Chapter 1

Introduction
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The history of Indian literature began about 4,000 years ago. Anglo-Indian literature is far younger, having started to form only in the second half of the nineteenth century.

It is worth mentioning that before the First World War, two great men of letters whose creative was inseparably connected with India had been awarded the Nobel Prize in literature. Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936), an English prose writer, poet and journalist got it in 1907, and in 1913 it was presented to Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), an Indian writer, poet, artist, composer and public figure. Kipling spent the first six years of his life in India and later, in 1882-1889, worked there as a journalist. He was the first to tell the world about the real life of British India, sighing deeply over 'the White Man's burden', the one that was making him propagate European civilization in distant lands with marked cultural traditions of their own. Knowing India much better than most of his contemporaries, Kipling was pessimistic with respect to the perspective of achieving mutual understanding between the representatives of the two worlds, having coined his skepticism in his famous 'East is East, and West is West'. Rabindranath Tagore wrote in Bengali. The extent of his creative works' popularity with his compatriots can be understood from the fact that many of his songs (and he wrote some three thousands of them) became folk songs. Tagore was introduced to the West thanks to William Butler Yeats and Ezra Pound who believed that the Bengali poet's creative work was full of supreme wisdom and reminded him of things that would slip one's memory in the chaos of the Western of life. Familiarity with Tagore's poetry owing to its translations into English first permitted European readers to hear the Mystic voice of India. Tagore managed to
achieve what Kipling had so much doubted, namely, to bring together two worlds, the Orient and the Occident. Having presented his people with faith in their native tongue, their cultural and moral values, Tagore absorbed the achievements of the British culture as well, which made his works an integral part of Western literature. To a considerable degree, his entry into it proved to be quite natural since many translations of Tagore’s works were authorized.

Tagore's example gave an incentive to the unprecedented development of writing in several languages spoken in India. However, modern Indian authors, as it is easy to see, tend to be bilingual, like Dilip Chitre (1938-2009), or prefer writing in English to facilitate their access to the world's reading public while demonstrating loyalty to the aspiration for combining oriental and occidental traditions in their literary work. The works by the outstanding thinker Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950), a natural combination of Vedanta, teachings of Hindu mysticism, and elements of Western European philosophy, have been the striking instance of such an approach. The magic realism of Salman Rushdie (b. 1947), one of the finest Indo-Anglian prose writers of the second half of the twentieth century, also developed through the synthesis of oriental and occidental cultural traditions.

Abhay Kumar (b. 1980) continues this trend in Indo-Anglian literature may be called the most distinguished among the modern Indian poets writing in English. A graduate of Delhi University and Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, he is a career diplomat who served earlier in Moscow at the Embassy of India. His debut on the literary scene in 2006 with the publication his memoir *River Valley to Silicon Valley* -

Abhay Kumar’s presence on the contemporary literary scene in India is not merely that of an ordinary point of reference but of an influence and contribution to be reckoned with. He continues to be one of the literary flag – bearers of contemporary Indian poetry for almost a decade now. Entertaining a wide range of readership across the cultural and ideological boundaries with the urgency of his concerns, his poetry has received wide critical attention. He received SAARC Literary Award for his contribution to contemporary South Asian poetry and was nominated for Pushcart Prize 2013. He has been featured as a nominee on the long list of the Forbes India 100 Celebrity and has been honoured with Asia-Pacific Excellence Award in 2014.

Abhay Kumar has been acknowledged as distinct poetic sensibility of divergent orientations, but it will be interesting to study his poetry in relevance with the present day cultural conditions of both East and the West. His book Seduction of Delhi was shortlisted for Muse India-Satish Verma Young Writer Award 2015. He has been invited to read his poems at various literary festivals like: Jaipur Literature Festival 2015 & 2017; Peruvian House of Literature Casa De La Literatura, Lima, Peru 2016; Poets House, New York 2017; India International Centre by the Poetry Society of India and Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of Letters 2017; SOAS, University of London 2017; International Poetry Festival of Granada, Nicaragua 2017; 27th International Poetry Festival of Medellin, Colombia 2017.
His poetic works startle and heal and give humanistic outlook to Indian English Poetry making subtle use of metaphor and imagery. 'Abhay Kumar’s poems are reflective, informed by a grave concern for a planet endangered by its on dominant species, yet vibrant with a measured optimism.'¹ Major Indian poet Jayanta Mahapatra thinks "qualities of love, tenderness and compassion set Abhay Kumar's work apart from much of the general run of current poetics"². As per the Hindu Book Review – “Abhay Kumar’s words do not sit outside and observe. They dig in, making their subject their home and then they turn outwards, watching the landscape, the people, the city, the change.”³

The poetry of Abhay Kumar is filled with words and images of love, beauty and emotion and the poems are honest, heartfelt and very personal which makes it a joy to read. It is indeed like walking through the land of fairy tales. His poems are like drops of first spring rain, simple and cozy at the same time. The poet’s capacity for loving is expressed through his eloquent romantic poetry in Enigmatic Love. His philosophy of love has the power to renew even the most jaded person’s faith in the idea of true love.

