

A History of Indian English Literature

M.K. Naik



Sahitya Akademi

A History of Indian English Literature - M.K. Naik

Contents

[Preface](#)

[CHAPTER 1. The Literary Landscape: The Nature and Scope of Indian English Literature](#)

[CHAPTER 2- The Pagoda Tree: From the Beginnings to 1857](#)

[Early Prose](#)

[Early Poetry](#)

[CHAPTER 3: The Winds of Change: 1857 to 1920](#)

[Poetry](#)

[Prose](#)

[Drama](#)

[Fiction](#)

[CHAPTER 4 The Gandhian Whirlwind: 1920-1947](#)

[Prose](#)

[Poetry](#)

[Drama](#)

[Fiction](#)

[The Short Story](#)

[CHAPTER 5 The Asoka Pillar: Independence and After](#)

[Poetry](#)

[Fiction](#)

[The Short Story](#)

[Drama](#)

[Prose](#)

Preface

Acknowledged 'with civil leer' by many and damned 'with faint praise*' by some for a long time, Indian English literature, designated variously as 'Indo-Anglian Literature', 'Indo-english Literature' and 'Indian Writing in English' (and once even regarded unjustly as part of 'Anglo-Indian Literature'), is now more than a hundred and seventy years old. In spite of the great pioneering efforts of Professor K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar— virtually the father of the serious study of this body of writing— in his *Indo-Anglian Literature* (1943), *The Indian Contribution to English Literature* (1945) and *Indian Writing in English* (1962, 1973), a systematic, comprehensive and critical history of this literature, clearly defining its nature and scope, adopting a proper period-division and relating writers and schools firmly to changing indo-political conditions had not been attempted. Viewing Indian English literature as essentially a significant by-product of the eventful encounter between India and the Indian ethos on the one hand, and England, the English language and Western culture on the other, the present work tries to trace the course of this literature from 1809, the year when probably the first < (imposition in English of some length by an Indian - namely, (V. Boriah's 'Account of the Jains'--appeared (in *Asiatic Researches*, Vol. IX, 1809) to the end of 1979. While the needs of a systematic chronological survey have been kept in mind throughout, the responsibility of rigorous critical evaluation has not been sought to be evaded. Writers like Sri Aurobindo, Pitrindranath Tagore and Sarojini Naidu have often driven critical and reviewers into opposite camps, generating both uncritical adulation and unthinking condemnation. The present work tries to adopt a balanced approach to these writers.

'A work is never necessarily finished', says Paul Valery, 'for he who made it is never complete'. This is perhaps specially true of a history of literature, which involves one single mind's encounters with a large number of authors belonging to different periods and schools and exemplifying different kinds of sensibility. The writing of a literary history must therefore necessarily involve the education of the historian's literary taste, and I must thank the authorities of the Sahitya Akademi for giving me this opportunity to acquire such an education.

I have received much help from numerous friends in the compilation of this history. A forbiddingly large number of books published in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were not easily available—some of them not even in reputed metropolitan libraries. B.A. Olkar—an old friend and a confirmed bibliophile—went expertly hunting in antique book-shops in Bombay, and similar operations zestfully carried out by my young friends,' S. Subrahmanya Sarma and R. Raphael in Madras, S. Krishna Bhatta in Bangalore and G.S. Balarama Gupta at Annamalainagar also yielded a sizable harvest. Dr. G.S. Dikshit, Dr. Amalendu Bose, Dr. V.M. Kulkarni, Mr. D.G. Angal, Mr. M.N. Nagaraj, Mr. N.B. Marathe, Dr. Prema Nandakumar, Dr. Shyamala Narayan, and Dr. H.S. Saksena also made much valuable material available to me. Dr. V.K. Gokak, Dr. Chaman Nahal, Dr. Sisir Kumar Ghose, Dr. K. Krishnamoorthy, Mr. Ruskin Bond, Dr. Nirmal Mukherjee, Dr. Sujit Mukherjee, Dr. M. Sivaramakrishna, Dr. K. Ayyappa Panikar, Dr. K.N. Sinha, Mr. Lakhan Deb, Dr. H. Raizada, Dr. R.B. Patankar, Mr. V.D. Trivadi, Dr. Visvanath Chatterjee, Miss Eunice D'Souza and Miss Kaushiki Sen Verma answered my numerous queries (I strongly suspect that during the last two years many of my correspondents must have dreaded the periodic arrival of a hastily w^{itf}^p little post-card from Dharwar asking for information).

The librarians and the staff of the following libraries extended their willing co-operation to me: National Library, Calcutta,; Tagore Museum and Library, Santiniketan; University of Bombay Library and Asiatic Library, Bombay; Poona University Library, Deccan College Library and Fergusson College library, Poona; Osmania University Library, C.I.E.F.L. Library, Salar-jung Museum Library, Sir Nizamut Jung Library, State Library and Andhra Pradesh Archives, Hyderabad; Bangalore University Library, Bangalore; Mysore University Library, Mysore; Madras University Library, Adyar Library, Presidency College Library, Connemara Library and Tamil Nadu Archives, Madras; Sri Aurobindo Ashram Library and the Romain Rolland Library, Pondicherry, and the Regional Library and Kamatak College Library, Dharwar. To Mr. K.S. Deshpande and his enthusiastic band of colleagues at the Karnatak University Library, Dharwar I owe a special debt of gratitude. The more I asked for, the more responsive they were (a couple of assistant librarians once even allowed themselves to be dragged to the Binding Section to search for the back numbers of periodicals).

In writing about prose of different types—political, historical, philosophical, etc., and criticism of Sanskrit literature and the arts, I had inevitably to depend upon the acknowledged expertise of my University friends belonging to different disciplines—Dr G.S. Dikshit, Dr K. Raghavendra Rao, Dr K. Krishnamoorthy, Dr G.K. Bhat, Dr S.S. Settar, Dr R.B. Patankar, Dr L.C. Mulatti and Professor K.J. Shah. Dr Rao and Dr Dikshit also read my typescript and drew my attention to matters that called for a reconsideration. Prof. R.G. Chenni assisted in preparing the typescript for the press, Dr C.V. Venugopal read the proofs and compiled the Index with a mastery born of long practice.

I am deeply grateful to all these numerous friends and associates. In the final chapter, I have drawn on my essay, 'In Defence of Indian Writing in English' included in Indo-English Literature (1977) edited by Dr K.K. Sharma. The grant of a National Fellowship for three years enabled me to take time off from my normal teaching duties and also made work in the various libraries possible. My thanks are due to the authorities of the University Grants Commission and Kamatak University for this generous gesture.

Before concluding, I must place on record my appreciation of the patience and consideration shown by the Secretary, the Deputy Secretary (Programme) and the other authorities of the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, in extending (more than once) my deadline for submitting the final typescript of this history.

M.K. NAIK

Dharwar, January 1980.

CHAPTER 1. The Literary Landscape: The Nature and Scope of Indian English Literature

Indian English literature began as an interesting by-product of an eventful encounter in the late eighteenth century between a vigorous and enterprising Britain and a stagnant and chaotic India. As a result of this encounter, as F.W. Bain puts it, India, a withered trunk ... suddenly shot out with foreign foliage.¹ One form this foliage took was that of original writing in English by Indians, thus partially fulfilling Samuel Daniel's sixteenth century prophecy concerning the English language:

Who (in time) knows whither we may vent

The treasures of our tongue?

To what strange shores

This gain of our best glory shall be sent

T'enrich unknowing nations with our stores.

What worlds in th'yet unformed orient

May come refined with th'accents that are ours.

The first problem that confronts the historian of this literature is to define its nature and scope clearly. The question has been made rather complicated owing to two factors: first, this body of writing has, from time to time, been designated variously as 'Indo-Anglian literature', 'Indian Writing in English' and 'Indo-English literature'; secondly, the failure to make clear-cut distinctions has also often led to a confusion between categories such as 'Anglo-Indian literature', literature in the Indian languages translated into English and original composition in English by Indians. Thus, in his *A Sketch of Anglo-Indian Literature* (1908), E.F. Oaten considers the poetry of Henry Derozio as part of 'Anglo-Indian literature'. The same critic, in his essay on Anglo-Indian literature in *The Cambridge History of English Literature* (Vol. XIV, Ch. 10) includes Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu, Rabindranath Tagore and 'Aravindo [sic] Ghose' among 'Anglo-Indian' writers along with F.W. Bain and F.A. Steel. Similarly, Bhupal Singh's *Survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction* (1934) deals with both British and Indian writers on Indian subjects. V.K. Gokak, in his book, *English in India: Its Present and Future* (1964), interprets the term 'Indo-Anglian Literature' as comprising 'the work of Indian writers in English' and 'Indo-English literature' as consisting of 'translations by Indians from Indian literature into English'. In his massive survey, *Indian Writing in English* (1962), K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar includes English translations of Tagore's

novels and plays done by others in his history of Indian creative writing in English, while H.M. Williams excludes these from his *Indo-Anglian Literature 1800-1970: A Survey* (1976). John B. Alphonso Karkala (*Indo English Literature in the Nineteenth Century*) (1970) uses the term 'Indo-English literature' to mean 'literature produced by Indians in English.'

Strictly speaking, Indian English literature may be defined as literature written originally in English by authors Indian by birth, ancestry or nationality. It is clear that neither 'Anglo- Indian Literature', nor literal translations by others (as distinguished from creative translations by the authors themselves) can legitimately form part of this literature. The former comprises the writings of British or Western authors concerning India. Kipling, Forster, F.W Bain, Sir Edwin Arnold, F.A. Steel, John Masters, Paul Scott, M.M. Kaye and many others have all written about India, but their work obviously belongs to British literature. Similarly, translations from the Indian languages into English cannot also form part of Indian English literature, except when they are creative translations by the authors themselves. If Homer and Virgil, Dante and Dostoevsky translated into English do not become British authors by any stretch of the imagination, there is little reason why Tagore's novels, most of his short stories and some of his plays translated into English by others should form part of Indian English literature. On the other hand, a work like *Gitanjali* which is a creative translation by the author himself should qualify for inclusion. The crux of the matter is the distinctive literary phenomenon that emerges when an Indian sensibility tries to express itself originally in a medium of expression which is not primarily Indian. There is, of course, that infinitesimally small class of Indian society called the 'Anglo-Indian' i.e., the Eurasians, who claim English as their mother tongue; but with notable exceptions like Henry Derozio,

Aubrey Menen and Ruskin Bond, few of them have tried to express themselves creatively in English. But even in their case, the Indian strain in them is bound to condition the nature of both their artistic sensibility and their way of expression. (In fact, the poetry of Derozio is a copybook example of this.) However, since literature is not a science, there will always be a no man's land in which all attempts at strict definition are in danger of getting lost in a haze. Thus, there are exceptional cases like Ananda K. Coomaraswamy and Ruth Praver Jhabvala. The former, born of a Sri Lankan Tamil father and an English mother, was neither an Indian citizen nor did he live in India; and yet the entire orientation of his thought is so unmistakably Indian that it is impossible not to consider him an Indian English writer. As for Jhabvala, she is virtually an international phenomenon. Born of Polish parents in Germany, she received her education in English, married an Indian, lived in India for more than twenty years, and has written in English. This daughter-in-law of India (though a rebellious one, in her later work) shows such close familiarity and deep understanding of Indian social life (especially in her earlier work) that she has rightly found a place in the history of Indian English literature. On the other hand, V.S. Naipaul's Indian ancestry is indisputable, but he is so much of an outsider when he writes about India and the Indians and so much of an insider while dealing with Caribbean life and character, that there can be no two opinions on his rightful inclusion in the history of West Indian Writing,

It is obvious that Indian English literature, thus defined is not part of English literature, any more than American literature can be said to be a branch of British literature. It is legitimately a part of Indian literature, since its differentia is the expression in it of an Indian ethos. Its use of English as a medium may also give it a place in Commonwealth literature, but that is merely a matter of critical

convenience, since the Commonwealth is largely a political entity—and, in any case, this does not in the smallest measure affect the claim of Indian English literature to be primarily a part of Indian literature.

Another problem which the historian of this literature has to face is that of choosing from among the various appellations given to it from time to time—viz., 'Indo-Anglian literature', 'Indian Writing in English', 'Indo-English literature' and 'Indian English literature'. The first of these terms was first used as the title of the Specimen Compositions from Native Students, published in Calcutta in 1883. The phrase received general currency when K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, the pioneer of this discipline, used it as a title to his first book on the subject: Indo-Anglian Literature (1943). He, however, now agrees that ' "Indo-Anglian" strikes many as a not altogether happy expression.' He adds, 'I know many are allergic to the expression "Indo-Anglian", and some would prefer "Indo-English". The advantage with "Indo-Anglian" is that it can be used both as adjective and as substantive, but "Indo-Englishman" would be unthinkable. "Indo-Anglian" is reasonably handy and descriptive.' But a major flaw in the term 'Indo-Anglian', as pointed out by Alphonso-Karkala, is that it would suggest 'relation between two countries (India and England) rather than a country and a language.'⁷ 'Indo-Anglian' is thus hardly an accurate term to designate this literature. Apart from that, 'Indo-Anglian' also appears to be cursed with the shadow of the Anglican perpetually breathing ecclesiastically down its slender neck, and threatening to blur its identity. (In fact, Professor Iyengar has noted how, in his book, Literature and Authorship In India, 'Indo-Anglian' was changed to 'Indo-Anglican' by the enterprising London printer who, puzzled at so odd an expression, transformed it into something familiar.) For his first comprehensive study of the subject, published in 1962, K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar used the phrase, 'Indian Writing in

English'. Two pioneering collections of critical essays on this literature, both published in 1968, also followed his example: *Indian Writing in English- Critical Essays* by David McCutcheon and *Critical Essays on Indian Writing in English* edited by M.K. Naik, S.K. Desai and G.S. Amur. But the term 'Indian Writing in English' has been accused of having a rather circumlocutory air, and while 'Indo-English literature' possesses an admirable compactness, it has, as noted earlier, been used to denote translations by Indians from Indian literature into English. The Sahitya Akademi has recently accepted 'Indian English Literature' as the most suitable appellation for this body of writing. The term emphasizes two significant ideas: first that this literature constitutes one of the many streams that join the great ocean called Indian literature, which, though written in different languages, has an unmistakable unity; and secondly, that it is an inevitable product of the nativization of the English language to express the Indian sensibility. Nevertheless, by whatever name Indian English literature is called, it remains a literary phenomenon worthy of serious scrutiny.

