CHAPTER - II

THE LIFE AND LITERARY PERSONALITY OF
HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA

Harindranath Chattopadhyay was born on 2nd April, 1898 at colourful Hyderabad (Deccan) in the most auspicious surroundings. His father, Dr. Aghorenath Chattopadhyay, was a world-renowned scientist. In the words of Dr. Srinivesa Iyengar, he was "a scientist-dreamer and a mystic-jester". His mother, Varada Sunderi was "half angel" and "half bird".1 He is the younger brother of Serojini Naidu. Dr. Aghorenath Chattopadhyay took his degree in Science at Edinburgh University and on his return founded the Nizam College in Hyderabad.2 Serojini Devi was later to salute the spirit of her father in one of her poems thus:

"Farewell! Farewell! 0 brave and tender sage
O mystic jester, golden-hearted Child!
Selfless, serene, untroubled, unbeguiled
By trivial snares of grief and greed or rage,

O splendid dreamer in a dreamless age
Whose deep alchemic vision reconciled
Time's changing message with the undefiled
Calm wisdom of the Vedic heritage.3

Harindranath recollects his parents and pays glowing
tributes to his parents in his autobiography, Life and Myself.

They were not merely human parents, but rare spiritual
beings, high points of evolution, two truly unworldly lights
walking through the darkness of life, illuminating it wherever
they walked, casting hope and blessing on whomever they met on
life's roadway.4

He vividly sketches the picture of his father:

He [Father] stands out in my memory even now as some
tremendous epoch of large-heartedness, wisdom and spiritual
achievement carved into the figure of a broad-shouldered man
with a Homeric face, and whom Sarojini has described as one
whose “Homeric laughter brought down the roof” . . . . He
was not a man, my father, but a veritable epoch: in myriad

3. Maidu Sarojini: Broken Wing, London, William Heinemann,
1917, p.21.
4. Chattopadhyaya Harindranath: Life and Myself, Vol. I,
ways he established era in realms of knowledge and in the realms of the life of humanity.  

With great affection and reverence he recollects the picture of his mother:

I grew up under the protection of my mother, a true embodiment of generosity and affection. ... and wrinkles on her forehead and cheeks which had grown quiet, quiet with the history of a spiritual resignation to uncounted sufferings which she had bravely borne in her lifetime. I also remember her sweet, bird-like voice.

Whenever I see a crescent, the first faint crescent of the waxing fortnight, I cannot help thinking of mother. It is associated in my mind, indelibly, with a very sweet memory of childhood. ... She would not open her eyes until she was sure that she had me in her arms, when she would open them gradually to look at my face, with the words: "My moon, my little moon! yours is a lucky face to look on first thing, after catching a glimpse of the crescent!" Then she would kiss me warmly on my cheeks and my brow and say: "God bless you and give you life of a hundred and twenty-five years."  

5. Ibid., p.19.  
6. Ibid., p.2.  
7. Ibid., pp.43-44.
Early in life, his mother instilled into his heart a belief in a Great Being called God.  

His father and mother were one, sharing striking qualities of generosity and the wisdom of an unfaltering love of humanity. They stood together like an immense tree in the centre of life itself, affording ample shade for any traveller who chose to rest awhile in that shade. The broken, the wounded, the diseased, the frustrated, the demented all had an equal claim to rest in that cool and comforting shade.

Harindranath speaks of the cultural atmosphere wherein he was born and brought up, in his extension lecture delivered on 'Poetry and Poets', under the auspices of the Osmania University, Hyderabad (Deccan) on 1-1-1951:

I should at the outset, offer my acknowledgement to the beautiful landscape of Hyderabad and the equally beautiful culture of Hyderabad which have been responsible for the major part of my love for poetry and adoration of aesthetics. It was that landscape and that culture, with its wonderful festivals and friendships, warmth and wisdom that went far in moulding my mind and making it the mind of a poet. When I look back on my childhood and those glorious days

