ABSTRACT

It is said literature is the creation of three factors: the race, the milieu, the moment. Australia, the last outpost of British culture, has produced many post-war poets who used English language for their superb expression and showed the genius of their creativity. One such mind is that of Alec Derwent Hope, the most distinguished, rather leading contemporary Australian poet. His poetry is an, “expression of something autonomous and beautiful in itself.”

Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Africa, Pacific Islands and Caribbean region all had close ties with England through common political institutions, legal systems, educational methods and ideals. But none was more binding than the English language which inspired a wide variety of experimentation depending upon the people who were using it. The ‘commonwealth paradox’ is that the writer in English, he be Australian, Canadian, African, or Indian, the secret of his strength lies in his experience of his own native land.

Commonwealth literature is a heterogeneous product of diverse mentalities, drawing its sustenance from an intelligent appreciation of the differences and asks for serious effort to become aware of these differences, so that an interaction of these differing mentalities can, not only correct mentalities, but contribute to the richness of understanding literature in general.

The poets and artists sensitize the society by treating these differences generously and imaginatively. The uniqueness of Shakespeare, Kalidasa, Moliere and Racine is not only a matter of individual caliber because they are gifted in different ways; rather they are the products of the soil and sun. In Australia it was environment that dominated and daunted. A settlement so cut off from every civilized contact, so dependent for all amenities upon what was brought from outside, there was little disposition to look back. So it was all
uninteresting and derivative. But both imperialist and nationalist sympathies can be seen in its literature.

The close relationship between nationalism and imperialism transformed into literary movements. A well known movement was formed for nationalist journalism with a preference for bush life and workers. The Radical Nationalist tradition began in the 1880’s and ‘1890’s when the country began to be urbanized. Writers like Henry Lawson and ‘Banjo’ Paterson revived the ‘bush’ ballads of previous generations in which European folk songs had been accommodated to local conditions. It was an attempt to create an authentic Australian voice-democratic, somewhat inarticulate, uneducated, tough, stoic, realistic, in contrast to English polished manners and social injustices of Europe.

However, the native Australian poets began to convince themselves that the landscape was not all that bad; it began to assume a unique charm and became romantic. This will to accept Australia and to identify with it proved to be the cornerstone of the Australian poetic tradition. William Wentworth was the first to sing of Australia as something dear. And A.D. Hope was the one who openly confessed his belief in, ‘still from the deserts the prophets come’.

Australian writers of the 1940’s, were the Jindyworabaks. The movement was marked by the use of Aboriginal material, myths and legends. The first writer of this genre, Rex Igramells tried to combine the rationale of his poetic and national feelings. Deeply impressed by ‘landscape’ he wanted to blend this new perspective in art, the mythology and unexamined cultural life of the aborigines. The Jindyworobak programme introduced new respect for the literary and artistic ecology of the country, treating all imported systems as antagonistic to the native spirit of Australia.
The Angry Penguins or the writers of the 1950's tended towards examining the historical source of their present condition. For want of more precise terms they might be called Modern, recent and contemporary. A.D. Hope was in the vanguard of this movement.

In the late 1960's a new generation of poets emerged, a large and varied group of young writers who fought against the constraints of conservatism to create a revolution in poetry that had far reaching implications.

A.D. Hope an intellectual and a man of great learning, was passionate, skeptical and had tremendous sense of humour. As a literary artist-a technician – he hardly has a rival. In 1958 he was awarded the Commonwealth Poetry Prize. Right from the beginning of his poetic career, he made plain to readers the formed personality beneath the finished literary character. He earned a reputation for frankness and daring wit, something which is positive, independent, and radical in Australian manners. His poetry has an autonomous quality. He deliberately disregards down the accepted values of a complacent provincial society and exposes to public gaze, his fantasies, frustrations and anxieties. Many a time it is noticed how little Hope has been interested in his own country as a subject for poetry. Of the prominent post war poets like Fitzgerald, Douglas Stewart, Judith Wright, McAuley. Hope has been the least influenced by the distinctively Australian experience.

His poetry is remarkable for its absence of specific memories of places or things, and it expresses, on the one hand, the dissatisfaction that can be felt by an Australian who returns home after experiencing for the first time the richness and variety of European culture, and yet, on the other hand, within the whole body, there is an intense preoccupation with the landscape. The mature poet has continued to enlarge the boundaries of his intellectual resources. He promotes his own notion of pioneering which is to revive interest in subjects
and forms of poetry gathered from his knowledge of European literature. There is no requirement that a poet should choose certain kinds of subjects and no one can blame Hope if he chooses to do what he can do best. The Wandering Islands. New Poems, Collected Poems, Selected Poems, A Late Picking Poems, Orpheus. a poetic journey expresses pain and longing rather than a celebration of triumph and transcendence.