CHAPTER 2- The Pagoda Tree: From the Beginnings to 1857

The British connection with India was effectively established in the beginning of the seventeenth century, though the first Englishman ever to visit India did so as early as A.D. 883, when one Sigelm, as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle notes, was sent (here by King Alfred on a pilgrimage, in fulfilment of a vow).

The discovery of the sea-route to India by Vasco da Gama in 1498 brought the Portuguese and the Dutch to India long before the British. In early and mid-sixteenth century, British interest in India mostly remained in the formative stage. A petition addressed to King Henry VIII in 1511 reads: 'The Indies are discovered and vast treasures brought from thence everyday. Let us therefore bend our endeavours thitherwards.' Finally, the East India Company which was to link India's destiny firmly with Britain for almost two centuries was granted its first charter by Queen Elizabeth I on the last day of the last month of the last year of the sixteenth century, as if to usher in a new era in the East-West relationship with the dawn of the new century.

The East India Company, whose original aim was primarily commerce and not conquest, however, soon discovered its manifest destiny of filling the vacuum created in the eighteenth century India by the gradual disintegration of the Mughal empire. In Kipling's words,

Once, two hundred years ago, the trader came/Meek and tame./Where his timid foot halted, there he stayed,/Till mere

trade/Grew to Empire,/And he sent his armies forth/South
and North,/Till the country from Peshawur to Ceylon/ Was his
own.

After the Battle of Plassey (1757) which made the Company virtually master of Bengal, the British who had come to India to sell, decided also to rule. The business of ruling naturally involved the shaking of the Indian 'Pagoda tree' of its treasures. (One recalls Clive's famous reply to his detractors after the sack of Murshidabad in 1757: 'I stand astonished at my own moderation.') But those engaged in shaking the 'Pagoda tree' were also instrumental in planting the seeds of a modernization process in the eighteenth century Indian Waste Land—seeds which started burgeoning in the nineteenth century. The rise of Indian English literature was an aspect of this Indian renaissance.

As Sri Aurobindo points out, the Indian renaissance was less like the European one and more like the Celtic movement in Ireland, 'the attempt of a reawakened national spirit to find a new impulse of self-expression which shall give the spiritual force for a great reshaping and rebuilding.'³ The awakening of India, as Jawaharlal Nehru observes, 'was two-fold: she looked to the West and, at the same time, she looked at herself and her own past.'⁴ In the rediscovery of India's past, some of the early officials of the company played a significant role. Many of them were scholars with a passion for oriental culture and it was not unusual in those days to find an East India Company official fully equipped to discuss the Koran with a Maulana Mohammad Ali and a Purana with a Viswanath Sastri with equal competence. Sir William Jones, who founded the Bengal Asiatic Society as early as 1784, H.T. Colebrooke, the author of Digest of Hindu Law on Contracts and Succession (1797-98), and James Prinsep, the discoverer of the clue to the Asokan

inscriptions, were some of the representative white men in India then whose burden was certainly not imperial.

While these Englishmen were rediscovering India's past. (the gradual spread of English education and Western ideas brought forth a band of earnest Indians who drank deep at the fountain of European learning. This consummation was not, however, achieved before the British policy concerning the education of Indians had passed through two diametrically opposed stages. To begin with, for almost a generation after the East India Company had virtually become the de facto ruler of Bengal, the Government had no official education policy, probably because at that time, even in Britain itself, education had not yet been accepted as a responsibility of the Government. But soon, practical considerations stressed the necessity to evolve such a policy. There was a pressing need for suitable pundits and maulvis to help judges in the administration of justice. It was therefore decided to revive the study of Sanskrit and Persian among the Indians. This led to the establishment by Hastings of the Calcutta Madarasa for teaching Persian and Arabic in 1781 and that of the Sanskrit College at Benaras by Jonathan Duncan in 1792. The Orientalists among the Company officials naturally supported this policy enthusiastically. By the turn of the century, however, second thoughts began to prevail. First, there was an equally pressing need for Indian clerks, translators and lower officials in administration and a knowledge of English was essential for these jobs. Furthermore, with the rise of the Evangelical movement in Britain, the ideal of spreading the word of Christ among the natives assumed vital importance for some Englishmen. Even before the close of the eighteenth century, Mission schools which taught English besides the vernacular had already been functioning in the South, while the beginning of the nineteenth century saw the establishment of similar schools in Bengal and Bombay.

The missionaries believed that in imparting Western education to Indians, every teacher was 'breaking to pieces with a rod of iron the earthenware vessels of Hinduism'.¹ The imperialists also championed the cause of English, which for them was a potent instrument to civilize 'the lesser breeds without the law'. They also thought that the spread of English education among the natives would lead to the assimilation of Western culture by the Indians and that this would make for the stability of the empire—a view strongly advocated by Charles Grant, who argued: 'To introduce the language of the conquerors seems to be an obvious means Of assimilating a conquered people to them.'

The Orientalists were seriously alarmed at this growing support to English. Their stand was forcefully expressed by H.H. Wilson, who observed: 'It is not by the English language that we can enlighten the people of India. It can be effected only through forms of speech which they already understand and use.. . . The project of importing English literature along with English cotton into India and bringing it into universal use must at once be felt by every reasonable mind as chimerical and ridiculous.'⁷ It was however, obvious that the Orientalists were fighting a losing battle. As K.K. Chatterjee notes, 'The Home Office despatches from 1824 onwards went on being increasingly insistent on re-orienting Indian education to teach the useful science and literature of Europe. ... All the presidencies in the 1820s were headed by Governors who were generally inclined to English education, though with varying emphases (Elphinstone in Bombay, Thomas Munro in Madras, and above all the reformist Bentinck in Bengal).'

As for the Indians themselves, there was no doubt in the minds of most of their intellectuals as to which way the wind was blowing. Perhaps the most adaptable of people, they had whole-heartedly taken to Persian some centuries

earlier, with the Muslim conquest, and had mastered that language. It was obvious to them that a similar strategy with regard to English was now called for. As early as 1816, we find a Calcutta Brahmin named Baidyanath Mukhopadhyaya telling the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court that 'many of the leading Hindus were desirous of forming an establishment for the education of their children in a liberal manner,' meaning obviously English education. A strong prejudice against Western education was indubitably rampant in the conservative circles. It is on record that the office of the Inspector-General of Schools at Patna was at one time popularly known as 'Shaitan ka daftarkhana'¹⁰(i.e., the Devil's Office). Nevertheless, the more forward-looking among the Indians were convinced that English education was not the Devil's wine but a Godsend. So enthusiastic was especially the younger generation in its desire to learn English that, as Trevelyan has noted, an Englishman coming to Calcutta by steamer was pressed by eager boys clamouring for English books: 'He cut up an old Quarterly Review and distributed the pages. As the same writer points out, on the opening of the Hughli College in August 1836, there were 1200 applications for admission within three days.'

The cause of English education found its ablest Indian champion in Raja Rammohun Roy. In his persuasive Letter on English Education addressed to the Governor-General, Lord Amherst in 1823, he argued most forcefully against the establishment of a Sanskrit School in preference to one imparting English education:

If it had been intended to keep the British nation in ignorance of real knowledge, the Baconian philosophy would not have been allowed to displace the system of schoolmen, which was the best calculated to perpetuate ignorance. In the same manner, the Sanskrit system of education would

be the best calculated to keep this country in darkness, if such had' been the policy of the British legislature. But as the improvement of the native population is the object of the government, it will consequently promote a more liberal and enlightened system of instruction, embracing ... useful sciences, which may be accomplished by employing a few gentlemen of talents and learning educated in Europe and providing a college furnished with the necessary books instruments and other apparatus.

Even before this letter was written, Rammohun Roy had already been active in the cause of Western education. Together with David Hume, the British watch-maker turned educationist and Edward Hyde-East, the then Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Bengal, he established in 1816 an Association to promote European learning and science. This was the first step towards the founding of the Hindu College at Calcutta on 20 January 1817. Rammohun Roy also founded at his own expense a school in Suripara (near Calcutta) to teach English to boys (1816-17).... Rammohun invited the best among them to his house for advanced coaching by English instructors. He also founded another school in Calcutta called the Anglo Hindu School (1822).

With the tide running so strongly in favour of English, the coup de grace was delivered by Macaulay's famous Minute on Education of 2 February 1835, which clinched the issue. Macaulay, who combined in himself the spirit of staunch Evangelism, Messianic imperialism and Whig liberalism, was richly endowed with a boundless courage of conviction, which admitted no possibility of there being another side to the question at all. He stated emphatically that it was both necessary and possible 'to make the natives of this country good English scholars' and that 'to this end all our efforts ought to be directed.'

In a passage entirely typical of his cast of mind and his style (which made Lord Melbourne once exclaim: 'I wish I could be as cocksure of any one thing as Tom Macaulay is of everything') he declared:

'The question now before us is simply whether, when it is in our power to teach this language, we shall teach -languages in which by universal confession there are no books on any subject which deserve to be compared to our own; whether when we can teach European science, we shall teach systems which by universal confession, whenever they differ from those of Europe, differ for the worse, and whether, when we can patronize sound philosophy and true history, we shall countenance at public expense medical doctrines which would disgrace an English farrier, astronomy which would move laughter in girls at an English boarding school, history abounding with kings thirty feet high and reigns 30,000 years long and geography made up of seas of treacle and seas of butter.'¹

Macaulay did not rest content with championing the cause of English so strongly; he even threatened to resign from his position as President of the Governor-General's Council, if his recommendations were not accepted by the Government. Lord Bentinck, the Governor-General immediately yielded and the Government resolution of 7 March 1835 (a red-letter day in the history of Modern India) unequivocally declared that 'the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India, and all funds appropriated for the purpose of education would be best employed on English education alone.'¹⁷

The extremism of this policy was sought to be corrected some time later by Sir Charles Wood, a member of the Select Committee of the British Parliament in 1852-53. In his

well-known Despatch of 19 July 1854, while reiterating the necessity to 'extend European knowledge throughout all classes of the people', he observed that 'this object must be effected by means of the English language in the higher branches of instruction, and by that of the vernacular languages of India to the great mass of the people.'¹⁸ The logical outcome of Wood's Despatch was the establishment of the three first Indian universities—those of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras—in 1857. These universities soon became the nurseries of the resurgent Indian genius, which within hardly a generation thereafter ushered in a renaissance in the political, social, cultural and literary spheres of Indian life.

Early Prose

More than two decades prior to Macaulay's Minute of 1835, Indians had already started writing in English. Cavellly Venkata Boriah's 'Account of the Jains' published in Asiatic Researches or Transactions of the Society instituted in Bengal for inquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Art, Sciences and Literature of Asia, Vol. IX (London, 1809, written in c. 1803) is perhaps the first published composition in English of some length by an Indian. Boriah (1776-1803), an assistant to Col. Colin Mackenzie (1753-1821)—the first Surveyor General of India and well-known in South Indian history for the collection, Mackenzie Manuscripts—was described by Mackenzie as 'a youth of the quickest genius and disposition.'¹* A master of a number of languages including Sanskrit, Persian, Hindustani and English, he studied mathematics, astronomy and geography; wrote poetry in Telugu; discovered ancient coins and deciphered old inscriptions. His 'Account of the Jains' has been described in the essay itself as 'collected from a priest of this sect at Mudgeri' and 'translated by C. Boria' [n.c] This essay of twenty-eight pages is not therefore an original composition, though it remains of historical importance as probably the first considerable attempt by an Indian to write in English. Raja Rammohun Roy's essay on 'A Defence of Hindu Theism' (1817) may be regarded as the first original publication of significance in the history of Indian English literature. Raja Rammohun Roy (1772-1833), aptly described by Rabindranath Tagore as 'the inaugurator of the modern age in India'²⁰ was indeed the morning star of the Indian renaissance. The casual Western reader of today who perhaps remembers him best as the original of the absurd Rummon Loll in Thackeray's Newcomes, certainly does him less than justice. A pioneer in religious, educational, social

and political reform, he was a man cast in the mould of the Humanists of the European Renaissance. Born at Radhanagar in the Hooghley district (which was also to produce Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Aurobindo) of Bengal in 1772, Rammohun was the son of a rich landlord. Going to Patna at the age of nine to study Arabic and Persian, he steeped himself in Muslim theology, Islamic culture and Persian poetry there. Under the influence of the doctrines of the Mutazalis school, he developed a rationalistic approach to religion, which he lost no time in applying to Hinduism. Expelled from his father's house for his iconoclasm at the age of sixteen, he travelled far and wide and is supposed to have lived in Tibet for sometime to study Buddhism there. This was followed by a sojourn at Benaras, where he mastered orthodox Hindu theology and philosophy. Restored to his father's favour in 1794, he returned home and joined the East India Company service in 1804. Resigning his post in 1811, he settled down in Calcutta in 1814 and till the end of his life carried on a crusade for social, cultural, religious and political reform. Plunging into journalism, he edited periodicals in three languages—The Brahmunical Magazine in English (1821-23), SambSd Kaumudi in Bengali (1821) and Mirat-ul-Akhbar in Persian (1822-23). In 1828, he founded the Brahmo Sabha or Samaj, which was the earliest attempt of its kind in the nineteenth century to revitalize Hinduism. Sailing for Britain in 1830 as the envoy of the Mughal emperor who conferred on him the title 'Raja', he continued his mission there until his death at Bristol in 1833.

