CHAPTER III

POETRY (Mystic and Metaphysical)

The poet, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, in his autobiography has vividly recollected his mission in life and the early phase of intense poetical creations:

My dharma was to dream and express myself, to catch the mysterious moods that are born past our normal mental plane. The period of the Feast of Youth poems was one of tremendous inspirations: ...... It was, as if, a pebble had been thrown into the well of my life creating circle upon circle of widening vision which held inescapable distances in view before it could hope to reach its goal. 1

The Advaitic Vedantic philosophy and Sufism have exerted greatest influence on the mind of the poet. The poet grew up in an atmosphere replete with terms like God, creation, soul, life after death, asceticism, yoga etc. His father had absorbed into his intellectual make-up the Advaitic Vedantic philosophy. 'Although born in Brahmin family, childhood and boyhood days in Hyderabad with its composite

The following poems deal with religion, God, soul, Sufi mysticism, the Vaishnava philosophy and early influence of his father's ideas in this regard.

'Vessages' reveals the Vaishnavite philosophical thought. There is an echo of Rabindranath Tagore in this poem. These messages are from God to the aching humanity. He 'secretly sends' His message 'swiftly' through the flowering years ..... A message of hope and joy may be found 'in a child's resplendent laughter' and in a woman's 'tender tears':

Secretly He sends His message
Swiftly through the flowering years ..... In a child's resplendent laughter
And a woman's tender tears ..... 'Sunset-fires' are dancing to the music of its feet. Its footsteps could be heard 'in the burning breast of sunrise'. God's splendour 'bursts like lightning' through 'the burning mystic space'. God is quite sympathetic and magnanimous and

'is moving every moment' to the world He has created and which He loves infinitely:

Shadows dance upon my pathways
To the light upon His face ....
Silver stars are visible twinkle
Of His clear, transparent touch ....
He is moving every moment
To the world He loves so much!

(The Feast of Youth, 1918, p.20)

The poet very keenly feels the ecstasy when he is ready to offer himself totally to God, in 'Ecstasy'. It is the extreme condition of joy one undergoes when one has offered everything to God (Sarvārpana Māeva):

O make my burning blood Thy sparkling wine
For Thee to drink at pleasure and rejoice!
Transmute my flesh into a song divine
For Thee at will to voice!

Transform my tears into a silver shower,
To mingle with Thy rivers clear and white.
O make my laughter an enchanted flower
To blossom in Thy light.

Fashion a banner out of my desire;
And float it on Thy palace, sacred King!
Closest Thou my life with rich, relentless fire
Of endless suffering!
Of make each word I speak, a crystal prayer,
Each thought I think, a deathless temple flame.....
Strike on the anvil of my heart's despair
The atones of Thy Name.

(The F.Y., p.29)

The poet's imagination reaches its peak and noon is
thought of as 'mystic dog' with 'paws of fire' and 'tongue of
golden flame' set in its 'burning mouth' in 'noon'. There is
the vivid image of the dog that pervades the whole poem:

The noon, a mystic dog with paws of fire,
Runs through the sky in ecstasy of drouth,
Licking the earth with tongue of golden flame
Set in a burning mouth.

It floods the forests with loud barks of light,
And chases its own shadows on the plains.....
Its master silently hath set it free
Awhile from silver chains.

At last, towards the cinctured end of day,
It drinks cool droughts from sunset-mellow rills.....
Then, chained to twilight by its master's hand,
It sleeps among the hills.

(The F.Y., p.41)
Dr. Gokak observes:

The Indo-Anglian Poetry of Nature reveals both the unique loveliness of the Indian scene and the freshness of vision with which it is perceived..... H. Chattopadhyaya's Moon and Night, ..... all these reveal the various sights, sounds and other aspects of Nature that Indo-Anglian poets have loved to write about and also the philosophic or mystic attitude with which they have responded to Nature.

This poem places Harindranath on par with the great mystic poet Francis Thompson and Thompson's poem, 'The Bough of Heaven' closely resembles Harindranath's poem, 'Moon'. But the colloquial touches and informality in Harindranath take him closer to the metaphysical poets of the Seventeenth Century rather than Thompson who is majestic and serious in his poem quoted above.

In 'Earth and Sky' the poet thinks some sort of fighting goes on eternally between the earth and the sky. The sky is said to be looking down upon the earth as if the earth were its slave and a boy from its lap:

And a boy from your lap,
With a spring time coat and a flower in his cap.

And silver songs in his mouth at his birth
Of rippling rivers and shimmering streams,
Born in a mystic hour of dreams.

The poet seems to question the superiority of the sky and he loves the earth all the more for its 'dreams of flowers and streams'. At last he pacifies them both:

Are you richer than earth, my sky?
Is earth low-born because you are high?
You may have silver stars in your store
And the golden look of the moon for your door,
But earth has its dreams of flowers and streams.
Without its shadows, what are your gleams?
Earth and you shall fight no more.....
O Sky! your heart and the heart of the god
Are born in the wonderful womb of my God.

(The P.R., p.5)

The poet cites two instances of realisation of freedom from the cycle of birth and death in 'Realisation'. There was a man and he lived over the mountain. He renounced 'the world of strife' and tried to seek the godly musk. Another was his brother and he 'sought comfort in the universal ways'. He worked at the anvil all day and at night 'sang God's praise':

The man that lived on the mountains
Groped endlessly in the dark .....
The man that wrought at the anvil
forever caught the spark!

(The P.Y., p.6)

There is no need to renounce the world and worldly passions in order to realise the Ultimate delight and enlightenment, say, 'the spark'. The only way out for redemption from suffering in life is the way through the world of working 'at the anvil'.

'Changed' deals with the theme of renunciation of material world - its yearnings, joys and pleasures - and the subsequent rededication of life to a higher plane of entity: spiritual life:

I have left my great burdens of sorrow behind
In the flowering sod ......
In immutable silence I crave a new mind
In the Beauty of God!

(The P.Y., p.7)

It is not that the poet is wanting to run away from life or renounce it but he is always looking for a new expression of this world for he has nothing to do with staledness of any kind. Even spiritual experience must have some freshness or change.
It is the worship of God, not the usual sense of worshipping a deity, that is revealed in 'Worship'. It is God's bestowing on human beings all His blessings. God's benign and benevolent grace is solicited by the poet to bestow on him His blessings in the form of 'autumnal silence', 'red-fire sunrise', 'white-flame moon', 'crimson sunset', 'pure golden message of moon' and 'cool-grey clouds'. God's crystal heart shines resplendent through the poet's tattered garments:

The Universal Beauty dances, dances
A glimmering peacock in my flowering flesh!

(The P.Y., p.10)

'Thy Name' is the song of devotion and dedication of the poet's being to God. He humbly prays God to 'cleanse' his tongue 'in the immaculate flame' of His 'sacred Name'. Let it rest ever in the 'silence' of his lovely heart:

Of play upon my flesh, na on a lyre
A song of sacred fire.

The poet implores before God that in the 'dark' illimitable, deep skies of his mortal sleep may the 'stom-beauty' of His matchless Name 'twinkle' in endless flame. Amidst his heart's desire His name may be lit like an immortal fire.
Write Thou upon my mortal love, Thy Name
In letters fraught with flame •••
O! in my young heart let Thy Name take root
And burgeon into fruit •••
Thy Name shall make Life's journey ever seem
A sweet, enchanted dream •••

(The F.I., p.17)

The poet completely surrenders his being to God. Here the feeling of surrender to God is not born out of a feeling of helplessness but out of an intense desire for the making of an ever pulsating life on the earth. The poet surrenders to God on condition that God will make use of him for a glorious task.