Hope shows little interest in subjects which have been of great importance to his contemporaries: Fitzgerald’s interest in Australian history and his own ancestors. Stewart’s detailed examination of the natural world; McAuley’s description of the landscape and vivid autobiographical recollection; Judith Wright’s exploration of the natural history of Australia and its singular geographical features, and of her ancestors; Slessor’s avocation of a city life have no parallel in Hope’s work. There is however an intense preoccupation with the landscape, a mental landscape peopled and created by him.

The characteristics of his poetry have been discussed as follows: Chapter I comprises an introduction, which includes a briefing on Commonwealth Literature, the poets of different genres from William Wentworth to A D Hope.

Chapter II discusses the Theme of Isolation/Alienation Hope is disillusioned. He is very much aware of the fact that modern man is a powerless and isolated human being, who stands still in contrast to the limitless magnitude of nature. His The Wandering Islands was initially rejected by publishers claiming it to be too hot to handle though the main theme was isolation and loneliness. The End of a Journey shows that the union is temporary: there is no rescue for the shipwrecked sailor. Nature is the only rescue even after death as in the case of the bird in The Death of A Bird. The
theme of isolation and loneliness which appears in the above poem in a general form, is particularized in numerous others. The Wandering Islands and The Death of Bird can be cited as examples of man's inescapable plight.

Chapter III deals with the theme of love. The poems centre around the relationship between man and woman. He avers that love is a refuge from harsh, alien world. If it can lead to creation as in An Epistle: Edward Sackville to Venetia Digby, then it can lead to destruction too, as in the case of Conquistador. Man and woman are inter-dependent as in The Lamp and The Jar. The various shades of true love have been painted in Six Songs for Chloe. But it is not so in every poem. There are poems like The Damnation of Byron, Tontentanz: The Coquette which exemplify the negative aspect of physical pleasure. The notion of a new higher mode of being is frequently associated in Hope's mind with the art of love. Hope has been accused of being obsessed with sex and poems like The Gateway, The Damnation of Byron, Flower Poem, Return from Freudian Island, Phallus, X-ray Photograph, Observation Car. Lying on Lawn, Ascent into Hell, The Lingum and the Yoni, The three Romances, all exhibit a mixture of horror, anxiety, and almost excessive attention to physical mechanism, interspersed with cheerful colloquialisms.

Chapter IV deals with the indictment of modern society. Hope's wrath on modern society is reflected in poems like X-ray Photographs, Observation Car, The King, Sportsfield etc. He continuously complains about industrialization, breakdown of traditional values in the modern age, and isolation. He is also concerned about Nature and its bounties, as in Standardization. The anger against hunter is beautifully woven in his 'Mochus Mochiferus'. "Make no mistake there will be no forgiveness", becomes a major preoccupation of Hope's poetry and it has been best worked out in these poems. C.D. Narasimhaiah is of the opinion that Hope's peculiar Australian
Psyche charged with a sense of guilt at the white man’s extermination of the Aborigine, and taking the land from him, gives the poet’s anguish an edge, and makes it seen distinct rather than merely isolated.

Chapter V discusses Hope’s Use of Mythology. He has adopted different modes of expression but the most favourite poetic tool was reinterpretation of myth as per his poetic needs, coming out with a message at the end as in *Pygmalion*. The loss of artistic control is portrayed very well in the poem. In the *Imperial Adam* he has used skillfully the biblical myth of Adam and Eve; it is a multidimensional poem in itself. The complex myth of Lot is beautifully interpreted in the *Lots and His Daughters* which brings out the psychological aspect of man. A number of psychological aspects, including complexes emerge in the poems. The poet’s sensibility draws liberally from legend and history though he feels that fables must be recreated so that they may revived in men “the energy by which they live”.

The penultimate chapter talks about Hope’s Art of Poetry. While entering into the tunnel of his works/poems there is evidence of his training as a philologist and his knowledge of a large number of languages. But he is not an experimenter. His comments on free verse in ‘The Structure of Verse and Prose’ are the earliest signs of his engagement with the problem of the difference between prose and poetry. His works display his preference for formal models and rhyme scheme. The use of tradition earned him the label “Classicist”. In many poems he reminds the community of poets about their duty towards society. The loss of great forms of poetry like the Epic have been discussed with the muse Calliope herself in *Conversation with Calliope*. He is very clear about the task of the poet and poetry.

In conclusion, emphasizes Hope’s unique features making his poetry autonomous yet beautiful. The psychological and philosophical depths of
Hope's poetry are deeply experienced by readers particularly in India, because the impact of country's rich heritage is visible in Hope's verse. As per Ronald Dunlop, 'The things that are memorable in his work – his ability to meet the demands of the longer poem, his preservation of the tradition of elegant love poetry and his sustained championship of exegetical verse, his ready apprehension and castigation of absurdity, stupidity and pretence, his constant questioning of social, moral and literary values, above all, his integrity as a poet, have established him as first in a company of accomplished poets.'