8. Ibid., p.45.
9. Ibid., p.15.
of mutual understanding between communities and creeds, and of golden plenty uninterfered with by greed and black-marketeering and tottering economic structure, I realise that even at that time my imagination was wide awake to values of beauty, that my heart thrilled ripey, at that raw age, to rainbow and rocks, to the mystery haunting woodland and sky. I also recall the magical stories told us children by a Muslim lady who often came to spend weeks and fortnights with us, and whom were taught to call Acrami Mania. Those stories told us every evening just after lamplight formed, perhaps, the richest part of my imaginative experience. By the time I was eight years old I started writing verse. I was born with rhythm in the heart, as, indeed, all children are or should be. But unlike most children I was fortunate in having parents who looked upon my efforts, at rhyming, however childish and stupid, as something precious and worthy of encouragement. 


Even as a child, Harindranath took keen interest in various cultural activities. He has now made a name in the fields of histörionics, music and poetry, and in recent years has shown

some interest in painting too. The growth of the main traits of his poetic personality - intense and reverent love of life, human sympathy, liberal outlook, keen sense of colour, love of song and silence and, above all, his deep faith in God - should be traced to his childhood.  

Harindranath very fondly dwells on the pleasant days of his childhood in his autobiography:

Each passing day of our childhood was like a mysterious parcel brought to our door by some invisible postman from some wonderland. We opened each passing dawn, with hearts a-beating, wondering as to what marvellous gift was awaiting us - what painted hours, what glorious excitements inside that parcel, the mysterious parcel of each new yellow - and pink day that dawned for us. Childhood, if it is beautiful and merry as ours was, thanks to our understanding home, and parents whose sole ambition was to make us grow into joyous fullness of life and vision, - such childhood is one long and unbroken holiday. 

He further states:

As children, we enjoyed ourselves immensely; we never knew in the heart a distinction between

A Study of


rich and poor, between caste and caste, religion and religion. We were brought up in a home where Hindus, and Muslims and Christians, Parsis and Sikhs, Brahmins and Sudras and all living things had an honoured and equal place! We never lost one opportunity of associating ourselves with celebrations of all kinds; festivals, whether they belonged to the Hindu or the Muslim, the Christian or the Parsi, were all part of our yearly programme, and we knew them all by heart! .......

One can see how the matrix of cultural synthesis in the blossoming personality of Harindranath Chattopadhyaya could be found in the characters of his beloved parents.

One of the dearest recollections of his childhood is the woodland behind their house. 'There were stones ....... and there were all sorts of richly floated insects and butterflies ..... tall grasses and little wild flowers ......

...... the miniature forest which we called garden was full of whispering things and listening things and seeing things; .....14

In his childhood, he loved butterflies and trees most of all; he also loved clouds.15

13. Ibid.
15. Ibid., p.5.
He disliked formal education. He disliked the schools.

I now realise that I hated school, that I invariably experienced a choking sense of tyranny to have to leave the peace and the freedom of trees and butterflies which I always loved, and pace the precious day inside a formal school, resembling a jail in which all the little boys were just like prisoners. 16

He had no trust in the boys around him. He hated them as he hated everything about school. One is irresistibly reminded of Rabindranath Tagore's attitude to school when he was a child. The love of freedom and nature - the characteristic feature of the new ethos in our literary awakening - could be noted in Rabindranath also.

He very fondly recollects Balayya Derzi:

Without Balayya Derzi the day seemed to miss something in our childhood for he was part of the vision of beauty which I had conjured up in my young growing heart. 17

There are memories that live forever as intimate and inevitable part of the very growth of life itself. Such

16. Ibid., p.9.
17. Ibid., p.11.
memories are the essence of existence and one of such memories for him, at least is that of the Deewalis of his childhood.18

Towards fireworks he always had a very peculiar attitude. He loved them for their coloured flames, their extraordinary power of flight and the miracles of patterns they created in the air.19

A child's imagination is a conjuror, possessor of a magic wand.....

Our childhood was one long and never-ending experience of ecstatic invention and discovery.....what about God who holds the beakers of paint and the brushes with which he lays the colours light or thick across the sky? Surely he has enough gold liquid in one of his beakers to splash over the twenty-four hours instead of cutting the day short by putting an end to the light, with gashes of red and orange, until it bleeds itself to death, and passes away and is buried in a coffin of darkness nailed fast with stars! Does not God realise that the child needs a very long day to play all the games he wants to play.20.....