The existential philosophers believed ‘A life should be lived to the fullest’. This expression can be found in Abhay Kumar’s poetry which connects to the hopes and aspirations found in the many facets of love itself, in the love he feels for his father, friends, sweet hearts, strangers, enemies, teachers, divine and mother:

‘I want to sing a love song,
a song for my father,

a song for the love and care he gave

his young son,

I want to sing a love song,

a song for my great friends,

a song for the time

they happily spend with me.

I want to sing a love song,

a song for my sweet hearts,

who were left behind,

with the passage of time while life

moved on.

I want to sing a love song,

a song for the unknown strangers,

who helped me on my way

whom I’ll never meet again.

I want to sing a love song,

a song for my enemies,

without you,
the journey of life so far would have been monotonous.

I want to sing a love song,
a song for my teachers,
who taught me the alphabets of life,
who always guided me from the darkness to the light.

I want to sing a love song,
a song for the divine,
for all the great gifts,
for the greatest gift of life.

Above all I want to sing a love song,
a song for my mother
who brought me into this world,
of love I live submerged."^{4}

His poems are like light shining out of the darkness and the poet discusses the importance of the personal relationships which brings meaning into our lives. His
poems represent a faith inspired kaleidoscope of Joyce and longings for today and for many tomorrows.

His poems either take you into the essence of momentary feeling of love, sorrow, longing, heartbreak or they make you ponder on the question, what is love? Could love be beautiful violence? Could it be growing old watching the years pass by, a perfect kiss or life itself with black and white shades and shades of grey in between:

‘Beautiful silence,
silent violence,
violent silence,
beautiful violence.

In love,
out of love,
between love,
beautiful love.

Silent love,
beautiful love,
violent love,
beautiful love.
Sacred love,

profane love,

spiritual love,

beautiful love.\textsuperscript{5}

Since time immemorial writers and philosophers have tried to explore different types of love describing its various aspects. Sociologist and anthropologist have greatly advanced the theory of love and identified major love constructs. Recently scholars have started to peek into the concept of love from evolutionary and cultural perspectives. They investigate whether love is a universal emotion present in various cultures, what are the different attitudes of people towards love and love experiences in different cultures. Researchers such as Helen Fisher, Ellen Hatfield and Robin Gudwill are trying to expand their understanding of cross-cultural variation of love across the globe.

The important area of their research was to explore if the concept of love (romantic) was a western cultural construct or, since its origin is thought to be in ancient Greece and India, whether it is universal in human societies. They found out that love is an emotion which is globally experienced by a majority of people, in almost all historical periods and in every cultures, that ever existed. What is important is that culture has been found to have an impact on peoples’ concept of love, the way they think, feel and behave in different situations.
Theorist have begun to speculate about the impact of culture on love. The idea of love has changed over the period of time. By 18th century the western view of love was reshaped by Renaissance, the Scientific Revolution and the beginning of Industrial Revolution. People had more inclination for romantic and passionate love, on marriage for love (as oppose to arrange marriage).

‘The relationship between culture and love is dependent on:

1) the extent these feelings as shaped by culture
2) do the same antecedents influence the susceptibility to love for all cultures
3) or the precursor of love is different in different cultures.’

An awareness of critical theory which emerged in the works of Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggard and later Stuart Hall, under the titles ‘Culture’, ‘Power/Culture’, ‘High/Low Culture’, ‘Popular Culture’, may perhaps help us in having clear understanding of the existing critical opinions on Abhay Kumar’s poetry and a possible answer to the above said questions.

The English word ‘Culture’ is derived from the Latin term ‘cult or cultus’ meaning tilling, or cultivating or refining and worship. In sum it means cultivating and refining a thing to such an extent that its end product evokes our admiration and respect. This is practically the same as ‘Sanskriti’ of the Sanskrit language. The term ‘Sanskriti’ has been derived from the root ‘Kri (to do) of Sanskrit language. Three words came from this root ‘Kri; prakriti’ (basic matter or condition), ‘Sanskriti’ (refined matter or condition)
and ‘vikriti’ (modified or decayed matter or condition) when ‘prakriti’ or a raw material is refined it becomes ‘Sanskriti’ and when broken or damaged it becomes ‘vikriti’.

Since ages, Indians have called their culture by the name of human culture (manava dharma or manava Sanskriti). It has tried to be so comprehensive as to suit the needs of every human being, irrespective of age, sex, colour or race. In spite of many political upheavals it has flourished and endured. History has not been able to trace its beginning, hence it is taken as beginning less (anadi). It has always existed in time and it shows no signs of decay or death; hence it is spoken of as eternal, Sanatana. It is called Vedic because the earliest literature in which it found expression is the Veda, the oldest books known to the world. What is the secret of its longevity and imperishability? In his Why Religions Die, a short work but of great worth, Professor J.B. Pratt of America makes a few observations about the Indian Culture and Religion, which according to him:

‘…is the only culture which still tends to survive the present crisis because it is strong, deeply rooted, flexible and capable of absorbing new currents. It leads to life-like vitality which is self-perpetuating, self-renewing and eternal. That which in it, was vital and true, cast off the old shell and clothed itself in more suitable expression, with no break in the continuity of life and no loss in the sanctity and weight of its authority.’

