets and dramatists, but also writers such as, 'Landor, Ruskin, Bacon, Berkeley, Martineau, Gibbon, Herodotus, Pascal, Plato, Plutarch, Carlyle, Goethe, Tolstoi as also Dumas, Lytton, Lessing, Hugo, George Eliot, Matthew Arnold and Sainte-Beuve, whom Kant admired and read'. The list which is almost staggering in its variety and size shows how well-read Kant was in English and Western literature.

'An Apostrophe to the Royal Swan' is also addressed to the same friend on the occasion of his graduation. Thakore emerging from the Convocation Hall presented a copy of the English translation of Goethe's 'Faust' to Kant, who slipped into his friend's hand a piece of paper on which this poem was written.

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1. Vide, 'Pervana', p. 34.
variation once again on Keats's 'On Reading Chapman's Homer'.

(2) Another poem 'A Reprimand' expresses the poet's grief occasioned by his friend's inexplicable coldness which he had never experienced before. The stream of his friend's love, he finds, has either ceased to flow or been diverted to some other object. The poet cannot believe that his friend is suddenly grown selfish and yet his indifference hurts and enrages him. If the friend was really changed, it was futile to complain to or open the heart before one who had ceased to love. He would, however, not retaliate and be cold to him. The poem which reminds one of Wordsworth's poem in a similar vein to Coleridge, is conceived in a Shakespearean strain and proceeds on the lines of some of his sonnets. The poet's bitter disappointment at his friend's change of heart and his dignified assertion that he would not change even though his friend is changed is a variation on the Shakespearean dictum, 'Love is no love, which alters when it alteration finds. The pining for lost love and pangs of separation which follow also compare well with the following from Sir Thomas Wyatt:

'And wilt thou leave me thus,
That hath given thee my heart
Never for to depart
Neither for pain nor smart?
And wilt thou leave me thus,
And have no more pity
Of him that loveth thee?
Alas! thy cruelty!
And wilt thou leave me thus?
Say, nay! say, nay!' 2

The same theme is repeated in another poem, 'To a Friend'.

(3) 'A Fallen Lover's Reply', addressed to the same friend, describes

3. Vide, p.153 'Purvalap'
The poet's devotion to his friend in passionate terms. He observes how enchanted by him, his eyes never looked on anyone else. Proud of his love, he lost his sense of duty and fell into the valley of sin, followed by his friend, for which he was not to blame. The memory of past sins brings tears of repentance, washing his heart to purity. Though the heart has not regained its pristine purity despite the purificatory process of penitence, it faithfully mirrors his love as before.

The idea of sin and the loss of innocence, followed by repentance which purifies the heart and 'ransoms all ill-deeds' is a typically Christian concept. The following sonnet by Shakespeare provides an interesting parallel:

'O never say that I was false of heart
...... myself bring water for my stain
Never believe, though in my nature reigned
All frailties that besiege all kinds of blood,
That it would so preposterously be stain'd,
To leave for nothing all 'tisy sum of good
For nothing this wide universe I call,
Save thou, my rose, in it thou art my all.'

(4) 'An Apostrophe to Kalapi' contains the poet's warm appreciation of a young friend and admirer of the poet. Playing upon the word 'Kalapi', which stands for the peacock and the pseudonym of his friend, the poet likens his friend to a peacock who showers his deep intoxicating notes from the palace-top - a fancy like that of Shelley, if the Skylark is substituted for the peacock. The song is like an incantation. His friend pipes his song, through which flows the stream of love from his heart and its notes are spread far and wide in the sky. Laden with the fragrance of the flowers in the fields, his song fills the world and knocks at the heart like some celestial song - a fancy which again invites compara-

'Thou lovest; but ne'er knew love's sad satiety'.

and

'All the earth and air
With thy voice is loud'

and

'Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awaken'd flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous and clear and fresh thy music doth surpass.'

and

'a flood of rapture so divine'.