Proficient in about half a dozen oriental and an equal number of occidental languages, Rammohun Roy wrote extensively in Bengali, Persian, Hindi, Sanskrit and English. [His collected writings—The English Works of Raja Rammohun Roy (6 vols., 1945-51) were edited by Kalidas Nag and Debajyoti Burman. Selected Works of/Raja

Rammohun Roy, issued by the Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, appeared in 1977]. Of his English works, as many as thirty-two are original essays on various subjects. The earliest of his writings on religion were in the form of translations: 'An Abridgement of the Vedant' (1816) and renderings of the Kena and Isa Upanishads (1816). An attack on the 'Abridgement of the Vedant' by one Sankara Sastri prompted Rammohun Roy to write his first original essay in English: 'A Defence of Hindu Theism' (1817)—a masterly vindication of monotheism. This was followed by 'A Second Defence of the Monotheistical system of the Vedas in reply to an apology for the present state of Hindoo Worship' (1817).²¹ Next, embarking upon the study of Christian theology, he read the scriptures in Hebrew, Greek and Latin and compiled 'Precepts of Jesus: The Guide to Peace and Happiness, Extracted from the Books of the New Testament ascribed to the Four Evangelists with translations into Sungscrit [r/c] and Bengalee' (1820). 'The translations, however, if they were ever issued, have never been traced. The probability is that they were never issued.'²² Here, boldly 'separating from the other matters contained in the New Testament, the moral precepts found in that book', Rammohun Roy tried to place before his 'fellow creatures the words of Christ'. When the book was bitterly attacked as heretical by Christian missionaries, Rammohun Roy wrote in succession three rejoinders: 'An Appeal to the Christian Public, in Defence of "The Precepts of Jesus" ' (published under the pseudonym, 'A Friend of Truth') (1820); 'Second Appeal to the Christian Public, in Defence of "The Precepts of Jesus" ' (1821); and 'Final Appeal to the Christian Public, in Defence of "The Precepts of Jesus' (1823). In these 'Appeals', Rammobun Roy reiterates the necessity to reject Christian myth, miracle and dogma in favour of the actual teachings of Christ; chastises the missionaries for the unChristian spirit shown by them in the controversy, and

emphasizes the need for a 'religion destructive of differences and dislike between man and man and conducive to the peace and union of mankind. Dr. Lant Carpenter found the 'Second Appeal* 'distinguished by the closeness of his (Rammohun Roy's) reasoning, the extent and critical accuracy of his scriptural knowledge, the comprehensiveness of his investigations and the acuteness and skill with which he controverts the positions of his opponents.' This comment would fit the other two appeals equally well.

Social reform was equally dear to Rammohun Roy. Here, the plight of women in orthodox Hindu society became his special concern. His broadsides against widow-burning include: 'A Conference between an Advocate for, and an Opponent of, the Practice of burning Widows alive'(1818); 'A Second Conference between an Advocate for, and an Opponent of, the Practice of burning Widows alive' (1820); 'Abstract of the Arguments regarding the burning of Widows Considered as a Religious Rite'(1830), 'Address to Lord William Bentinck' (1830); and 'Anti-Suttee Petition to the House of Commons' (1832). In his 'Brief Remarks regarding Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females According to the Hindu Law of Inheritance' (1822) he attacks polygamy and shows how ancient Hindu laws have been misinterpreted to deny women equal rights to inheritance. Rammohun Roy's famous 'Letter on English Education' (11 December 1823), which has already been mentioned, is a document of so great importance that it could very well be called 'the manifesto of the Indian renaissance'.

The most significant of Rammohun Roy's political writings are the two 'Petitions Against the Press Regulations' (1823) drafted by him and signed along with him by his supporters. These petitions were occasioned by the passing of a

Government ordinance in March 1823 suppressing the freedom of the press, known as 'Adam's gag' after John Adam, the acting GovernorGeneral. In the first petition, described by Miss Collet as 'The Areopagitica of Indian history'²⁴, Rammohun Roy argues:

'Every good Ruler, who is convinced of the imperfection of human nature, and reverences the Eternal Governor of the world, must be conscious of the great liability to error in managing the affairs of a vast empire; and therefore he will be anxious to afford to every individual the readiest means of bringing to his notice whatever may require his interference. To secure this important object, the unrestrained liberty of publication is the only effectual means that can be employed.'²¹

When the petition was rejected, and the Press Regulation Act was promulgated, Rammohun Roy appealed to the King-in- Council. In the second petition, he tells the King:

'If your Majesty's faithful subjects could conceive for a moment that the British nation, actuated solely by interested policy, considered India merely as a valuable property and nothing but the best means of securing its possession and turning it to advantage, even then it would be of importance to ascertain whether this property be well taken care of by their servants. . .therefore the existence of a free Press is equally necessary for the sake of the Governors and the governed.'

Rammohun Roy's 'Exposition of the Practical Operation of the Judicial and Revenue Systems of India' (1832) represents the evidence given by him before a Parliamentary Select Committee in London in 1831. This document, which embodies Rammohun Roy's views on administrative reform, is specially remarkable for its spirited

protest against the economic drain in India under the East India Company rule and the exploitation of the peasantry by the rich landlords.

During the last year of his life, Rammohun Roy wrote a short autobiographical sketch at the request of his friends. (Its authenticity has been questioned, but not conclusively.) This sketch, though all too brief and written in a somewhat matter-of-fact manner, is of interest as the first exercise in Indian English literature in a form which was to be handled with conspicuous success by later writers like Nehru and Nirad C. Chaudhuri.

Rammohun Roy's writings obviously belong to the category of 'Literature of Knowledge', rather than 'Literature of Power', yet, he is a master of a distinguished English prose style. In a personal letter, Jeremy Bentham complimented Rammohun Roy on 'a style, which but for the name of a Hindoo, I should certainly have ascribed to the pen of a superiorly educated and instructed Englishman.'²⁷ In the same letter, praising James Mill's History of India, Bentham added, 'though as to style, I wish I could with truth and sincerity pronounce it equal to yours.'²⁸ Rammohun Roy's style is reminiscent of Burke's eloquence, though it does not possess the English master's colour and splendour. Nevertheless, clear thinking, soundness of judgement, comprehensiveness of views, forceful and logical argumentation and moderation and dignity in refuting the criticism of his adversaries are the outstanding features of Rammohun Roy's prose style, which indubitably makes him the first of a long line of Indian masters of English prose. The father of Bengali prosewriting, he is also the first 'begetter' of Indian prose in English.

Apart from Rammohun Roy's work there was not a little prose writing of note during mid and later nineteenth

century in metropolitan centres like Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. Most of this writing was on religious, social, historical and political subjects and some of it in the form of journalism and pamphleteering.

In Bengal, Krishna Mohan Banerji (1813-85), a pupil of Henry Derozio, the poet, and one of the prominent Christian converts of the day, wrote strong articles exposing the errors and inconsistencies of Hinduism in the *Enquirer* in 1831. His *Dialogues on Hindu Philosophy* (1861) is a potted handbook for missionaries and his *Aryan Witness* (1875) seeks to prove that the Prajapati of the Vedas is Jesus Christ. Another pupil of Derozio, Ram Gopal Ghose (1815-68) was actively associated with many literary, cultural and political organizations in Calcutta. Connected with journals such as *Agyananashun*, *Durpan* and *The Spectator*, he was an enthusiastic pamphleteer and a forceful speaker, eulogised as the 'Indian Demosthenes'. His pamphlet, 'Remarks on the Black Acts' (1851) in defence of the so-called 'Black Acts' of 1849, which abolished some of the privileges of Europeans in India, caused a furore in that community. The *Times* described his speech on the Charter Act as 'a masterpiece of oratory' and his oration on the Queen's Proclamation made the *Indian Field* comment that 'If he were an Englishman, he would have been knighted'.² His *Speeches* were published in 1868. Hurish Chunder Mukerji (1824-60) edited *The Hindoo Patriot* from 1854 to 1860 with a passionate sense of mission, championing widow-remarriage, counselling reconciliation after the Mutiny and exposing the iniquities of the British planters. Rajendra Lal Mitra (1824-91), Assistant Secretary and Librarian, Bengal Asiatic Society, and hailed by Tagore as 'Sabyasachi' (i.e., ambidextrous) was one of the earliest Indian antiquarians, Indologists and historians. His numerous studies, including *Antiquities of Orissa* (1875, 1880) and *Buddha Gaya* (1878) earned him Max Muller's praise in *Chips* from a German

Workshop. His Speeches, edited by R.J. Mitter, appeared in 1892. Girish Chunder Ghosh (1829-69) founded in 1849 The Bengal Recorder Weekly, which became The Hindoo Patriot in 1853. He also founded and edited The Bengalee (1861-68)

and fearlessly advocated social and political reform. His vigorous pleading in The Bengalee led to the appointment of the Famine Commission in 1866. Selections from the Writings of Girish Chunder Ghosh, edited by his grandson, Manmath Nath Ghose, appeared in 1912. Raja Ram's Essays on the Architecture of the Hindus (Calcutta, 1834), is perhaps the earliest attempt at art criticism.

The first name that comes to mind when one turns from Bengal to Bombay is that of Bal Shastri Jambhekar (1812-46), a great pioneer of the new awakening in the Bombay presidency. Perhaps the first Sanskrit pundit of note to study English, he became the teacher of such men as Dadabhai Naoroji, Bhau Daji, and K.L. Chattrre. Linguist, educationist, translator, antiquarian (he contributed frequently to the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society), Jambhekar is best remembered as the founder of the first English-cum-Marathi journal in Maharashtra, The Durpan (1832), the aim of which as described in its Prospectus was, 'to encourage among their countrymen the pursuit of English literature and to open a field for free and public discussion. The journal sought to 'please, to convey information on passing events, and to point out the means and opportunities for improvements.' His contemporary, Dadoba Pandurang (Tarkhadkar) (1814-82), scholar, educationist, religious and social reformer, and author of the earliest standard Marathi Grammar, wrote 'A Hindu Gentleman's Reflections respecting the works of Emanuel Swedenborg (1878) —an enlightened study in comparative religious thought. Bhau Daji (1822-74), a physician by profession, was active in

many causes. A founder secretary of the Bombay Association, he became the first sheriff of Bombay. Apart from conducting investigations in Indian medicine, he wrote numerous articles on antiquarian research and social and political problems. His 'Essay, on Infanticide' appeared in 1847. His Writings and Speeches (1974) have recently been edited by T.G. Mainkar.

In the Madras presidency, apart from Boriah's 'Account of the Jains', another noteworthy early document is Vannelakanti Soobrow's (He was, significantly enough, known as 'English Soobrow') report on the 'State of Education in 1820,'³⁰ submitted to the Madras School Book Society of which he was a nominated member. Written on 22 November,, 1820, it was published in the First Report of the Madras School Book Society for the year 1823. Soobrow's report contains interesting bits of information such as that The Arabian Nights was one of the prescribed school texts then and that 'Among the Natives, English school masters at Madras, there are. . .very few who-have a knowledge of grammar.' In 1844, Gazulu Lakshmi Narsu Chetty (1806-68), a public-spirited businessman and founder of the Madras Native Association, started The Crescent—a newspaper dedicated to 'the amelioration of the condition of the Hindoos.'¹ He was also instrumental in drawing up several memorials and petitions to the Government on issues such as the grievances of the people and the need for transferring the administration of India from The Company to the Crown. The Madras presidency also enjoys the distinction of having produced the first work of literary biography in Indian English literature. This was Cavelly Venkanta Ramaswami's Biographical Sketches of the Dekkan [sic] Poets Sketches of the Dekkan [sic] Poets 1840), the elder brother of C.V. Boriah (the author of the 'Account of the Jains') describes in this book the lives of more than a hundred Indian poets, both ancient and modern, in Sanskrit,

Telugu, Tamil and Marathi. The accounts vary in length and accuracy and are written in a rather pedestrian style, there being no attempt at critical comment on the poetry. But to have written in English a work of this nature and with this scope in early Nineteenth century India is itself no mean a feat.

In contrast with the Bengal, Bombay and Madras presidencies, the north India of the period shows little sustained interest in Indian English writing, but as if to compensate for this, it can boast of having produced the first extensive Indian English autobiography (Rammohun Roy's autobiographical sketch is an all too brief affair): *Autobiography of Lutufullah: A Mohamedan Gentleman and His Transactions with his fellow creatures: Interspersed with remarks on the habits, customs and character of the people with whom he had to deal* (1857). The son of a Muslim priest, Lutufullah (b. 1802) served in the states of Baroda and Gwalior, and later, having learnt English, became a tutor in Persian, Arabic and Hindustani to British officers. He travelled widely over India and also visited England. Part travel diary and part autobiography, Lutufullah's book is the expression of a man who was well read (he quotes from Shakespeare, Bacon, Prior and Rowe), enterprising, observant and broad-minded. His boldness of judgment is revealed in his description of the character of the English. Though he admires their civility, respect for law and spirit of patriotism, he is highly critical of what he calls their 'obedience, trust and submission to the female sex' which, according to him, 'are far beyond the limit of moderation.'

