It is not usual to associate Bachchan with the experimental trends in modern Hindi poetry. His early poetry—the one that carved a niche for him—is steeped in the romantic lore of mysticism. He is immortalised by his Madhushala—rich complex of 'Honeyed' sweetness and lyrical beauty. Drawing heavily from Omar Khayyam not only in content, but also in form—since the 'Rubais' were used perhaps for the first time in Hindi poetry with such tremendous success—Bachchan brought out a bold theme that almost enchanted his generation. The Madhushala was followed by collections of later lyrics namely Nisha Nimantran, Ekant Sangeet, Akul Antar, Satrangini—unique in their musical effects. The earlier Bachchan, though keeping his feet firmly planted on the earth, drank deep off the cup of the 'Chhayavad' and followed a similar diction and style expressing a sense of nostalgia, cloying sensations of beauty and vivid, sensual portrayal of Nature. It is this stage that the poet is beset with a sense of isolation:

"How lonely am I to-day!
Broken down by the struggle,
Cheated by misfortune;
Uprooted from the family—
How lonely am I to-day."¹

Sumitranandan Pant, the foremost amongst the living poets of the Chhayavad School has characterised Bachchan's early poetry as 'Poetry of Honey,' while the later is termed as "the intellectual poetry"²: "the poets of Chhayavad" were mainly imaginative; but Bachchan has laid an accent on experience"³. There is progressive development in the poet, towards maturity and experiment with theme and form, till he almost gives up the romantic flights of fancy and

¹. Bachchan: Ekant Sangeet in Abhinav Sopan (P. 149). Abhinav Sopan is the collection of his most selected poems by Bachchan himself and hence for the sake of uniformity, quotations are being given from this.
². Preface to Abhinav Sopan (P. 23).
³. Ibid. (P. 23).
adapting a common style, stresses the facts of daily life. He was not in any way connected with the 'fellow wayfarers' of the Tar Saptak led by Agyeya, nor did he propound any theory for new experiments in Hindi poetry. He has hardly contributed to critical writings; nor has he expressed any opinion on the inadequacy of the contemporary form. On the other hand, the impact of the new trends is clearly discernible in his later poetry and much though he may be unwilling to admit it there is in his later writing a marked influence of the contemporary trends in English poetry — particularly the trends set in by Ezra Pound, William Butler Yeats and above all, T.S. Eliot.

Born on 27th November, 1907 in Allahabad, Harivanshrai Bachchan passed his B.A. from Allahabad University in 1929 with English literature, Western Philosophy and Hindi as his subjects. He had already married a year earlier to his first wife, Shyama. He joined M.A. classes in English literature and passed the 'Previous' course in 1930, but gave up his studies to join the freedom movement. The responsibilities of a large joint family were many and Bachchan had to earn his livelihood. Hence in 1932 he started working as a daily Correspondent for the 'Pioneer' which in those days used to be published from Allahabad. Early in 1937 he was appointed as a teacher in Agarwal High School, Allahabad, and worked there for three years. His wife was undergoing terrors of prolonged illness and her death in 1935 deeply moved the poet:

"Shyama Rani was lying on her deathbed,
Two hundred and sixteen days were spent in torture,
The struggle was in saving her from Death —
To see whether we win or Death wins!"  

For ever a year Bachchan was deeply afflicted by grief. In 1937, therefore, he again sought admission in the Final Year of M.A. in

English literature. In 1938 he joined the Training College in Varanasi and after obtaining the diploma in 1940 he again joined Allahabad University as a research student and later in 1941 he was appointed there as a junior Lecturer in English literature.

In January, 1942, Bachchan remarried Teji who was teaching Psychology in F.C. College, Lahore. This marriage turned out to be extremely happy. By this time, Bachchan had already published Madhushala and other lyrics collected in the Nisha Nimantran and gained unique popularity amongst the students and the rising poets who treated him as their idol. Gone were the days of mournful sorrow which was now replaced by a new confidence and a search for new meaning in life. The creative activity was continued uninterrupted - but the difference in tone and style is marked. In 1952 Bachchan went to Cambridge for his Doctor's degree, the subject of his thesis being Occultism in W.B. Yeats, and even went to the house of Yeats in Ireland to spend some time with his widow. During the two years' stay in Cambridge he wrote over a hundred Hindi lyrics including those compiled in Budha Aur Nachghar.

On return in 1954 he was reappointed as Lecturer in English literature in Allahabad University. In 1955 after a brief spell as Hindi Producer in the 'All India Radio', he was appointed Hindi Adviser to the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi and has been working there ever since.

