CHAPTER - I

TRADITION AND SELF-DISCOVERY

The voice of a poet, although of an age, is not confined in spirit. Poetry can not be poetry unless it deigns to universalise the human emotions. It stands for and includes much more. It is of all ages and belongs to all ages, even to the ages yet to come. Also, a true artist can not limit himself. His spirit has to soar, knowing no boundaries. This is what makes his poetry meaningful and may even help it in forming and giving it a kind of ideology and a firmer background to fall back upon.

An artist, specially a poet, is not rootless in either psychological, cultural or social sense. Always he has his roots to contend with. The pull of the roots can in another way be described as 'How much tradition-bound a poet is in his work, approach and thought process ?' Being tradition-bound does not really make poetry old-fashioned. It is, in fact, a continuous pull from the present to the past and to the future. It will be better if we describe it as floating in the 'stream of consciousness', i.e., belonging to or
being in a moment or even a point in time, yet opening out into the future and also incorporating in it the entire past. The 'self' grasps much more by 'intuition', too. It is a kind of eternal dialogue going on inside the single self. The moment is perennial and the movement continuous despite 'time gaps' or ' Interruptions' but on the whole, the 'consciousness' is one single unit.

Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. An awareness of traditions, conscious or unconscious, lends substance to a work of art. There can not be any writer who can truthfully claim to write independent of his tradition. All of us do carry in ourselves the burden of our past in every sense, willingly or unwillingly. Only a poet being sensitive feels it all the more acutely.

'Chambers' (Twentieth Century) Dictionary defines the word 'Tradition' as the "handing down of opinions or practices to posterity unwritten." In After Strange Gods (1934), Eliot describes tradition as "rather a way of feeling and acting which characterises a group throughout generations. It involves, all those habitual actions, habits and customs, from the most significant religious rites to our conventional way of greeting a stranger, which represent the blood 'kinship' of the same people, living in the same place."
Tradition cannot be negated. It is in our blood and forms what we refer to as the Jungian 'Collective Unconscious', an Ocean of images and figures. The 'Unconscious' or 'The Collective Consciousness' helps us in understanding ourselves on a deeper level or even a work of art better. We have the artist who is a human being with his own life and his own ideas, likes, dislikes, yet he creates in a manner by remaining faceless to a great extent as if his works are the expression of irrational, psychological phenomena, typical of a whole group of people.

C.G. Jung, who gave us the term, 'Collective Unconscious' talks about it thus "If it were permissible to personify the unconsciousness, we might call it a collective human being containing the characteristics of both sexes, transcending youth and age, birth and death, and, from having at its command a human experience of one or two million years, almost immortal". According to Jung, there is a 'personal unconscious', too. But to him, it is only superficial. Explaining it all, he says,

This personal unconscious rests upon a deeper layer which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn. This deeper layer I call the 'Collective unconscious.' I have chosen the term 'Collective' because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents to the modes of behaviour that are more or less the same everywhere and in all men and thus
The 'Collective Unconscious' in a way acts as a reservoir of all our dreams and fantasies which gradually through ages have come to become a part of human psyche. We may not be aware of them on a conscious level; they may make their presence felt in 'Overt myths' and actual behaviour to make us realise that they are the conscious embodiment of the 'Unconscious Archetypes'. In a way poetry is nothing but 'myth making' and myth lends credence and strength to all works of art. Friedrich Schlegel was one of the first to perceive that:

such a premise would give a new strength and purpose to the creation of poetry. He proposes that the poets of this time should conceive themselves in the role of myth makers engaged in communal enterprise. The spontaneous mythologies of ancient or primitive peoples would then find their correlative in an artfully constructed modern mythos.

W.B. Yeats developed 'A Vision' on a similar theory. "The ideal and the real, which tend to fall apart and oppose each other in modern literature, would be co-ordinate dimensions of the created myth". Victor Hugo does not call for a return to the mythical ground of poetry but proclaims that this has never been lost. According to him, "Poetic creation is a constant reshaping of the mask of man into human types, an evocation of the infinite latent forms of
Myths are within us, known or unknown. We think ourselves to be original or even unique but we are, in fact, nothing but imitators or performers, forever following the path, the others had trodden ages before us as life is nothing but a continuous 'mythical identification'. The world is the same, yet keeps getting 'reborn' and 'lived' continuously through us.