Generalizing on the secret of longevity of this Vedic religion and its culture, Professor Pratt further adds, If a religion and its culture is to live, it must adapt itself to new and changing conditions; if it is to adapt itself to new and changing conditions; it is to feed the spiritual life of its people, it must have the sensitivity and inventiveness that shall enable it to modify as the needs demand.

Not only Hindu religion, but the whole culture of the Hindus has been growing, changing and developing in accordance with the needs of time and circumstances without losing its essential and imperishable spirit. The culture of the Vedic age, of the ages of the Upanishads, the philosophical systems, the Mahabharata, the Smritis, the Puranas, the commentators, the medieval saints and of the age of modern reformers is the same in spirit yet very different in form. Another secret of the vitality of Indian culture is its catholicity. Here mutually contradictory creeds can and do keep house together without quarrel within the wide aid hospitable Hindu family.

‘...Hindu thought and culture ... because of its ingrained conclusiveness, its tolerance and its indifference to doctrinal divergences, stressed the essential unity of all Indian Dharamas, whether Hindu or Buddhist or Parsi and minimized differences. This tolerance of differences of opinion
and creed within its own fold and even outside itself is an essential characteristic of Indian Culture. 

It is true that 'culture' defies a unanimous definition, but it has basic tenets of strong family base, guru-shishya parampara, secular outlook, spirituality, acceptance of diversity of faith and belief in the fundamental unity of whole universe. A glorious feature of Indian culture has been sublimation of higher values. It was seldom that old things lost their hold on the minds of the folk; for forms linger long after the meaning is forgotten. Indian sentiment has been in favour of transmuting the older decaying form into one more useful, than of casting it away as dead and useless. It believed in conformity, compromise and conciliation of tradition. It is on the same principle that many Indian poets, decade after decade flourished and those who did not care for it were rebels as they traversed on the long journey of creativity.

Culture is a way of life. The food you eat, the clothes you wear, the language you speak in and the God you worship all are aspects of culture. In very simple terms, we can say that culture is the embodiment of the way in which we think and do things. It is also the things that we have inherited as members of society. All the achievements of human beings as members of social groups can be called culture. Art, music, literature, architecture, sculpture, philosophy, religion and science can be seen as aspects of culture. However, culture also includes the customs, traditions, festivals, ways of living and one’s outlook on various issues of life. Culture thus refers to a human-made environment which includes all the material and non-material products of group life that are transmitted from one generation to the next. There is a general agreement among social
scientists that culture consists of explicit and implicit patterns of behavior acquired by human beings. These may be transmitted through symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment as artefacts. The essential core of culture thus lies in those finer ideas which are transmitted within a group—both historically derived as well as selected with their attached value. More recently, culture denotes historically transmitted patterns of meanings embodied in symbols, by means of which people communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and express their attitudes toward life.

In 1869, Methew Arnold, in his essay *Culture and Anarchy* describes culture as having its origin in love of perfection. In other words he meant culture is a study of perfection. The idea which culture sets before us for perfection:

‘ an increased spiritual activity having for its characters increased sweetness, increased life, increased light, increased sympathy’

Methew Arnold’s idea of culture is an idea which the new democracy requires more than the idea of the franchise, or the wonderfulness of the industrial performances.
Arnold continues, the culture which is supposed to plume itself on a smattering of Greek and Latin is culture which is begotten by nothing so intellectual as curiosity; it is valued out of sheer vanity and ignorance or else as an engine of social class and class distinction. No serious would call this culture or attach any value to it. To find the real ground for the very different estimate which serious people will set upon culture, one must find some motive for culture in terms of which may lie a real ambiguity; and such a motive the word curiosity give us.

But there is another view of culture which is not merely the scientific passion, the only desire to see things as they are, natural and proper in an intellectual way, appears as the ground of it. There is a view in which all the love of our neighbor the impulses towards action and help, the desire for removing human error, diminishing human misery, the noble aspiration to leave the world better and happier than we found it-come in as a part of grounds of culture:

‘...culture is then properly described not as having its origin in curiosity but as having its origin in the love of perfection; it is a study of perfection’

By this Arnold meant culture studies perfection, which is harmonious perfection, general perfection and perfection which consists in becoming something rather than having something. It is an inward condition of mind and spirit not an outward set of
circumstances. Perfection as a general expansion of human family is different from our strong individualism. It is at variance with individual’s lack of flexibility for seeing more than one side of a thing.

For this love of perfection people have accustomed themselves to give the name of genius; implying, by this name, something original and heaven-bestowed in the passion. But the passion is to be found in many manifestations; culture being the true nurse of the pursuing love, and sweetness and light the true character of the pursued perfection. The pursuit of perfection is actually the pursuit of sweetness and light. He who works for sweetness and light works to make reason and the will of God prevail. This idea can also be sought in Abhay Kumar:

‘Angel,

Ordinary man can’t assess your worth,

For them diamond is just another stone;