The purpose of the above biographical data (so much decried by Eliot in evaluating a poet's writings!) is to provide the necessary background to demonstrate Bachchan's susceptibility to the trends in English literature. He is fully conversant with the writings of the modern English poets and critics and a denial of their impact on his writings would merely reflect his insularity. The period he spent at Cambridge gave him a unique opportunity of assimilating the

5. The biographical details are taken mainly from the Preface by Chandragupta Vidyalankar to A.1 Ke Lokpriya Hindi Kavi: Harivanshrai Bachchan (Rajpal & Sons).
best of what he saw in English literature, preserving at the same time the values of his old tradition. At this time he was over 45—well past the impressionable age when his mental outlook could have been completely conditioned by the Western influences. In fact he was repelled by the licence and 'philistine' values of the Western world. This further helped to generate in him a renewed faith in his culture and traditions. The poems written in Cambridge and thereafter are characterised by a return to tradition and values other than material. And it is here that the poet displays—subconsciously though—a subtle, but marked influence of Eliot. Furthermore, it is perhaps a coincidence—but one that goes considerably to the making of the poet—that Bachchan shared with Eliot the torture of an unhappy first marriage followed by happiness in remarriage, as well as the enervating experience of teaching in the school in the earlier years. Such details, though perhaps of secondary importance, determine the range of the poet's width of experience and intensity of sensibility. Even Bachchan's dedication of his collection of poems 'Arati Aur Angare' to his wife, Teji:

"To you are dedicated my hopes, my despairs and my strivings, reminiscent of Eliot's lines in 'To my Wife':—

"To whom I owe the leaping delight
That quickness my senses in our Wakingtime.
And the rhythm that governs the repose of our Sleepingtime
The breathing in unison
Of lovers."

There are critics who consider the starting point of what Sumitranandan Pant calls the Second phase, namely, the "intellectual poetry" represented by poems written in Cambridge and thereafter. For them the watershed is Buds Aur Nachghar. This would, however, mean denying

6. Eliot never found teaching pleasant. He has himself admitted:

"I have never worked in a coal mine, or a uranium mine, or in a harving trawler; but I knew from experience that working in a bank from 9:15 to 5:50 and once in four weeks the whole of Saturday, with two weeks' holiday a year, was a rest cure compared to teaching in a school." ('The Aims of Education' in 'To Criticise the Critic'. P.101)

7. T.S. Eliot: To my life (Collected Poems)
any progress or evolution in the poet's technique and form. No doubt the poems compiled in Budh Aur Nachghar and those published thereafter mark a clear departure from the Madhushala and the romantic lyrics of the earlier Bachchan. Nevertheless Bachchan had never lost his grip on reality. Much earlier than his stay in Cambridge, he had shown a certain awareness of the reality before him rather than the vision beyond;

"On this side, my Dear, you are, there is honey! On the other side who knows what would be?"  

The poet stressed the value of the existing moment rather than the tendency of "looking before and after" and pining for "what is not":-

"Whatever is past is over.  
There was a star in life  
No doubt it was very dear  
But now that it is small  
.......... Look at the face of the sky  
Does it mourn over the stars that are paled?  
Whatever is past is over."

However, Bachchan's first effective attempt at portraying the grim reality is in his forceful expression of 'hunger' in the poem 'Bengal Ka Kal'. The famine in Bengal in 1943 deeply stirred the poet's sensitivity and he urged the starving mankind to shake off the shackles of submission:

"Be rid of this complacency,  
Raise the voice of Dissatisfaction;  
Sound the cry of Revolution.  
O Starving men! increase your appetite  
And realise the strength of Hunger,  
Realize your own daring and boldness,  
Let us see who does not  
Submit before you."

8. Bachchan : Pranav Patrika. Abhinav Sevan (P.175)  
9. "In Septashati.  
Extolling the value of 'Hunger' as a source of consciousness and quoting the vigorous passages from *Durga Saptaghati*,

"Hunger is not weak, helpless,
Hunger is powerful;
Hunger is intense,
Hunger is eternal;
Hunger is Goddess Kali Herself

O Goddess Kali! Who exists amongst all beings in the form of Hunger.

We bow to Thee, We bow to Thee, We bow to Thee."\(^{11}\)

Apart from the contents, for the first time, Bachchan used free verse for such a vigorous theme for creating the right effect. Ever since, Bachchan has been restlessly in search of sound,"\(^{12}\) he asserts in one of his lyrics. The poet does not subscribe any more to the romantic fallacy: to him it is more important to have roots in the good earth-

"This destiny and this Nature would go on misleading you,
You just keep on your hands firmly to the ground."\(^{13}\)

The realisation of truth is none too pleasant:-

"And with an equanimous mind
The bitter truth I have accepted to-day.
The dreams of mine are all shattered,
But here's not the end of this dynamic life,
There are miles and miles to go, to see and suffer."\(^{14}\)

Truth and time pervade Bachchan's latter poetry throughout. He had already deprecated the futility of the dreamland in the face of reality:-

"Around everything the man creates
An atmosphere of dream;
And enriches it with poetry and art;
At last it is shattered -
The face of Truth is unmasked."\(^{15}\)

\(^{11}\) Bachan : *Bengal Ka Kal* : Abhinav Sagan (P.197)
\(^{12}\) Ibid. *Milan Yamini* (P.236)
\(^{13}\) Ibid. *Tribhangima* (P.381)
\(^{14}\) Ibid. *Tute Sapne In Tribhangima* (Abhinav Sagan . P.392)
\(^{15}\) Ibid. *Arati Aur Angare* : Abhinav Sagan. P.309
The poet laments on the absence of values in contemporary life.
"Now the age is of the parasites, apes and the dwarfs," reminding one of Eliot's lines in Sweeney Erect and The Hollow Men.