The primitive foundations of the human soul are likewise primitive time sources where the myth has its home and shapes the primeval norms of life. For the myth is the foundation of life; it is the timeless schema, the pious formula into which the life flows when it reproduces its traits out of the unconscious.

The word 'myth' can neither be loosely handled or ignored. From the Indian point of view the use of myth is very significant. P. Lal writes, ".... Myth holds communities and races more strongly than language, territory, and government; myth provides insights into the mysteries of life and death with a poetic richness that has startling truth and immediacy. There is no secular substitute for myth". Mankind, specifically the intellectual, goes through bouts and periods of uncertainty and doubt when it becomes an act of 'compulsive urge' to go their own way and find answers to everything, all over
again. Temporarily they may seem to be succeeding in a way, giving a new garb to the truth which has always been there. Their quest may take them on a path very much different from the original but always to take them back. In the process they usually go through terrible perils of souls, because we can never really dissociate ourselves completely from our 'Archetypal foundations'. With time the interpretation changes, appropriate to that particular point in time. The struggle of the artist is:

... to connect the life of the past that still exists in us with the life of the present which threatens to slip away from it. If this link-up does not take place, a kind of rootless consciousness comes into being no longer oriented to the past, a consciousness which succumbs helplessly to all manner or suggestions and, in practice, is susceptible to psychic epidemics.

Infact, if a man were to exist independent of all the ties with the past, he would not know how to conduct himself. Feeling nervous, confused, unstable and insecure he would not have the privilege of learning from experience; neither from his 'alone' or 'collective' experience of the society. Bereft of his bearings, he finds himself in a vacuum. Unconsciously, a man's dignity and security lie in the feeling and the faith that with him something timeless has once more emerged into the light and has become present. And it is this which infuses new hope in him, inspiring him to go on.
II

For an artist, to escape the 'perils of soul' and a feeling of abysmal hopelessness, it is important that he should try to derive strength from his mythical history and forever try to connect himself with his tradition. According to T.S. Eliot, having an 'Historical Sense' is very important and which is,

... a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence and should therefore be equated with a vital realisation of the fact that the past and the present are not two disparate segments of time, but two facets of the same organism, ceaselessly conditioning and reshaping each other. It is this historical sense that 'compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones'.

And, it is this 'historical sense' which according to T.S. Eliot, makes an artist traditional, yet it never is a blind adherence to past. Tradition is synonymous with the knowledge of historical life. Here it may become important to define the word 'Historical'. It is naturally taken in the sense of recorded account of events and happenings in the life of nations, races or individuals. Although the term 'cultural history' narrows the sphere, yet it encompasses much more. It also includes various geographical and racial influences to which the growth of an
individual is subject to. The historicists and the philosophers have different views about it. According to Aurobindo, "The work of the poet depends not only on himself and his age but on the mentality of the nation to which he belongs and the spiritual, intellectual, aesthetic tradition and environment which it creates for him".13

Hegel, the great modern philosopher views it as the 'Freedom of the Spirit'. He postulates:

In every human culture the substance of the spirit comes to partial knowledge of itself and every culture is destined to be superseded as the spirit moves onwards, reflexively knowing what it has been and approaching its goal of total possession. There is no room for accident here, no element of chance; the ruins of time record the historical reality.14

Croce, too, regards history as freedom but on a much less transcendental plane.

In seeking to know things we are always trying to grasp situations in which we must act. Any given situation is a kind of 'past', which we need to comprehend as the promise for our future. Therefore, all knowledge, even that of natural science, is historical knowledge. In one sense history enables us to escape from the past in which we would otherwise be enclosed and trapped. In another sense, it is our way of claiming past, which would be incomprehensible to us if we ourselves, as human beings did not virtually contain the human heritage.15
There is a bond between tradition and history. In a way, tradition helps us in understanding 'historical destiny' of people better and so it can also symbolise 'Self-Knowledge'. The eternal historical facts are important but to be able to apprehend the currents of inner life is what can help us in formulating a philosophy of history. When an artist is able to realise his particular 'philosophy of history', he can hope to attain heights in his work of art.