In 'My Unlaunched Boat' there is metaphorical embarking of the poet on life's long journey. One can find the Vaishnavite philosophy in this poem. There is soul's anxious longing for the union with God. But the poet has not yet prepared himself to launch his boat. 'The hour hath come to launch my boat, my sailless boat at last' ••• He sits upon the shore alone in the dusk:

And with him, every note
Is crushed to silent sorrow in the song-bird's throat.

Opportune time has come and gone. The poet's soul is very anxious to go to its Lord:
In every breeze and corner of the sky,
Whose lip was dumb and mute
Showers suddenly a scattered melody ..... 
Behind the clouds some hidden flutist plays His flute ..... 
Ah me!
And I have not my boat launched out to sea!

(The F.Y., p.21)

Like Tagore, Harindranath was also under the influence of the Vaishnavite mysticism. The 'flutist' is none other but the Infinite or God and the poet himself: the individual soul, responding to the call of the infinite. The poem suggests both attraction and hesitation. It is this subtle ambiguity that imparts a special flavour to the poems of Harindranath.

'Marvel' deals with the richness of human heart and human beings are admonished to give their 'secret riches' of life to God who is poor and is hiding in the dark. He is suffering. His sorrow is very vast. He is in dire need of sympathy and succour:

...... Silver tears
Flowed like a radiant river from His eyes,
And made me weep likewise!

The moon, that rises over the eastern rim,
Is of His pale, sad heart a lonely spark,
That speaks of His vast sorrow.....

(The F.Y., p.18)
It is remarkable that Harindranath has turned upside down the usual relationship between God and Man. The metaphysical wit of the seventeenth century poets can be found in the suggestion that it is God who is poor requiring the generosity of Man. In a suggestive way, it behoves man to come out in the name of life and express his greater nature.

It is the magic of the sky that exerts its own strange and mysterious influence on the mind of the poet, in 'Raglo'. He turns inward with spontaneous joy and trod in his inward gardens and beholds a 'blossomed Rose!':

The silver starlight, through the shadows, streaks...
The forest-heart..... I laugh in inward dusk.....
My musk-deer soul, in her own vision, seeks
The hidden Musk!

(The F.Y., p.16)

His thoughts are turning incense. The magic light has transformed his 'dorming bud' into 'a flower!' Though musk is in the navel of the deer, it vainly searches the entire wood for musk. Similarly, the votary searches for God here and there, forgetting the fact that God (i.e. The hidden Musk) could be found in his own heart.

'Day and Night' deals with creation of day and night by God. There is the poet's metaphysical vision of a child
at play. God watches a child at play and 'divines' the 'sparkles' in its eyes. Through their depths He seems to say:

"O Child! your window makes me wise!"
Then, forth He went to make the day
And set the moon-glow in the skies!

(The P.Y., p.14)

If for Blake child is a symbol of innocence, for Harindranath it is the teacher of God Himself! Indeed, the theme of children has not been taken up by many Indian poets and in this regard one can see how the concerns of Blake and Wordsworth with the character of the child are reflected in Harindranath's poem in his own typical way.

The sea has exerted a tremendous influence on the mind of the poet. 'Sea-Song's origin and the myriad facets of the sea are very vividly and fondly recollected by the poet in his autobiography. The sea plays 'many-coloured' game with 'changing' sky in the 'vast play-halls of time'. It appears to the poet that God 'churns' waters of the sea into silver foam and breathes his music into every shell. With 'breaking waves' He builds His secret home.

There is an eternal longing in the sea as well as in the sky to meet each other. The poet's inward ear has caught each subtle note that the sky plays on her silver flute above:

Through dawn, thy loud and ruby-flaming throat
Breaks into tunes of love.

I gaze within my heart and find thy shell
Scattered in shining heaps of glowing light,
Thy emerald waves break like enchanted bells
To flood my heart with white!

God hides His dreams of passion and of power
Amid thy wave-house built so strong so strong so strong.

My joy in thee hath blossomed into flower,
My sorrow into song!

(The P.I., pp.24-25)

The deep attraction of the sea for the poet is a symbol of the spiritual bond between him and God. This kind of mystical experience is worked out concretely through the imagery of the sea.

In 'Mystic Poetry of the Sufis' Professor Said Safiyy observes:

Sufism is incompatible with organised religions. It is individualistic and prepares every aspirant, of whatever race, caste or creed, to attain the highest degree of purification: to attain to the realization of his own divinity which
enables him to declare, "I am God", or "There is only God within this garment". A significant characteristic of Sufism is its liberalism. It regards votaries of all religions with equal respect. It represents a philosophical principle and not a ritual, demanding no specific religious observances.\(^5\)

A similar line of thought of Sufi mysticism may be traced in a number of poems such as 'Sufi Worship', 'Fire', 'Within My Being: A Sufi Song', Sonnet: 'Love; I have known you for one little hour', Sonnet: 'You move among the crowd on flowering ways', and Sonnet: 'We shall not meet in fear, nor love and part'.

In 'Sufi Worship' God is divine Lover and it is the worship of Divine Love. Though there is apparent duality between the lover and the beloved, in the ultimate analysis, there is unity between the two; there is one and only Divine Love (i.e. God):

Give O'er this war of Thee and Me!
And thro' clear eyes of wisdom see,
In Love, what difference can there be 'Twixt Me and Thee?

(The F.I., p.27)

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5. Prof. Said Eshagi (of the University of Teheran): Mystic Poetry of the Sufis, a lecture delivered in French, under the auspices of P.E.N. Public Lectures, and rendered into English by Srimati Sophia Wadia, The Indian P.E.N. (ed. Sophia Wadia), Vol.XVI, No.4, 1st April, 1950, pp.53-54.
'Fire' is about immortal love which forms one aspect of ideal love. The poet implores Love to kindle its 'glimmering lamp' in the infinite space:

I am athirst for one glimpse of your beautiful face,
O love!
Veiled in the mystical silence of stars and the purple of skies.

He requests Love to thrill him with 'radiant rapture':

Shaping my heart into flower, and the flower of my heart into fruit,
Meet for your orchards of light and the touch of your luminous lips.

(The F.Y., p.4)

An echo of Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind' may be found in the following lines:

Fan it to magical flame, till my dead heart burst into fire.
Swing, like a censer, my dream of devotion,
O love! through the dark,
Turn into tumults of incense my richly palpitating desire!

(The F.Y., p.4)

It is a tribute to the poetic genius of Harindranath that he has turned 'fire' into a symbol of ever changing, ever shaping
principle of life, i.e. love. In a way it is love that is the source of new life. And this 'fire' is the eternal principle of life itself. A process of regeneration is hinted at.

In Sonnet: 'Love! I have known you for one little hour', the poet has known love for a short while and claimed it as his own for ever. Love has transformed his life into a white continuous thought and left him blossoming into a flower. Its fragrant breath is prophet to the shower of joy which it has brought into his life. He has bought his love with 'painful silences'. Only their mortal lives are lived separately. Their souls are always united.

'The God of Warriors' is a sonnet about the Master of the Universe who is the Warrior of all warriors. The octave describes features of the Warrior. He possesses 'white sky' as his arm which is 'tattooed' with 'starry beauty'. He has a proud and determined brow - the dark and threatening cloud. His sword shines in a lightning flash. 'The fiery sun' is his eye. The winds are his burning breath. The thunder is his 'mighty war-drum'. His banner - 'a glistening crowd of colours in His rainbow' - is held high in the sky.