The mankind is so much prone to escapism:-
"To-day truth has become so unbearable -
One would rather have molten lead poured in one's ears
That hear the truth.

These lies echo Eliot's
"Human-kind
cannot bear very much reality."

"The fallacious feelings and imagination vanish
When come in contact with the truth of the age,

The refusal to face reality arises from a restlessness of the soul -
its isolation and anguish in the midst of plenty:-
"In the surfeit of material comforts and physical pleasures
My heart is listless as if in exile."

And thus leads to a feeling in the poet of
"Being cheated by the earth and even by the Heavens."
The poet is caught up in the race of time and has hardly had time
for reflection, self-analysis and introspection; but

"The day my consciousness was awakened, I saw
I am standing in this world fair,
Each one is under some self-deception,
Each one is concerned with his own petty affairs
For some time I remained standing almost flabbergasted -
'Where have I come? What to do here? Where to go?'
Then all of a sudden there was a surge of humanity,
And I too was carried away in that big mass ........

There is, however, a sharp contrast between the colourful
fair and the aimlessness of the soul within:-

--- The fair was colourful - almost exotic ---

--- References ---
16. Bachchan: Char Kheme Aur Chaunsath Khunte (P.122)
17. " Ibid. (P.176)
21. " Ibid.

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But the mind was full of weaknesses. 23

The irony of life, the contrast of disparate experiences and the futility of the material values find an expression in Bachchan's poetry. The anguish and doubts of the soul form an important place in his lyrics:

"I am the great Doubt of Life.
Leaving the path trodden for ages,
Shattering the faith established for ages
I am hostile to the hypocritical tradition established for ages." 24

Since the poet, too, like Eliot's character in the 'Cocktail party' who are urged to "seek their own salvation", is

"Finding my own path
And the answer to my doubts." 25

Bachchan's first-hand contact with the Western Civilisation does not instil in him a desire to imitate. In fact he is repelled by its artificiality and emphasis on material values. His anger and feeling of frustration are vocal in the poems written by him at Cambridge:

"Now look, I am not an Indian Prince
Nor was my father one, nor would be my son.
The Princes belong to aristocracy,
I am not the brother of His Highness of Jodhpur,
Or the nephew of the Nawab of Rampur
Or that of the Jam Saheb,
Or the brother-in-law of the Maharaja of Patiala,
Or that of the Nawab of Bahawalpur,
Or the son-in-law of the Nizam,
Nor do I get a Privy Purse." 26

This reflects the general trends of an arid society that excels in power-seeking and name-dropping, similar to the one described by Eliot as consisting of-

25. " Ibid.

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"The Captains, merchant, bankers, eminent men of letters,
The generous patrons of art, the Statesmen and the Rulers,
Distinguished civil servants, Chairman of many Committees,
Industrial Lords and petty contractors."

Bachchan had ironically called the "rupee" as the dearest and the
most costly of all items in one of the folk songs. He finds the mask of
officialdom too much for him and on a Sunday he looks forward to the
leisure spent in study and recreation rather than in routine:

"Today is holiday.
Wearing the mask of a clerk,
I do not have to hide my real identity.
Today the constant ringing of the telephone
Cannot torture my ear-drums.
Today the tardy files, notices, memoranda -
All full of the stench of the sweat of dealers and Stenographers
Cannot afford to nauseate me."

The poet is, however, thankful to have such days of leisure,
though few, but
"To live fully and the immortalise
Every moment of leisure
Is it all that easy?"

Bachchan's most pungent satire on contemporary society - its
hollowness, purposelessness and complete lack of spiritual values
is in his poem on 'Budha Aur Nachghar', in which he has described
vividly the contrast between the teachings of Lord Budha and the activ-
ities of the present-day generation: a total abstinence on the one
hand and a complete submission to desire on the other. The poem,
written during the stay at Cambridge, portrays strikingly the eclipse
of all religious and traditional values by licentious tendencies.

27. T.S. Eliot: The Four Quartets: East Coker III.
28. Bachchan: Char Kheme Aur Chaunsath Khunte (Abhigav Sevan, (P.133)
29. Ibid. (P.421)
A remarkable experiment in blank verse, this poem may reasonably be said to mark the beginning of a new phase in Bachchan's writings. He describes how Lord Budha forsook all the pleasures of the world to seek the truth, while to-day:

"O Lord Budha!
The drawing rooms of the rich
And the houses of the affluent
Are decorated with your images and portraits
But they are ignorant of your philosophy,
Your thinking is alien to them.
They can scarcely even dream of it!"  