The poet hails his friend, who pseudonominally a bird and yet never a bird ('Bird thou never wert') pours his full heart in ecstasy ('profuse strains of unpremeditated art') from heaven or near it, called 'Nandanvan' in this poem, his song flows in a stream and all the earth and air is loud with his voice, and he sings, like (Shelley's) poet hidden in the light of thought, his hymns unbidden till they knock open the hearts of his listeners ('Till the world is wrought to sympathy').

There seems to be no conscious attempt to borrow, much less to appropriate Shelley's fancies without acknowledgement, yet the resemblances are there. Probably, to a mind saturated with English poetry - Shelley was among Kant's favourite poets - it is difficult to describe the song of any bird without unconsciously and unwillingly coming under the spell of Shelley's 'Skylark'. What in other poets would have been a clear case of dressing his bird in borrowed feathers is, in the light of Kant's known integrity, a thing to be explained in terms of poetic memory often playing tricks unknown to the poet. Verbal resemblances apart, the indirect influence of Shelley's 'Skylark', however, remains a fact, which could hardly be disputed.

(d) Devotional Poems

The tradition of writing devotional poems goes down almost to the beginning of Gujarati poetry, but Kant's devotional poems are devoted to a different God and a different religious faith. Since his conversion to Christianity, Kant had the feeling that he had come by a 'great Truth', which it was his mission to propagate through his poetry for the benefit of his people.  

He, therefore, started singing hymns and psalms in praise of Christ and Christianity, but his performance was more distinguished by zeal and fervour than by true poetry. Kant, like Thompson, had passed through spiritual agony and known divine compassion, but somehow the personal experience failed to emerge, through the crucible of a vision, into a clear poetic flame and largely remained valid for the poet himself. His attempt at dressing the Christian gospel in typical Hindu mythological garb, as in his 'Hymn to Shiv' was both awkward and incongruous. 'The Song of Hope' is inspired by the poet's faith in God and Heaven, acquired through Swedenborg's glowing picture of Christianity as the only hope of salvation for mankind. Added to this song is the personal note, which induces hope in the poet that he would be united in this heaven of love with his late wife, who did not share his religious faith and that the wounds of suffering on her pure and delicate heart would be mercifully healed - once again reminiscent of Rossetti's picture of the 'Blessed Damozel'. In 'An Offer to the Beloved' the poet invites his beloved to be purified with the holy waters of a 'higher' life, which descend from the holy mound like a balm to a tired soul, where the poet has appropriated a passage from the Bible. 'The Song of Heaven', 'The Holy Supper',

5. Vide, New Testament : Revelation, CXXII, 1-2 'And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of Good and of the Lamb....on either side of the river was the tree of life....and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the Nations'.
"Lord's Prayer", 'Psalm'\textsuperscript{1} are all, in one way or another, inspired by the passages in the Bible, while translation of 'Lead, Kindly Light' comes from the English hymn composed by Cardinal Newman.

In this pious mass of poetic mediocrity shines the authentic jewel of Kant's lovely lyricism, entitled 'The Sea and the Moon'\textsuperscript{2} where the two sentiments of love and devotion harmonise themselves into one song, which spans both earth and heaven in its sweep. The song is devotional without being sectarian where, the heart spell-bound with the beauty of nature, rises in thanksgiving to Him who 'fathers-forth' all beauty which is past change.\textsuperscript{3} Moonrise on the sea fills the heart to saturation with joy and peace. The fret and fever of Time come to an end at once. While the moon shines like the bright eye of God in heaven, the sea majestically rises in tide. The night illumined by occasional flashes of lightning moves slowly, while the cuckoo pours forth its ecstasy of love and there is peace on earth and deep calm in the heart.