The poet must develop a consciousness of the past and at no stage this consciousness is to be side-tracked or given up. Discussing it, T.S. Eliot in his critical essay 'Tradition And Individual Talent' writes, "And he is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living".¹⁶

III

This also brings to mind the relevance of the concept of the 'modern tradition'. The word 'modern' symbolises whatever is new, the recent or the latest in everything. Consequently, 'Modernism' becomes any movement which aims at expressing the mind or the emotions of the present day. But the term modern tradition sounds paradoxical or may be we
can simply refer to it as an "untraditional tradition". Any new age of history is usually marked by innovations in thought patterns and artistic experimentation. It may also be marked by many new trends, dissimilar in nature; old and new co-existing and fighting with each other yet getting interwoven and mixed in the texture of the times, and naturally giving rise to totally new literary phenomenon. The poets writing at that time are the children of that age and reflect it all in different ways. In a way we can say that the modern stands for progress which characterises progressive development in various spheres of the life of society and in the spiritual culture of humanity. The special laws governing the progressive development of art are both of interest in themselves and important from the sociological point of view.

The term 'Modernism' also reflects the break in the continuity, and also to a degree, freedom from the ideas and thought patterns of the past, but on the other hand, 'modernism' may even stand for dispossession.

In an essay on 'The Modern Element in Modern Literature', Lionel Trilling singles out a radically anti-cultural bias as the most important attribute of the modern imagination, committed to everything in human experience that militates against custom, abstract order, and even reason itself, modern literature has elevated individual existence over social man, unconscious feeling over self conscious perception, passion and will over intellection and
systematic morals, dynamic vision over the static image, dense actuality over practical reality. In these and other ways, it has made the most of its break with the past, its inborn challenge to establish culture. Concurrently, it has been what Henry James called an 'imagination of Disaster'. Intertwined with the access of knowledge, the experimental verve, and the personal urgency of the modern masters is, as Trilling also finds, a sense of loss, alienation, and despair. These are the two faces, positive and negative, of the modern as the anti-traditional: freedom and deprivation, a living present and a dead past.

In the history of art and literature we find instances where the influence exerted by the experience of the previous artists has enriched an artistic culture. On the other hand, we also come across the constant need to overcome traditions which hold back the forward, on-going movement and cases where movement has been achieved as a direct result of some artist's rejection of these backward traditions.

The concept of 'Modern tradition' is not totally bereft of the feeling of ancestral line. Although its awareness may be unconscious, yet the sense of historical continuity and the relation with the past is very much there. Modernism may sound suspicious of everything traditional and it may even take the form of some rebellion. With its scepticism and cynicism for everything old, it will again and again try searching for, but never is quite able to
reach its starting point. "The paradoxical task of the modern imagination, whether liberated or alienated, has been to stand both inside and outside itself, to articulate its own, formlessness, to encompass its own extravagant possibilities". This is what Stephen Spender formulates as "The Vision of a Whole Situation", The modern, according to Spender,

finds its character by confronting the past and including this confrontation within itself as part of a single total experience. It is more than a cultivation of immediacy of free or fragmented awareness; it is the embodiment in current imagery of a situation always larger than the present, and as such it is also a containment of the resources and perils of the present by rediscovery of a relevant past. In this sense, modernism is synthetic in its very indeterminacy. Modern writers, working often without established models and bent on originality, have at the same time been classicists, custodians of language, communicators, traditionalists in their fashion.

Every great artist has to reach out to his roots because, to quote T.S. Eliot again, "No poet, no artist of art, has his complete meaning alone", and so, for the poet the task sometimes, becomes too burdensome, difficult and fraught with unwanted and unasked for responsibilities. Not only has the artist to fit in but also to maintain his originality and uniqueness without in any manner encumbering himself with inherited principles and thought patterns. He
has to be sure of his mind which is not only his mind but also the mind of the ages preceding his. Many poets may not find the task pleasant because it may involve a 'total surrender' of one's personality. Emphasising the same view T.S. Eliot writes in his critical essay "Tradition and The Individual Talent", "The progress of an artist is a continual self sacrifice, continual extinction of personality."\(^{22}\)

IV

The idea of the 'Depersonalisation of the Art',\(^{23}\) can be rather painful for the poet, because he is a creative person. He has his own voice, too. He is a sensitive human being, not a mere gramophone or a recorder mouthing ideas and views of others. The idea that a poet should underplay his own individuality can be quite stifling. Yet, this is what is required of him. He only reproduces what he has observed, trying to encompass life as broadly as he can.