The reason is that the people are far too concerned with the worldly affairs to even think of God and idols of the Gods they have set up in temples as if to say:

"You better rest here
The whole world remembers your name,
I'll drop in to look you up every morning and evening,
Since I'm far too busy throughout the day."  

Eliot, too, has described a similar situation:

"Men do not need the Church
In the place where they work, but where they spend their Sundays".

The spiritual values are completely extinct:

"Where are any signs
Of Rama, Krishna, Budha, Mohammed or Jesus?"

In fact, this is the 'malaise' of the age when men, according to Eliot, have forgotten "the way to the Temple" and are instead:

"Engaged in devising the perfect refrigerator,
Engaged in working out a rational morality,
Engaged in printing as many books as possible."  

Bachchan finds an element of farce in this ironical situation:

31. *Ibid.* (P.364)
32. T.S. Eliot: *Cheruses from the Rock.*
34. T.S. Eliot *Cheruses from the Rock.*

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"Today I have seen,
That while your image is on the one side
On the other side is the dancing hall!
O Lord Buddha!
Advocate of mercy to the animals!
Incarnation of non-violence
O Supremely non-attached, restraint incarnate!
Before you is the orgy of Youth;
Passion and Desire are having free play—
With Kebabs of beef and fork
And glasses after glasses of alcohol.
With the people chain-smoking cigarettes, pipes, cigars,
They are drunk and not conscious of themselves."  

At last, the young men have tightly embraced the ladies and
with the soft whispers the jazz music has started as if to sound a
parody of the well-known lines:

"I submit to Lord Buddha,
I submit to the Sangha,
I submit to the Dharma,"

But now the sound appears to be:

"I submit to alcohol,
I submit to meat;
I submit to dance!"

Bachchan does not spare the idle rich of India who try to ape
the western habits, who lead a mechanised life and who, like Profrock,
measure "out their life with Coffee spoons" as they are self-centred, being symbols of "a stale, perverted, mechanised Western
culture:"

"They have their tea at ten past seven,
Eight fifty-five is the time for breakfast;"
Leaving home at nine-forty-six,
They reach office just at ten,
And return at five, thirty-five—
One could even set one's watch by their timings,
After tea, they go to the Club,
Have a peg and play bridge,
On return they have their dinner,
And after setting the alarms in the bedside clock
They go to sleep at eleven—
Not the difference of even a minute!37
They are so impervious to the world around and so much isolated that
"If there is a theft or a death in the neighbour's house,
They come to know only through Newspapers."38
They are completely bereft of emotion, feelings and above all,
traditional Indian Courtesy since, according to them:—
"Without proper introduction, to meet and converse
In the height of the lack of culture
And also against one's position and standing."39
This is diagenesed by the poet as resulting from a lack of tradition, to a sense of restlessness:—
"When I have already lost the way to home
To which direction shall I go?"40
However, Bachchan echoes Eliot's "fare forward, voyager!" in the following lines:—
"Blessed is the traveller who hearkens every morning
the call of the destination
Who prepares himself adequately for the journey."41

38. " Ibid.
39. " Ibid.
40. " Pranay Patrika (Abhinav Sopan - P.280)
41. " Poem on Those Going for Work.
Eliot’s lines are:-

"When the train starts, and the passengers are settled
To fruit, periodicals and business letters
(And those who saw them off have left the platform)
Their relax from grief into relief,
To the sleepy rhythm of a hundred hours –
Fare forward, travellers!" 42

In an earlier poem Bachchan had stressed the sense of eternity of
time, the laws of destiny and the futility of self-deception. 43 The return
to tradition in Bachchan is essentially an influence of Eliot. In 1958
he published the Jangita – a popular transalation of the Bhagavadgita
to appeal to the people with a quotation from Tulsidas in the preface.
In the Arati Aur Angare, a collection of poems written during 1950 to
1957, Bachchan wrote lyrics in praise of almost every important poet
of the past – Valmiki, Kalidas, Surdas, Tulsidas and even Tagore:-

"Again and again I bow to you, you eternal worshipper
of Lord Rama’s life " (To Tulsidas)

"O Surdas! Show me the path, I am at your feet!" (To Surdas)

"O Mira! the temple of my heart is waiting for you" (To Mirabai)

"Praise be to thee, O King of poets, Jaidev!" (To Jaidev)

"O Rahim, one of your ‘Samadhis’ is in my heart also (To Rahim)

and the most feelingful tribute to Kalidas:-

"O Genius of language, victory to thee, poet of Ujjain.

You were one of the nine gems of King Vikram’s Court

But this is past history

But the world has now identified

Its real king.