Deep and reverent in tone like the choir in a church, the poem is a beautiful blending of the serene mood of devotion and the feeling of awe and wonder at the sight of the beauty of nature. 'Earth has not anything to show more fair than the sight so touching in its majesty'. The sea wears, almost like a garment, the beauty of the rising moon and never did the moon more beautifully steep in its first splendour the expanse of water below it and never was a calm seen or felt so deep! These words purposely adapted from Wordsworth's poem 'Upon the Westminster Bridge' may perhaps give a clue to how two poets, separated in time and space, may yet have an affinity of outlook when it comes to depicting the serene grandeur of

\begin{itemize}
  \item [1.] Vide, 'Purvalap', pp.155, 158, 159, 178.
  \item [2.] Vide, Ibid, p.165.
  \item [3.] Vide, G.M. Hopkins : 1844-1889 : Glory be to God for dappled things, Palgrave's 'Golden Treasury', p.477.
\end{itemize}
Nature in terms of the peace it invokes and the sense of awe and wonder it induces in a heart, which turns to Nature only to turn reverently to God and the fret and the fever subside in an experience of a sight so touching in its majesty and a calm so deep. Knowing Kant's poetic integrity, it would be unjust to suggest that he had Wordsworth before him when he wrote this poem, but if the 'peacock' - friend of the poet could sing, for a moment, like Shelley's Skylark, as has been represented in these pages earlier, there is no reason why Wordsworth could not, in a most subtle and unconscious way, influence Kant, especially when it is seen that the splendour of the scene and the experience of deep peace which ensures the sight so touching in its majesty - regardless of the fact whether it was the sun or the moon rising or whether it was the sea or the river gliding at its own sweet will, remains the same. A poetic fruit of a personal experience, Kant's poem was conceived and composed in 1902, exactly a century after Wordsworth's, when the poet on a moon-lit night saw the sea, he described, near a place called Gopnath, which served him as a raw material for his poem, even as the actual song of a nightingale on a moon-lit night served Keats, or the scene from the Westminster Bridge on September 3, 1802, served Wordsworth. But Kant's poem is not a nature poem, though the beauty of nature is depicted in it; it is not a devotional poem either, though the note of deep devotion is not lacking in it. It is a lyrical rapture that defies classification. Its word-music, deep, serene and sweet, like that of the organ, which lingers in the memory long after it is heard no more, is inseparable from its picturesqueness and it does not sing only to the sensual ear. It is one of Kant's rare pieces, untranslatable alike in its music and beauty, where the verse quintessentially rises to the inspired height of an incantation. It is a peaceful picture

'Of some world far from ours,
Where music and moonlight and feeling are one.'

1. Vide, Shelley: 'To Jane - The Keen Stars are Twinkling'.
If a profound sense of Fate underlies all Greek and Shakespearean tragedies, the
same impression is given by an important part of Kant's poetry - his narrative poems
embodying his tragic vision of life. Here, Kant seemed to believe that there was
some Power, called by any name, immeasurably superior in its might to man and unjust
and cruel in its dispensation. The Greek tragedies were perfect tragedies of Fate;
Shakespeare linked man's destiny with his character; and Hardy invested man with the
grandeur of a Titan contending against Fate, which he called 'Hap'. Kant's tragic
view has all the ingredients of the ancient Greeks, Shakespeare and Hardy and thus
approximates to the Western conception of tragedy, where gods are sometimes depicted
as supremely indifferent to human suffering or maliciously interested in it, and
sometimes, depicted as 'just' and only "of men's pleasant vices making instruments
to plague them", something fundamentally different from the traditional Indian
outlook, based on a faith in divine dispensation, which comes down on the evil, but
ultimately sees the good triumph. The self-acknowledged melancholy and pessimism
projected into a vision of life such as the above, which has sapped the energy of the
strongest souls, could not but play havoc with the energy of a soul, who once
described himself as fragile as a flower. Yet, the unrelieved suffering and gloom
he depicted in his narrative poems could have little relation with the actual facts
of his private life, especially when it is known that they were composed during the
years when, in a worldly way, he was a happy man indeed. The persistent undertone
of melancholy heard almost all through Kant's poetry has, therefore, not much to do

1. Shakespeare's 'King Lear'.
2. 'Kusum sarakho Kant ganajo' - 'Purvalap', p. 100.
3. 'The disaster which overtook him with the death of his first beloved wife
as also the agonising separation from his second one, came later.'
with the actualities of things, but is an integral part of his mental constitution
almost unaccountable like Hamlet's melancholy or Arnold's pessimism.