But forgive them all,

As Christ did’ 11

Here, Abhay Kumar asks his friend named Angel to raise herself above the accustomed way of thinking as he metaphorically compares her to a diamond, whose worth cannot be assessed by ordinary people. Moving a step higher Abhay asks her to inculcate the perfection in herself as witnessed in Christ.
T.S.Eliot’s interpretation of culture shows a clear impact of Ezra Pound’s 
**Guide to Kulchur. In Definition of Culture** (1948), he maintains the idea that liberalism, in course of time will be replaced by Christianian concept of society. For Eliot, religion is Christianity. In other words life of conformity to Christian religious ideals is Eliot’s precondition for Culture. Eliot imagines a society in which upper layer of citizens who believe in conditional Christianity will activate and determine the behavior patterns of the lower classes. For Eliot

‘…culture even may be described simply as that which make life worth living…. It includes all the characteristic activities and interests of people: Derby Day, Henly Regadda, HR, Cowes, the 12th of August, a cup final, the dog races, the pin table, the dart board, Wensleydale cheese, boiled cabbage cut into sections, deep root in vinegar, 19th – century Gothic churches and the music of Elgar

Eliot’s culture has three different dimensions, namely: an individual, a class or a whole society. While Matthew Arnold’s culture is a growth towards perfection of an individual so that one may rise above the class to which one belongs. Eliot refutes this limited perception of culture without reference to the conditioning background of class or society. To Eliot this appeal to perfection is vague-perfection in what area, philosophy,
learning, art, music? Since a cultured individual is an unreliable ideal and so Eliot asserts culture must be seen as the relation of an individual to larger social background.

‘We only mean that the culture of an individual cannot be isolated from that of the group and that the culture of the group cannot be abstracted from that of the whole society’  

The term *relation* is central to Eliot’s assertion of culture, Eliot feels no culture can appear or develop except in *relation* to religion. For Eliot culture is the incarnation of religion of people. Culture and religion are the two sides of same coin, where, culture cannot grow or develop in the absence of religion. Eliot says:

‘…part of our culture is also part of our religion’  

Religion provides the frame work for culture. Eliot views culture not just a sum of activities but “a way of life”. It is a function of the elite to communicate this way of life by precept and practice. Eliot recommends a structure of the society made of hierarchically graded levels of culture, where each cultural level will have its own responsibilities. When these graded levels do not exist or function no higher civilization is
likely to be established. Culture should be capable of further splitting into local and regional cultures. Eliot feels that higher region can provide,

‘…a ground pattern of common belief and behavior, upon which a variety of local patterns can be embroidered’

For culture to flourish people should neither be too united nor too divided. There should be a constellation of cultures one nourishing the other for the emergence of national culture. Eliot cites the example of India while exploring the question of imposition of an alien culture on an indigenous one. Eliot uses the word culture in two different ways, where one meaning of culture implies the way of life of the people and the second meaning refers to the value based qualitative life in terms of art, music and philosophy.

Eliot’s culture exists outside the domain of reality. Political world becomes vulgar and false and so it is removed from the elite. The total exclusion of politics from his culture leaves his definition ‘rather limping’. This is the reason why Raymond Williams and Terry Eagelton have serious exception to Eliot’s definition. To quote Eagelton:
‘the conservative of a stable and stratified, with given degrees and relation of culture, and the ‘liberal minority’ version with its faith in the new just men sustaining a personal tradition with in an impersonal and in changing ‘mass’ society both end by doing this.’

The writings of Raymond Williams on politics, culture and literature are the most significant contributions to the Marxist critique of culture and the arts. His works laid the foundation for the fields of cultural studies. There are three general categories in the definition of culture. There is, first, the ‘ideal’, in which culture is a state or process of human perfection, in terms of certain absolute or universal values. The analysis of culture, if such a definition is accepted, is essentially the discovery and description, in lives and works, of those values which can be seen to compose a timeless order, or to have permanent reference to the universal human condition. Then, second, there is the ‘documentary’, in which culture is the body of intellectual and imaginative work, in which, in a detailed way, human thought and experience are variously recorded. The analysis of culture, from such a definition, is the activity of criticism, by which the nature of the thought and experience, the details of the language, form and convention in which these are active, are described and valued. Such criticism can range from a process very similar to the ideal’ analysis, the discovery of ‘the best that has been thought and written in the world’, through a process which, while interested in tradition, takes as its primary emphasis the particular work being studied (its clarification and valuation being the principal end in view) to a kind of historical criticism which, after analysis of particular
works, seeks to relate them to the particular traditions and societies in which they appeared. Finally, third, there is the ‘social’ definition of culture, in which culture is a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour.

In Raymond Williams’s *Marxism and Literature, ‘Dominant, Residual, and Emergent,’* we find how dominant social structures maintain their dominance, while at the same time other social groups and in fact individuals can contradict or subvert those cultures. There are dominant, residual, and emergent parts of any cultural group. Interestingly enough, while dominant is the most powerful shaping force as obviously indicated by the name, it does not get its own section of the essay, but is mostly shown as the sort of cultural mass that he pokes at with his other types of culture. Dominant culture oversees the whole essay, without ever being explained outright. He presumed that readers would have enough cultural awareness to understand the dominant group in their own cultures without giving any direct explanation. Williams does however, clearly explain the other two ideas, residual and emergent.