The sestet speaks of his noble cause and his brave qualities. He is a beautiful and strong warrior. He is
dauntless in fight and he fights alone incessantly through endless ages against the world's dark and evil forces:

Across my dreams bursts His victorious song,
"Out of the darkness march into the light!"
(i.e. Tamasoma Jyotirmaya).

God plays upon the heart-strings of the darkness to lull the cry of birds, flowers and streams, in 'light'. His 'magic fingers' weave each 'starry spark' into the poet's 'sapphire dreams'. Out of the depths of night, a vision starts, haunting the poet's anguish with a touch of flame. God 'unfolds' the petals of the poet's heart like a rich flower:

The stars are white because His thoughts are white,
And are, like them, in deeps of darkness born.
O God! I seek the message of the night
And find the gold of morn!

(The F.Y., p.43)

In the analysis of the various poems in the first collection, The Feast of Youth, we have noted how the poet is deeply involved in life not as a political activist but as a celebrant of the vividness, variety and vibrancy of life. But it is celebration of life as projected by God and not as conceived by the limited mind of man. The emotional fervour
and the imaginative expansiveness are the hallmarks of this collection of poems.

'Ecstasy' (from the collection of poems, The Eagle Tree, 1922) deals with the poet's eternal quest for seeing God. He has watched myriad down with all interest and curiosity and 'turned with wild desire' to catch one glimpse of Him. He has seen various facets of sunset since a long time and bowed before His golden shrine. He has watched midnight skies with 'the myriad stars unfurl'd' since several years with great devotion and reverence towards God. So he sensed:

Who knows in what vast sorrow thou dost make
So much eternal beauty for our sake!

Dr. Gokak observes:

Harindranath's 'Ecstasy' speaks of the beauties of Nature as the handiwork of God. These things of beauty inspire in us a love of their maker.

He quotes two lines which are already cited above:

'The Quest' seeks to probe earnestly the inner happiness, the joy of the soul. The poet invites his beloved and bids her close her eyes against the light.

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'of all the weary world' and 'dream' in dark. 'We too shall twinkle into thoughts'. They have already gone through thick and thin in life. Now they wish to strive hard to 'catch' the inner bliss:

Shell we not strive to catch the quiet strong bliss
Of inner splendour gleaming in our own
Small selves?

Already we have blossomed to p. Rose
Beneath the fiery shadow of His feet.

(The Magic Tree, p.5)

'Harmony' speaks of the harmony which is ushered in the life of the poet after long years of 'songless woe'. The universe is born again. Life-music thrills in every clod. God has fashioned in 'an hour of pain' the poet and the poet is to re-fashion God.

(The Magic Tree, p.6)

The poet's ever-increasing anxiety, eagerness and desire to seek and see God are expressed in the mystic poem, 'Yellow bird'. The poet invokes 'yellow-bodied bird' to sway on the branches of his mind and scatter 'silver-singing dew'. He 'afflowers with song' and finds the subtle flame that runs in the bird. He asks the bird:
Say! have you ever seen His face
Or heard Him hum His lonely tune?

(The Magic Tree, p.8)

God is omnipresent. 'The Fountain' amply illustrates this universal truth, the faith of devout Hindus:

In every heart a jewelled fire
Of godliness unconscious glows,
The earthly seed of man's desire
Gives birth to an immortal Rose.

(The M.T., p.9)

All importance is attached to the human life which is lived on the earth. Even the colour from the mortal eye is drawn by God to make the stars quite bright and illuminating. The poet sings:

"The fairy palace of a king
Is fashioned by a beggar's hand".

(The M.T., p.9)

God Himself is the great captive in 'The Great Captive'. His 'potency' is limited and His 'being is narrow'. God is a mighty captive in the sky's 'enamelled tower'. Vast ages wander greyly and in pity pass Him by.
He dare not even save the fragile murder
of a flower.
Nor hush the arrow-wounded bird’s
heart-agonising cry.

(Lord Tennyson, p. 14)

Like most of the Romantic poets of the nineteenth century, Harindranath also is deeply concerned with Freedom and Liberty. According to the poet, the chain is a symbol of the need for struggle without which there can be no freedom at all. And even God himself, in the eyes of the poet, is a captive as he is not able to save even a flower from being defiled and destroyed. There is a curious amalgam of God's and Man's characters in this poem which enhances the poetic meaning of the word, freedom.

In 'Alchemy' the change that is wrought by time factor is itself alchemy which transmutes and brings about innumerable new things in the world. By its touch many things are revived.

In 'Atheist' the poet has sought to vindicate the human strength and prowess that could be on par with the omnipotence and omnipresence of God. In reality the poet is not an atheist. He has merely striven to show that, given the chance and awareness, man, too can soar to lofty heights and can reach godhead:
Whatever we desire to be we are,
Beauty and fragrance, silence song and fire;
And even God's infinity afar
Can grow if we desire.

(The M.T., p.23)

The poet sees with his inner eyes the broken 'ruins'
of his nights and days, his shattered lute which did not
know to sing its own 'infinity'. The memory of chains has
left him free to run across the sky, seeking the immortal
eccstasy.

There is the assertion by the poet that 'there is no
God'. 'We gave a hazy thought a name and called it God'.
Through anguish life became dependent on invisible power.
Human beings gave God His title and His wings to soar 'in
higher realms'; oversee their fears, joys and dreams. In
order to fathom earthly things they gave Him super-natural
sight and sense:

Trembling at our own vastness, we began
To build huge walls about us, till we grew poor,
In potency, and He the God of men,
Departing from our little human door,
Laughed over us in crude omnipotence.

(The M.T., p.26)
The poet's conception of 'the atheist' is that, no ordinary person who denies the existence of God is an atheist, but Man himself who has not yet realised his own potentialities, is an atheist.

'Dust and Star' is dedicated to the poet's sister, Prinolini. The poem traces the relationship of Man to God, the relationship between the earth and the sky, the relation between the devotee and the God. The importance of the earthly life is emphasised. The poet works out in greater detail and description the Sufi mysticism in the context of his personal realisation of the truths embodied in that philosophy.

The narrow scope of reason bore the seeker from the Lamp of Truth. The Road to 'the white abode' is not easy one. The seeker is full of thirst and requests the Cup-bearer (i.e. God) to dole him a measure from the bowl and intoxicate his faded soul till its blossom burst again. Time fleets and fulfils its destiny. All roses seek the hidden rose.

Human beings have inflicted wounds afresh on God, imprinting Him with scars.

The poet grows so chaste in Love's carens that now his soul begins to sing:
"Life is immortal loveliness,  
And death a pearl-pale fabulous thing".  

(The M.T., p.39)

Live pain alone can touch His pain. Only a God  
can guage a God. It is not death to lose identity in Love's  
embrace. It is to fuse into each other beyond all self and  
beyond all trace:

The lustre of God's stainless eye  
Grows dim with every human tear.

(The M.T., p.40)

With each separate mosque and shrine the death of  
spirit has increased. Indeed, our divine dreams cannot be  
measured by an earthly priest. The Poet's heart is purer  
than the church and he lives the diviner life than the  
priest's.

God is enshrined in the human heart. God cries that  
pain is the richness of His touch and sorrow is His hand.  
There is the blending of good and evil in the world.

