CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Literature is neither a series of unique works with nothing in common nor a series of works enclosed in time cycles...

When, as tiny babies, we first enter this world, we have no experience, we know no words, our minds are not filled with thoughts and ideas. We simply exist, being just aware of our immediate surroundings and secure in the love of our parents. As we grow older, we become aware of ourselves and of our wider surroundings; we learn to communicate through speech as well as our other senses. Our minds and spirits are opened up to thoughts and ideas, experience and reflection. Questions are asked. Answers are sought. Who am I? Why is the world as it is? Why do people die? Why isn’t everybody happy? What is God like? Does God really exist? The world’s religions and their founders have asked these questions and given their own seemingly very different, and yet at the same time very similar answers: ‘Know yourself’ / ‘Know your God’.

Metaphysical knowledge aspires for a complete description of the whole world process, of its existent entities that are constantly changing their attributes as well as of its real entities that do not
change. It considers reality just as rational knowledge considers existence. Its entities are attributeless with respect to rational knowledge but are attributeful in their own metaphysical world, which remains unrevealed in the actual world. They describe the origin, dissolution and the purpose of the world that are outside the scope of rational knowledge. The presence of real entities in the world is evident. There is an agency that creates, dissolves, and inspires the world’s purposeful evolution. If this agency is considered to be God then His presence in the world cannot be sensed. God’s attributes are eternal, otherwise the change in them would become perceptible, He therefore is real. Metaphysical knowledge aspires to intuit a logical statement of God and His attributes that correlates Him to the world process. True knowledge is complete, and it describes the world in full. There is nothing in conflict with or external to it and it is all comprehensive self-awareness of the world, its creation, purpose and evolution.

All religions view God as a Power permeating everything, at the head of the entire cosmos. All religions believe in the divinity of man. The human soul—whatever it be, or whatever its relation to God—is essentially pure and perfect, whether this idea is expressed in the language of mythology, allegory, or philosophy. Its real nature is blessedness and power, not weakness and misery. Somehow or other,
this misery has come. Divine nature never dies. In the most degraded, as well as in the most saintly, it is ever present. It has to be called out, and it will work itself out.

Mysticism is the highest hidden aspect of religion and spirituality. Mystics who have ventured into this baffling journey have shared their experiences. Based on such experiences, the term 'mysticism' has been variously defined, and its several stages analyzed. Bradford Smith finds it "strange that the word 'mystic' suggests something distant and unknowable to many, when the whole point of mysticism is to come close to the divine, to experience it fully, deeply, personally" (1964:177). Evelyn Underhill attempts to make mysticism less distant and more knowable. She defines it as the "name of that organic process which involves the perfect consummation of the Love of God: the achievement here and now of the immortal heritage of man ... it is the art of establishing his conscious relation with the Absolute" (1955: 81).

Writers talk about various kinds of mysticism. According to Happold, there are two kinds of mysticism, the Mysticism of love and union, and Mysticism of knowledge and understanding. He mentions Nature mysticism, Soul mysticism God mysticism as some of the many aspects of mysticism (Happold 1971: 40-43). Christian mysticism is Christ-centred, and is essentially the mysticism of the love of God.
The Christian mystics believe that deification of man is virtually a corollary to the Incarnation, the humanization of God. According to Christian mystics, there are five stages in one’s spiritual progression. They are: 1) the awakening of the self; 2) the Purgation or purification of the Self; 3) The Illumination of the Self; 4) the Dark Night of the Self; and 5) the Unitive Life or Union. These different stages overlap one another and a mystic has to pass through all these stages, though gradually. The first three stages of the mystical journey together constitute what is referred to as the ‘First Mystic Life’. ‘The Second Mystic Life’ comprises the two stages of the Dark Night of the Soul and the Unitive Life of the Christian mystic way.