Residual is the influence of old cultural practices on modern societies, consciously or unconsciously. A sort of “residue—cultural as well as social” that is built into the infrastructure of the dominant culture. He goes out of his way to differentiate residual from archaic, archaic being mostly outdated and abandoned cultural practices, residual being certainly active in shaping society, even if it does not come from the dominant culture itself. Williams considers organized religion, rural community, and monarchy three important residual traits of culture.
Raymond Williams describes emergent culture as the new cultural ideas and practices that are being created constantly in a society by groups and individuals. These ideas can be dominant themselves, but they can also be alternative or opposing. Alternative would be less confrontational, whereas opposition (to the dominant culture) would clearly be more confrontational.

Raymond Williams also talks about public versus private in dominant culture, where practices that are not openly of the dominant culture are practiced in private. The dominant culture can do nothing about this, whether or not it approves of these practices.

‘Therefore no dominant social order and therefore no dominant culture ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy, and human intention.’17

Williams’s description of dominant cultures being influenced by individual actions and practices, as this is a prominent idea in practice theory a theory that shows how individuals shape their cultural environment through their own agency.
A new field of academic study that finds its origins in the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (UK) and the work of critics like Raymond Williams, Richard Hoggart and later by Stuart Hall, Tony Bennett and others, Cultural Studies is a discipline between disciplines. Cultural Studies is interested in the processes by which power relations between and within groups of human beings organize cultural artefacts (such as food habits, music, cinema, sports events and celebrity culture) and their meanings.

**What 'culture' has meant before:**

- 'Culture' derives from 'cultura' and 'colere', meaning `to cultivate'.
- It also meant `to honour' and 'protect'.
- By the nineteenth century in Europe it meant the habits, customs and tastes of the upper classes (also known as the elite).

**What 'culture' means now in Cultural Studies:**

- 'Culture' is the mode of generating meanings and ideas.
- This 'mode' is a negotiation over which meanings are valid.
- Meanings are governed by power relations.
- Elite culture controls meanings because it control the terms of the debate.
- Non-elite views on life and art are rejected as tasteless', 'useless' or even stupid by the elite.
What this implies is that certain components of culture get more visibility and significance.

Cultural Studies looks at mass or popular culture and everyday life. Popular culture is the culture of the masses. It is graffiti, comic books, mass cinema (as opposed to 'art cinema'), popular music (as opposed to classical music), the open spaces of the city (as opposed to art galleries), sports... It is the culture of larger number of people.

For a very long time such forms of art dismissed as ‘inferior’. The term 'mass culture' was used pejoratively. The only 'true' culture was that of the elite members of society. The culture of the wealthy minority section of the population was projected as the 'standard' or 'true' culture. So academic studies would look at 'great works of art' or 'classical authors', ignoring the fact that the greater number of people never viewed these art forms or read these classical authors. Standards of judgment and ideas of taste were framed using these elite forms as examples. Certain authors, forms and genres were given respectability as 'culture'. That is, the very term 'culture' came to be associated with a smaller section of the population and their tastes.

What this means is that the upper classes in a society legitimized certain artefacts as 'culture'. Some objects — a painting by M.F. Hussain, the writings of Rabindranath Tagore and William Shakespeare, the films of Satyajit Ray — acquired an aura of respectability as 'culture'. Most critics did not discuss Sidney Sheldon or the films of Manmohan Desai as 'art', relegating them to the realm of 'popular culture'.
In the 1950s and 1960s a change in focus came about in cultural analysis. Scholars started taking popular culture seriously. In 1969 the Department of Popular Culture at Bowling Green University (USA) launched the Journal of Popular Culture. The journal carried essays on Spiderman comics, rock music, amusement parks, the detective film and other such forms of popular culture. It is in popular culture studies that Cultural Studies finds its first moments.

The Production and Consumption of Culture

Cultural Studies believes that the 'culture' of a community includes various aspects: economic, spatial, ideological, erotic and political. Cultural Studies therefore aims to include all these in its ambit. It seeks to understand how a particular objects acquire meaning and value in a society or community. Culture is not a natural thing — it is produced. Cultural Studies is interested in the production and consumption of culture. The production and consumption of culture is linked to:

• matters of class (Who decides on what is produced?)

• matters of economy (Who can afford it?)

• matters of representation (How is the artefact marketed presented?)

Together these three coalesce into a larger theme in Cultural studies: the production and consumption of culture is linked to power and identity.
The production and consumption of cultural artefacts defines one's identity. But the production and consumption of artefacts depends on the ability to do so and the ways in which these artefacts have been marketed and sold. In short, culture is a product that is:

- made
- marketed
- consumed

**Power/Culture**

Cultural Studies addresses questions like these:

- Who decides that Shakespeare can/must be read but not Christie?
- Who decides the spaces for the pedestrians and automobiles?
- Who gains economic profits from selling tribal artefacts?

As it obvious, the decision about culture and social practices — Shakespeare, walking in the city, showcasing tribal culture — are not simply cultural questions. They involve politics and questions of power since each artifact or practice acquires legitimacy and value because somebody has decided they are legitimate and valued. That is, cultural issues and themes are mediated through questions of economy (profit) and politics (power).
Culture is therefore about power.

The research will discuss another important aspect and subtheme of literature that is the quest for self. Life in general and literature in particular attempts to understand self. It can be said that perhaps all human activities center on the attempts of coming in terms with the self. The philosophers of all ages, all over the world have inquired into this question, leading to the development of various theories and discourses on this topic. In literature too, the search for self, in all genres, had been a predominant concern of the authors. In poetry this search becomes more direct and subtle because of its lyrical and autobiographical nature.