...the poet has not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways. Impressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in the poetry and those which may become important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man, the personality.
It is thought that everything that the poet writes has meaning as far as it contributes to the common cause, but is considered valueless if it is only a very subjective expression of his feelings; meaning thereby that the 'artistic personality' has little value in itself. On the other hand, it is the artist's contribution to the common store of literary experience that determines his artistic self and the place he will hold in literature.

It is also important that a poet must have his 'own voice' which will enable him to enrich the common literary heritage. The significance of the artistic personality lies in being original in a way that leads to the creation of literature which is of value to all. The 'originality' does not become significant in the manifestation of the 'individuality', but because it enriches man's emotional world and cultural heritage. Some critics believe that an over-emphasis on the 'Freudian Ego' and on purely personal moods and feelings that make one lose touch with the world is the thing which destroys the creative personality and talent of a writer. Jung, on the other hand, sees it differently and writes,

Art is a kind of innate drive that seizes a human being and makes him his instrument. The artist is not a person endowed with free will who seeks his own ends, but one who allows art to realise its purpose through him. As a human being, he may have moods and a will and personal aims, but as an artist he is
'man', in a higher sense he is 'collective man' - one who carries and shapes the unconscious, psychic life of mankind.

That means to express one's artistic qualities, a person must abdicate his own ego and dissolve into the spiritual elements of the collective. According to Jung, the artist and the human personality are not only two separate things but also in constant conflict:

Whenever the creative force predominates, human life is moulded by the unconscious as against the active will, and the conscious ego is swept along on a subterranean current, being nothing more than a helpless observer of events. The work in process becomes the poet's and determines his psychic development. It is not Goethe who creates Faust but Faust who creates Goethe....

This increasing emphasis on the 'facelessness' puts a strain on the artist. Some poets do make a conscious effort to assert their individuality. Critics, too, often add more weightage to the fact as to how a poet is different from other writing in that particular age. All this gives rise to the problem of 'Identity Crisis' within and without the mind of the poet, triggering a lot of soul-searching and lending a new conflict and a new tension to his poetry. Critics are also, often obsessed with how a poet is different from his predecessors:
... Especially his immediate predecessors. We endeavour to find something that can be isolated in order to be enjoyed. Whereas if we approach a poet without this prejudice, we shall often find that only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their individuality most vigorously.  

The stress on the uniqueness of an artistic personality, does not in any way mean that the work of one writer is something isolated from and unconnected with the work of another. The uniqueness does not mean that there are no common principles and tendencies found in his work, binding him with other artists of his age. The common tendencies do exist and have an important role to play in the literary process in all the various forms. When we speak of a national literature and of its development, we are usually referring both to the work of its many major and minor writers and to all that is common to different literary phenomena.

In the light of the above discussion it becomes clear that a poet is very much a creature of his roots: cultural, social, geographical, racial, mythological, and even national. Roots are alive in all and the pull of the roots can either consciously or unconsciously play on the human psyche. Roots lie deep, binding each human being
irrevocably to his howsoever humble beginnings. In the depths of the heart of every human being, lie buried the great epochs of human history. Their consciousness may have become dimmed or even gone hazy because of the great expanse of time separating it from the 'present' to the 'past' or from 'now' to 'then' yet they are there and can never be completely obliterated or trampled upon. They keep appearing taking different garbs or even making their presence felt in the unexplained dreams and visions of mankind. Their presence can cause great turmoil, creating a world of shadows within shadows. It takes great ingenuity, understanding and intuitiveness on an artist's part to be able to penetrate the thick fog of the times and unravel the dark and mysterious realms of the soul.

For every poet, in fact, it is an inward journey which enables him to understand his deeper self. It makes him understand his own self better because it is a journey back to his beginnings. He is able to delve in the depths of his own nature which provides him with a key to unlock the secrets of time which till now had appeared to him superficial or even alien, something outside and beyond his own self. Yet suddenly they begin to take shapes, assume different meanings; opening new vistas and making him realise and find his place in the cosmic scheme of things. The 'inner eye' opens and gives a new meaning and purpose to his art.
Peaching out in order to find the answers is not always easy. One has to go through a lot of travel and travail. For the poet, it can be a heart rending journey of blood and tears. On the other hand, a shallow sensitivity would not be able to understand the deeper significance and would in fact, disregard it all callously. The journey into the self can take many shapes. The poet could turn 'inward' and ask questions. The poet could turn 'outward' and then ask questions. He can become totally submissive or absolutely aggressive; taunting, mocking or ridiculing. He may pretend to be above it all. He can be objective and detached or can even quietly acquiesce and give in. His poetry can turn complascent in mood. But even in turning away, or consciously catering to and cultivating a distance, the poet can unconsciously still be making use of a lot of myth, symbolism, irony etc., making it all a vehicle for his poetry.