Hindu mysticism comprises various types of mysticism. It is divided into five categories: 1) Sacrificial mysticism, 2) mysticism of the Upanishads 3) Yoga mysticism, 4) Buddhist mysticism and 5) Bhakti mysticism (Dasgupta 1976: 61). Bhakti mysticism refers not only to man’s love for God, but also God’s love for man. The Hindu mystic way, unlike the Christian way does not speak of clear-cut stages. By the Hindu way is meant two different ways namely, the way of the Upanishads and the way of the Bhagavad Gita, both of which aspire for Liberation. According to the Upanishadic mysticism there are four stages: the waking, dream, deep sleep and the Realization state. These four stages may be said to correspond
roughly to the Awakening, Purgation, Illumination and the Unitive Life respectively, of the Christian way. In the Bhagavad Gita, three methods of approach (yogas) are prescribed for one to reach the Ultimate: The Path of Action (karmayoga), The Path of Knowledge (gnana yoga) and The Path of Devotion (bhakti yoga). The Path of Devotion is most suited for those who are neither too much attached to sense desires nor too much detached from them. The Path of Meditation/Contemplation (raja yoga) provides a means of "observing the internal states. The instrument is the mind itself. A part of this practice is physical, but in the main it is mental" (Vivekananda 1987: 208-09).

Literature does not talk about truths that can be verified. It is a record of man's emotional response to nature and God and his fellowmen. It is an evidence of his power of imagination and invention, and of his expression (Das 1989:14). Devotional literature in any tradition may be defined as literature written for the faithful and intended to develop or heighten feelings of devotion toward God or the saints. It takes for granted a basic knowledge of the respective religious belief and is not concerned with defining points of doctrine in a systematic way. Though not specifically intended to present theological issues, it is didactic in that it speaks about the proper
religious life and about the proper relationship between the individual soul and the divine.

Religious poetry as a genre exists from the earliest times and in most cultures. Its prototype, as Vincent Buckley notes, may be taken as the psalm and the hymn, poems written to celebrate, thank or invoke the adorable forces (1968: 22). According to Miller, when poetry and religion meet, the poet “contemplates the spirit, the soul, death, fate, purpose, meaning” and brings to the interpretation of these issues some system that “derives from church doctrine or some conception of God or divine principle of human destiny” (1976: 317). For Santayana, religion and poetry are identical in essence, and differ merely in the way in which they are attached to practical affairs. He remarks that poetry is called religion when it “intervenes in life, and religion, when it merely supervenes upon life, is to be nothing but poetry” (qtd. in Buckley 1968: 6). Poetry is an act both sacred and sacralizing. Hope explains poetry as a way in which man “carries out his side of the continual responsibility for maintaining the frame and order of the world” (qtd. in Buckley 1968: 22). It takes into account every thing from the rising and setting of the stars, the procession of the seasons, the nature of beasts and plants and rivers and seas, the order of society and the behaviour of supernatural things. It is hence ‘an act of celebration’, which involves a sense of communion with
those natures and participation in their processes. It is for the poet to feel himself to be not merely the mirror of nature or its commentator, but the voice of creation, speaking for it and as part of it. Such poets are rare, and if any, they transcend national, cultural and religious barriers in their sacramental vision. Comparative literature helps one to identify such poets and discover their similar wavelengths in terms of experience, both physical and spiritual experimentation.

Comparative literature as a discipline implies transcending the frontiers of single languages and national literatures. For a comparatist, any literature is basically a literature, which has to be studied with reference to other literatures, generally on a bi-or multilingual or national basis. He is concerned mainly with the relationships, the resemblances and differences between national literatures; with their convergences and divergences. As Das remarks, comparative literature is a method of investigation, which is not different from that used within a single literature. He adds that it differs from the study of single literatures not in method, but in matter, attitude and perspective (1989:96-97).