42. T.S. Eliot: Four Quartets & The Dry Salvages. III.
43. Bachchan: Lyric in Akul Antar (Abhinav Seeman P. 160)
You were the Sun around which revolved the ether stars
You put to shame the thousand thrones of Vikramaditya,
O Genius of the language, victor to thee, poet of Ujjain.**

There is hardly any other modern Hindi poet who has so candidly acknowledged the debt of the past writers and has so objectively surrendered himself to the tradition, thereby confirming to Eliot's concept of the historical sense which "compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order."** This historical sense makes him admire "the accumulated wisdom of time" and Bachchan shares Eliot's concern that the struggle of our age is to "re-establish a vital connection between the individual and the race." By paying homage to the poets of the past Bachchan has demonstrated that literature is a continuous activity and that in his best writings the dead poets, his ancestors, assert, their immortality most vigorously.

When he refers to Tulsidas:-

"What is the end of life, time, action, movement? Who can say? None has been able to reach the depths you have fathomed, Again and again I bow to you, you eternal worshipper of Lord Ramas' life,"**

he almost subconsciously echoes Eliot:-

".............. " the communication of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living."**

44. Bachchan: *Arati Aur Angare* in Abhinav Sopan (P.296)
   *The Sacred Weed.* (P.49)
46. Bachchan: *Arati Aur Angare.*
47. T.S.Eliot: *Four Quartets : Little Gidding.* 

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The poet laments the lack of tradition visible in contemporary life:

"Where were once born Vashishtha and Vyasa
Patanjali and Valmiki,
Jayadev and Kalidas,
Shankar and Lord Budha,
Mahavir and Gauranga,
Gautam and Kanad -

Their representatives today are - Ranjit, Tulip and Mankad."

This return to tradition in Bachchan is reflected in his choice of themes. In a folk-song he feelingly describes the offering of flowers in a joint Hindu family:

"The flowers flowing in the waves,
My father-in-law brought them,
My elder brother-in-law brought them,
My younger brother-in-law brought them

And my Darling also brought them."^49

Then he goes on to describe how the young wife offers the flowers:

"Rosy dawn breaks in the east
In the temple are sounded the crouches,
I offered the flowers in worship to God."^50

In another poem on 'Welcome' compiled in the same 'Tribhanga' published in 1961 - that is, after the poet's return from Cambridge - the poet accords a traditional welcome to the foreign guests. In the later poems, too, he freely draws from the imagery of the Puranas and for one of his poems chooses a line from Tulsidas,^51 asserting

48. Bachchan : Budh Aur Nachghar
50. " : Ibid.
the importance of the Ramayana in today's life; in the context of the erosion of moral values:--

"Today has been repeated
The story of Rama and Ravana."

Similarly the title of another poem is the quotation of a verse in Tulsidas.52 He has vindicated the action of Lord Rama in abdicating the throne and in remaining in exile since had he not done so, the entire nation would have been annihilated by Ravana, and in his action Lord Rama was guided not so much by emotion as by a desire for good to the world:--

"Supposing after defying Father's instructions,
(Or after listening to Bharat's prayer)
Had Lord Rama taken over the throne in Ayodhya,
He was Lord Rama after all!
He would have brought order, prosperity and beauty to Avadh,
But what would have happened to the entire community?" 53

Bachchan believes in the continuity of the past and its relevance to the future. Referring to the Puranic incident of the charming of sea in order to get the nectar, the poet applies the imagery to contemporary scenario, asserting that:--

"If the creation has to continue,
It would again be necessary to churn the nectar!
And this churning may be
For any possible form of the nectar." 54

In Bachchan's later poetry there is a strong streak of religion similar to that of Eliot's Christian's piety- and Bachchan is confident - almost authoritarian like Eliot - in dealing with the religious

52. Bachchan : Sur Samar Karani Karaihin ( Abhinav Sopan )
53. " Poem on Fourteen years of Freedom in Char Kheme
    Aur Chaunseth Khunte ( Abhinav Sopan - P.430)
54 " Poem on The Curse of the Demons ✼
themes. His description of Lord Hanuman in his poem 'Sisyphus Aur Hanuman' conjures the mighty vision of Lord Hanuman reflecting on an intense theism:

'Lord Hanuman, the worshipper of Lord Rama,
In the shady garden of banana elms,
Is standing Himself in His divine glory;
Bhimsen saw him here itself."

He extols the virtues of penance:

"Penance is hope;
Penance is the language of life;
Penance alone is the definition of the world.
Penance is the basis of Creation."

The need for worship is brought out in the following:

"The urge to worship is very intense in mankind,
And hence some basis has to be created;
And if someone does not establish any idol,
He is left with no alternative to establishing his own idol."

Adopting the style of folksongs Bachchan refers to the immortality of the waves of the Ganga:

"Blessed is the way of the penance of Bhagirath
The sky has shivered,
The wave of the Ganga is immortal."