The poet seeks his freedom in the chain, though captive  
among prison-bars. He finds the flower of peace in pain,  
and discovers stars in the dusk.
The poet eagerly wishes that if human beings had eyes to see beyond their sense-built dreams they would contact the mystery of God in forest, field and lake.

If anyone hurt the bird the flower would bleed and stain the clod and every little cruel word from man would hurt the heart of God:

Divine is God’s demand and just;
He but desires O Earth! to hold
Your gray and inarticulate dust
And turn its deadness into gold.

(The M.T., p.44)

The poet wants to re-construct the Infinite each moment with striving human power. He wants to pluck the world and change it into something new from hour to hour by human efforts.

Men’s insignificant stature in the scheme of things in this universe is stressed:

A tiny speck of dust, a grain,
A little nothing void of power,
Insignificant drop of rain,
Ephemeral struggle of an hour.

(The M.T., p.46)
God does not like idleness and shun worship. The poet expresses his sympathy and compassion towards the poor and the destitute. The shame of mothers stains God's heart.

Each atom opens wide and far. The bird has touched all heaven's rim. How there is no difference between dust and star as they have grown to be like God.

In 'Moment of Soul' 'Moments of Soul', like lightning—splendour flash and pass. We stand each moment on the shadowy verge of 'rich discovery'. The 'crystal urge' of unseen beauty and eternal mind forever beats glittering past 'the perishable desire'. There are 'moments' when the flesh 'begins to break' and 'blossom' into sweet celestial silences. The natural phenomena when they occur reveal the splendour of this universe and such moments are described very meaningfully as 'moment of soul':

What are we, alas!
But frozen shadows seen, as in a glass,
Each moving to his cold self-built tomb,
Pale-passioned spectres passing in the gloom
A-while into mere deadness and decay?

(Peonings of Earth, 1922, pp.12-13)

It is the mutual dependence of God and human being which is revealed in 'Dependence'. It is a poem of
metaphysical reflection. God's omnipotence depends upon the human beings and this earth. God seeks even from the frailest flower on earth, a little strength to live His life above. We give him love. We tend the gardens of His peace. In us He seeks His solace and forgets His cry. We make Him 'richer and sublimier' every hour.

Sufi mysticism can be traced in 'The Earthen Goblet'. God Himself is a Great Potter who twirls the Potter's wheel and out of clay fashions goblets, pitchers and other wares. Human beings are the earthen goblets and pitchers. Ked goblet states:

The Potter has drawn out the living breath of me, And given me a form which is the death of me. My past unshapely natural state was best With just one flower flaming through my breast.

(Ancient Wings, 1923, p.6)

Dr. V. K. Gokak remarks:

In J. Krishnamurthi's The Immortal Friend what looks like philosophic argument is made poetic through a dramatic presentation, each school of philosophy being made to convey its own philosophy in its special idiom. This is also the device adopted in Tagore's The Child, Naidu's
The Soul's prayer, and Harindranath's The Darthen Goblet. This last has also a symbolic glow.  

He has expressed his view on this poem elsewhere, stating that Indo-Anglian Poetry is particularly rich in metaphysical reflection.

'Ultimate' speaks of man's insignificance in the scheme of things in this vast universe. Reality and illusion are obviously explained:

Life is the rich illusion of a sleep,  
Wherein the Unseen dons the veil of seeing,  
While hidden in its darkness cries the deep inevitable sainthood of our being.

(A.W., p.15)

Lord Shiva is both the Creator and the Destroyer of worlds. Both the processes of destruction and creation are at length described in 'The Dance of Shiva' (Ancient Wing, pp.16-18). In a rich rapture of intoxication, 'dream-lost', Lord Shiva moves from deep to shadowy deep. Star upon star

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breaks forth in swift pulsation and 'multitudinous dreams' swell and sweep behind Him. Enchanted forces leap like giant flames out of His meditation. After His dreaming is over once more Lord Shiva dances His reckless dance of destruction (i.e. tandava mityaga), and He wanders from globe to globe, fashioning 'a mystic necklace' of shattered worlds.

The poet feels sorry for the degenerate state of various religious faiths and man's willing acceptance of bondage and his wickedness, in 'Today'.

'Our wanton hands' have hurt His old universal design and His supernal plan. And now each man is but 'the last rehearsal of the collective tragedy of man:

I saw the flame of Truth grow pale and flicker Lighting their mouths that fed on bloodstained bread ...... The Christian's joy was in his jug of liquor, The Hindu's pride in his false sacred thread ...... Yea, in my dream I know that God was dead.

(A. B., p.28)

'Fire' reveals the mystery that concerns the process of creation of life. The infant asks the leaping flames which have caught his dead mother and unmasked life in its lonely nakedness. The fire gives sudden and sharp answer:
I am the terrible desire
That shaped you in the mother's womb.

(A.W., p.34)

The Hindu theory of the cycle of birth and death
is dealt with in 'Garments'. Human soul is indistructible
and it goes on changing 'garments' and these being innumerable
human births, till it is ultimately redeemed from the cycle
of birth and death and attains Makti or Moksha. The
permanence of human soul is emphasised:

I am called to earth again and again
And so I fashion my garments bright,
Shot through with the threads of pleasure and pain
To clothe my formless body of light.
But with every birth one hue I lose
And the need of a robe grows less and less,
So when I outgrow my myriad hues
I will burn in my own sweet nakedness.

(Grey Clouds and
White Showers, 1924, p.18)

'The Wizard's Mask' reveals God as the Wizard who
wanders on the earth as well as in the sky, decked with Mask.
No, human beings, therefore should show our sympathy to the
lowly creatures of God's creation and to other human beings
who are afflicted with deadly diseases and undergo untold
agony and suffering:
Treat then a snake
Or a leper with kindness
Let the wise Wizard
Laugh at our blindness.

(The Wizard's Mask, 1924, E.P.)

In the simplicity of its structure this poem resembles the poems of George Herbert, the famous seventeenth century metaphysical poet. The conception of God as a wizard is wonderful and adds poetic beauty to the poet's appreciation of the changing visible world.

One finds the poet's infinite faith in the universal benevolence of God which is expressed in 'Rhythms'. A revolutionary idea of beauty is expressed in the last stanza:

A thing of beauty is not joy but sorrow
Which we have only felt in deeper hours
Each day that down rose-red and gold, tomorrow
Is buried with its sunsets and its flowers.

(The W.H., p.14)

There is the Advaita philosophy in 'At the End'. There is One Absolute Universal Soul and it is split into the myriad small selves which ultimately join the Absolute Soul. The earlier impact of his father's philosophy of Advaita can be found poetically stated in this poem:
I, the already Become at the end of the quest
Await the becoming one,
Kindling to a last glory within the peaceful and
soundless depths of my breast
The ultimate pageant of star and of moon and of sun.

(Cut of the Deep Dark Avul, 1924, p.9)

God is supreme artist who has created enormous forces
of nature as well as tiny and tender things of beauty in nature.
This is clearly revealed in 'The Artist'. God's radiant
ecstasy has created 'tempest's giant wrath' as well as painted
'gorgeous dream-designs' very delicately on the moth. His
luminous agony shaped the lightning's fiery claws as well as
carved in utmost tenderness a summer flower to perfection.

Harindrath is aware of the true function of an
artist or a poet - to be in tune with the voice of the
universe. In a previous poem he made fun of a poet who is
bookish but here the character of the true artist is
portrayed.

Though God is invisible, formless and "beyond the storm
of blind religious conflict", still human beings tend to
worship Him in one form or the other. This is amply revealed
in 'Image Worshippers':
A sense of image-worship subtly steals
From which our spirit cannot find escape
Until we have out of all worship grown.