Early Poetry

Cavelly Venkata Ramaswami's English rendering of 'Viswagunadarsana' of Arasanipala Venkatadhvarin, an early seventeenth-century Sanskrit poem, is probably the earliest (1825) book of verse in English by an Indian, though being a translation (and not an original work) it cannot properly form part of Indian English literature. An interesting point about the book is that it was published in Calcutta, with the help of donations, and the list of donors given on the last page includes the names of Rammohun Roy and Dwaraknath Tagore.³² In his *Biographical Sketches of Dekkari Poets*, Ramaswami also gives a competent translation in heroic couplets of passages from *Vasu Charitra*, a Telugu epic by the sixteenth-century poet, Bhattu Murti.

The first Indian English poet of note, Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-31) was the son of an Indo-Portuguese father and an English mother. A precocious child, he had already taken to writing in his teens. After completing his school education, he worked for sometime as a clerk in Calcutta and on an indigo plantation at Bhagalpur, and also tried his hand at journalism before joining the Hindu College, Calcutta, as a lecturer. Here, his fearless spirit of inquiry, his passion for ideas, his reformist idealism and his romantic enthusiasm fired the imagination of many a student. Under his leadership, a debating club ('The Academic Association') and a magazine (*The Parthenon*) were started to discuss all subjects under the sun, including Hindu religious practices, the rights of women and political issues. Orthodox Hindu society in Calcutta was seriously alarmed at these activities which wild rumour painted in the darkest colours. For instance, Derozio and his pupils were accused of 'cutting their way through ham and beef and wading to liberation

through tumblers of beer.’³³ It was also said that ‘some Hindu boys, when required to utter mantras at prayers, would repeat lines from the Iliad instead (and) that one student, asked to bow down before the goddess Kali, greeted the image with a “good morning, Madam.”’³⁴ The mounting pressure of hostile public opinion finally compelled the College authorities to dismiss Derozio from service in 1831 on the charge of corrupting the minds of youth. Undaunted, he started a daily, *The East Indian*, but suddenly died of cholera six months later.

In his all too brief poetic career lasting hardly half a dozen years, Derozio published two volumes of poetry: *Poems* (1827) and *The Fakeer of Jungheera: A Metrical Tale and Other Poems* (1828). The shorter poems show a strong influence of British romantic poets in theme (e.g. ‘Sonnet: To the Moon’; ‘The Golden Vase’; ‘Sonnet: Death, my Best Friend’), sentiment, imagery and diction, with some traces of neo-classicism (e.g.)

The heart.. .where hope eternal springs’, with its obvious echo of Pope). His satirical verse (e.g. ‘Don Juanics’) and the long narrative poems (*The Fakeer of Jungheera*) clearly indicate his special affinity with Byron. In sharp contrast to the wilting sentimentality of his romantic lyrics, Derozio’s satirical verses give evidence of energy and vigour, as in the lines: ‘That sponging is the best of all resources/For all who have no money in their purses.’ *The Fakeer of Jungheera* is an extremely competent narrative of the tragic life of Nuleeni, a high-caste Hindu widow, rescued from the funeral pyre by a young robber-chief, whose love she returns. Her relatives, however, are determined to reclaim her. In the ensuing battle, the lover is killed and is finally united in death with the heart-broken Nuleeni. In this fast-moving tale, Derozio skilfully employs different metres to suit the changing tone and temper of the narrative. He uses the

iambic four-foot couplet for straight-forward narration, but adopts a slower line for the descriptive passages and the anapaestic metre for the spirited account of the battle, while the choruses of the chanting priests and the women round Nuleeni's funeral pyre are in trochaic and dactylic measures.

A noteworthy feature of Derozio's poetry is its burning nationalistic zeal, somewhat surprising in a Eurasian at a time when the average representative of his class was prone to repudiate his Indian blood and identify himself with the white man, for eminently practical reasons. Poems like 'To India—My Native Land', 'The Harp of India', and 'To the Pupils of Hindu College' have an unmistakable authenticity of patriotic utterance which stamps Derozio as an Indian English poet who is truly a son of the soil. Derozio is also a pioneer in the use of Indian myth and legend, imagery and diction (though he also employs allusions to Western classical myths with equal competence): e.g. 'Highest Himalay' ('Poetry'); 'Gunga's roil' ('Song of the Indian Girl'); 'Chandra's beams' ('The Eclipse'), 'Sweet Sitar' ('Song of the Hindoostani Minstrel') etc. Unlike Sarojini Naidu, Derozio is able to strike the singing note only occasionally, and his most successful poems are the sonnets in which the imperatives of the form save authentic emotion from slipping easily into soft sentimentality. It is obviously impossible to accept today E.F. Oaten's over-generous assessment of Derozio as 'the National bard of modern India.'³⁶ A poet of slender actual achievement, Derozio, 'a lamp too early quenched' remains a writer of sadly unfulfilled promise.

Three years after Derozio signalled the birth of Indian English poetry, the first volume of verse by an author of pure Indian blood appeared: *The Shair or Minstrel and other Poems* (1830) by Kashiprasad Ghose (1809-73). Fired, at a

young age, with the ambition to compose original verse in English, Kashiprasad Ghose studied prosody and criticism on the advice of his British teacher in the College. As he says, he also 'continued reading the best poetry in a regular and measured tone which soon accustomed my ear to English rhythm.' The results, as revealed in his work are generally correct verses, undistinguished either by authentic emotion or poetic imagination. Kashiprasad Ghose seems to intimate by turns the stylized love-lyrics of the Cavalier poets, the moralizing note in neoclassical poetry and the British romantics, his 'Shair' being obviously Scott's 'minstrel' in an Indian garb, slightly dishevelled as a result of the arduous voyage across the seas. His use of Indian material in his poems about the Hindu festivals and in lyrics like 'The Boatman's Song to Ganga' indicates an honest attempt to strike a native wood-note which fails not because earnestness of purpose is wanting but owing to sheer lack of true poetic talent.

Equally undistinguished are Rajnarain Dutt's (1824-89) verse narrative, *Osmyn: An Arabian Tale* (1841) in faded heroic couplets; Shoshee Chunder Dutt's (1815-65) *Miscellaneous Poems* (1848) and Hur Chunder Dutt's (1831-1901) *Fugitive Pieces* (1851). A better title to fame the last two Dutts possess is that they were the uncles of a girl who was to write *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* a generation later.

Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-73), better known as an epoch-making writer in Bengali, began his career as an Indian English poet. In addition to some sonnets and shorter pieces, he wrote two long poems in English; *The Captive Ladie* (1849) narrates the story of the Rajput King, Prithviraj, his Lochinvarlike abduction of the Kanouj King's daughter, and his unsuccessful battle with the Muslim invader, ending in his own death and that of his queen. Dutt takes liberties

with history, by making Prithviraj and his queen kill themselves by mounting a funeral pyre at the end, while in actual fact, the Hindu king was captured and put to death by his Muslim conqueror. But, in contrast to his history, his prosody is pure, and his octosyllabics move with almost as much vigour and energy as in his models—viz., Scott and Byron. In fact, *The Athenaeum* declared that the poem 'contained passages which neither Scott nor Byron would have been ashamed to own.'" In *Visions of the Past* (1849), a poem in Miltonic blank verse, complete with weighty, abstract diction and Latin inversions, Dutt handles the Christian theme of the temptation and fall and redemption of Man. The result is a skilled pastiche of Milton. In spite of his command of English and his sense of rhythm, Dutt's English poetry hardly rises above the level of derivative, if technically accomplished, verse. He was really able to spread his wings only when he turned to Bengali for artistic expression, following Drinkwater Bethune's advice that 'he could render a far greater service to his country and have a better chance of achieving a lasting reputation for himself if he would employ the taste and talents which he has cultivated by the study of English in improving the standard and adding to the stock of the poems of his own language.'

The first period of Indian English literature may be said to end in the 1850s, a few years before the Indian Revolt of 1857 —that great watershed in the relationship between India and Britain. During this period British rule in India was generally accepted by most Indians as a great boon divinely delivered. The holocaust of the Revolt ushered in different ideas. Winds of change soon began to blow over the land, affecting accepted attitudes. It was ultimately as a combined result of these changes that Indian English literature slowly struggled during the next two generations from psittacism to authentic artistic utterance.

CHAPTER 3: The Winds of Change: 1857 to 1920

With the end of the Great Revolt and the proclamation of peace on 8 July 1858 came the end of the East India Company rule also, though the Company itself lingered on for a few years more, until its formal dissolution on 1 January 1874. The Queen's proclamation of 1 November 1858 heralded the birth of a new age. The Revolt and its aftermath led to several radical changes in the Indo-British relationship. Unfortunately, they were all in the direction of widening the cleavage between the two peoples.

In fact, this process had already set in during the forties; the Revolt and its repercussions only served to accelerate it. In the early days of the Company dispensation, many of its servants came to India as 'writers' at a young age, filled with a spirit of youthful adventure and curiosity and fascinated by the land of opportunity in which they found themselves. The story told of John Malcolm's interview for cadetship is not unrepresentative. Asked 'What would you do if you met Tipu Sultan?' the young laddie promptly answered in broad Scots, 'I would cut off his head.'¹ Furthermore, unaffected by colour prejudice and unspoiled by imperialistic hauteur (though these attitudes were certainly not totally absent from the scene), some of them saw nothing wrong in taking Indian mistresses—and, a few, even wives. 'Going native' had not yet become the capital crime it was to be after 1857. Col. Kilpatrick, British Resident of Hyderabad, was said to have dyed his beard with henna, married a Muslim lady and dressed like a Muslim nobleman; and Col. Charles Stewart came to be known as 'Hindoo Stewart' on account of his passion for

Hindu culture.* Actually, in the early days, the company 'patronized both Hindu and Muslim religions. Offices were open on Sunday but closed on Indian Holidays. Troops were paraded in honour of Hindu deities. .. British officials assisted in the management of Hindu religious trusts.'³ Out of this kind of a spirit of identification—though not always expressed in such extreme ways—had come the loving discovery of ancient Indian culture by the British officials of the early days.

The Evangelical revival in England, the social and educational reforms of the 1830s, the advent of the steamships during the 1840s, and the changes made in the system of recruitment to Company service in the 1850s ushered in totally changed attitudes. From 1853, admissions to the Company's training college at Haileybury began to be made by competitive examinations. This brought to India a different race of civil servants, ending the tradition of hereditary service by which sons of certain families like the Prinseps and the Bechers had served India generation after generation. W.S. Blunt declared in 1909, 'The Anglo-Indian official of the Company's days loved India in a way no Queen's official dreams of doing now.. .Also. .. loving it, he served it better than now, and was better loved in return.'⁴ The impact of the Evangelical revival and its after-math often generated a feeling of contempt for Hindu religion and culture in the Englishman's mind; and the stance of the white man's superiority came naturally to self-made men, the products of the new social and educational reforms. Again, with the introduction of steam-navigation, an Englishman could reach Bombay from London within thirty days, this period being reduced still further with the opening of the Suez canal in 1869. This meant that there was no need henceforth for the British officials to make India their home. It was very much easier now for their wives and families to come to India. The small British colony—a tiny

white oasis in the brown desert around —now appeared on the social scene. As W.S. Blunt noted in 1909, 'The Englishwoman in India during the last thirty years has been the cause of half the bitter feelings there between race and race... It is her constantly increasing influence now that widens the gulf of ill-feeling and makes amalgamation daily more impossible.'¹¹ As a total result of these various factors, for the new British civil servant, India came to be mostly exile and not home, a 'land of regrets' in Sir Alfred LyalPs phrase.

The many horrors of 1857-58 and the cruelties perpetrated by both the sides during the Revolt left inveterate scars which were never to heal completely. As G.T. Garrat pointedly put fifty years ago, 'The English have never attempted to remove the irritation caused by their behaviour after the Mutiny, and from that time we must date the long and bitter estrangement between the two races. Born of hate ' and fear, it was nourished on a series of unfortunate incidents most of which were the direct result of the new spirit which the Mutiny encouraged amongst Europeans.'⁷ Garrat adds, 'Countless middle-class Englishmen learnt to look upon Indians as the creatures, half gorilla, half Negro, who appeared in the contemporary Punch cartoons. They were usually depicted standing over a murdered woman but cowering before an avenging Britannia. . .praying to the God of Battles to steel our soldiers' hearts. For another generation their children learnt of India from the same source.'⁸ As late as the turn of -the century, we find a British official in India describing his situation thus: 'Here we stand on the face of the broad earth, a scanty, pale-faced band in the midst of 300 millions of unfriendly vassals.'⁸ And this kind of an official had become, in the words of Blunt, 'the practical owner of India.. . irremovable, irresponsible and amenable to no authority but that of his fellow-members.'¹⁰ The alienation of the

British official from those he governed now became, with extremely few exceptions, virtually total.

If the British attitude to the Indian thus underwent a radical transformation, the Indian too was changing, and changing very fast. When the first products of higher education in India started coming out of the portals of the earliest Indian universities (established ironically enough in the year of the Revolt itself), the seeds of the ideas sown by Raja Rammohun Roy a generation earlier began to sprout vigorously. The gradual spread of the vast railway network, the growth of the native press in the bigger cities and the acquisition of a common language—viz., English—soon brought the new Indian intelligentsia close together. While the old Indian aristocracy lay supine, licking its wounds, dreaming of past splendours and shutting its eyes to the realities of the present, there 'was born from the middle stratum of society a new integrated all-India class with varied background but a common foreground of knowledge, ideas and values. .. It was a dynamic minority; It had a sense of unity, of purpose, and of hope. It was the newborn soul of modern India. In time it was to infuse the whole of India with its spirit.'