It is an uncontroversial fact that in all modern creative writing the transformation and combinations of the self with anti-self is what shapes the work of the writers. But more than anywhere else, it is in Indo-English poetry that the self is fully exposed without any shield or cover. This is one reason why the modern Indo-English poet is intensely autobiographical in his work and is evidently concerned with his heredity relationships. Their works reveal their feelings that the individual of the modern world is in danger of being swamped by the social environment and that he can preserve his individuality only by remaining continuously aware of himself as a distinct, separate entity.

To discuss ‘search for self’ one should restrict himself to experience, awareness, poetic self and the role played by consciousness. In ordinary language the use
of the word self is not very frequent. One may rather prefer to use myself, yourself or himself. In the past philosophers have written about ‘soul’, in present century the word ‘person’ has gain considerable currency. The word ‘self’ is probably a more convenient and natural word that avoids all religious connotations of the former term. Selves are clearly a very exceptional phenomenon. Even in saying this one is saying something that would give offence to many. Human beings have spatio-temporal existence. They begin, live and then they come to an end. No matter how much account we discuss of the self, we need to remember one thing that the self is intimately related to the body.

Selves are plural and the most influential argument given in favour of pluralism is that – there is no one ‘I’. The self is something which is not simple rather the there is a constant fight in every human being to search coherence between the selves. The numerous selves in one self is the source of everlasting conflict and the lack of harmony inside the human existence. Every human being is in fact searching to find coherence among these internally fighting selves. Margaret Chatterjee says:

‘The question of identity of self is no less fraught with puzzles. In what sense you are the ‘same’ as you were ten years ago?’

There are parallel puzzles about the identity of the physical things. Hume has given a dazzling analysis in his treatise presenting how empirically-based are our methods for judging one thing to be the same as it was earlier. In the case of physical
things, the dilemma is less tricky. In judging of the identity of an individual general structure similarities may or may not be there. When we say ‘so and so has changed’ we over and over again say this on the basis of a change in the other’s attitude to ourselves.

May be the feature of the self that has most overwhelmed the philosophers is the quality of self which knows. It now brings up the complete question of what it means to ‘know’. Consciousness has been considered always to be the presupposition of knowing. Knowing in the case of man is connected with his ability to speak, with his ability to put his information in propositional form. Man has a dual aptitude, both to do and to think. Rationalist philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries held the idea that self is a substance. But the derivation of the theory can be found earlier than this, in the works of Aristotle and Plato, and in the scholastic philosophy of the Middle Ages. Kant showed that whereas knowledge does need a cognitive subject this is by no means the same thing as to say that information requires a substantial self. The self, the empiricist will say, is reducible to its perceptive, although whether presupposed in the notion of ‘experience’ is something which is itself not an experience is something to give us a gap. The empiricist account of the self is also known as the ‘serialist’ or ‘phenomenalist’ theory. The other contemporary theory of the self which must be talked about is that of existentialism. The existentialist treatment of the self is the way in which it lifts the conversation out of its usual context of cognition. The idea of man who is a being that acts rather than contemplates had been highlighted by philosophers earlier too. The existentialist reminds us that man is not only a being who tries to know but a being who feels and acts.
In understanding the real self the concepts and ideologies don’t work. What is really important is to view the accurate information, and if possible, to accept them. So a human being is selfish by nature. Even the ‘self’ in which a man is interested is not a whole one. It is divided into countless pieces. In the words of Krishnamurty:

‘We live in fragments.’

You are one thing at your workplace thing, another at home, you discuss democracy and in your heart you are autocratic, you may talk about loving your neighbors, yet kill them with competition; there is one part of you working, looking, independently of the other. Are you conscious of this fragmentary existence in yourself? And is it possible for a brain that has broken up its own functioning, its own thinking, into fragments-and when you admit time into the process in of understanding yourself, you must allow for the every form of distortion because the self is a complex entity, moving, living, struggling, wanting, denying, with pressures and stressing influences of allsorts continuously and work on it. So you will discover for yourself that this is not the way; you will understand that the only way to look yourself is totally, immediately, without time; and you can see the totality of yourself only when the mind is not fragmented. What you see in totality is the truth. So we can say there is no becoming of the self, but there is only ending of selfishness, of anxiety, of pain and sorrow all of which are the content of the psyche, of the ‘me’.

J. Krishnamurthy writes that:
‘The transformation of the world is brought about by the transformation of oneself, because the self is a product and a part of the total process of human existence. To transform one, self-knowledge is essential, without knowing what you are; there is no basis for right thought; and without knowing yourself there cannot be transformation. One must know oneself as one is, not as one wishes to be which is merely an ideal and therefore fictitious, unreal; it is only that which is that can be transformed, not that which you wish to be. To know oneself as one is requires an extraordinary alertness of mind, because’ what is’ is constantly undergoing transformation, change, and to follow it swiftly the mind must not be tethered to any particular dogma or belief, to any particular pattern of action.’