We are all image-worshippers. We bathe
A myriad forms of Thee in restless tears
And Thou dost crown us with the crown of seers
Close-measuring not our image but our faith.

(O.D.D.K., p. 28)

Like Tagore, Harindranath also criticizes the blind
worshippers of idols and images without a grasp of the
essence of religion.

Heavenly judgment is altogether different from the
law of the Old world and it is beyond the man-made code of
morals. God's love towards human beings is unbounded. This
is obviously stated in 'Heavenly Judgment'. Human beings
hardly know one another on this earth, meeting but 'on the
surface'. 'The soul is hidden in a mist of tears'. Love is
covered (masked) in a 'shroud of birth':

In us, a deeper tune is ever played,
A deeper love is wrought beyond our ken
And He who knows the inmost hearts of men
Smiles at the code of morals we have made.

(O.D.D.K., p. 33)
The poet calls for a code of morality which takes into account the hearts of men and not the mere outward actions of men. In a way this new code of morality implies a need for psychological interest in others.

'Pitchers of Clay' (from Cross-Roads, 1934) reveals Sufi mysticism. God is the great potter and human beings are the pitchers that he forms on the potter's wheel. But the pitchers detest the very shape given to them, even though it is very beautiful. They want to escape from 'the enchanted tyranny of shape'.

'Contraries' is a mystic poem. The pairs of opposites invariably exist in the universe. This reminds us of Blake's poem, 'Tiger' and here Harindranath realizes the core of earthly existence - the contraries cannot be separated:

How could I have made the roses
If I had'nt conceived of thorns?
How could I have written my story
Through all these aeons of years,
If I had'nt wed sorrow to glory,
Bright laughter to sullen tears?

(ChA, p.13)

The kingdom of God is within us. It is expressed in the mystic poem, 'The Kingdom of God'. Human beings are
advised to 'gaze deep within' their hearts and find the mystery of sorrow 'cleared':

Within yourself the Power waits
To free you from the myth of time.
The changing tide of loves and hates.
And veils which hide the Life sublime.

(C.R., p.22)

Each passing mood is but 'the dream' which 'grows' the reality of One who is the 'flame-born' consciousness.

It is a beautiful realization of the mystic oneness and like Tagore Harindranath wants, that men should know that by being attached to the momentary and the limited, they cannot bring about the new society of equality which the poet calls 'The Kingdom of God'.

In 'Miracle', faith is the miracle, which is capable of transmuting to fire the sleeping clod. It can change 'the substance of man into 'the mystery' of God. Faith moves the mountains. The poet emphasizes the quality of faith. And it is faith alone that can lead man to a greater glory of life. It is a symbol of man's creativity.

(C.R., p.41)
There is some new and strange idea of the poet which is expressed in 'Shaper Shaped' (from Strange Journey, 1956). A potter, through recently won wisdom, ceases to be the potter and has learnt to be the clay. The poem shows the growing awareness in the poet that a poet with ideology is not the right thing but he must dissolve himself into a song. As usual, his universal spirit is exhibited here.

Dr. Radhakrishnan stated that mere ideals are not enough. Though Harindranath delved deeply in mysticism, at the same time he possessed a keen awareness of the prevailing social conditions. There were poverty, suffering, injustice and exploitation. He had to go out of the sphere of the ideal world of poetry and find stark reality of life. Therefore, he plunged into the mainstream of the national life and keenly responded to the joys and sorrows of his fellow countrymen.

'In the "Shaper-Shaped" the poet contrasts the over-confidence of youth with the humility that has come over him on account of pondering over the problems of this universe. As a result of this he has ceased to be the poet and has become the song. Experience has thus transformed his outlook, and it is this kind of transformation of the outlook of his readers that he seeks through his poems.'

In 'Soul', the soul lights mysteries that lie over in the universe. It moves through some thoughts which are purple twilights. It is a star that draws a dreamy orbit of light:

Each footfall echoes, probing
Dark undiscovered ways,
To silences unprobing
The music of man's days;

(The Dark Well, 1939, p.59)

The poet speaks about colours:

Colour brings me news
Of the hidden One
In whom all hues
Are quenched and done.

(The Dark Well, 1939, p.59)

'Fulki or Dream-Lonely' is uninteresting and dreary. The sky of lonely dream is bare, 'unmooned, unstarred, unhued'. Her soul and heart also become a part of 'inward solitude'. The poet is unable to know what she thinks on this day of 'utter loneliness':

She ponders on some far-away
Dream-lit horizon-end:
O flower! O dream!
Alone, you seem
To hunger for a friend!

Drypoint-8)

In *On the way of Ajanta* the pilgrims have embarked on the journey and they want to reach the caves of Ajanta. They proceed through 'rocky land'. The hot wind is blowing. The pilgrims seem to think that 'the bare rocks' stare at them and convey them so much information. The road is winding and long. But the bullock-carts move slowly and reach them to their destination.

Though the road is winding and long and rocky and the atmosphere is unpleasant, that is, though they experience some odds, there is the determination in them to reach the famous caves of Ajanta.

(F.D., Drypoint-10)

A true devotee's pilgrimage to a holy shrine is described in the following lines of *On the way to Juri Temple*. He walks the long and difficult lonely way through dark nights and scorching days in order to reach at last 'God's garment-hang.
He is just one of them
Who walk the long and difficult lone ways
Through starless nights and scorching days,
At last to reach God's garment-beni
Drunken with the Alone's
Inviolable Beauty, through strange fires and glooms
He treads towards the temple,.....

(F.D., Drypoint-14)

In 'The Ray of Festival,' the throng of people flows in and out of the temple, as the time is ripe for 'a rich festival of chant and prayer.' But in that throng there is a lone beggar woman who has been totally ignored by the throng. The poet sympathises with her lot:

For her, at least, each temple-lamp a-lit
Has such a flame as hides a wound in it.

(F.D., Drypoint-15)

'Revelation' is about the reality. The poet peeps through the appearances and perceives the inner eye—the eye of reality of things—and human soul:

No fleeting colours shall delude
Your eyes that open on the Eye
Thrice twinkles in the solitude
Of some serene interior sky.
The veils have dropped, your soul is nude
Since she has bade her last good-bye!

(Lyrics, 1944, p. 5)

In 'Wedding' it is the wedding of fire with clay. The poet is eager to attend this wedding. Old Silence, master-piper plays upon his pipe. Joyous greetings are offered. The guests are 'bygone dreams'. 'Love is the priest'.

(Lyrics, p. 13)

In 'The Magic Carpet' the poet's mind is the magic carpet, 'shade-embroidered' and 'fire-designed'. The poet asserts, that the magic carpet of the Old Arabian Nights is not as bold or fluent in its flight as his. Its flight is like flowing wine which stains the swimming void with gold:

...... from above I see the earth
all shadow strewn with death and birth,
and Time, a withering waver-de-rose!

(Lyrics, p. 27)

The priest confesses that he has committed untold crimes against humanity in the name of religion, in 'Priestcraft'. Now the priest stands unbroked, as the world is wide awake to his 'intriguing'. He has basked in 'golden sunshines' for a long time:
I have, what though it may sound strangely odd,
Betrayed all mankind in the name of God,

(Redgewo, 1946, p.36)

He has exploited the weak-willed and the credulous. He has made many a temple girl yield 'virgin charms' to some 'imagined deity' in his arms. He is very well acquainted with every shape of exploitation, He has mastered rape both of the soul and the body. He cannot protect himself under the Idol of God. He is revealed to the people and they spit upon his face. Now his soul has turned into a 'cracked and hollow begging bowl'.