The aim of the dissertation is to attempt a comparative study of the poetry of the English, Christian poet Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) and that of the Tamil, Hindu poet Subramania Bharathi (1882-1921) and bring out the sacramental vision in them. Their
poems on God, Nature and Man are the main focus of the scrutiny. The justification of the present study lies in the fact that both are well known religious poets who have made significant contribution to the modern poetry in their respective languages. The personal lives of both are marked by spiritual conflicts. Their poetic career is remarkable for their startling innovations. There are a number of comparative studies of Hopkins with English poets and of Bharathi with Indian as well as English poets. But there has been no comparative study yet of these poets, either in Tamil or in English. Hence the need for the present study to bring out the striking parallels in their poetry. An identification of similarities does not mean discovering mutual influences, for they had neither personal acquaintance nor mutual access to their respective works. Hopkins obviously had no knowledge of Tamil; moreover, he died when Bharathi was hardly seven. By the time (1919) the first edition of Hopkins‘ poems was published, Bharathi had already written all his major works. Bharathi does not seem to have had any knowledge of the poetry of Hopkins. This chapter presents a brief introduction to the two poets and their works and indicates their respective philosophical, religious and literary backgrounds. It concludes by providing an overview of the rest of the chapters.
Gerard Manley Hopkins was born in a middleclass, cultured family of moderate High Church Anglicanism. In 1863, he was admitted to Balliol College, Oxford, where he became intimate with a group of Anglo-Catholic intellectuals. He was personally convinced about “the sole authority of the Church of Rome” (AHR 1966: 348) and he could not “fight against God Who” called him to His Church (AHR 1966: 355). In 1866 Hopkins, still an under-graduate was converted to the Roman Catholic faith. He was “distressed” to think that the news of his conversion might cause pain to his parents and alarm to his friend, Robert Bridges (AHR 1966: 350). It was largely the influence of Cardinal Newman’s writings that brought about this conversion. It was Newman who recommended the Jesuit Order as he thought it was the “very thing” for Hopkins (L 1935: 408). In 1877 he was ordained. One of his anonymous contemporaries remarked that he had rarely known anyone who sacrificed so much in undertaking the yoke of religion as Hopkins (qtd. in Lahey 1985: 39). Hopkins asserted that man was “created to praise, reverence and serve God Our Lord, and by so doing to save his soul” (S1959: 239). His poems are marked by the deep concern to ‘praise’ and explore the ‘mystery’ of his Lord Jesus. Hopkins, as a convert to the Roman Church embraced the dogma of the Immaculate Conception and the devotion derived from it with fervour and enthusiasm. Though his poems on the
Blessed Virgin are only a handful, they are expressive of his deep devotion to her.

Hopkins was a student and teacher of the Greek thinkers all his life. Hopkins's translations of and reflections on Parmenides show his interest in the latter's philosophy. Parmenides of Elea was a revolutionary and enigmatic Greek philosophical poet. He asserted that there is only one unchanging item in the world inventory - Being. He argued for the essential homogeneity and changelessness of Being.

Monism was not new. All his major forerunners, from Thales to Heraclitus, had believed everything to be ultimately analyzable as manifestations of one thing, namely a single underlying stuff. Parmenides was the first eliminative monist. Everything is still one, but instead of accounting for plurality, he eliminates it. Heraclitus of Ephesus stands primarily for the radical thesis that everything is in flux, like the constant flow of a river. He challenges people to come to terms, theoretically and practically, with the fact that they are living in a world that no god or human has made, a world he describes as an ever-living fire kindling in measures and going out in measures. All things are one, but this unity, far from excluding difference, opposition and change actually depends on them, since the universe is in a continuous state of dynamic equilibrium.
Hopkins’s poetic precocity manifested at the age of ten. He was at Highgate School, where he wrote a prize poem for which he was awarded an exhibition in classics at Balliol College, Oxford. Poetic impulse was natural to him, natural and ineradicable. Hopkins’s poems deal with God, nature, and man. In his early poems, the Romantic influence is obvious, especially that of Keats, in the diction, imagery and sensuousness of description (Bergonzi 1978: 5-15). The English metaphysical poets made an impact on him. Eliot describes him as the author of “some very beautiful devotional verse” (1985: 106). Hopkins made an artificial distinction between his priestly and poetic duties. He had a very strict conscience, which made him feel that not poetry but religion and classical scholarship were his real duties in life. This conflict continued till the end. He burnt the poems he had written before, when he became a Jesuit. He “resolved to write no more”, as not belonging to his profession unless it were by the wish of his superiors (AHR 1966: 146). After seven years of abnegation of poetry, a hint from his Superior made him compose WD. As Hartman suggests there must have been a call, and the hint must have become that call” (1980: 6). Hopkins dedicated his poetic gift to the praise of his Lord. The sonnets of the middle period are GG, SN, HH, PB and SS. They express his ecstatic wonder at the beauty of nature. His sensuous response to natural beauty is given full and spontaneous
play. Some of his poems deal directly with his work as priest in the
world of ordinary men. A note of tenderness and pity marks these
poems. The ‘terrible sonnets’ of the last phase of his poetic career are
the “uncensored expression of Hopkin’s naked soul” (Reeves 1979: 25).