An awareness of roots leads to self knowledge and it is significant to understand their importance. How much balance an artist is able to arrive at and how he does it, stands for the strength of a work of art. The poet has to understand the mind within the mind. The absence of the understanding has an adverse and depressing effect, resulting in uprootedness, degradation and a loss of social, cultural values and norms, leaving an artist groping in the
dark. He does not understand himself and is likely to fall into an abyss of purposelessness which makes him drift. His work becomes subject to alienation, despair and depression.

To be able to know oneself fully and to come to terms with whatever is there, dark and secret in one's own self, needs lots of moral strength and can also meet with a degree of resistance. The stress should be on making the subjective, objective and converting the 'self' into the 'universal'. It is here that the 'Past' and the 'Present' merge into each other, thus leading to self-revelation and self-knowledge.

Too much stress on the 'individuality' leads to estrangement, and to alienation from there on. Till the 'individual' becomes 'universal', poetry can not become great. In the process, the individual persona has to turn around himself, seeking to know all that he is and to unify all that he knows himself to be. To seek the totality of the self becomes the object of an inner quest, important to all human beings and specially to the artists. The cultivation of self-consciousness, and ardent introspection result in a painful feeling of depression, despair and alienation of the self and the spirit.
This confusion seems to be the lot of the Indian poets writing in English today. It finally leads them to a great deal of soul searching.

Roots and laurels, life and land, time and vision, creation and continuities; from these arose the literature of India. It was the purest voice of her deeps, the dream of her reason, the dust of her ways and the waters of her rivers, the blue embrace of her seas and skies, born of leaves soaked in the dawns since the days of the *Rigveda*.

The quest of roots is specially important for Indo-Anglian poets because they have chosen to write in a language which is not their own, and so in a way, they have consciously alienated themselves, culturally, emotionally and socially. It is this great burden which disturbs Indian poets writing in English, playing upon the emotions and exciting them; consequently bringing about an 'Identity Crisis'. It is this Identity-crisis that creates great poetic tension inside and outside the poet's psyche. At such moments it becomes natural for a poet to turn inwards and question himself.

Basically, all human beings like to belong. The feeling of 'not belonging' can throw one in a bottomless pit of depression. The Indian poet, specially the poet belonging to the Post-Independent era, finds himself
standing with his feet in two different worlds and he in his poetry is forever making an attempt to resolve the dilemma which sometimes becomes too agonising for him. Finally, the poet has to accept his roots as he is unable to negate them. Because, this and this alone, can in a way, restore the lost balance of his life.

This agony and tension that one has consciously cut oneself away from one's roots by hitting at all the ties and has specially alienated oneself from one's cultural background by seeking to express oneself in other than one's mother-tongue is the peculiar destiny of the 'Indo-Anglian' poets. The quest for roots becomes doubly significant for the Indian poets writing in English. "In the name 'Indo-Anglian Poetry' we recognise the fact that it is poetry issuing and evolving from a creative tension between two literary and cultural traditions".  

Language is nothing but expression. It is close to one's heart and so is dearly loved and is even referred to as one's mother-tongue. It also carries in it the colour and the fragrance of the soil and the local flavour. The burden and even the guilt of writing in an alien language keeps weighing on the conscience till it becomes too painful,

R. Parthasarathy, a widely published, Indo-Anglian poet, speaking at the Regional Conference of Association of
Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies, testified to the existence of a painful tension within him because of his bilingualism. From Parthasarathy's point of view the agonised trend is there because of the fact that English forms part of his emotional and psychic make-up.  

Besides language, all Indians innately have in them the compelx of superiority of their culture over the rest of the world. The Omnipotence of the spirit over what is merely physical, becomes the power of the east over the west. So purely from this angle, the Indian poet has a special spiritual role to play in the socio-cultural structure. In the words of great Indian philosopher Sri Aurobindo, the poet is the 'Seer' and even 'Rishi'. Aurobindo believes that "the great poet interprets to man his present or reinterprets for him his past but can also point him to his future and in all three reveal to him the face of the eternal".  