In 'Loyalty', the devotee has taken an oath to 'reach' his friend (i.e. God) and therefore he proposes to embark on the journey despite the odds of the weather, loneliness and temptations of this world:

To bend at his feet and receive his grace,
And I'll keep to the oath, I know.

What does it matter if some mistakes
Creep into our lives - some little breaks?
What does it matter how long it takes?

(A Treasury of Poems, 1948, pp.55-56)
The poet suggests how in spite of many obstacles he has to stick to the word he has given to God. He must continue his quest of God and must not be captured by ordinary considerations. That is the inner meaning of loyalty.

Loneliness of a devotee who is forlorn and is very anxiously waiting for the union of God, is expressed in 'Song of Loneliness':

I am lonely of heart tonight,
I am very lonely, my God!

But there is an ecstasy
In the depths of this longsomeness
Which knows that the Path to Thee
Was the loneliest ever trod.

WAZ (p. 47)

The influence of the Vaishnavite thought and the Sufi thought is in the mood of the poem. The path of the soul is lonely and it will have to meet God alone.

'Attainment' is a poem of metaphysical reflection. There are myriad ways of seeking and reaching God. Some take many years, nay, eternities, while others 'but a few days' to reach God. The Hindu thought of reaching God through several paths is expressed poetically:
Some bring Thee a well-tuned harp, and others
A shattered lyre.
Some come to Thee treading a path
Of beauty, Sire!
And behold! it was mine to reach Thee
Through a path of fire.

(At.P., p.53)

So long as the seekers are conscious of God, it does not
matter to them whether the way is sweet or thorny and difficult.
Dr. Gokak is of the opinion that Indo-Anglian poetry is
particularly rich in the poetry of metaphysical reflection.
Instances are Harindranath's 'The Earthen Goblet', 'Attainment'
and 'Dependence'.

As Kaviseswarat, Viswanatha Satyanarayana rightly
observes in his Preface to Horizon End (1946):

In this little book, we see some of
Harindranath's lyric poetry at its best. In
this kind of poetry the poet speaks of himself.
In each verse he reveals his own experience
directly to us and not through the medium of a
character employed in the theme ..... This
little book differs in thought from Chattopadhyaya's
earlier works. It deals at length with the

11. Dr. Gokak V.K.: The Golden Treasury of Indo-Anglian
spiritual experiences of the author. The spiritual experiences told are all in the traditional path.12

An advaita thought of the union of the soul with God is expressed in 'Bridal Moment'. This union is the bridal moment. Soul is bride; God is bridegroom. The bride alone shall know about His coming. The soul waits, breath-abated, for the bridal night.

(Horizon Ends, p.7)

In 'Verge of Vision' an advaita thought is expressed. When man realises his own self he frees himself from the ties of birth and death. The Timeless, which is wide-awake, 'shatters the being's mirrored glass'. Then 'I' and 'Me' come face to face.

(H.E., p.5)

An advaita thought - relation of body and soul - is expressed in 'Contemplation'. The body is advised to hold its breath as the hour with miracles is ripe. God has granted the body His consent to 'tune' its nerves into the 'strings of Love's immortal instrument':

Stillness is as a singing wine
That brings the being's crystal bowl
And cancels the dividing-line
Between the body and soul.

(H.E., p.13)

God's love unto man is expressed in 'Master-Grip'.
God's love has mastered the poet and therefore he is resigned.
He can no more rebel. Now he is carefree and watches the
passing hours which bloom his being into a flower. Human life
has to be very lofty and brave before it can turn a slave to
God's love:

Freedom can but be free
Accepting slavery,
All other things above
To me, all-mastering love!

(H.E., p.18)

Human beings worship stone-deities out of some
weakness of their mind, and not out of faith. Foot's
criticism of blind faith in people is expressed in 'Blind
Faith'. People come to the temple, in scorching heat, with
flowers. They place them before stony god. They kneel and
pray and then depart:

The idol stood as hard as grey,
Thrice ignorant of the human heart,
Clothed in a drowse of perfumed hours.

(H.E., p.19)
The irony of the situation is, a black crow sits upon the statue's head, at the sunset.

God may come to the poet in whatever form He likes. The poet does not grumble against God's ordaining. This is revealed in 'Invitation to Divine Love'. The poet is ready to receive any gifts from God; he has no choice. He equally welcomes briars and blossoms.

(H.E., p.24)

An advaita thought is presented in 'Image of the Lover'. God is the divine lover. He is sheer 'quintessence of Beauty'. God is Light of lights, throned in sovereign ease. His voice of faith cleaves through the darkness of doubt and rings clear in the heart assuring that this dual sense of I- and - Thou remains so long as human beings are held by 'mental chains':

When once this dual sense puts off its cloak
Of I - and - Thou, and then the one reply
Shall be that I - am - Thou and Thou - art - I!

(H.E., p.37)

Human ego is the actor in 'The Actor', which struts about upon the stage. It is 'time's timeliest hermit hero' which is adorned with costumes and crown. When the stage-lights are put out its total takings (i.e. achievements) are reduced to zero, the eternal zero! One is reminded of Hindu thought
that God has created this universe out of nothing, i.e. Shūnya.

(H.B., p.38)

In 'Cup At The Cataract' God’s grace is flowing like a cataract and it is to be contained and held according to the cup’s capacity. Even madmen are considered holy in India because of fullness of their delight - 'Ananda'. In the Western world civilized men, i.e. citizens are expected to contribute something to society. Then alone they get the privilege of living in society. But this principle does not hold good in India. Delight or the feeling of extreme joy which may be very appropriately called 'Ananda' - the sense the brim-feel of fullness - is considered important in the Indian context. 'Ananda' is our cultural heritage:

The cataract floweth unceasingly under the moon and the sun,
A sheet of pure nectar waiting alike for every one.
What matters is only the brim-feel of fullness when filling is done.

(W.B., p.46)

'WAY OF WAYS' is an elaborate poem which may be considered as an epilogue to Horizon Ende. The voyager is a true seeker of truth and God. The way of ways he has chosen
is very hard to traverse. He is not afraid of the path which is as sharp as a razor's edge:

Out of life's shadowy dream
along the razor's edge, the Way of ways
that, at the end of the journey, perchance,
would seem
but a dim scriptural phrase.

(II.Es. p.57)

Man should resolve his doubts. His mind should be clear. Then Time itself comes to his door to serve him. This strange and mysterious statement winds up the stanza.

The poet is alone. He obeys God's high commandments irrespective of his personal triumphs and defeats.

He burns incense-gum to worship God. But veils of smoke-fume hide God's face till He wholly disappears.

All visible life is ordained by the heavenly will. 'We are not several, we are one'.

Fear undoes human beings. When high Beauty delves into the heart, we awake and grapple with reality.

The flower, i.e. a blood-red rose even though short-lived, spends its life in a meaningful way:
God chronicleth the way
I rejoice to have bloomed for a day.

(H.E., p.65)

Human dreams and desires are fugitives. Even greatest poems can but breathe a little breath. It is really curious to think that God who has created his works everywhere, remains incognito, leaving such master-miracles as evening's silver, daybreak's pink, the trembling rainbow, the clouds and winds to us. We shall never know that Author (i.e. God) who forever hides behind His works.