This spirit soon began to express itself through movements of religious, social and political reform. As already noted, a beginning in this direction had been made by Raja Rammohun Roy as early as 1828, when he founded the Brahmo Samaj, an attempt to reorganize Hinduism along the lines of monotheism and repudiation of idol-worship and superstition. After Rammohun Roy's death, the movement was strengthened by Dwarkanath Tagore. With Keshub Chunder Sen (1838-84), came a period of expansion, when the movement assumed an all-India character, leading to the establishment of similar organizations like the Prarthana Samaj by M.G. Ranade and R.G. Bhandarkar in Bombay in

1867. In spite of a schism in the Brahmo Samaj in 1866, brought about by the growing differences between the conservatives and the reformers, the movement continued to be vigorous, especially in Bengal, and influenced, in some measure, the thought of men like Swami Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore.

A similar movement was Arya Samaj, established in 1875 by Swami Dayanand Saraswati (1824-83). This was an attempt to revive Hinduism in the pristine purity of the Vedic age. Repudiation of Puranism and polytheism, rejection of the hereditary caste system and revival of proselytization were its chief doctrines. The Arya Samaj, which also started a number of educational institutions imparting both oriental and occidental knowledge, later continued its mission of militant Vedic Hinduism with renewed vigour under the leadership of Swami Shrad- dhanand and Lala Lajpat Rai (1865-1928)

The year which marked the establishment of the Arya Samaj also saw the rise of another movement based on ancient Hindu religious and philosophical thought. This was the Theosophical Society founded in New York by Madame H.P. Blavatsky, Col. H.S. Olcott, W.O. Judge and others. Unlike the Arya Samaj this was a western movement but the society shifted to Adyar in India in 1878. With its blend of the teachings of Hinduism, Buddhism, Pythagoras and Plato, ancient Egyptian thought and early Christianity, Theosophy was an eclectic creed, but like the Arya Samaj it also helped the prevailing climate of the Indian resurgence.

While all these movements aiming at religious reform flourished, the appearance of a genuine Hindu saint and mystic at this juncture showed how the ancient Hindu tradition, far from being fossilized, was still vigorous enough to produce new living manifestations. Swami Ramakrishna (1836-86),

who made his entire life an ecstatic pilgrimage of spirituality, cast a spell on the youth of modern Bengal. During the last year of his life, his disciples, led by Swami Vivekananda, formed a holy brother-hood which finally took shape as the well-known Ramakrishna Mission. Under the dynamic leadership of Swami Vivekananda, the Mission effectively carried the message of ancient Hinduism abroad, while in India itself, Vivekananda's fiery eloquence, having dazzled the West, instilled a new self-confidence in the minds of his compatriots.

This was one of the signal gains of the new religious resurgence. Earlier, under the first impact of Western education, the Indian, swept off his feet by European culture and thought, had often been a prey to an inferiority feeling, as he contemplated, in comparison, the state of his own tradition-bound religion and culture. In Bengal especially, the younger generation had, for a time, taken pride in rebelling against what it considered to be crass obscurantism; and some like M.M. Dutt had even abjured Hinduism to embrace Christianity. As Surendranath Banerjea observes, 'Our fathers, the first fruits of English education, were violently pro-British. They saw no flaw in the civilization and the culture of the West. They were charmed by its novelty and its strangeness. The enfranchisement of the individual, the substitution of the right of private judgment in place of traditional authority, the exaltation of duty over custom—all came with the force and suddenness of a revelation to an oriental people who knew no more binding obligation than the mandate of immemorial usage and of venerable tradition.'¹² The new reform movements proved a strong corrective and restored the balance.

The general climate of resurgence in the country did not fail to affect the Muslim community also, though here orthodoxy was even more firmly entrenched. Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-

98) became to the Muslims what Rammohun Roy was to the Hindus earlier. Making the dissemination of western ideas and education among the Muslims the sole mission of his life, he founded the Anglo-Arabic College at Aligarh (1873), which later developed into the Aligarh Muslim University. In course of time, this institution became the most important centre of Islamic thought in India. As a friend of Syed Ahmed Khan has observed, 'other men have written books and founded colleges; but to arrest, as with a wall, the degeneration of a whole people, that is the work of a prophet.'

Even before the inception of the college of Aligarh, the Mohammedan Literary and Scientific Society of Calcutta had been founded by Abdul Latif in 1863. In 1878, Ameer Ali started the National Mohammedan Association, the policy of which was loyalty to the crown and assimilation of the progressive tendencies of the age. By 1888, the Association had more than fifty branches, mostly in the northern and eastern regions of India.

The new reformists zeal was inevitably accompanied by a political awakening as well. The first organized effort in this direction was the founding of the British India Association in 1839, to be followed quickly by the Bengal British India Society in 1843 and the British Indian Association of Calcutta in 1851. In 1876, Surendranath Banerjea founded the Indian Association, which was intended to be the centre of an All-India movement based on 'the conception of a united India, derived from the inspiration of Mazzini.' Soon, agitations against the lowering of the age limit for Civil Service examinations, the Arms Act, the Vernacular Press Act and the Ilbert Bill accelerated the tempo of Indian political activity. In 1885, the Indian National Congress was established, with the support of liberal-minded Englishmen like A.O. Hume, Sir William Wedderburn and Sir David Yule.

In the beginning it was mostly a body of moderates who had unshakable faith in the British sense of justice and fair play, and who pledged complete loyalty to the King Emperor. It passed courteously worded resolutions requesting the Government for political and social reform. Most British administrators refused to take it seriously. (Lord Dufferin's dismissal of it as 'Babu Parliament supported by a microcosmic minority' and 'hysterical assembly in which the more violent and silly of their members rule the roost,' is characteristic.) Continued Government indifference and mounting Indian impatience fanned by the rise of radicals like B.G. Tilak and Aurobindo Ghose led to the eclipse of the moderates and the Congress increasingly became a more militant body. The coup de grace was administered by the ill-advised partition of Bengal in 1905 by Lord Curzon (that 'most superior person') whose boundless egotism made him so blind to the political realities of his time that we find him prophesying as late as 1909 that the Congress was 'tottering to its fall' and that one of his great ambitions while in India was 'to assist it to a peaceful demise.'¹ To Indians the partition appeared to be not so much an administrative necessity as a planned attempt to weaken the nationalistic movement. A popular agitation set in, which, 'starting as a purely local movement, led to and merged itself in a national struggle of All India character against the British, which never ceased till India won her independence.'

The increasing self-confidence generated by the re-discovery of the Indian identity received a further boost with Japan's epoch-making victory over Russia in 1905, which pricked the bubble of Western superiority. As Lord Curzon himself put it, 'The reverberations of that victory have gone like a thunderclap through the whispering galleries of the East.'¹⁸ Again, the revolutionary movements in China and Turkey in the first decade of the twentieth century and the

Persian liberal movement 'all suggested that the path of progress consisted in using western techniques and ideas to regenerate ancient societies and then to use western weapons against western supremacy. The belief in an irresistible West from which nothing but pure imitation could procure even a modicum of self-respect was broken. India and the East might look forward to independent life again.'

This conviction was strengthened by the impact of World War I and its aftermath. As Percival Spear points out, 'American democracy emerged as a force which might counter the old Western imperialism. President Wilson's¹ Fourteen Points and his doctrine of self-determination shot a thrill of expectancy through Asia. . . .The American influence changed the emphasis of political discussion from constitutionalism and legal rights to the abstract rights of man. A more radical tone came into political discussion which, if it sometimes led to dangerous unreality, increased the self-confidence and determination of the new popular leaders. As Europe was seen to be no longer invincible, Britain was realized to be less powerful in the European system than had previously been thought. This new evaluation of Britain and the West encouraged the organizers of anti-government movements.'²⁰

Thus, during the period from 1857 to 1920, the Indian ethos gradually underwent a sea-change from the shock of defeat and frustration and the trauma of inferiority feeling to a new-found self-awareness and self-confidence. It is against this background that the work of the prominent writers of this period must be viewed; and it now becomes clear why the diffident psittacism of Kashiprasad Ghose should now make room for the confident authenticity of Toru Dutt, Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath Tagore; and also why, while we have only a solitary Rammohun Roy—a genius well ahead of his times—before 1857, the next sixty years produced a

Ranade and a Gokhale, a Tilak and a Vivekananda. Indian English literature really came of age after 1857, when India's rediscovery of her identity became a vigorous, allabsorbing quest and when she had learnt enough from the West to progress from imitation and assimilation to creation.

Poetry

This change, of course, came gradually and there is no trace of it in the first notable work of poetry in this period—The Dutt Family Album (1870), though it appeared more than twenty years after M.M. Dutt's *Visions of the Past*; but significantly enough, Toru Dutt's work lay only half a dozen years ahead. The Dutt Family Album, the only instance of a family anthology in Indian English poetry, is a collection of 187 poems by three Dutt brothers—Govin Chunder, Hur Chunder and Greece [sic] Chunder, and their cousin, Omesh Chunder. The Dutts, descendants of Rasmoy Dutt, who had been a lieutenant of Rammohun Roy, had abjured Hinduism in favour of Christianity and Govin Chunder, who had visited England with his family, had once even thought of settling down there. These poets can hardly therefore be expected to write with India in their bones; they treat their Indian material as something poetically serviceable. Their major subjects are Christian sentiment, Nature, and Indian history and legend and like the poets of the earlier generation they are content to play the sedulous ape to the British Romantics. When Govin Chunder, addressing the spirit of Romance asks 'Who hath not seen thee, fair one, when the day/ Urges his coursers over the dappled clouds' ('A Farewell to Romance'), he is obviously echoing Keats's well-known apostrophe to Autumn. Similarly, in contemplating a Himalayan peak, Greece Chundur Dutt can only repeat all the appropriate Wordsworthian responses, including 'peaceful thoughts and calm delight/And soothing hopes and sadness mild' ('Sonnet: Like a great temple'). Omesh Chunder Dutt, while recounting the exploits of a Rajput prince, visualizes him as a medieval English knight equipped with a gerfalcon (a north European bird) and attended by a squire ('The Chief of Pokurna'). And Hur Chunder Dutt's

sonnet, 'India', sports all the correct sentiments—'I love thee with a boundless love/Land of my birth', but provides little evidence of actual personal involvement expressed in evocative terms. The Dutt Family Album, like the poetry of Kashiprasad Ghose and M.M. Dutt earlier, again shows how mere technical competence unattended by freshness and genuineness of response does not make for authenticity in art.

ness of response does not make for authenticity in art. 1918), on the other hand, there are certain glimpses of authenticity. In his verses are seen the first tentative flickerings of the mythical flame which was to burn bright later in Sri Aurobindo and Tagore. His works include Willow Drops (1873-74), The Last Day: A Poem (1886) and Shiva Ratri, Bhagaboti Gita and Miscellaneous Poems (1903). The Poetical Works edited by D.C. Mallick appeared in 1919. A versatile poet, Ram Sharma wrote occasional verse ('Ode in commemoration of the visit of Prince Albert to India in 1875); satires ('Lines Addressed to James Skribblerus'); narratives ('Mohinee'); lyrics on various themes and mystical verse. As one who had practised yoga for forty years, he was certainly in a position to recreate genuine mystic experience in poetic terms. Unfortunately, the still uncanceled demon of psittacism in him often compels him to express his responses through conventional western myth and frame of reference, as when he describes his Hindu yogic experience as 'a very sabbath of the soul' ('Music and vision of the Anahat Chakram'), or in visualizing a meeting after death between Swami Vivekananda and his master, he brings them together in Elysium ('In Memory of Swami Vivekananda').

It was with Toru Dutt (1856-77) that Indian English poetry really graduated from imitation to authenticity. The third and youngest child of Govin Chunder Dutt, Torulata, born a

Hindu, was baptized along with the other members of the family in 1862. She learnt English at a very early age and reading and music were her chief hobbies. Sailing for Europe in 1869, she spent a year in France, studying French, and was thereafter in England for three years. Returning to India in 1873, she died of consumption four years later, at the age of twentyone. One of her father's sonnets contains a remarkable pen-portrait of her: 'Puny and elf-like, with dishevelled tresses/Self-willed and shy. . . /Intent to pay her tenderest addresses/ To bird or cat,— but most intelligent.' The fifty odd letters¹ she wrote to her English friend, Miss Martin, reveal an interesting personality. There is inevitably much in them of the usual schoolgirl gossip about the trivial minutiae of daily life—news of the calving of a cow and the killing of a large snake; and at one place one finds her demanding a mosquito curtain for her canaries; but there is something much more also: a sad awareness of the passing of time and strange intimations of maturity, as, for instance, when she declares, 'I am getting quite old, twenty and some odd months and with such an old-fashioned face that English ladies take me for thirty.' For one living so sheltered a life, she shows a surprisingly lively interest in the social and political scene. When a European who had killed his syce is reported to have been fined only £2, she comments indignantly, 'You see how cheap the life of an Indian is in the eyes of an English judge.' Her comments on the books she reads show a well-developed critical sense. She wonders why Hardy's heroines 'generally marry the men they loved the least.' An impish sense of humour too breaks out occasionally, as when, on being chided by an elderly relative for not getting married yet, she replies demurely, 'I was only waiting for your permission.'

Her attitude to England is ambivalent. The burden of her letters is, 'I wish I was there,' and 'I so long to be there.' She misses at home 'the free life we led there.' When she drives

by the Calcutta harbour, the sight of the steamships fills her with a sudden des're to jump aboard one of these 'homeward bound' steamers. She even refers to her own countrymen (quite innocently though) as 'natives', and apologizes when pulled up by her British correspondent. But as her study of Sanskrit during the closing years of her life brought her nearer to the springs of her own culture, she ceased to be a 'Brown Englishwoman'. She now realizes 'how grand, how sublime, how pathetic our legends are,' and during the last few months of her life she writes, 'strange to say I do not much relish the idea of leaving Calcutta. I am very fickle, for it was I who regretted the most leaving England. I wonder why this is so.'