'Most wretched men
Are cradled into poetry by wrong;  
They learn in suffering what they teach in song.' 1

Kant's poetry, in more than its usual sense, is a projection of his inner
life, which, like that of Shelley and Keats, may have been considerably accentuated
by the reality without, but not logically issuing from it. Born pessimist like
Hardy, he could sing of human suffering in his own happiest hour under the facade
of fables and old mythology, where his choice of only a particular set of stories
in his narrative poems betrays his own bias. The 'inward glow' of which Kant spoke
seems to have grown into a fierce flame, which consumed both the poet and his poetry,
the result being, in a career spread over thirty-four years, he could hardly give
more than a volume, of which again not all are impeccably perfect.

The excruciating spiritual crisis through which Kant passed has an interesting
parallel in that of Carlyle, who after wandering through 'a howling wilderness of
infidelity', acquired a spiritual faith without its concomitant repose. If Kant's
conversion to Christianity solved a spiritual problem, it created another and threw
him into a maelstrom from which he never emerged. Though he began devoutly
singing his new song of hope, faith and divine compassion, it had not the moving
intensity and effectiveness of his older song, which he believed to be only a
prelude.2 The earlier pessimistic poems of Kant are poetically more gratifying
than those which he produced after his spiritual rehabilitation. If the gloomy
harping, in his earlier poems, on the vanity of human wishes in a world, supposedly
ridden with a cruel and an unjust Fate, where men strive, suffer, seek and find not,
over-emphasize a vision of life which is more or less subjective, the strain of hope

1. Vide, Shelley: 'Julian and Maddalo'.
2. The title of his collected poems 'Purvalap' means in English 'Prelude'.

and faith, in his later compositions of the devotional type, suffers from the artistic drawback of the unpoetised personal experience, whose sincerity may not be questioned, but whose art leaves much to be desired.

Kant was prosaic in places, unduly rhetorical in others, sometimes straining after effect and not a little artificial in a number of poems. Like Wordsworth, he wrote a body of uninspired verse, but he had also his heaven-sent moments, when, like Coleridge's ideal poet (in 'Kubla Khan'), his flashing eyes caught fleeting phantoms of beauty and embodied them into that rare variety of poetry, where not only the words but also the poet seem to be working merely as a medium. In some of his best poems, Kant came very near the best in English lyrical poetry, which was the object of his admiration and emulation. He burnt incense at the shrine of Love like Shelley and worshipped the principle of beauty in everything like Keats. 1

Having little enthusiasm either for old Sanskrit or Gujarati poetry, he hitched his waggon to the star of English poetry and also adopted its critical standards as his own yardstick. 2 His artistic ego was, however, too sensitive to let him merely bask in the reflected glory of English poetry. The internal evidence of his poetry shows that there is no English poet who intimidated or awe-struck him into servile imitation. That he was deeply influenced by English poetry and its technique, alike in his representation, expression and forms is undisputed and indisputable. Yet, that influence is seen working on him only indirectly and unconsciously, which may be, nonetheless, all the more potent in the variety of subtle ways in which it worked. His tragic conception, as stated, was influenced by, if not derived from, the West through English; the technique of his long narrative poems is an artistic amalgam of several English poetic forms, including dramatic lyric; the subjective representation of nature, as also the use of the pathetic fallacy in his poems, is peculiarly English; the delineation of personal emotions in his lyrics that influence is seen working on him.