The Indian poet writing in English, tries to break the shackles of overpowering spirituality because today according to him, spirituality is not all important or even a significant theme, and is unable to provide the poet with all the answers. The harsh and hard realities of life force him away from the 'journey inward' to the 'journey outward'. From religion he turns away to seek answers elsewhere and presumably to the West, to the culture of which he has willy nilly associated himself with. On
surface it even becomes a conflict between the east and the west. Too much stress on moral and ethical principles seems to be stifling his soul and he would like to breathe in the free air of the West - of sexual permissiveness. There is so much in India to put off the sensitive soul of a poet - a tradition bound, superstition ridden society, the gruesome poverty, the ugliness, the squalor! The purely Indian scenario does not satisfy him any more.

Indian poetry in English - increasingly becoming insistent with every new Anthology - tend to assume, by and large, three forms: First, that it represents a significant break with the precedent poetic and cultural milieu; Second, that transcending the pseudo-spiritual pre-occupations of the earlier pre-independent phase, it has shifted the poetic quest 'inward', to the individual; and Third, that the resultant sensibility is fiercely responsive to the 'Socio-political' reality.

However, in India, man's spirit and the spirit of the universe is one great truth. How can one divide the bud and the blossom. No wonder the Indian poet, writing in English, undergoes pangs of traumatic guilt as and when he finds himself in a spiritual and religious vacuum. The spiritual roots are deep and do have a grip on his psyche, however light or unobtrusive it may appear to be. On one hand, his Hindoo, Christian, Jew and Parsee personality becomes a burden and on the other, he finds himself hopelessly cut
off, feeling totally adrift and away from his roots. The tension heightens his agony.

Infact, his total personality, his being an Indian with brown complexion, (though his colonial past may make him go on behaving like a 'Kala Sahib') his socio-economic circumstances, the totally middle class upbringing, holding on tightly to generally middle class values and ethos, his very Indian English (he dares to laugh at himself!) form his background, yet restrict him tremendously! Time and again, he tries to rise above it all and sometimes even succeeds, yet the pull of the roots proves too strong.

Outwardly, the poet tries to relate with and proclaims passionately a 'modern sensibility' and also exhibits a marked antipathy towards the past, i.e., the cultural past. This also involves a re-examination and re-evaluation of values and scepticism towards everything Indian. On the other hand, overtly this dilemma also makes the poets self consciously sing exaggerated praises and glorify everything that is Indian, giving expression to a sense of 'national Pride' in their poetry! There is even a conscious attempt to sell 'Indianness' to the Western gallery. Indian poets do run the risk of exploiting the potential advantage that lies in their being able to draw upon a classical tradition at the same time as they are exposed to the richness and variety of literatures available in English. So most of
their poetry is full of the tension and the subsequent resolution between what is 'inherited' and what is 'acquired'. "In this perspective, Daruwalla's 'Dialogues with a third voice', dramatise this quest in all its apparent complexity. The initial pre-condition is unerringly realised: I avoid the shock response for strange bugs have bitten me". Yet, There is, however, a suffocating awareness of 'long road of' archetypal conscience, as in the words of Parthasarathy:

My conscience is a road
--- A childhood has been trampled here,
Concretised and stamped over
with the feel of the passing years.
We erode each other, the road and I
Neither giving way...

This assertion of identity in the face of the almost overwhelming burden of conscience leads to a clear recognition of the impasse.

About the decision of the poet, in choosing a foreign language other than his mother-tongue, to give expression to his innermost thoughts, the various accusations make the poet self-consciously defensive.

Kamala Das, in her poem 'An Introduction', mimics the constant obscure comments of the Anti-Indo-Anglian and shows them how absurd they are in their insistence:

... Don't write in English, they said
English, is not your mother-tongue.
Why not leave
Me alone, critics, friends visiting Cousins, Everyone of you? Why not let me
Speak in
Any language. I like? The language I
Becomes mine, mine alone.

Parthasarathy, on the other hand, is full of remorseful
guilt, and gives expression to his agony thus:

My tongue in English chains,
I return, after a generation to you
I am now at the end
Of my Dravidic tether, Hunger for you unassuaged.

There are other well-acclaimed poets who give
explanations for their writing in English. Dom Moraes gives
reasons for writing in English in his autobiography, 'My
son's Father' where he says that his family like many
Christian families in India, had spoken English for the
previous two generations. This means English became his
mother-tongue. A.K. Ramanujan, who is bilingual, says that
he just happens to write in English; Nissim Ezekiel says
that he writes in English because he can not write in any
other language.