Scott Shaw gives the account that:

‘People seek salvation because they are experiencing emptiness in their lives. This emptiness can take the form of lack of love, lack of purpose, lack of fulfillment, and so on.’
The religious method to search the self has failed. There is more disenchantment than satisfaction. The Zen way of preaching also hints at that:

‘When people enter onto the spiritual path they generally seek guidance from a higher power. They often times go to a guru or a spiritual teacher in order to be directed down to the road to Nirvana. If we are all human beings and we all possess Buddha nature, what does one person possess that another does not? What makes one person more than the next? Is it simply they have more disciples? How many people, throughout history, have claimed to hold the keys Nirvana only to be later revealed as a fake? If somebody claims to hold the key to Nirvana ask them to give it to you right away.’²¹

The gaining of self-knowledge and world knowledge makes new fields of experience that promotes the growth of afresh sentiments. In this regard, V.K. Gokak quotes the example of poetry. He says that:

‘The nationalism of modern Indian poets, the imperialism of Kipling, the internationalism of Tagore, the democracy of Whitman, the pacifism of
Gandhi ji, the socialism of younger Indian poets- all these are the sentiments of modern Indian poets. The fact remains that there is a continuous progression of sentiments along the lines set by the evolution of humanity. The goals that a human being pursues in life, individually or collectively, are neatly summed up by ancient Indian thinkers as Wealth (artha), Satisfaction of Desire (kama), Duty (dharma) and Illumination (moksha).”

Hence, there is a close association between the poet and the structure of personality. In the essay titled as ‘The Poet and Structure of Personality’, V.K. Gokak refers to Herbert Read and mentions that:

‘Sentiments therefore form the very substance of man’s personality.’

Herbert Read makes the dissimilarity between character and personality. Character is the tragic conventionality of a man to his ego-ideal. It is the controls to keep the selected motive prevail throughout life, reducing impulses in accordance with a regulative standard and preserving certain integrity in the midst of the herd. The sentiments are largely inappropriate to character, for character communicates in action man’s approach towards the world. It is the front that he vigorously presents to the world. A character with perverse intelligence, like Don Quixote, is a distorted character.
Character hence is a partial organization, dependent on a chosen cause or sentiment or sentiments to which the claims of all other sentiments and emotions are given up.

How does the self-expand? Or how the ‘self’ does get shaped and reshaped. Herbert Read feels that this happens all the way through the intervals of stimulation—the luminosity that comes from the hidden memory of verbal images in the preconscious mind. More noteworthy than inspiration, the vital faculty that makes the poet is the ability to cultivate the innate activities of one’s own individuality without division or inner revolt. V.K. Gokak offers the following remarks that:

‘Thought and personality go hand in hand and their goal, whether confessed or not, is that state of vision or revelation which all great spirits have attained. The highest personality is inconceivable without the intuition of pure being. In the fleeting moments of his vision, the poet’s vision penetrates very deep and far, and the degree of its penetration is measured by the range of the poet’s thought or intelligence. The mind must rise above the realm of existence to the realm of being, and this can only be achieved by vision.’

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Attitude is another factor that shapes and re-shapes the ‘poetic self’. In fact it’s a reciprocal method. The prototypes or possibilities into which sentiments tend to be grouped may be called types of perception or attitudes- the attitudes of the seer towards the object. Not like the moods of humans, these moods or attitudes have the class of stability about them. The moods of a person may change from time to time. Feelings vary from one character, country or age to another. But though sentiments which constitute their substance vary to a great extent in this way, the moods or attitudes always remain same for they are probably relations which a subject can have with object. These possibilities do not transform unless human nature itself is transformed out of gratitude. V. K. Gokak gives the elaborate description of attitude by defining it as:

‘...an innate disposition or predisposition and, in this form, it exists in every human being. It is a significant element in the composition of his personality through which he responds or reacts to the world around him or within himself. A number of the sentiments evolved by him constitute the substance of an attitude.’

If we talk of the most comprehensive personalities, such as of Vyasa or Shakespeare, we can find in them qualities that clearly defined attitudes at work. ‘Negative capability’ is there coming from a state of encouragement and leading to a state of vision. It is a blank or neutral status of consciousness free of any responses or reactions. It is a different from a state of pain or pleasure, of pure sorrow and delight.
The most comprehensive personality will have the inquisitiveness to know everything around. He will be grounded uniformly well in the intellectuality. He will just not be a naked mass of sensibility but sensibility organized according to an inner perspective. He realizes the romance of the past and of the future; of the natural and supernatural; the rural and the urban; the retrospective and the meditative: he is happy in all the avenues of subjective. While his emotional response in terms of ardor and pity is thoughtful, he can turn the search light of his serious reason on everything. The same idea can be seen in the introduction of Candling the Light, where Abhay Kumar writes:

‘The meaning of 'candling the light' may be interpreted differently but what I had in mind while thinking of this title for my book of philosophical poems, was showing light to the light or making the light brighter which in simple terms can be called the process of enlightenment. The poems presented in this book have been written with this purpose, to initiate the process of enlightenment. I hope that these poems will guide mankind on that noble path.’