Hopkins was never a professional poet; but he gave to both the
theory and practice of poetry an intense and dedicated concentration
that is reflected in his letters to Robert Bridges and others. He defined
poetry as “speech framed for contemplation of the mind by the way of
hearing or speech framed to be heard for its own sake and interest”
even over and above its interest of meaning. He says that some
matter and meaning is essential to it but only as an element
necessary to support and employ “the shape, which is contemplated
for its own sake”. Poetry according to him, is speech which “afters and
oftens its inscape, speech couched in a repeating figure” and verse is
“spoken sound having a repeating figure”. He wanted his verse to be
“heard” rather than read (AHR 1966: 140-44). It would seem that the
central nature of poetry for Hopkins is repetition.

Hopkins was always interested in language, and his diary
includes a large number of notes on language and the connection and
derivation of words. He classifies the language of poetry into three
kinds. The first and highest is poetry proper, the language of
inspiration. The second is Parnassian, which can only be spoken by poets, but is not in the highest sense poetry; it does not require the mood of mind in which the poetry of inspiration is written. The third kind is merely the language of verse as distinct from that of prose, Delphic; it is used in common by the poet and poetaster (AHR 1966: 129-133).

Hopkins insists on the need for unity as an ideal in life. The ideal, the one is our only means of recognizing successfully our being to ourselves. He states that all thought is an effort at unity and that in art "it is essential to recognize and strive to realize on a more or less wide basis this unity in some shape or other" (J 1959: 83). With reference to his poetic ambition, Hopkins uses the term 'inscape' to mean "design, pattern" (AHR 1966: 150). Total identification with Christ and re-sacralization of poetic language seem to be the twin aspirations of Hopkins.

One of the basic essentials of Hopkins's poetry is his love of parallel, balance, antithesis, apposition, and all modes of comparison which allow things to reveal their particular difference and their fundamental relationships. The term 'parallelism' carries the technical meaning of a correspondence, in sense or in form, of successive clauses in lines or half-lines of poetry. Because of its semantic correspondences, biblical interpreters often refer to parallelism as
thought-ryhme’. Hopkins universalized this technical feature of Hebrew poetry by extending it to English poetry and exploiting its congruence between form and meaning. By this he found a way to unite verse’s disparate effects so that sound correspondences of alliteration and rhyme work to create correspondences in word meanings. Those correspondences in turn create parallelism of thought in the reader’s response to the poem. In Hopkins’s unified poetics, parallelism in form engendered parallelisms in diction and in thought. Because it embodies likeness in form as it communicates likeness in meaning, parallelism exemplifies the incarnational ideal of matter as spirit.

His interest in language was not simply in vocabulary; it was also in dialect and syntax, in fact anything curious or distinctive about usage. His lecture notes are admirable expositions of some of the characteristics of verse, the nature of rhythm, alliteration, assonance, and their use in different times and countries, but what stands out here is his notion of rhythm. It was in analyzing and explaining poetic rhythm that he hit upon what seemed a new rhythm. He called the common rhythm of English verse “Running Rhythm”, and he gave the name “Sprung Rhythm” to the new rhythm. He employed it in his poetry because he found it “the nearest to the rhythm of prose”; it is the” native and natural rhythm of speech” and “the least forced”
Ong points out that Hopkins with his sprung rhythm found the "tradition of a sense-stress rhythm" (1966: 158).