An ideal poet can never be happy; his poems are just numerous rings of a ladder to scale an ideal he never reaches. For he hungers in vain to imprison God's silence in speech:

So all the words that he writes or may write are as foreword
To all that his pen leaveth unwritten
For want of true words.

(H.E., p.70)

The poet is quite optimistic of the better order of things to come. Fraternity of man shall assert itself. There shall be harmony among the nations of the world. There shall be equality between prince and peasant. Evils of humanity, such as war, enmity and hate will vanish. The time is coming.
when toil shall not reduce human bodies to beasts of burden.
Man is God and he is not made in His (i.e. God's) image, but He in man's.

Toll shall be Beauty's tool for her own increase.
Every man shall labour and experience deep joy. Man is a miracle; each man is a world. He was meant to carry forth creation from point to point of progress:

Earth and her creaturehood is raw material
Awaiting the progressive destiny
Of ever waxing wisdom and significance.

(H.B., pp.75-74)

Man cannot defy the destiny that was preordained by God. God gives us a long rope to hang ourselves with. And then:

Reveals the heart which is immortal,
The fountain head of sovereign sight,
Dragging us, even against our wills, towards
The final wisdom, flooding us again
With a sense of high eternal howdahness.

(H.B., p.75)

God chastises man so that he can obtain His bliss.
God undoes what is created by man, in order to offer him immortal love.
Personal relationship between the devotee and the Lord is suggested in 'Emberking Time' (from *The Divine Vagabond*, 1950). The devotee has determined to reach his Lord. He confesses that his life grows deeper and vaster beneath His 'transfiguring touch', and in gradual depth he will grow to a master. He is ready to embark on his journey to meet his Lord:

Dohold, I am sure ..... and the boat is ready,
The sail in the wind keeps silent and steady,
On the dark rich waters of God, forgetting
All distance and time, behold I embark!

(The Divine Vagabond, 1950, p.4)

Human sorrow and human struggle ultimately pave the way for better things to come. Suffering in man's life is inevitable. After all, man is an earthen pitcher and God is the Potter. Human weakness 'strengthens the conscious Potter's fingers'. This thought is expressed in 'Row 'eternal?':

Man is an earthen pitcher wrought
To shape upon his wheel of thought:
The weakness in the clay that lingers
Strengthens the conscious Potter's fingers.

(The D.V., p.8)

In 'Masterhood' the poet's soul is unaffected by the vicissitudes that take place in the world. His 'kingly spirit
enjoys a light which shall abide. An echo of Shelley's
Adonais wherein the poet eagerly longs that he may be darkly
borne away in a lonely boat on the rough surface of the sea,
may be traced in the following stanza:

Amidst life's ocean, dark and rough,
I float, a kindled buoy
No billow was yet strong enough
My balance to destroy.

(The R.Y., p.35)

There is Sufi thought of mysticism in 'loyalty'.
The votary very patiently awaits his Lord to arrive in his
house and makes preparations to receive Him with open arms.
He leaves the door wide open as his Lord may enter his house
on some day. He will light his little lamp of clay. He will
weave the garland for his Lord. He will plant a tree in his
garden-plot. He is sure, ultimately his Lord will come to him:

That you may come
Suddenly, at the end
Of this waiting on the edge
Of ages, friend!

(The R.Y., p.25)

In 'Pilgrim', God in the Pilgrim of Eternity who passes
through this world conveying the message of hope:
Through desolations he goes on
In flowing beauty, pouring out
From the sweet pitchers of his dawn
New-kindled faith on glooms of doubt.

We are the mystic deaths of him
Through which himself he comes to meet
Since every death is but a dim
Grey shadow of his rose-red feet.

He seeks an ever-distant goal
Through life's miraculous decay;
Between the griefhoods of our soul
He treads the hushful homeward way.

(The P. V., p. 86)

The poet comes to know that God has been waiting long
To become a creator like himself, i.e. the poet, at the end
Of every song. This is expressed in 'Evasion':

I have, in this instant, known
That you have been waiting long
To become my very own
At the end of every song.

(The P. V., p. 88)

All expression on the part of the poet, however sweet
And true it might be, draws away the heart from the silent
Heart of God. When God gives the poet some songs to sing,
Something whispers in his heart that He has run away to 'the
Lonely unexpressed'.
The thought that poems are the myriad ways and means of reaching God, is expressed in 'Voices of Poems':

O poet! what you call poems
Are so many ways and means
Of reaching the virgin whiteness
Behind the world's golds and greens.
Divine attempts at storming
The subtle wonder that slips
Between the words you utter
From your song-enchanted lips.

(The D.V., p. 97)

In 'Invitation To A Worldly Friend' the poet has assessed the value of worldly life—its bitterness, hatred and anguish and so invites a friend immersed in such a world, to the world of the poet where there is love, peace and grace—the qualities that come out of harmony and universal attachment. The contrast to the worldly life is provided by the 'garden named the beloved and a flowering called within'. It is this interior world of the spirit that will secure us freedom from the shackles of the exterior, familiar world.

(The D.V., pp. 107-108)

The poet's awareness of God's omnipresence is revealed in 'Realization':

It is your presence drapes
The universe with glows;
Out of your dream escapes
The colour of the rose,
The wing-beat of a bird,
The music of a word;
A universe of shapes
Is born of your repose.

(The D.Y., p.119)

God is getting married. The natural phenomena and
animals and other creatures in this world attend the wedding
ceremony:

Cloud and cloy and camel
Fast join the marriage feast
For God is getting married
To His world without a priest.

(The Cord Seller, N.D.C.P.)

God is supreme creator. Man cannot be a match with
God in regard to creation:

You fashion ships and aeroplanes
And huge machines of power;
Fools you have never dared to make
A simple summer flower.

(The Cord Seller)

There is Sufi mystical thought in the following
quatrain:
Here, in this tavern of the world,
We dance in wine-excess,
Our life is but a drunken dream
Of rose-red emotions.

(The Curd Seller)

One is reminded of the similar thought expressed in
The Rubayat of Omar Khayyam.

Masks and Farewells (1961) is dedicated to 'the lonely
of heart'. At the outset of the collection, one finds searching
metaphysical questioning by the poet:

And what is life? I asked
Death whom I met on the way;
Life is myself unmasked
At the end of the play.

And what is death? I asked
Life whom I met on the way;
Death is myself unmasked
At the end of the play.

The title is chosen from the gist of three or four
poems: 'Traveller' (..... "Is not the face, in reality, one
with the mask?") 'Symbol' (..... "Since, what is human birth
but symbol of departing?") 'Duality' (..... "We are masks
who forget/ourselves behind the masks we are .....") and 'Love's
Irony' (To bid it farewell - farewell is a stern, relentless
thing! - farewell to discover its ultimate bridal state in operation).

The collection is a product of the poet's mature experience and it is obviously different from all his other works. One can find structural compactness and restraint in these poems. The experience conveyed through them is clear and bright. They have a simplicity of their own.

In 'Tryst' the poet dwells on the relation between One and Many. Self-sovereignty of the One has led to myriad tryst of planet, moon and sun. The creator 'reposes' in their 'continuum of whirl'. Against the white background of the sky the blood of innocent men like Christ has spread and stained the very core of rose. Innocent human beings have been crucified for the fulfilment of noble cause. It is inevitable that 'countless Christs' are to be crucified in order to secure 'roses' - roses of joy, happiness, peace and plenty. The images of blood - a sky of pearl, roses, and Christ - are meaningful and apt.