18. Ibid., p.38.
19. Ibid., p.36.
20. Ibid., pp.52-53.
That is the identical feeling he felt when he was a child. "It is curious to look back across the days that are no more and recount the wonderment of life in childhood when time was an experience as of being tiptoe all the time, expecting something magical and lovely to happen, and life never knew the folly of sorrow and the falsehood of death." 21

One comes across many such sweet memories of his childhood days in his autobiography. 22

Dr. R. R. Srinivasa Iyengar observes:

The children were taught English at an early age and learned when quite young to speak and write it with astonishing ease. 23

Harindranath holds the opinion that the poet, more poignantly than most men, is being made all the time, being moulded into shape by the invisible fingers of forces working deftly and surely at the changing history of mankind. 24

He began writing verse at the raw age of eight. They were never made to think about the theatre with contempt.

22. Ibid., pp. 55-56.
nor of the stage-artists with disrespect, thanks to the large understanding of their parents who always encouraged in them their natural love and esteem for the fine arts. 25

This refreshingly new attitude to the theatre and the artists can be looked upon as the effect of the European culture and it also suggests aliveness to one's surroundings.

He very fondly recollects the theatres and renowned artistes of Calcutta:

When we were children we went to Calcutta, the city of theatres and the home of really remarkable artistes. Father used to be invited with the whole family to witness great performances of great plays by great artistes in great theatres ..... since the whole conception of histrionics and stage-sets was on a distinctly high and mature level; ..... since they were the creations of geniuses like Girish Ghosh and Dwijendralal Roy, the then acknowledged masters of play-writing; ..... men like Girish himself, Pani Babu, Girish Ghosh's son, and Amar Dutta, who at that time had reached sensational heights of popularity!

There were well-known and much loved lady artistes as well: I remember the highly-strung acting of Kamala Kumari whose name was a household

25. Ibid., p.62.
word; ..... Bengal always tried to make progress by adding to her knowledge of art and technique learned from countries outside India.

Bengali artistes have always been very serious about their art: the reason being that art to the Bengali is his life-breath, his most vital evolutionary necessity; he has never been afraid to learn from the world's art and world-artistes.26

Literally the theatre became their home; they were brought up in its domain; they grew up as neighbours to a world of powder and paint, stage-sets and music and dances, acting and actors. They were never made to have any prejudice against the art of the stage.27

It is worth noting here that the native histrionic talent of Harindranath found the cultural setting to be very favourable for his later development as a dramatist.

Thus his love for the theatre grew as he grew; it became essentially part of his dreams and his imagination. His father encouraged him to read the plays of Shakespeare and Molière at a very early age. By the age of ten or

27. Ibid., p.65.
eleven he had read a number of plays of Shakespeare after first getting to know all about his stories from "Lamb's Tales". Molière was one of his father's favourite authors.28

They decided to borrow loose black cloak from their father and use it as a king's cloak, in their first play which Horindranath wrote. The play started at six o'clock. The audience had arrived. It consisted of one person only - and that was their father who took his seat quite seriously. Alone he sat and watched their really stupid first play which had hardly any story or interest. But what mattered to their "audience" was that they were making a serious effort to express themselves; and that was the main thing. He met their serious effort to express with his serious effort to understand and encourage them in their efforts.29

Dr. Srinivasa Iyengar observes:

"In his autobiography (Life and Myself, 1940) Horindranath reveals the core of his faith as well as his endless interest in the process of poetic creation: 'Since my youngest days, I have somehow sensed a deeper law which operates behind us, above us and around us; the law which never goes awry, and which has no truck with twisting and turning points

29. Ibid., pp. 67-69.
and squeezing out its own workings, deviations
and interpretations which insult the truth
itself' ........

'I dwelt more and more ..... in the
innermost recesses of the heart from where
poetry comes. Words and phrases became an
obsession; thoughts floated across the mind like
clouds, some delicately tinted, others stormy,
but past all their movement I began to grip more
firmly the thought .....