Toru Dutt's tragedy is that she died just when her talent was maturing with her discovery of her roots. Of her two collections, only one appeared in her own life time and that was not in the nature of original work. *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields* (1876) comprises 165 lyrics by about a hundred French poets, (translated into English mostly by her, only eight of the pieces including the much-praised 'Still barred thy door—the far east glows being by her sister Aru. Edmund Gosse's description of the volume as 'a wonderful mixture of strength and weakness'⁵¹ is a just evaluation. *Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan* (1882) published posthumously shows how Keatsian in pace was the progress achieved by Toru Dutt during the last two years of her life. Two of these ballads deal with the archetypes of Indian womanhood, Sita and Savitri; four narrate the legends of youngsters, Dhruva, Buttoo, Sindhu and Prehlad; one recounts a legend about the goddess Uma; and Lakshman and king Bharata are the other characters that figure here. As this list indicates, Toru Dutt is the first Indian English poet to make an extensive use of Indian myth and legend, though scattered references to these had been employed by her predecessors. Furthermore, her treatment of these

legends reveals, on the whole, an instinctive understanding of the spirit underlying them, though as a recent Christian convert living in a half- anglicized environment at home, she occasionally betrays certain inadequacies. She sings of Savitri's matchless wifely devotion, her faith in the omnipotence of fate and her belief in Maya; Sunneetee's enunciation of the doctrine of Karma, and Prehlad's pantheism with an insider's sense of conviction. At the same time, in 'The Royal Ascetic and the Hind,' she is tempted, at the end, to read a Christian sermon on Divine Love to the reader, thus missing the point of the original tale in the Vishnu Parana, which seeks to emphasize the need to concentrate all one's thoughts not on a worldly being, but on God, at the moment of death.

Toru Dutt's poetic technique shows a sure grasp of more than one poetic mode. 'Savitri' reveals her skill in brisk narration; 'Lakshman' a keen sense of drama, and the sonnet 'Baug- maree' —one of the seven 'miscellaneous poems' included in the collection—a flair for description. But it is again a mark of her peculiar ambivalence that she misses altogether the dramatic irony inherent in the finale of the story of Sindhu (better known as 'Sravana'), where the prophecy of the boy's hapless parents that King Dasaratha too would die of grief at parting from a child comes like a fortunate curse to the King who is childless. Her imagery makes evocative use of local colour. The forest in which Buttoo wanders is full of 'the sombre soul', 'the bitter neem' and 'the seemul, gorgeous as a bride', though one wonders how the 'Pampas', more typical of South America, have found their roots here. A jarring note is similarly struck when the peacocks in Sindhu's forest are endowed with 'Argus wings'. But in describing the Seemul's red flowers she writes what is perhaps her most memorable line: 'Red, red, and startling like a trumpet's sound'—an

image surprisingly modern in its use of synaesthesia, a device used so effectively by Edith Sitwell.

Her diction is naturally of the Victorian romantic school, and true to the Ballad motif, she employs archaisms like 'hight' and 'dight'. She gives ample evidence of her prosodic skill in employing different forms like the Ballad measure with its variations (eight syllable quatrain; a mixture of eight and six syllables; lines arranged in eight and twelve line units); Blank verse; five, eight and eleven line stanza forms, and the sonnet. Unlike Sarojini Naidu, she is no singer, and her short poems, like what is perhaps her best-known single piece, 'Our Casuarina Tree', often strike a note of nostalgia. In her narratives she is sometimes flat-footed as in, 'Savitri liked her new life much' and 'Can we in such / A matter delicate, proceed?' Her artistic immaturity is also revealed when, ignoring the lesson to be learned from Milton's deliberate vagueness in his description of Death in *Paradise Lost*, Book II ('The other shape/If shape is might be called that shape had none') she attempts a detailed description of Yama, the god of Death ('His skin was dark as bronze' etc.) and fails to create the desired effect of awe and terror. And at one place she even descends to bathos, when she makes Savitri take her husband's soul, 'no bigger than a thumb', and run to his lifeless body in which she presumably inserts it, like a clever housewife armed with a do-it-yourself kit swiftly fitting a spare part to a faulty kitchen stove.

But none of these failings is such as a chance to grow .and mature would not have easily corrected. What is most impressive about Toru Dutt's poetry is its virtually total freedom from imitation (in contrast with Kashiprasad Ghose and M.M. Dutt) at an age when most writers are in their artistic swaddling clothes. She quotes from Pope and Wordsworth, but it would be difficult to cite definite examples of psittacism in her verse. This indicates that hers

was an individual talent capable of growing according to the laws of its own nature. It is therefore all the more sad that she died Keatslike, before her pen had gleaned her 'teaming brain.' Edmund Gosse's well-known description of her as 'this fragile blossom of song'² is certainly misleading. There is nothing 'Glass Menagerie' like about Toru Dutt's poetry. Her best work has the qualities of a quiet strength, of deep emotion held under artistic restraint and an acute awareness of the abiding values of Indian life. Permitted a few more years of life, she could have proved capable of far greater things, as her actual achievement, though slender, unmistakably indicates.

Toru Dutt's authenticity stands out in sharp relief, when one turns to Behramji Merwanji Malabari (1853-1912), whose *The Indian Muse in English Garb* (1876) appeared in the same year as Toru Dutt's first collection. There is more of the 'English garb' (and that too soiled by the Indian dust) than of the 'Indian Muse' in this slim collection of 32 pieces. It opens with half a dozen specimens of occasional verse, celebrating the 'great and Heav'n-directed Sovereign' Queen Victoria, the 'Sun of India', i.e., the Prince of Wales, and the Prince consort. Even personal emotion fails to give wings to Malabari's pedestrian muse. While lamenting the death of his benefactor, Dr. John Wilson, the best he can manage is 'those briny pearls... trembling in your widow's eyes.' The exercises in social criticism like 'The Stages of a Hindu Female Life' and 'Nature Triumphs over Caste', with their stereotyped mouthing of conventional sentiment do more credit to Malabari's reformists zeal than to his muse. Pieces like 'The Folly of War' and 'Defence of Time' show his pitiful attempts to run with the Neo-classical hare, while in those like 'An Ode to Night' and 'Lost Love', he tries unsuccessfully to hunt with the romantic hounds. Atrocious rhymes like 'slavery-mockery' and 'misery-memory' tell an equally dismal tale about Malabari's technique. His best

effort is 'A Sketch'—a lively autobiographical piece in Popean Heroic couplets, in which Malabari for once happily gives free rein to his talent for satirical observation of men and manners, which is seen to far better advantage in his prose works.

Apart from Malabari, the then Bombay presidency also heard contemporary minor voices like a fellow-Parsi, Cowasji Nowrosi Vesuvala (*Courting the Muse*, 1879); the poet who wrote under the 'spicy' name 'Chili Chutnee' (*Social Scraps and Satires*, 1878), M.M. Kunte (*The Risi*, 1879), and Nagesh Wishwanath Pal '(1860-1920) who, like Malabari, makes a better showing as a prose writer. His *The Angel of Misfortune: A Fairy Tale* (1904) is a romantic narrative of about 5000 lines in ten books, recounting the legend of King Vikramaditya of Avanti and Ujjain, his relentless persecution by the god Shani, 'the Angel of Misfortune' and his final deliverance through the love of Princess Indira, daughter of the ruler of Champa. Writing under the inevitable shadow of his Romantic and Victorian masters, Pal tells his tale competently in derivative blank verse but unlike Toru Dutt, he cannot make his legend pulsate with life.

It was, however, not Bombay, but Bengal—the first home of Indian English literature—that was to continue to dominate the poetic scene for many more years. Romesh Chunder Dutt (1848-1909), a cousin of Toru Dutt, was an Indian Civil Service official who retired voluntarily at the age of forty-nine in order to devote himself to scholarly and creative writing. He wrote in both Bengali and English; all his original creative work was in Bengali and his English verse all in the form of translations, while he wrote reflective and critical prose in English. His *Lays of Ancient India* (1894) is a collection of workmanlike verse translations from Sanskrit and Prakrit classics including the Rigveda, the Upanishads, Kalidasa and Bharavi, and Buddhist texts like

theDhammapada. The translations of the Mahabharata (1895) and the Ramayana (1899) are a far more ambitious undertaking. Dutt's aim was to produce condensed versions of these two great Indian epics; and the method he adopts is not abridgement, but the selection of major incidents for complete translation, with the linking up of these portions by short connecting notes. He thus reduces the 48,000 lines of the Ramayanaand the 200,000 of the Mahabharata to 4,000 each; and copying the model of the Western epic, he adopts the twelve book structure, whereas the Sanskrit Ramayana contains seven kandas and the Mahabharata eighteen parvas. In his epilogue to the translation of the Mahabharata, Dutt claims to have tried to preserve something of the 'musical movement' of the original in the English translation. With this aim in view, he employs the 'Locksley Hall' metre as the 'nearest equivalent' to the Anustubh or slokametre of his originals.

If the epic sweep and complexity of these Hindu classics is inevitably lost in Dutt's condensations, the spirit of the originals also evaporates as a result of this extremely unhappy metrical choice. The sloka metre, with a pause dividing each line into two parts, has the qualities of simplicity, vigour and energy, native to folk poetry, and lends itself easily to trenchant and frequently epigrammatic expression. With its easy flexibility, it is also capable of almost endless varieties of mood, tone and effect. These are precisely the qualities which the 'Locksley Hall' metre, with its jingling rhythm (which inevitably palls when served in large doses), its uniform flow and its sophistication and polish, singularly lacks. Furthermore, in order to fill in the long flowing lines of his chosen measure, the translator is often compelled to use a lot of padding, thus disturbing the taut structure of the original. For instance, Sita's memorable words to Rama in the Ayodhyakanda:

Na pita natmajb natma na mata na sakhljanah lha pretya qa
narlnam patirekd gatih sada

are translated extremely loosely as 'Sire nor son nor loving brother rules the wedded woman's state/With her lord she falls or rises, with her consort courts her fate.' Here, the concentrated epigrammatic force of the last four key words is irretrievably lost in the diffuse second line of Dutt's rendering which contains more than three times the words in the original without a third of its clinching quality. While acknowledging fully Dutt's services in making these two great Hindu epics easily accessible to the Western reader in the popular idiom of late Victorianism, the final verdict on his translations must be the same as that well-known assessment of Pope's Homer: 'A pretty poem . . . but not Homer'.

Among the younger contemporaries of R.C. Dutt was Manmohan Ghose (1869-1924), whose poetic career is a classic example of how the lack of roots stunts the growth of an artist cursed with 'an exile's heart' in his bosom. Educated in a convent school away from home, Manmohan was sent to England for higher education at the age of ten. English became his first language and his own mother tongue remained almost a closed book to him. His overpowering sense of alienation was accentuated by an unhappy childhood and adolescence. He never perhaps recovered fully from the childhood trauma of his mother's insanity and his father's sternness. (He describes his father as 'so strangely unsentimental that I am assured he would vivisect me if he thought that was my highest good.'²⁴) As he once wrote to Laurence Binyon, 'Thus from childhood I was subject to fits of gloom and despondency which grew with my age... . Also, I believe there is something repulsive about me. Nobody ever took a liking to me. ... As a boy I often perceived with jealousy that my brothers were always

perferred to me.' Going upto Oxford in 1887, where he specialized in classical literature, he made friends with the poets of the Decadent school and had his poems published in the collection *Primavera* of which Binyon was one of the editors. Unwilling to return to India after his graduation, he once wrote to Binyon, 'I shall try to persuade my father to let me stay in England for good; I am sure with the tastes I have I shall be of no use in India '2* And again, 'There is nothing I dread so much as going back to India. I feel quite at home with my surroundings here. ... There I should be utterly out of sympathy with everything. I know neither the people nor the language—all is strange and alien. I am fourfifths an Englishman, if not entirely one; and it is in England I should do the most good to my country and myself.'²¹ But all his efforts to get a post in the British Museum and the civil service failed. Compelled to return to India in 1894, after the death of his father, he became a professor of English in a Government college in Bengal. Utterly frustrated and totally alienated from the life around, he wrote to Binyon, 'Green things are indeed wonderful here, but brown things (that is man) is absurdly out of sympathy with me.' In another letter he laments, 'For years not a friendly step has crossed my threshold. With English people in India there can be only a nodding acquaintance or official connection, and with Indians my purely English upbringing and breeding puts me out of harmony; denationalised, that is then the word for me.' His marriage in 1898 and the subsequent birth of a daughter brought him a brief spell of happiness, before tragedy struck in 1905, when his wife was permanently paralysed by a heavy fall, though she lingered on, with intermittent spells of recovery till her death in 1918. Manmohan himself died six years later, a blind, broken man, who had planned just a few months before to settle down in England after his imminent retirement.

Manmohan Ghose's poems in *Primavera* (1890), which also included the work of Stephen Phillips, Laurence Binyon and Arthur Cripps, are typical of the mood of world-weariness and yearning and the colourful aestheticism of the Eighteen Nineties. *Love Songs and Elegies* (1898), while expressing the same strain more effectively, adds to it a celebration of Nature, and a surer command of image and phrase. *Songs of Love and Death* (1926), published posthumously, shows the poet still lost in the fin de siècle world, as a lyric like 'London' ('This is London.