In another folksong, while warning the village-belle not to go to the pond located on the Western side for her bath, the poet, however, concedes, that the evil curse does not apply to

"Those who utter the name of Krishna."

And hence he exhorts

"O Lachhma, do not forget your darling Lord Krishna."

The most poignant religious sensibility displayed by Bachchan is in his poem on 'Taj Mahal'. The poet describes how he decided to take his

55. Bachchan: *Arati Aur Angare* in *Abhinav Sopan* (P.315)
57. " Poem on *Char Kheme Aur Chaunsath Khunte* (Abhinav Sopan - P.417)
family from Delhi to Agra by Car and reached the ruins of the temples of Mathura. The memory of destruction and religious persecution by Aurangzeb deeply stirs him:—

"We went here and there and reached Keshava peak,
Behind which we saw a big mosque

............ The ruins of the old temple with its sad eyes
Spoke the bitter tale of injustice and persecution
Writ large on each and every corner and the doors.
Six times did the Hindus erect this temple;
And six times did the Muslims destroy it.
At last Aurangzeb had it demolished
And constructed a mosque from the released material." 58

One is naturally reminded of Eliot's:

"It is hard for those who have never known persecution
And who have never known a Christian
To believe these tales of Christian persecution." 59

The poet, however, regains his composure, alive to the inevitability of this historical truth and sensitive to religious tradition:—

"By merely repenting, history cannot be changed.
I bowed my head on the soil of the peak
And left for Agra with mixed feelings of
Indignation, anguish and repentance." 60

The strong streak of theism in Bachchan's later poetry is to be appraised in the light of the earlier themes selected by him, namely love of alcohol, sensual beauty and nature, as well as the fact that no modern Hindi poet has attempted to write so strongly on this subject. If he has done so at all, he is hardly termed "modern". It may also be remembered in this connection that the above lines were written by one who, besides being a poet, holds a responsible position.

58. Bachchan: Tajmahal in Tribhanga (Abhinav Sevan - P. 399)
60. Bachchan: Tajmahal - (Abhinav Sevan - P. 400)
in the Government of India and would have perhaps considered himself mere on the right side of the "establishment" by expressing "secular" views which unfortunately have grown to imply a total absence of one's traditional values. That Bachchan could be alive to tradition and history and write so feelingly about the persecution of the Hindus in the reign of Aurangzeb even while holding a responsible post and that, too, at a time when a section of historians was busy "glossing" over such glaring instances of persecution, is a testimony to Bachchan's integrity of character and confidence with which he could dwell on religious themes with the felicity as he had earlier done in respect of the romantic subjects.

In order to express the sensibility of the common man, his joys and sorrows and despairs, Bachchan, like Eliot, also resorted to the day-to-day language. The diction chosen by him in the earlier poems is mellifluous, imaginative and steeped in a mystical atmosphere. This is now replaced by the idiom of the common man and Bachchan does not hesitate to use even Urdu words of common speech in order to express the irony of a situation, even when easy Hindi words could have done - for instance, 'Kamzori' instead of 'Durbalata' (weakness), 'Raz' instead of 'rahasya' (mystery), 'Khed' instead of 'swayam' (oneself.) The later writings of Bachchan abound in instances where the language of poetry has been identified with the language of prose, without, however, losing its beauty or musical quality. In the *Arati Aur Angare* Bachchan uses some of the colloquial expressions like 'gadhapachisi' (childishness) and 'golmal' (confusion). In the *Budha Aur Nachghar*, he freely uses the irony of the modern civilisation.
The style is racy, striking and appealing - the one which brings home the sordid facts. Thus he employs expressions like "Fazihat", "BabulAGAIN", "Dagabazi", "Seenazeri", "Fareb", "Abbajan", "Nasha KAFUR" not because there is dearth of Hindi equivalents but because the expression of the dramatic situation demands it.

In the later poems, the poet has also used the dialect of the village people in folk songs. In this the influence is clearly that of Yeats. Expressions like 'Kera', 'Bhera' and addressing ending in 'Re' or 'Ri' are common and lend a unique beauty to the writings. Increasingly Bachchan has been realising the need for the 'common style' - one advocated by Eliet. As Bachchan had written: -

"O ghost of the diffuse poetry! cast not your shadows on me!

I am wedded to simple life and simple nature.