Thus he realised his mission in life. He stated in
his autobiography:

I was being linked slowly to the being's
mission, to what in Sanskrit, is called dharma.
My dharma was to dream and express myself, to
catch the mysterious moods that are born past our
normal mental plane.

One also comes across the struggle between his
'without' and 'within' which he overcame only in his mature
age as wisdom dawned on him from "immensely huge suffering".

30. Quoted by Dr. Srinivasa Iyengar K.R.: Indian Writing in
English (Second edition), Bombay, Asia Publishing House,

31. Chattopadhyaya Harindranath: Life and Myself, Vol.I,
Bombay, Maldanda Publications, 1946, p.139.

32. Ibid., p.92.
Such an inner struggle is a mark of the growing pains of new awareness, of new synthesis of the old and the new.

He always felt sympathy towards the poor and the miserable. He had romantic longings.

Our parents had done everything to make us feel that life was one fluent process of rainbows and fairy happenings. But despite the happiness and the cheerful glow always existent in our home I always seemed to sense a loneliness in the heart, a loneliness I could hardly explain to myself. I felt a romantic desire to change places with the ragged beggar in the street, a cobbler cobbbling away on the edge of a road, the peasant working hard in the fields under the scorching sun. Somehow, even at that early age, I felt somewhat strange in the society into which I was born. But this romantic attitude did not last long. Gradually the reality of things began to dawn upon him. In this kind of feeling one can notice the growth of the new social conscience, of a modern outlook on social relations.

Consistent with his new born urges and aspirations, Harindranath married Nemala, a young widow and this unorthodox behaviour is an indication of the emerging new values of life.

35. Ibid., p.71.
in the Indian social milieu. In Madras, along with his brothers and sisters he staged a play, *Abdul Basan* which he had written in verse form. It became a great success, and Harindranath became famous as a "really fine" actor and writer. This success encouraged him to create his literary contributions with greater and greater enthusiasm.34

Lotika Basu has recorded her first impression of the young poet Harindranath thus:

A slim lad of sixteen with a handsome, sensitive face, dark lustrous eyes, and black silky hair falling about his neck and forehead was standing behind the footlights. This was my first sight of Harindranath Chattopadhyaya. It was the year 1914 after the production of his musical comedy *Abu Fussain* at private theatricals in Calcutta and we were just being introduced to the young author. Harindranath is one of the youngest writers of English verse ..... He is a good musician and has considerable dramatic powers.35 ......

Soon after marriage he left for England. It was just at the close of the 1914-1918 war.

34. Ibid., p.41.
On the advice of his friend Harindranath sent his manuscript poems (later published as *Perfume of Earth* and *The Magic Tree*) along with *The Feast of Youth* to Cambridge University. A card came in a few days inviting him for an interview with Mr. Reddaway, the then Dean of the University. Mr. Reddaway received him with extreme courtesy and informed him that "Q" (as Sir Arthur Quiller Couch was known then) had read his poetry and said, "We would have given Shelley and Keats a chance, why not this young poet?" Mr. Reddaway suggested him to choose a subject and evolve a thesis...... The rich imaginative power of Harindranath must have made the Cambridge Professors think of exploiting it for a splendid intellectual adventure in the form of a thesis on a subject agreeable to his peculiar sensibility.

The subject he chose for his thesis for a Ph.D. was "William Blake and his Eastern Affinities". It was suggested to him by Mr. Leonard of the University of Birmingham. It is really a great intellectual loss that Harindranath could not bestow on his assignment the close attention it deserved as he was drawn into the political field at that time.


37. Ibid., p. 154.
But he did not carry on the work for long. "For India was in a ferment and the Civil Disobedience movement launched by Gandhiji was slowly but surely gathering force. I yet felt growing in me all the while a deeply intimate sense of quietness such as seemed to express a need for home-returning". 38

He gave up the idea of a University Degree and decided to return to India.