I lie and twine in the root of things') shows. *Orphic Mysteries* ('Songs of Pain, Passion and the Mystery of Death') and *Immortal Eve* ('Songs of the Triumph and Mystery of Beauty') were the products of a lyric upsurge following the death of the poet's wife in 1918, though they were published as late as in 1974, in the collected edition. Here, the poet struggles through a direct and often moving expression of personal sorrow towards consolation and the reassurance of a reunion: 'You my love/ Did with the roses burn/where you are gone I shall not fear/ With roses to return.' *Perseus, the Gorgon Slayer*, an epic, planned as a magnum opus, was begun in 1898 but abandoned in 1914, under official pressure, consequent to unfounded allegations that it was a seditious political allegory. This fragment of six (out of the projected twelve) books runs to about 7500 lines of blank verse, and was to have for its central theme the idea of progress in human history and the slaying of the spirit of stagnation and annihilation (Medusa), which makes progress possible. An elegant pastiche entirely classical in conception and execution, this is a copy-book example of the 'epic delusion' to which Indian English poets of the Nineteenth century, like their American counterparts have often succumbed. *Nollo and Damayanti*, a verse drama begun in 1916, after the abandonment of *Perseus, the Gorgon Slayer*, also remained incomplete and is of interest

chiefly as a rather belated attempt to handle Indian poetic material, though the principal characters here are shadows of Shakespearian figures bearing Indian names. *Adam Alarmed in Paradise* (1918), a 'lyric epic', also remained a fragment.

Manmohan Ghose's work reveals a limited but genuine poetic talent which, however, failed to grow to its fullest stature. Hovering all through his life between the two worlds of the England of the Eighteen Nineties and India—the one 'dead', and the other 'powerless to be born' for him—he never fulfilled the early promise of *Primavera*. His poetic equipment was by no means inconsiderable. Perfectly at home with the English language, he had an unfailing sense of rhythm and a fine sensitivity to the sound and feel of words. His delight in Nature and his passion for beauty were intense. His longer poems like 'Inda's Idol' show that along with a delicate lyricism, he was also capable of sustained poetic flight in the narrative mode. Unfortunately, his spiritual home was the England of the Age of Decadence. Long after he had been exiled from it, he continued to be unaware that Camelot had totally vanished, while he equally disastrously failed to realize the supreme importance of striking his roots in the land of his birth, to which he returned, not as a native but as an alien. He was therefore doomed to remain a minor figure and could not become a major voice.

A younger brother of Manmohan Ghose, Aurobindo Ghose (Sri Aurobindo) (1872-1950) provides a striking contrast. Though he had very much the same kind of upbringing as his elder brother, whom he accompanied to England at the age of seven, Sri Aurobindo found his roots in Indian culture and thought immediately on his return to India from Cambridge in 1893. Manmohan's career is a sad story of arrested artistic development; Sri Aurobindo's, a glorious

chronicle of progress from patriot to poet, yogi and seer. After a brief, quiet spell in Baroda State Service (1893-1906) and a much shorter but far more hectic one as a political radical (1906-10), which landed him in jail for one year, Sri Aurobindo escaped to Pondicherry (then a French possession) in 1910, and made it his permanent home thereafter. His incipient mystical leanings had become apparent immediately on his return to India. As he set foot on the Indian soil, 'a feeling of the Infinite pervading material space and the Immanent inhabiting material objects and bodies'³⁰ came to him, and instead of the murky pall that had surrounded him while in England, now 'a vast calm descended upon him and surrounded him and remained with him for long months afterwards.'³¹ These tendencies strengthened by yogic practices led, when he was in Alipore Jail, to a remarkable mystic experience which he described as 'Narayana Darshan'. Continuing his yoga at Pondicherry, he was joined in 1914 by a French lady, Madame Mirra Richard (later known as the 'Mother'), who recognised in him the guru of her own quest. After another significant spiritual experience characterized by him as the descent of a new power of consciousness, on 24 November 1926, Sri Aurobindo withdrew into complete seclusion for some time. He continued his spiritual quest and his literary work comprising poetry, drama, philosophical, religious, cultural and critical writings unceasingly till his death on 5 December 1950.

Sri Aurobindo's long poetic career spanning sixty years yielded an impressive volume of verse of several kinds—lyrical, narrative, philosophical, and epic. The early Short Poems (1890- 1900) are mostly minor verse of the 'romantic twilight' of the Eighteen Nineties, celebrating the characteristic themes of love, sorrow, death and liberty in a typically romantic style to which the introduction of Greek names like 'Glaucus' and 'Atheon' adds a classical touch, to

be expected of a young poet who, like his elder brother, was an accomplished classical scholar. The call of mystic India is already heard here in the *Envo5*, in which the poet hears Saraswati and the Ganges beckoning him. 0 1 *Short Poems 1895-1908*, written after Sri Aurobindo's return to India strike a note of rapturous mystic awareness in pieces like 'Invitation' and 'Revelation'. In . In 1930 and 1930-1950, he attempts reflective and symbolic verse as in 'The Rakshasas' and 'The Meditations of Mandavya'. Sri Aurobindo also wrote some remarkable sonnets, including 'Transformation', which distils the essence of a mystic experience and that trenchant comment on modern technology— 'A Dream of Surreal Science'. The Poems in *New Metres* included in *Collected Poems* (*Collected Works*, Vol. V) contain some of his best-known mystical lyrics like 'The Bird of Fire' (1933), 'Thought the Paraclete' (1934) and 'Rose of God' (1934) which are charged with an emotional rapture, a verbal exuberance and a passion for audacious technical innovation comparable to Hopkins in his most characteristic vein.

Among the longer poems of the early period are three complete narratives: 'Urvasie', 'Love and Death' and 'Baji Prabhou' [sic.] and six fragments including four with an Indian background—'The Rishi', 'Chitrangada', 'Uloupie' and 'The Tale of Nala', while of the remaining two, 'The Vigil of Thaliard' has the setting of a medieval chanson and 'Khaled of the Sea: An Arabian Romance' is an Eastern tale with Keatsian opulence. 'Urvasie', a poem of about 1300 lines of blank verse and in four cantos, is a retelling of the ancient Indian legend of King Pururavus and his love for the celestial damsel, Urvasie—a legend immortalized by Kalidasa in his play, *Vikramorvasia*. The poet makes a determined effort to give an epic cast to the narrative by employing epic similes, set descriptions and Miltonic diction, even experimenting (rather successfully at times) with the music of proper

names as in this catalogue of the celestial beauties: 'Menaca, Misracayshie, Mullica/Rumbha, Nelabha, Shela, Nolinie/Lolita, Lavonya and Tilottama—/Many delightful names.' There is also an unsuccessful attempt to secure a larger thematic dimension to this story of personal love, by the introduction in the closing stages of the poem of an inconclusive discussion of the question whether Pururavas has failed in his kingly duty to his country by opting for reunion with Urvashie in heaven. The elaborate epic machinery has the look of an intruder in this narrative with its essentially romantic ethos; and the best parts of the poem are those which offer a lyrical evocation of intense love, with all its agonies and ecstasies.

Love is also the central theme of 'Love and Death', a poem of about 1100 lines of blank verse based on an ancient Hindu legend with a remarkable resemblance to the Greek legend of Orpheus and Euridice. It is the story of Ruru, son of the rishi Bhrigu, and his beloved Pramadvava (called 'Priyamvada' by the poet, since he thought this would be 'more manageable to the English tongue'), the daughter of the celestial nymph, Menaka. Priyamvada dies of snake* bite and is carried to the nether world of Death. Ruru, braving heavy odds, finds his way into this region and brings her back. Here again an essentially lyrical narrative is unsuccessfully sought to be given an epic colouring. Ruru's descent into the nether world obviously recalls Homer, Virgil and Dante and there are the inevitable Miltonic similes, inversions and Latinized diction. Sri Aurobindo's claims for the poem are far more modest than those by some of his admirers. In a letter, he observes, 'For full success it (the poem) should have had a more faithfully Hindu colouring, but it was written a score of years ago (1899) when I had not penetrated to the heart of the Indian idea and its traditions, and the shadow of the Greek underworld and Tartarus with the sentiment of life and love and death which

hangs about them has got into the legendary framework of the Indian patala and hells.'

Of the three longer poems, 'Baji Prabhou' (a more correct transliteration, to the Maharashtrian ear, would have been 'Prabhu') is, on the whole, the most successful, in fulfilling its limited purpose of spirited narration of military heroism. As the Author's note on the poem points out, 'this poem is founded on the historical incident of the heroic self-sacrifice of Baji Prabhou Dcshpande, who to cover Shivaji's retreat, held the pass of Rangana for two hours with a small company of men against twelve thousand Moguls [sic]. Beyond the single fact of this great exploit there has been no attempt to preserve historical accuracy.'³³ While a creative artist is certainly entitled to take liberties—even great liberties—with historical fact, the poet's apparently hazy acquaintance with the story of Baji (known to every school boy in Baroda State where Sri Aurobindo lived at the time) has unfortunately made him miss the crucial point in the episode, thus affecting its very artistic potential. He makes his hero hold back the enemy until Shivaji returns from Raigurh in 'two brief hours'. Apart from the fact that this would have been an impossible feat in pre-aviation days, since Raigurh is more than a hundred miles from Rangana, the reasons for Shivaji's dash to Raigurh and back are left obscure, thus robbing Baji's heroic stand of any weighty purpose. In actual fact, Baji's task was to contain the enemy in the Rangana pass until Shivaji, fleeing from besieged Panhala to Vishalgad (about sixty miles away) reached the safety of the fort. (The pass was only a few miles away from Shivaji's destination). Immediately upon doing so, he was to fire the cannon and Baji died with the reassuring boom of the cannon making sweet music in his ears. (The poet has also confused the Moghul with the Adilshahi forces, which were actually pursuing Shivaji here—but that is a detail which should make only the historian

wince more). Sri Aurobindo's hero dies fighting, but without earning the satisfaction of knowing that he has ensured the safety of his master. This one flaw apart, 'Baji Prabhou' is a stirring narrative of battle in virile blank verse which has something of the energy and vigour of 'The Battle of Maldon', with some evocative description of the ragged Deccan landscape and many rousing rhetorical flourishes.

With his classical scholarship, Sri Aurobindo had a constant fascination for the quantitative metre. Obviously undaunted by Tennyson's denunciation of 'barbarous experiment, barbarous hexameters', and contrary to accepted opinion, he held that 'the freedom of the use of quantitative verse for the creation of new original rhythms would be enough to add a wide field to the large and opulent estate of English poetry. His two most ambitious efforts in quantitative hexameters are 'Ilion' and 'Ahana'. Of the proposed (and inevitable) twelve books of 'Ilion', an epic entirely on the Homeric pattern, the poet was able to complete only eight and a part of the ninth, totalling about 5000 lines. Set against the background of the Trojan War, the poem centres round the clash between Achilles and the Amazonian Queen Penthesilea. In addition to many Homeric characters, the poet also puts the entire epic machinery into operation, including catalogues of armies, descriptions of battle, long debates and the intervention of supernatural agencies, etc. To have sustained all this—and that too in a difficult metre—almost but not quite, to the bitter epic end (even Sri Aurobindo faltered, when actually in sight of his goal of twelve books) is indeed a tour de force. The one thing sadly lacking is the living force of the poet's own voice (which is heard unmistakably in 'Savitri'), there being too much of Homer and too little of Sri Aurobindo in 'Ilion'.

In 'Ahana', Sri Aurobindo has attempted an even more ambitious technical feat, viz., a long poem in more than 250

rhymed hexameter couplets. Ahana is the Divine Dawn who descends into the world and is greeted by the 'Hunters of Joy', 'the Seekers of Knowledge' and 'the Climbers in quest of Power'. She takes pity on Man and finally assures him, 'Thou shall not suffer always nor cry to me, lured and forsaken.' She invites him to 'follow the dance I shall teach thee'; this is the Divine Dance of Delight, symbolized in the Ras of Krishna's Brindavan. While the ordinary reader is likely to find the long- and opulent descriptions and the even longer rhetorical speeches in spacious hexameters frequently overpowering, the initiated will not fail to realise that 'Ahana' is, in many ways, a prologue to 'Savitri'. The central theme of the descent of the Divine to the earth, the symbolism of 'Dawn' and the allegorical figures like 'the Hunters of Joy', etc. distinctly anticipate 'Savitri'.

In fact, the entire poetic career of Sri Aurobindo may be seen as a long and arduous preparation for the writing of his magnum opus, 'Savitri' (first definitive edition, 1954). In the mystical short poems of the early and middle periods he had expressed his intimations of divinity briefly in the lyric mode; the longer narratives—'Urvashi', 'Love and Death' and 'Baji Prabhoo'—had all shown him to be preoccupied with the theme of death and separation and the different ways to neutralize these negative forces in human life. In the first two of these poems and in 'Ilion' he had trained himself in the epic mode. All these lessons learned earlier contributed to the making of 'Savitri', an ambitious epic of 23, 813 lines, in twelve books and forty-nine cantos, on which the poet worked for fifty years and more, though a part of the poem remained incomplete at the time of his death. Originally written as a simple legendary verse narrative in two parts and eight books, the work was continuously revised by the poet almost till the end of his days and shaped into an epic of humanity and divinity, of death and the life divine. Sri Aurobindo himself describes it

as 'a sort of poetic philosophy of the spirit and of life,'^{3*} and 'an experiment in mystic poetry, spiritual poetry cast into a symbolic figure.'^{**}

'Savitri' is a retelling of the well-known legend of prince Satyavan and Savitri, his devoted wife, who rescues him from Death, narrated in about 700 lines in the Mahabharata, and is a story of pure love conquering death. Sri Aurobindo makes no substantial changes in the outlines of his rather uncomplicated narrative, so far as the external action is concerned; but he invests the major characters with a symbolism all his own and also adds a new dimension of a highly complex inner action to the original. Thus, Aswapathy's yoga is only briefly mentioned in the original; Sri Aurobindo expands it to fill slightly less than half the poem. Similarly, Savitri's penance, described equally briefly in the Mahabharata story, is developed into a yoga which takes the poet 5,000 lines to expound. The final confrontation between Savitri and Death is also expanded more than tenfold, so as to enable the poet to present his spiritual message.