It is not only the language but also their intense
exposure to an alien civilisation and culture which gives
the poets a feeling of belonging to two different worlds,
each making demands on their loyalty. It makes them appear
ambivalent and even lends a uniquely sensitive tone to their
emotion as expressed in Ezekiel's autobiographical poem,
'Background casually':

The Indian background sears my eyes
I have become a part of it
To be observed by foreigners.
They say that I am singular
Their letters overstate the case.

A remarkable feature of Ezekiel's poetry as also of the poetry of A.K. Ramanujan and Parthasarathy, is that there is no ambivalence in their attitude to India. In no uncertain terms do they give poetic utterance to their commitment to India. With poets like A.K. Ramanujan the Commitment to India is not merely a sense of belonging to India but a commitment to her history and heritage, and he in his poetry beautifully blends the techniques and conventions of Indian, European, American and British literature with those of Sanskrit, Kannada and Tamil. This belonging to the East and West makes them an easy prey to the east-west pull. So there are attempts conscious or even unconscious to get rid of their feelings of alienation. It is in this context that Meenakshi Mukherjee writes,

In the complex fabric of contemporary Indian civilisation, the two most easily discerned strands are the indigenous Indian traditions and the imported European conceptions. Also, every educated Indian today is the product of the conflicts and reconciliations of the two cultures although the consciousness of this tension varies from individual to individual. What is generally true of the educated Indian is especially true of the Indian writer, because a
writer is concerned with the motivation behind human behaviour. Thus he is more aware than others of the elements that make up his personality. At the present point of Indian history, a writer's analysis of his self, necessarily involves the evaluation of his own attitude towards these two aspects of his being - one inherited from birth, the other imbibed through education. This cultural conflict or synthesis, as the case may be has for some reason always assumed a vital significance for the Indian novelist who writes in English.

What is true of the novelist is also true of the poet, it is not surprising, therefore, that writers in English are conscious of their Indianness because at the bottom of it all, one suspects a crisis of identity. This explains why Michael Madhusudan Datt (1824-73) after publishing his first book of verse, *The Captive Ladie* (1849), in English turned to Bengali in which he wrote *Meghanbadh Kavya* (1861). He is the paradigm of the Indian poet writing in English. He exemplifies the 'uneasy tensions' that arose in using a language he wasn't born into, and which he abandoned at the age of thirty five to write in his own language.

There is another thing, too. The intense exposure to an alien culture and civilisation makes the poet nostalgic about his own. "There is something to be said for exile", says Parthasarathy, "You learn roots are deep". This intensive exposure to a different culture makes the Indo-Anglian poets aware of their own beginnings and leads to self discovery. It becomes necessary and significant too.
Meenakshi Mukherjee writes,

Confrontation with the west for the discovery of one's own self; this is not an infrequent motif of contemporary Indo-Anglian novels. Home-coming after a sojourn abroad and a consequent readjustment and reevaluation of the terms in which to face life, constitute the major issue in a number of these novels.

This fascination, this compulsive urge to get back to their roots, in the Indo-Anglian poet also has a touch of the ambivalence. The poet tries to fight his yearning, he even disowns it, wanting to do away with it, but is never really able to overcome the urge as the artist is unable to make a clean cut at the umbilical chord. Ultimately, to resolve the 'Identity Crisis', he is forced back to from where he had started, to begin from the beginning; in quest of his roots to find his identity, in a bid to discover himself.

A close study of the work of the Indo-Anglian poets, specially the poets writing in post-independence era, reveals that a quest motif forms the centrality of their poetic experience. The poets in one way or the other seem to have embarked on a voyage within, with the purpose of knowing themselves. This quest motif lends their work rare depth, range and richness. The special inner dilemmas are dealt with great sensitivity. In many places the quest assures social and existential undertones and overtones,
absorbing the poet absolutely. Brooding, meditative and questioning attitude creeps in. The free use of images, myth and symbols add inner and outer vision, and the images become the 'objective Correlatives' of the furies that surge within when the poet grapples with the self. Tradition in the hands of these poets does not remain a static legacy, but becomes a dynamic force, forever challenging and opening selves within selves.
REFERENCES


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23. Ibid., p. 20.
24. Ibid., p. 23.
27. T.S. Eliot, op. cit. p. 16.
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