Dr. F.C. Kotoky has observed emphatically:

In 1928 he went on invitation to Moscow to attend the anniversary celebration of the Revolution. He was a communist member of the first Indian Parliament. It should however be mentioned that notwithstanding his belief in the Marxist ideology, in poetry Harindranath has remained an idealist and a seeker of spiritual truth. 39

Dr. Srinivasa Iyengar observes:

In the course of his life he has veered spasmodically between the extremes of Aurobindonian mysticism and Marxist materialism, and he has sampled every variety of experience and exploited

38. Ibid., pp.187-188.
every possible mood, pose and stance. The result is a body of verse that has truly impressive bulk, though it is also, inevitably perhaps, of rather uneven quality.

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The earliest and the greatest influence that was exerted on the young mind of Harindranath the poet was that of a nurse who served in the house of Dr. Aghorenath Chattopadhyaya. Harindranath recollected her in his autobiography thus:

"Next to mother we had a nurse called Ganga, but we children called her Gagan. She was a strange creature, she was almost a sort of second mother to us .... Gagan was an inevitable part of it. After she left us, there was a gap in our lives which nobody could fill, not even our mother."

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The young poet had formed his own conception of beauty:

In my deepest heart I would search sensitively for my own values of beauty, and come to the conclusion that mother's values were all wrong, and that, passing an unkind remark about Gagga's looks, she was insulting part of the finest beauty in God's creation. To us, Gagga was part and parcel of all that was good, all that was kind, all that was beautiful. 42

She used to offer birth day gifts to the children. One of the gifts - kaleidoscope - presented by her to the young poet went a long way in moulding and influencing his imagination. The incident was very fondly recollected by the poet in his autobiography:

Gagga had a wonderfully beautiful presence - was a great soul, and had a heart as large as a mountain!

On our birthdays she was the first to wake us up early in the morning and greet us with birthday gifts. ...... On another occasion, my birthday, I woke up and, to my deep joy, found a large kaleidoscope lying beside my pillow ......

42. Ibid., p.6.
What a gift for one like me, a lover of colour! The whole day and the next passed in spiritual excitement. For that kaleidoscope meant a great deal to me and was one of life's gifts destined to mould and influence my imagination. I can never read Shelley's

"Life like a dome of many coloured glass
stains the white radiance of eternity"

without recalling nurse Gogga's gift. It has been responsible for much of the colour that has crept into my poetry.....

I have again and again found that kaleidoscope creeping into my work. Colour! Thanks to you, sweet kaleidoscope of my childhood! Colour! Later, much later in life, I wrote a lyric to colour.43

In the prelude to his autobiography the poet maintained:

Life is, indeed, a kaleidoscope, trembling into accidental patterns of colours. It in the twist, the tap, the turn we give it. All the same, the fact remains, that the patterns, however fascinating in their complex or simple arrangement, are formed by bits of coloured glass which human

43. Ibid., p.7.
desires and dreams often seem to be in their
last analysis. 44

Kaleidoscope may be interpreted thus: The poet is
an escaper from so many thought patterns; he enjoys the ideas;
there is no commitment on his part; he goes through so many
spots or passes through so many thought processes; but he is
not committed to any particular thought; he is an enjoyer; the
image of kaleidoscope stands for poet's mental sympathy. It
also agrees with T.S. Eliot's own idea that the mind of a poet
is just like a medium through which the experiences, thoughts,
and ideas pose, continually making new wholes of experiences.

She was his teacher also in the limited sense of the
term:

Nurse Gagga did not merely start me off on
a colourful imagination with that kaleidoscope.
She was also responsible for my achievement of,
at least, three letters of the English alphabet... 45

Desars festival had its own impact on the young mind
of the poet which further paved the way for the poet's
adoption, at a later stage, of rhythm-patterns of the Geese

44. Ibid., Prelude, no pagination.
45. Ibid., p.8.
of the "Sati" in his mature art - creations known as "The Curd Seller". 46

He inherited, as it were, "a certain flair for tongues" from both his mother and father.