Diffuse diction is the complicity of mind in the garb of words

Why should she falter in the lyric then, when she does not allow it to grand?"61

Bachchan is as aware as the experimental poets that the existing form of the language is not adequate to express the depth of the poet's experience and new experiments are called for:-

"The form of the language which you had carved

Has since grown stale and useless -

By constant use, misuse and abuse,

By progress of times and changes in age."62

Again he refers to the romantic fallacy and imagination which cannot stand on its own in the face of reality:-

"They never had any utility

At any time."63

62. " Poem on Creation and Form in De Chattami (P.83)
63. " Abhivan Sevan (P.459)
The precision of words is stressed by Bachchan in comparing the 'word' to the 'arrow' which should aim at a target:

"The arrow of the word
Is aimed at striking the target". 64

With a view to attaining such precision of expression, Bachchan resorts to symbolism by using sharp, perceptive images as in imagery of the "gold fish":

" It has the eyes of the sapphire
It has the eyes of diamond and emerald". 65

Similarly he describes "the quivering of the eyebrows" 66 in the same manner as the imagists. Another striking description is of the neo-rich who ape the western manners and who

"Do not permit the beggars of joys and sorrows and emotions To cross the thresholds of their hearts." 67

The sight of a loving couple in Cambridge is vividly portrayed reminding one of the scene of the seduction of the typist in Eliot's The Waste Land:

"Every organ of the man's body
Was pulsating, alive, with the heat of love,
While the Woman
Like a marble statue taken out of a refrigerator,
Was silent, feelingless, motionless.
The clock of the Trinity struck eighteen times,
And the couple formed the shape of 'thirty-six'!" 68

But later on he finds another couple where

"The Woman
As if an idol of wax in a form
Was melting in a close embrace

64. Bachchan: Shabd Shar (Abhinav Sopan : P.462)
67. " Human Beings & Dogs, in
68. " When the River was dead: When the River was alive.
The Check of Trinity being out of order was sounding on,
And the couple having formed the shape of sixty-three
Was impervious to the world at large."69
It is seen that the poems composed by Bachchan during his stay in Cambridge and after that are deeply influenced by the imagist movement. The ice on the peak is described as

"Like frozen moonlight
Or molten silver put into its form."70

The rising of the new moon is described in juxtaposition of the daily hum-drum existence:

"The new moon has risen
As it has risen a thousand times.
The cars are moving.
And the rows of cycles
On both sides of the pavement
The old are going
Carrying the burden of their lives."71

Bachchan has not shunned the use of the sordid imagery.

Even in his earlier lyrics he has expressed a striking symbol:

"My dream was frightening indeed -
At some distance away from the waves of the river,
Wrapped in a Shawl of white coffin cloth
A corpse was singing on a lighted pyre."72

In a later poem, Bachchan refers to the affliction of the soul:

"Since my body is smeared with the mess of ages
And my soul is tormented by the fire of the ages."73

The sordid images are freely used in the later writings:

"Taking the support of the sky besmeared with the blood of
A leafless tree is standing like a skeleton."74

69. Bachchan: When the River was dead: When the River was alive,
In Tribhanga: (Abhinav Sevan - P.390)
71. " Poem on New Moon in Budha Aur Nachghar (Abhinav Sevan, P.344)
72. " Poem on Nisha Nimantran (P.104)
73. " Poem on An Evening with the Budha in Char Kheme Aur
Chaunsath Khunte ( Abhinav Sevan - P.443)
74. "
The poet goes on with the details of the attack of an egret on a small bird - how it goes on pricking it and eating its flesh: -

"On a thick branch of the tree
A terrific egret is sitting
Beneath its paws is a small bird
Who helplessly shutters its wings, groping for life
But in vain;
The egret attacks it again and again
And pricks its flesh."

The description reminds one of Eliot's:

"The starved crew sits in the field, attentive; and in the weed
The owl rehearses the hollow note of death"

Bachchan's experiments are not confined to the language and the images alone: they extend to style, to the lyrics and the stanzas. Right from the beginning Bachchan is intensely alive to the "music of poetry": -

"You just pour the music in my ears,
And I shall write the lyrics.
The mind is awakened to understand the meaning,
The trained ears follow the words,
The inner truth is grasped by intuition."

Bachchan has always been appreciated by his audience for his musical recitation of his poems. However, in the later poems - that is, those written in Cambridge and thereafter - he uses the free verse to express in a much more mature manner the depth of sensibility.

"I write a lot
So that the silence
That is imprisoned within me
Which is for everybody
And for me, too,
Is unknown and mysterious,
May find vent and expression,

75. Bachchan: Poem on An Evening with the Budha in Char Kheme Aur Chaunsath Khunte. (Abhinav Sevan - Pi 443)
76. T.S. Eliot: The Murder in the Cathedral.
77. Bachchan: Arati Aur Angare.

.....111
Be free in the form of lyric
So as to sing and tell
What indeed it is
Which is silence within me. 79

Bachchan is keenly alive to the need for the lyrical element in poetry and he indirectly endorses Eliot's views on "the music and poetry" when in a recent article in a periodical he asserts that "poetry is not merely the art of meaning but also the art of sound. For poetry of a high order, sound is of great importance." 80

Bachchan himself has admitted that so far as his experience, sensibilities and views are concerned, "I live them." 81 He has confessed that neither his personality nor his poetry are stable; both have been evolutionary, of course in my personality of yesterday there were seeds of my making today, and in my personality today lies the individuality of my tomorrow." 82 This is clearly a concept of the continuity advocated by Eliot. Bachchan has also made attempts - not very successfully albeit to maintain objectivity and does not approve of the tendency of "turning loose of emotion":-

"where the emotions are too intense
They lack in proper expression." 83

However, in this the poet has succeeded only to a limited extent since he has not been able to erase his earlier self - the romantic Bachchan of the Madhushala and even while trying to express the emotions which are sublimated, Bachchan has not been able to merge his own individuality into the totality of experience.