In 'Seer' the poet is awe-stricken and dumb before the wonderful creation of the universe and its mysterious and complex structure. His 'ingenious vision' in his gaze makes his soul exult. Obviously simple looking structure is 'brimmed' with complexity; everything in the universe is
subjected to perpetual movement: 'all in one endless sovereign mobility'. It is the will of the creator that 'manoeuvres' the destiny of things in the universe. This 'manoeuvring will' is all in all.

In 'Counterpart' there is the heavenly plan which is 'inscrutable'. It sounds inscrutable because each wound which human heart receives at the hands of blind fate is capable also of 'discerning' its soothing counterpart in a rose. Beauty in nature brings balm to wounded and broken heart. The colour of two images - wound and rose - is very vivid.

The poet firmly believes in God's creation in 'Faith'. He does not understand 'the myriad forms' that are being 'moulded' on the potter's wheel by God. He is also incapable of fathoming into the way 'His shapes are planned'. Though God in 'Formless', the poet firmly believes, that God make His 'fine escape' in each shape into form under the 'stress and reel' of His busy potter's wheel which is being constantly 'whirled' to 'express in shape'. The poet pins his faith on the potter's busy wheel which gives myriad shapes to formless mud.

The poet puts into expressively a concrete image the abstract concept of God's felt existence and reality:

Of you, the Formless, in each shape
Making your fine escape
Into form under the stress and reel
Of your busy potter's wheel
Whirled to express in shape.

(For Bits and Farewells, 1961, p.13)

In 'Arcane' the poet puts a searching question to human soul as to 'who am I?' Each one silently sojourns life's way 'hand-cuffed, foot-fettered' and at the end of the journey comes to 'a damp self-suffocation'. Human body is considered as a cell of bars, 'rustled, crumpled enclosure of breath'; it casts its shadow upon a 'host of stars'. Whether soul is an entity unique in itself or a sum-total of what dim ancestry changes the body into a ruined heap of flesh, robbing all sense and reason? Is human life, in the last analysis, but a season, fleeting from moment to moment, bearing deaths and dooms? One fails to answer this mystery.

Creation is a perpetual agony in 'Infant Cry'. In the very process of travelling life's distance that is covered is new life discovered. Roadways are limited and travellers are many. These travellers make efforts to unravel the mystery of creation (i.e. 'the meaning of all motherhood'). Birth-pangs of mother earth are very painful - 'blood-red milestones' that mark 'human travel'. Human beings are enchanted here as captives, there is only sorrow for them, and they pass through 'time's starry portal' at the end. External (earthly) 'form shuts soul in'; yet each infant's cry 'renders' its immortality immortal.
In 'Paradox' creation of a thing is a stark story of scramble. Separation looks through mirages of vanishing forms. Love is loath to be captured and held in image. To be spelled into fixity, once for all, is abhorrent to life that continues, while loveliness signs her own death warrant: this is strange paradox rendering loveliness ever so living.

There comes a stage in love when the object is lost in love itself. Love stands the test of time and grows to a lonely state of union in 'Union'. Fate is conquered by earthly love turned heavenly. The twin have flowered to one high luminosity. One is reminded of Donne's similar metaphysical themes of love-poetry. The poet gives concrete shape to the abstract conception of reality.

In 'Love's Irony' farewell is a stern, relentless thing. It is to discover its ultimate bridal state in 'expectation'.

Sorrow is the true test to prove the depth of love in 'Test'. An arrow waits for the breast of the dove. Sometimes the mate must be lost if the lover wishes to discover the depth of his love.

Desires 'roam across dim aeons' like birds in 'Desire'. Desires that go out return across aeons. Desires of the past meet their future loves at last and return unto the starting
point. They trace 'fire-ring' and cast and shadow-stain
on Love.

Nature's law is that contrary things are bound to exist
side by side in the world. Beside Grace black sweeney
'wrenches' the back of God and makes it bleed. The vulture
pounces upon the helpless chicken. That is inevitable. That
is the secret of life. This is expressed in 'Life's Secret'.

In 'Traveller', the poet would have lived in his warm
house, 'like a white bird', if only he would have been a
blessed creature. He thus questions:

Is not all travel only a figment? I ask
Myself on the travel.
Is there aught to unravel?
Is not the face, in reality, one with the mock?

(M.F., p.16)

It is his search for the truth.

He who expresses fear of death imagines that he is
total, while in reality, he is but a semblance of life.
Man is merely one semblance of super-numerous semblances spun
into the web of being by 'a becoming'. This thought is
expressed in 'Vision'. In the 'drunk plan of cyclical
existence', every man remains sheer shadow, imitating the light:
He shall be when the fragmentary sight
Gazing across all dyings and births shall be
Total and, hence, aacer of immortality.

(N.F., p 47)

An echo of Shelley's 'Adonais' may be traced in the lines cited above.

In 'Essence' one may behold beauty which is ever 'buoyed along' imagination's boundary-line dividing the unreal from the real, the real, mankind's unreality, its unreality. God is real. The poet wishes that beauty may flow through him so that the Ideal might sip it to allay its thirst.

He recreates all that he sees into essence (the rainbow and the star, white clouds, miracles of hue and form that meet and mete):

I recreate
All that I saw, to essence. Let me be
Cautious, sifting the spectacles I see.

(M.P., p 54)

Dr. F. C. Kotoky observes:

In many of these poems, the summing up at the end is brilliant ..... Intellectual curiosity, and an eagerness to find some meaning of the eternal mysteries of life and existence, mark the poems which may be said to have also what Eliot has called "the emotional equivalent of thought".
..... Each of them is to be valued by its totality of impression. Aphoristic in design, some of the poems contain either a query, the charm of which lies in its fine suggestiveness, in its evoking some deep feeling or in its bringing to the reader's vision a picturesque image. 13

Harimdranath has significantly called the collection of poems, Virginia and Vineyards, (1967) 'a journal of the soul'. Like T.S. Eliot's Four Quartets, this is an impregnated contemplation on the various aspects of human existence - human history with all its horror, the shallowness of modernism, the true vagabond, and on the nature of Time itself. Another significant aspect of this work is that the individual poems are not given any names at all, thereby suggesting a continuity of contemplation. However, the themes are not taken up logically or even chronologically but as and when the sensibility of the poet became engaged with it.

One is compelled to seek comparison with T.S. Eliot's handling of the theme of time: Eliot's is essentially rooted in history and his own individuality. Harimdranath's handling of this theme is altogether massive, so to say. That is, it dissolves all past, present and future into one single vastness.

ever palpitating and this idea is very beautifully brought out in verse No.75 in the line 'there is no such thing as a dead year'. Once again, the mystical propensity in Harintrapath finds expression in this poem. The poet's impatience with the logical game known as intellectual pursuits and scientific theories can be seen in Verse No.14. It is not the division of things into minute particulars and classifying them in their own ways that will constitute the real meaning of this universe. It is 'through the rare Man transformed to enpire humanity'. For in this there is a concern with humanity and life beyond the limiting factors such as, 'individualism' or for that matter any isam, caste, creed and sects. Harintrapath's impatience with science reminds us of William Wordsworth. Verse No.9 can be cited as an example of the preparation for a mystical experience: 'act of purification' of 'the powers of comprehension'. It is this process of purification of comprehension that reveals the fallacies and futilities of the senses. But the very first verse is a hymn to human existence: it is a hymn in which the traces of the past life or dynamism can be found in every part of the universe: the craters on the moon; 'in our own blood-corpuscles' we find the 'sickly stench of graveyards of centuried history'. 