The poet owes to Paerani Khala who was "a sort of walking Arabian Nights Entertainments" part of his love of literature, especially literature dealing with faery imagination. 47

The reign of Queen Victoria was very peaceful and congenial for fostering and leading an ideal life. The poet thus recollected in his autobiography:

The year 1898 was not free from a deep reverence for the good Queen Victoria of whom the parents of most of those of my generation talked with tender affection, naming her the Queen of Peace. Everything during my childhood seemed characteristic of her reign apparently, for I do not remember having ever lived in an atmosphere of excitement and the frustration of life and its dreams. It was an atmosphere conducive to nature and her beauty, to spiritual

46. Ibid., pp.30-31.
47. Ibid., p.46.
talk and discussion, to a life of abstract idealism.\textsuperscript{48}

"The English language was held in high esteem at that time, and it was the language which was most spoken around me. It was not unnatural, therefore that English came so naturally to me when I started to write rhymes."\textsuperscript{49}

Tennyson's influence on the mind of the young poet is obvious:

Tennyson, was at that time, still in vogue. I read and re-read his Lady of Shallot! and fell in love with the running rhythm of the piece. It inspired me to write my first poem.\textsuperscript{50}

On his tenth birth day the poet received a wonderful birthday gift. It consisted of about a dozen books of poetry presented to him by his circle of grown-up friends who looked upon him as a budding poet. These were the works of Shelley, Tennyson, Longfellow and Scott. Then he wrote a poem. It was addressed to "The Iying Patriot" - Bhudiram Bose who had been hanged about that time. One may find in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{48} Ibid., p.58.
\item \textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{50} Ibid., pp.58-59.
\end{itemize}
it as echo of Shelley's 'Cloud' in its suggestion of immortality. The Guest at his friend's house, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, was moved to tears when he listened to the poem, and blessed the young poet. He later said in one of his writings to the poet of ten: "That boy's genius gives me electric thrills." 52

Another important aspect of his kaleidoscopic mind was the part played by philosophy particularly the Advaitic Vedantic philosophy that his father had absorbed into his intellectual make-up. The poet grew up in an atmosphere replete with terms like God, creation, soul, life after death, asceticism, yoga etc. One of the favourite sayings of his father was "I am God, you are God" .... 53

Slowly I deepened into a mystic a really conscious mystic. From that age I have always held an almost continuous vision of the One-behind-the-many and the One broken into the many! This just came to me with ease, as it were, a gift from the ancestors. In my earliest poetry, therefore, there were very clear indications that I had acquired this vision of a mystic ..... 54

52. Ibid., pp.60-61.
53. Ibid., p.72.
54. Ibid.
Dr. Srinivasa Iyengar has observed:

although born in a Brahmin family, his childhood and boyhood days in Hyderabad with its composite culture—Hindu Vedantic and Islamic Sufi—doubtless made a mark on him. Proceeding to Cambridge, Harindranath was engrossed for a time in Blake, and through all the vicissitudes of his chequered career he has retained his early interest in mysticism. 55

Harindranath further stated in his autobiography:

Because of the vision of seeing the One-in-the-many, I had always been haunted also with the vision of the thousands who suffered from want and misery, I never understood why a world—which was so full of beauty should also be full of ugliness. The elders around me tried to explain away the existence of unjust inequalities by quoting the theory of Karma. But it never satisfied me, though it has always interested me as a theory deeply, very deeply . . . . I somehow felt that the poverty around us was not the outcome of the Law of Karma but the result of something wrong for which we ourselves were responsible. 56

Despite being engrossed in the uplifting feeling of 'advaita' Harindranath was continually seeking an answer to the question of human inequality and indigence. This points to


the inheritance of realism from the Western strand of the many influences on him. It is very significant that of all the Romantic poets Shelley should have exercised a tremendous influence on Harindranath both in respect of idealism and love of social change and establishment of a perfect human society and the following lines of Shelley quoted by Harindranath himself go to show the nature of Shelleyan impact on him:

Nothing in the world is single,  
All things by a law divine  
With each other's being mingle,  
Why not I with thine?57

The poet sincerely acknowledged the debt of gratitude to his first love in life for awakening in him his ancient heritage of Bengal. He recorded in his autobiography:

I am grateful to my first love in life; for the first contact she gave me with the soul of Bengal — the warmth, the something peculiar which may be described as "home-sickness" — a nostalgia to "go back home", the home of my generations of people, who had shaped me and given me singing blood and a soul that in all art, all poetry, all rhythm. 58

57. Ibid., p.77.
58. Ibid., pp.113-114.
Some of the critical opinions, estimations and views about his literary works and his personality that is revealed in his works may be considered.