To what extent has Bachchan felt the impact of western philosophy, poetry and critical tenets is a matter for consideration.

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79. Bachchan: Poem on Puana Aur Nachkhar in AbhinavSadan (P. 555)
80. " Article in Dharmayug dated 12.10.75 (P. 19)
81. " Preface to Arati Aur Angara. The sentence is in English written in Devanagari script, since the poet could not express himself so well in Hindi.
82. " Ibid.
There can be no doubt at all regarding his susceptibility to such influences - particularly that of Eliot - more so when it is markedly discerned in his poems composed after his first-hand contact with the West in Cambridge. It is, however, interesting to note that Bachchan himself does not admit any indebtedness to Eliot. He recognises the influence of Yeats - which indeed is clear in his symbolism as well as in his selection of folk love and myths for his themes. His translations of Yeats' poems published in 1965 in the book named *Markat Dweep Ke Swar* are of unique beauty, though Bachchan has very rightly pointed out that "transliteration is a very low mode of translation, since it can never catch the right idiom required", adding that "good poetry is hardly capable of being translated."  

No doubt, Bachchan's poetry is greatly influenced by the fundamental theme of Yeats - struggle, and the acceptance of tragedy. Yet to confine his range of sensibility to this alone would be uncharitable to Bachchan. It is, however, surprising that he should have rejected Eliot altogether without realising his subtle but perceptible influence on his own art. When asked as to why he chose Yeats and none else, Bachchan replied that "our present generation finds the poetry of Eliot and Pound far too obsolete. Our present generation feels that today's world is far too complicated and hence too much for Pound and Eliot .... Yeats is alive to reality. On the other hand, the world of Pound and Eliot is artificial". The statement is self-contradictory, to say the least; for without under-estimating the intrinsic value of Yeats' poetry it can safely be stated that between Yeats and Eliot, the latter is far

84. Bachchan in an interview given to Dinkar Sonwalkar, (Appendix II of *Markat Dweep Ke Swar*). - true about translations in the present dissertation also.

85. Bachchan - Ibid.
closer to reality and offers a much more realistic commentary on the contemporary life. It is also not correct that Eliot is less capable of expressing the complexities of modern civilisation. Between Yeats and Eliot, it is the latter who has successfully portrayed the complications of the Machine Age and expressed the modern sensibility more powerfully. What is more surprising is Bachchan's statement that Pound was profound scholar and it was perhaps under his influence that Eliot has described poetry as "the highest intellectual activity." The statement, besides being factually incorrect, does no credit to one who has been a Lecturer in English literature with a Doctor's degree in the subject from Cambridge. Eliot, on the other hand, has deprecated all generalisations including the one described above:" when a distinguished critic observed recently, in a newspaper article, that 'poetry is the most highly organised form of intellectual activity', we are conscious that we were reading neither Coleridge nor Arnold."

It is, therefore, apparent that while Bachchan was closely following the trends in modern European literature, Eliot's influence on him was unconscious. The more he denied it, the more was it felt - particularly in his later poetry. The influence is palpable in Bachchan's accent on reality and description of the isolation of the human soul. It is more evident in his expression of the irony of life when he echoes the strains of Eliot. In technique, too, he has been influenced by T.S. Eliot - particularly in his use of the common style and experiments with the language and the form. The most distinctive influence, however, is seen in the

86. Bachchan. In an interview given to Dinkar Senwalkar, (Appendix II of Market Dweep Ke Suwar) - true about translations in the present dissertation also.

87. T.S. Eliot: The Perfect Critic in The Sacred Wood (P.I.)
poet's return to tradition — and this he may not have owed to Yeats. It is the faith in the past, the submission to the tradition set by the predecessors which characterise his later writings which can only be ascribed to the influence of Eliot and none else. And above all, to Eliot he is indebted for the confidence with which he has taken to the religious themes which no other modern Hindi poet has done so candidly. It is in these poems that one finds the refined sensibility of the poet, who could write lines like:

"All of a sudden, Swam before my mind's eyes.
The temples of Ayodhya, Patna and Kashi —
Some in a state of semi-destruction, witnesses of past misdeeds.
A few transformed into ugly mosques and minarets
Creation demands the original dream of construction —
It is not fulfilled by just destruction and patch-work".

One is reminded of Archbishop Thomas's words:

"But for every evil, every sacrilege
Crime, wrong, oppression and the axe's edge,
Indifference, exploitation........"

88. T.S. Eliot: Murder in the Cathedral. (P.53)