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is characteristically English; his poems on friendship which he was probably the first to write, seem to be inspired by Shakespeare's sonnets to his friends; his patriotic poems follow the trail of those written by Narmad under the English influence; his sonnets are formally indebted to the English model; his love poems depict the love between man and woman in the English lyrical vein; the influence of the Bible on his devotional poems needs no comment and the lyric which he used as the vehicle of his poetic expression is English, in its origin, beyond dispute. If his sensuousness (e.g. in his 'Vasantvijay') is Keatsian in its character, his picturesqueness is reminiscent of Tennyson, as his word-music is of Shelley. His romantic melancholy is Byronic without its pose while the picture of heaven and love in his post-conversion poems owe not a little to that poet-painter Dante Rossetti. If the imagery of Wordsworth's 'Ode on the Intimations of Immortality' and 'Upon the Westminster Bridge' as also that of Shelley's 'Skylark' haunts him and reappears unexpectedly in some of his poems, his allegorical representation in his Christian poems is not unlikely, in some measure, to be traced to Bunyan. Mrs. Browning and Cardinal Newman he had admittedly translated, while a passage translated from Shelley's 'Prometheus Unbound' is found in one of his letters.

Lest this gives an impression that Kant had no poetic capital or initiative of his own, it should be added, in justice to him, that he was never a plagiarist or a parasite. What is suggested above with regard to the influence of English poetry on Kant is an attempt to show how his poetry in practice was moving close to the ideals of English poetry.

1. Vide, 'Purusap', pp.188, 190, 236.
2. 'Kant was mad about Byron', B.K. Thakore: 'Kantmala', p.107.
3. 'There were some extracts and translations from the "Pilgrim's Progress" in his letters of this period', B.K. Thakore, Ibid, p.358.
Modern Gujarati poetry, since it came under the influence of English poetry from 1852, had been affected generally only by its lyrical variety, because it was more or less that variety which dominated the curriculum in English poetry at the collegiate level and also because it facilitated an easy transition from the 'padas' of Marsinh, Neera and Dayaram, which enjoyed great vogue and where a certain measure of subjectivity was already achieved; the only change requisite for the metamorphosis being to secularise it in its themes and approach. Little attention then was paid to the other important branch of English poetry, namely, its objective variety. With Kant, modern Gujarati poetry ventured into this field and aided by its own tradition of the 'Akhyana' or narrative poetry of the past, it blossomed into the 'Khandkavya' or the episodical poem, which was objective in form, but subjective in tone. This was certainly an advance, enlarging as it did the scope and range of modern Gujarati poetry. Dalpatram and Narmad, for lack of a better alternative, put much in verse, which, according to modern standards, should have been more properly put in prose. When Gujarati prose also came to its own, it did an amount of good to poetry in the sense that it released poetry from also doing duty for prose, which, incidentally, was also a happy product of the contact with the West through English. Poetry then almost ceased to be used for imparting information or for social propaganda and could concentrate on things legitimately falling within its realm. Kant severely left alone the contemporary social problem which had engaged the attention of his immediate predecessors. Even in his handling of the devotional poetry, of which earlier Gujarati poetry suffered much lack, his aim, unlike that of the mediaeval Gujarati poets, was not so much to teach and preach as to express the ecstasy of his spiritual discovery.

Kant's genius was pre-eminently lyrical; lyricism was a gift natural to him. and his subject was love - love more than tinged with melancholy. The strain of

romantic melancholy, first heard in Narad's and then more loudly in Narsinhrao's poetry, assumed almost the proportions of a vital part of poetic sensibility in Kant's poetry—a poetic sensibility, which was essentially not different from that in the English poets of the Romantic Revival, particularly Shelley and Keats, with whom Kant had more than a superficial affinity. In his style, expression, poetic idiom and approach, in both subjective and objective varieties of poetry, Kant went still closer than his predecessors to the English model of romantic lyricism. Like Coleridge, he is to be judged not quantitatively but only qualitatively and his known devotion to Beauty, Love and Truth, in his life as in his poetry, is of an order which brings to one's mind the words of Robert Bridges—

'Thy work with beauty crown, thy life with love;
Thy mind with truth uplift to God above;
For whom all is, from whom was all begun,
In whom all Beauty, Truth and Love are one.'