Dr. Srinivasa Iyengar has observed:

Harindranath Chattopadhyaya is Sarojini Devi's younger brother; and like her, his own verse is distinguished by a never-failing fluency in expression and an almost equal metrical proficiency. It is nearly twenty-five years since Harindranath dazzled the Indian literary world with his first book of poems, The Feast of Youth, the book that elicited from the Sage of Pondicherry [Sri Aurobindo] the generous encomium: "A rich and finely lavish command of language, a firm possession of his metrical instrument, an almost blinding gleam and glitter of the wealth of imagination and fancy, a stream of unfailingly poetic thought and image and a high though as yet uncertain pitch of expression, are the powers with which the young poet starts...... Here perhaps are the beginnings of a supreme utterance of the Indian soul in the rhythms of the English tongue." 59

Of all the encomiums that Harindranath received from distinguished poets and critics, this one from the famous English poetess, Alice Meynell seems to be significant in

59. Dr. Srinivasa Iyengar K.R.: The Indian Contribution to English Literature, Bombay, Karnataka Publishing House, 1945, p.82.
that it places its finger on the heart of Harindranath’s personality and achievement:

It is exceedingly interesting to me to see such a meeting of Eastern and Western imagination as I think your poetry brings about. 60

S. Fowler Wright puts the matter in a proper light when he observes:

But if these difficulties are overcome by a genius of another race, as in the case of Conrad, the result is likely to be of an unusual and arresting originality. And what Conrad did in English prose, it may be high praise, and yet not too high, to say that Chattopadhyaya is doing in English poetry today.

No one of any soundness of literary judgement can read his work, whether in lyric or dramatic form, without recognizing that it shows an unusual mastery of English verse forms, and yet that it is something other than imitation-English poetry.

Whether he is writing mystical verse, or giving us one of the devout legends of Indian faith in dramatic form, or exhibiting some scene of Indian life with a clear simplicity, the careful

mastery of the language is equally evident. It is Hindi speaking - unmistakably India. But the voice is English - unmistakably English; and it is that which constitutes the most remarkable, if not the most important, feature of his contribution to our contemporary literature. 61

Lotika Basu observes:

Harindranath is at his best when he is describing Indian scenes. Thus in Nocturnal we get the mood of the poet brought on as he watches

The starry worshippers,
Seeking the floating temple of the moon. 62

Prof. V.N. Bhushan observes:

Unquestionably the most prominent and prolific of living Indo-English writers, his amazing versatility defies analysis. He is a poet, a playwright, a musician, an actor, a socialist, a rebel, a wayfarer ....

Harin should not be measured by the conventional yardstick of success in life. He is all by himself - something of a phenomenon .... 63

G. Venkatachalas in his *My Contemporaries* observes:

A genius of his nature is sure to outlive time and space, moods and moments. 64

Dr. P.C. Kotoky has observed in his *Indo-English Poetry*:

Barindranath Chattopadhyaya has not yet received the critical attention that he deserves although he has been steadfast in his devotion to the Muse, has written some brilliant poetry, and is fairly well known in the country and abroad for his varied interest and public service. The insufficiency of critical interest in his writings may be attributed partly to the dead weight of oriental abstraction in his poetry and the occasional clumsiness and verbosity of his poetic expression, and partly to the poet's utter disregard to publicity, his "Bohemian" way of life, and the limited number of copies of his published works. 65

He further observes:

The only Indo-English poet to make a deep probe into Indian life and thought, his main contribution to Indo-English poetry lies in widening its field and enriching its store with a considerable number of fine poems. 66

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66. Ibid., p.72.