Subramania Bharathi was born in an orthodox Brahmin family in southern part of Tamilnadu. Bharathi was learned not only in Tamil but also in Sanskrit, English and other traditions of writing. The Vedas and the Upanishads of the Sanskrit language and the epics of Kalidasa were among his reading. The Vedic research Bharathi conducted with Sri Aurobindo inspired the former's philosophical doctrines. He developed a great interest and awe towards the Vedas. Bharathl's philosophical poems were inspired by some basic truths about life, which he realized from his study of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the philosophies of Sankara, Ramanuja and the Buddha as well as his study of the Bible and the Koran. Bharathi translated the Gita in Tamil.

According to the Indian tradition, there is only one Ultimate Reality, but there are six fundamental interpretations of it. These are called the sad darsanas or 'six insights', which constitute the classic philosophical systems of India. They all grew out of the Upanishads, the philosophical portion of the Vedas, which is accepted as the supreme authority.

In Hindu mythology and popular theology many gods appeared. When the Trimurti (Hindu Holy Trinity) concept appeared, its exposition varied according to the preferences of the writers for one or
the other deity. *Vaishnavism* is a form of monotheism, for it sets aside the original triune equality of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva in favour of one God Vishnu, often called Harl. Lord Rama and Lord Krishna are said to be the human incarnations of Lord Vishnu. The Bhagavad Gita and the Bhagavada Purana assert that Lord Krishna is not just a manifestation of God but God Himself. Saktism takes its name from its worship of Divine Energy (Sakti), which is represented as the embodiment of power that supports all that lives and which upholds the universe. Sakti is portrayed as the female aspect of the Ultimate Principle and deified as the wife of Siva. Around this principle an intricate system of ritual has developed. Its literature is called the Tantras. Bharathi was free from sectarian tendencies in religion and looked upon all religions alike. He made observations on all popular religions and wrote poems on the gods of other religions too. However, he was a great devotee of Lord Krishna and the Goddess Sakti and wrote most of his devotional poems on them. Devotional poetry of the Alwars in Tamil made a deep impact on Bharathi.

For nearly three centuries before the dawn of the modern era, the Tamil Muse had been virtually unproductive. Only in the twentieth century, the Tamil Renaissance assumed the dimensions of a recognizable movement. In that creative upsurge the role of Subramania Bharathi was decisive. Bharathi plunged enthusiastically
in the turbulent political arena of national politics. He identified himself with the national cause of total emancipation from foreign yoke, and the humanist cause of breaking the shackles that fettered mankind. The impact of revolutionary nationalism in India was felt in Bharathi’s poetry, which gave a new direction to Tamil Literature. Bharathi used skillfully a variety of forms of poetry as well as melodies and metres. He avoided gaudiness, cliches, sickly entangled phrases, and ornamental and abstruse words; he spoke a plainer and more emphatic language to convey his revolutionary and democratic sentiments, necessary to rouse the masses against foreign yoke.

Extempore versification was Bharathi’s forte, even as a boy. The prodigy came to be honoured even when he was eleven years old. It was then that an assembly of scholars tested his talent for impromptu versification. He acquitted himself so creditably that the assembled scholars conferred on him the title ‘Bharathi’ (one of the names of the Goddess of Learning) in order to testify that he enjoyed in abundant measure the benign grace of the Goddess of Learning. To Bharathi, poetry, music and painting are sacred arts (p 1981: 212). He declares that writing poetry is his vocation (vn st. 25). He wants scriptural radiance in his poetry. He wishes to write hymns in Tamil, full effulgent, bright as flame (vn st. 2). He recognizes poetry as an art of establishing a sense of unity and purpose out of the diverse, random
occurrences of day-to-day life \((ntv)\). Poetry should give spiritual pleasure \((ck)\).