He can recognize himself dramatically with any frame of mind of disgust. He is as much at home with grief as with sublime. How can one study the poet’s attitude in order to understand his self? V.K. Gokak offers the logic that:
'It will help us considerably to grasp the range of a poet's perceptions if we analyze the attitudes prominent in his work and the level on which his sentiments are formed. There is much hope and enthusiasm in Shelley as there is sorrow. Beauty and sublimity strive for mastery in his work.'

One of the easiest understandings of ‘self’ is ‘personality’. But personality is outer appearance of inner self. May be there can be amendments and fabrications attached to the character of a person, but even then the simplest traces of ‘self’ can be studied in the observation of a person.

Exploration of self in reference to poetry and a poet does not require putting forth a question and then looking for answer. In science it not only does, but further involves both the initial separation of questions and their structuring. When the ancient Greeks said that the pursuit of wisdom starts in wonder, they laid the base for the concept of inquiry. In the species of question exemplified by science, the former dominates. Scientific speculations seek to resolve questions it incites. Poetic question seeks no resolutions. Incurably, a poetic finding opposes no others. Poetic wonder seeks its own additional room, though each poetic creation inevitably curbs itself as a plot.

But before that, it is indispensable to know what a poet is. A beautiful account is given by James Reeves while citing Wordsworth and Coleridge. It runs as “What
is a poet? This is one of the many questions asked by Wordsworth and Coleridge in their well-known preface to the second edition of Lyrical Ballads:

‘What is a poet?

To whom does the poet address himself?

And what language is to be expected from him?

He is a man speaking to men: man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than to be supposed common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirits of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the going on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them…. He has acquired greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels…A bold claim is made here. Can we agree that poets are so very different from other men? Have they more lively sensibilities, more understanding of human nature, more comprehensive
soul, and more powerful imagination than the rest of the mankind? Leaving this aside for a moment, I think we can agree that a poet is ‘pleased with his own passions and volitions’ and that he ‘rejoices more than other men in the spirits of life that is in him’. In other words, he not only has a marked capacity for sheer animal delight in life, he takes pleasure in this capacity, and rejoices in the sheer gratification of his instincts. We may agree that he is acutely sensitive, and that he has a powerful imagination- that is, the capacity to project himself beyond his immediate surroundings.  

There are two precise personalities that describe every work of art: that of the speaker and that of the unspoken poet. In fact, the poet in the poem, the cleverness with which the poet recognizes himself and with which the reader is called upon to identify himself, may live somewhere between the persona and the whole poem, Poet and reader meet together most clear and most comprehensive.

Since diverse times have different views of connotation and of the poems, their location of the poet in the poem will differ. While persona forever serves as equipment for giving viewpoint on the surface action and proceedings of the poem. The areas of vision where poet and reader meet offer a viewpoint from which the actions and events can be understood as significant in a world of meanings.
Though poetry and poets survived since ages, it is only in the recent times that modern individual man has turned inward into himself, looking for all that he is and to unite that all he knows himself to be. This inner quest for the totality of the self, anxious and passionate self-introspection, cultivation of self-consciousness, does not go too far in the past. The poet today is no longer the writer of epics portraying vast realities of remote allegories, or the admirer of kings and courts, or the broadcaster of the large spectacular actions, or the narrator of great historical dealings. The court, the battlefield and the drama is all within the individual poet and he is central character of his poetry. The names of Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats and Byron thus suggest poetic personalities fashioned by the poetic texts.

A very critical aspect linked with searching the self through poetry is marketability of poetry in general. This is for sure a brainchild of Marxist way of condemning texts and the authors. The whole gamut of literary motion can be brought under the Marxist way of perception. That may be a diverse issues altogether, but it certainly affects the poetic self as the market forces affects literature. Randall Jarrel gave a nice illustration in an essay titled as ‘The Obscurity of the Poet’ by saying that:

‘Knowledge of literature is not an essential requirement of the society of which one is a part. We belong to a culture whose old hierarchy of values- which demanded that a girl read Pope just as it
demanded that she go to church and play the pianoforte has virtually disappeared; a culture in which the great artist or scientist, in the relatively infrequent cases in which he has become widely known, has the status.\textsuperscript{28}

After having discussed in detail what culture and self is, its implications and how its definition and scope have changed with the passage of time, the research now will critically study how culture will shape the self of the poet, as is evident in almost all the anthologist of the poet. In the course of the discussion of the poems, an attempt will be made to characterize the poet’s mood and his use of structural tools such as irony, myth, conflict, parody, and fantasy. The research will deliberate vision of growing cultural traits and dilemma of the ‘self’ in the present day poetic world.

- The second chapter entitled Archetypal of Platonic love will cover the first two collections of Abhay Kumar, Enigmatic Love and Fallen Leaves of Autumn. The center of this chapter will be love, its physical elements, and the agony of its separation and the bliss of union.

- The third chapter will be devoted to Candling the Light under the title Reflections on Veracities of Life. This chapter will discuss the poet’s sincere optimism and his respect towards different traditions (Indian and Russian).

- The fourth Chapter, Eternal Culture: A Uniting Force in Diversity, mainly discusses The Seduction of Delhi and Remains, how history retains its presence defeating the power of Time.

- The fifth chapter Interview with the poet.
**Conclusion**, the sixth chapter points out how the personality of the poet got shaped under the influence of two different cultures viz. Indian and Russian.
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