Bharathi was familiar with parallelism as a poetic device, which is also found in many religious scriptures of the world including the Vedas. Moreover, Bharathi’s work in prose and verse reveal his intimate knowledge of the Bible. Bharathi was possibly aware of the use of parallelism in the Bible and in the Vedas. But as Whitman served as a model for him in free verse writing, he may have taken a hint from the American poet that parallelism could be successfully used as a prosodic device. One of the characteristic metrical devices in Whitman’s poetry is initial reiteration. As Sachitanandan says, initial reiteration is something new to Tamil poetry (1970: 85-87).

The Romantic poets and Whitman have influenced Bharathi. He experimented with the sonnet form in Tamil, which was new to the Tamil poetic tradition. Bharathi found the prevailing forms and metres inadequate to cope with his new creative impulses. His verse breaks through the rigidity of convention and reaches out to the common man. Bharathi analyzed the causes of decay in Tamil poetry and resolved to infuse new life into it. In an article, \textit{punarjannan} (Rebirth), in the sense of Renaissance, he observed that as times change, language too changes and old words become obsolete yielding place to new ones. He urges the poets to adopt words that
will be clearly understood by the people of their age. Different epochs require different expressions. According to him, good poetry is that which conveys exquisite inner visions in easy and elegant style. He disapproves of obscure or ornate style. He prophesied that Tamil literature would witness the emergence of new poetry and it would have spiritual radiation (p 1981: 56-57). His most lucid proposition on the language of poetry was made in the preface to pc. He insisted on simplicity of style and diction, easily understandable metres and popular tunes. He wanted the meaning to be crystal clear even to the neo-literates, and at the same time, the poem must not be wanting in the graces and refinements.

Bharathi’s poems deal with a gamut of emotions ranging from childhood and adolescent nostalgia, indignation at social evils, exultation at the anticipated freedom, hopes for future utopias, reverential awe at, and undisguised appreciation of, the splendour of universal creation to the deep-felt devotion for different aspects of God. They pass from genre to genre with easy facility—lyric, narrative, symbolic and prosaic—covering the spectrum of human life in all its variegated stages. The kannan pattu (Kannan songs), the kup and pc are the three major poems of Bharathi.

Chapter II seeks to establish the similarity between Hopkins and Bharathi in the understanding of their respective godheads. It
discusses the *Vedantic* concept of Brahman and the Parmenidean Being. Bharathi’s songs on Kannan and Hopkins’s poems on Christ are discussed to establish their understanding of the significance of Incarnation. Both acknowledge their respective incarnate gods as the Ultimate Reality. Hopkins’s poems on the Blessed Virgin and Bharathi’s on his goddess Sakti are examined to bring out their understanding of the female principle in their respective godheads.

Chapter III discusses the nature-poems of Hopkins and Bharathi to establish their perception of divinity in Nature. Both have written poems on the creation and the dissolution of the world. The nature-poems are discussed under elemental categories. Bharathi’s *ki* and Hopkins’s *PB* are discussed as poems on creation. Their poems on landscapes, birds, wind, the various water sources, the sun, the moon and the stars are discussed to bring out their Romantic fascination for nature, which turns into a spiritual experience. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of Hopkins’s *NHF* and Bharathi’s *uk* which are poems on the dissolution of the world.

Chapter IV attempts to bring out the similarities between Hopkins and Bharathi as men of practical religion. Both believe in the divinity of man and seek to realize it in their personal lives. They seem to have followed the four paths of self-realization. The concluding part of the chapter deals with the discussion of the poems in which they
declare their attainment of gnosis—Hopkins in NHF and Bharathi in nan.

Chapter V summarizes the findings of the previous chapters and attempts a brief conclusion. It points out how Hopkins and Bharathi as men and poets share so much in common. It highlights how the Inscape/Instress concept of Hopkins is related to Bharathi’s concept of Sakti experience. It attempts to justify the relevance of the present study.