Both the main aim and the poetic strategy of 'Savitri' are indicated in the sub-title, 'A legend and a symbol'. The ancient Hindu legend has been made here a vehicle of Sri Aurobindo's symbolic expression of his own philosophy of Man's realization of the 'life divine' on this earth. The symbolism has been explained by Sri Aurobindo himself.³⁷ Savitri is 'The Divine Word, daughter of the sun, goddess of the Supreme Truth, who comes down and is born to save'; Satyavan is 'the Soul carrying the Divine Truth of Being within itself, but descended into the grip of death and ignorance'; and Aswapathy, Savitri's father, who does penance for eighteen years is 'the concentrated energy of spiritual endeavour' that helps man 'to rise from the mortal to the immortal planes'. Sri Aurobindo thus sings, not of

‘Arms and the Man’, but of the Spirit and the Woman incarnate as Truth. His epic recounts how Man (Aswapathy) through arduous spiritual endeavour succeeds in breaking through the barriers of mortal nature and finally compels the Divine (Savitri) to descend on to this earth to save the human soul (Satyavan) which is the prisoner of mortality from death.

For an epic of such immense length (it is twice as long as *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* put together and the only epic longer than it is Kazantzakis’s *Odyssey, a Modern Sequel*), ‘Savitri’ has a well-planned structure. Its twelve books are divided into three parts. The poem begins in *medias res* describing the day on which Satyavan is to die, but Part I comprising the first three books is devoted mainly to an exposition of Aswapathy’s spiritual quest, cast in the form of a retrospective narration. His yoga involves both descent into Night and ascent through carefully mapped out stages to the World Soul till he gains Supreme Knowledge. Not content with personal salvation and yearning to secure the Divine descent on to the earth, he prays to the Divine Mother, who responds and promises that ‘one shall descend and break the iron law/Change Nature’s doom to the lone Spirit’s power.’ Thus reassured, Aswapathy returns to the earth.

Part II (Books IV to VIII) narrates the story of Savitri’s birth and upbringing, her search for her life-mate, her insistence on marrying Satyavan (‘I know that thou—only thou art he’) in spite of Sage Narad’s warning that the youth is doomed to die within a year, and her brief but happy married life till the fateful day of Satyavan’s death. Book VIII describes Savitri’s yoga for fortifying herself for her coming encounter with Death. Her quest is for total self-realization, which alone can give her the power to defy Death. Quite as arduous as that of her father, this quest, also recounted in

equally carefully marked out stages, is described allegorically in terms of a long and difficult journey. At last, in the last chamber of a mystic cave, Savitri meets her 'secret soul': 'They rushed into each other and grew one.' Two more realizations follow: that her secret soul is supracosmic, and that she can achieve a superior consciousness and defeat the forces of Negation by suffering the world's sorrow. Armed with this realization Savitri returns to her daily routine, awaiting that last meeting with death. At the end of Part II, we are thus again back to the fateful day on which the action of the epic begins.

Part III (Books IX to XII) describes the struggle between Savitri and Death, who siezes the dead Satyavan's soul, as predicted. In the long debates between the two, Death, the 'dark-browed sophist' employs various strategies including casuistry, intimidation and blandishments, but Savitri refuses to accept defeat. Finally, upon Savitri's claim that she herself is part of the Divine Truth, Death challenges her to prove it by showing her form as Truth. As she does so, refulgent in all her divine glory, Death, utterly demoralized, frantically implores Night, Hell and the Inconscient for support, but in vain. As he panics and flees, Satyavan returns to life. In Book XI, Savitri finds Death himself now transformed into a Being of Light. A final trial, however, still awaits her. A voice from her own heart tempts her by suggesting that now that she has conquered Death, she and her husband need not return to the earth at all, but accept individual bliss in the higher world, since there is no guarantee that the whole of mankind can achieve what she has done. A celestial voice asks her four times to make up her mind. Refusing to be tempted, Savitri is firm in her resolve to return to the earth, 'to change the earthly life to life divine'. The Supreme now reassures her that her choice is right—that, in fact, it is His own choice. In a long speech,

He tells the youthful couple that they represent God's dual power—Savitri the 'Force' and Satyavan 'the soul/operating on earth to divinise it'. In the concluding book, Savitri and Satyavan return to 'the manyvoiced human world' in the evening, while Night 'in her bosom nursed a greater dawn*. It is noteworthy that the actual action of the epic takes place on a single day, as in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, all the rest being cast in the form of retrospective narration.

As this outline indicates, 'Savitri' is not just another imitative and stale exercise in the western epic mode; it is an utterly unconventional, highly original and deeply philosophical Hindu epic in which Sri Aurobindo has 'metred the rhythm-beats of eternity'. It is clearly an epic with a difference—a bold experiment in the epic genre. Unlike the traditional epic, it has very little action in it and most of what happens in it takes place on the symbolic plane, in the regions of inner reality. Instead of the usual epic canvas crowded with characters, it contains hardly half a dozen characters in all and the major figures are all symbolic. 'Savitri' is thus an 'inner epic', an epic of the soul and the Oversoul. Nor is it, like Toru Dutt's ballad, a simple retelling of an ancient Hindu myth. It is a distillation of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy of Integral Yoga, according to which 'God must be born on earth and be as Man/That Man being human may grow even as God.' Furthermore, its central thesis is in line with modern thinking about the evolution of Man and human consciousness. It has surprisingly close affinities to modern theories such as Bergson's idea of the *elan vital* and creative evolution and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's vision of a future, when Man graduating into a superior consciousness will grow into more than Man. 'Savitri' is thus an exciting and prophetic vision of a glorious future, not a dull recital of a dead past.

The metre of 'Savitri' is also an equally bold departure from established poetic practice. The poem is written in 'blank verse without enjambment (except rarely) each line a thing by itself and arranged in paragraphs of one, two, three, four or five lines (rarely a longer series), in an attempt to catch something of the Upanishadic and Kalidasian movement, as far as that is a possibility in English.'³⁸ As Sri Aurobindo adds, 'You can't take that as a model—it is too difficult a rhythm-structure to be a model.'³⁹ The obvious danger in the use of end-stopped blank verse in a poem of such dimensions is that of stiffness and rigidity in rhythm and there are passages in which the poet does pay the expected penalty. But it has often gone unnoticed that Sri Aurobindo secures considerable variety and flow of rhythm in a number of ways such as frequent modulation, changes in ordering of the line-units, alterations in pace by the admixture of Latinized and simple diction, constant shifts in the position of caesura in individual lines and consequent variations in texture. In fact, his technique is similar to that of Pope's heroic couplets in these respects and like Pope he too frequently achieves the epigrammatic quality time and again as in lines like 'To see her was a summons to adore.'

The diction and imagery of 'Savitri' are manifestly influenced by Miltonic and Romantic models—the obvious models available to Sri Aurobindo when he started writing the poem. The poem abounds in abstract, Latinized diction, Keatsian double adjectives and typically Romantic imagery. This has often led the prejudiced critic to dismiss it summarily as a totally derivative poem. Closer scrutiny reveals that the diction of the poem often attains a stark simplicity when occasion demands, as in Savitri's rejoinder to Death, 'I am, I love, I see, I act, I will.' And as for all those abstract words, the poet obviously needs them, not because he wants to out-Milton Milton, but because he has to deal with things of the spirit. Again, those who pigeonhole the

imagery of the poem as totally 'romantic' strangely ignore the great variety of images in 'Savitri', some of which are 'modern' in the best vein of poetry in the age of technology: for instance, the universe is an 'ocean of electrical energy' and 'Dark beings' come 'televised from the gulfs of night'. Surely, a poet who talks of the 'calculus of Destiny' and the ?

Mystic Morse of God' cannot be labelled a cringing camp-follower of Milton and Keats.

Other charges usually levelled at 'Savitri' are that it is too long, repetitious and vague. Mere length can surely be no flaw in an epic, the art of which consists in 'deliberate amplification' and only the casual reader and the careless critic will complain of repetition, in view of the sharply defined outlines of the entire narrative. In fact, though the motif of quest is repeated.

Aswapathy's yoga is clearly differentiated from that of Savitri in its various stages. And one strongly suspects that those who complain of vagueness in the narrative have simply not cared to read the detailed accounts of the journeys of Aswapathy and Savitri which are visualised in extremely vivid, concrete terms. To those who find the poem totally lacking in human interest (one recalls a similar complaint against Paradise Lost) the poet has already given an answer in his subtitle, 'a legend and a symbol'. And as already noted, those apt to dismiss 'Savitri' as another traditional exercise in 'weak-kneed spiritual poetry' have strangely shut their eyes to Sri Aurobindo's world-view and its urgent contemporary relevance.

It is, however, not easy to assess 'Savitri' as a work of art, in view of the poet's claim that there is 'a general overmind influence'⁴⁰ in the poem, and that the entire work, including

the corrections, came from a higher source. This has naturally led some of his admirers to regard the poem purely as 'a revelation',⁴¹ and surely no critical evaluation is at all possible under such conditions. If it is permissible to try to evaluate this kind of 'overmind' poetry by using the obviously limited tools of the present day critical mind—and of one individual mind with all its numerous inadequacies, in particular—one may notice several possible limitations. Even the most devout admirers will have to concede that the poem does have ups and downs of creative excellence inevitable in a composition of such huge proportions. Thus, the incomplete Book VIII ('The Book of Death') is easily the weakest part of the epic, where both thought and style suffer. In Book V ('The Book of Love') where the emphasis is clearly on the human rather than the symbolic aspect of the characters of Savitri and Satyavan, there is a definite lack of immediacy; and in the inordinately long speech of the Supreme at the close of Book XI ('The Book of Everlasting Day') the poem totters perilously on the edge of the gulf between philosophical poetry and versified philosophy. A few portions are so dense that they remain obscure to any but the most devout; nor are passages wanting where the end-stopped blank verse has become flat-footed and the authentic accents of Sri Aurobindo have been drowned in echoes from his models.

'Savitri' is thus a major epic but not a perfect poem. It is however, an audacious attempt to pour God's wine which is perpetually new—into the age-old epic bottle, transforming the receptacle itself in the process. With all its limitations—and they are many—it remains a landmark in Indian English poetry. The first major poetic voice in the annals of Indian English verse, Sri Aurobindo is a poet of varied achievement in lyric, narrative and epic modes.

Sri Aurobindo invites comparison with another prominent contemporary, who was actually his senior in age, but whose work in English began much later. Rabindranath Tagore (1861- 1941), hailed by Mahatma Gandhi as 'The Great Sentinel', was one of those versatile men of his Age, who touched and enriched modern Indian life at several points. Poet, dramatist, novelist, short story writer, composer, painter, thinker, educationist, nationalist and internationalist—such were the various roles that Tagore played with uniform distinction during his long and fruitful career. In his poetry (as in his work in the forms of drama and the short story), Tagore presents a case of literary bilingualism which is perhaps without a parallel in literary history. With the exception of a solitary poem—'The Child'(1931)—and a few verse epigrams originally written in English, he wrote in Bengali, and creatively translated some of his work into English with such remarkable success that his very first effort won him the Nobel Prize for literature and to this day he remains the only Indian English writer to win this distinction. Grandson of Prince Dwaraknath Tagore, who was an associate of Rammobun Roy, and son of Maharshi Debendra- nath, a saintly Brahmo Samaj leader, Rabindranath, born in a rich and cultured family, had little formal schooling, but his sharp poetic sensibility manifested itself very early. The semi- mystical experience (described in his Bengali poem, 'The Awakening of the Waterfall') at the age of twenty-one, when, as he stood watching the sun rise, 'all of a sudden a covering seemed to fall away from my eyes and I found the world bathed in a wonderful radiance, with waves of beauty and joy swelling on every side,'⁴² perhaps provides the key to Tagore's major poetry of which, as he himself said, the chief theme was 'the relation between the finite and the infinite.'⁴³ As a young man, his work as manager of the family estates in North Bengal involved frequent visits in a house-boat on inland waterways to the countryside. This brought opportunities for

introspection, contemplation of Nature in her changing moods and close acquaintance with rural life and character, all of which provided a secure base for most of his work both in verse and prose.

Tagore's career as an Indian English poet began by sheer accident. In 1912, on the eve of his departure to England for medical treatment, he tried his hand at translating some of his Bengali poems into English. The manuscript, taken to England, was lost in the Tube Railway, retrieved by Tagore's son Rathindranath, and came later to be rapturously hailed by William Rothenstein and W.B. Yeats. The rest is history. *Gitanjali* (1912) took the literary world of London by storm and was followed in quick succession by *The Gardener* (1913) and *The Crescent Moon* (1913). The award of the Nobel Prize came in the same year. More collections followed: *Fruit-Gathering* (1916), *Stray Birds* (1916), *Lover's Gift and Crossing* (1918) and *The Fugitive* (1921). By this time Tagore's reputation in the English-speaking world had already suffered a disastrous decline. Only two more volumes in English appeared: *Fireflies* (1928) and the posthumously published *Poems* (1942) of which all but the last nine were translated by Tagore himself.

The task of the assessment of Tagore as an Indian English poet is extremely difficult owing to a number of factors. First, his literary reputation in the English-speaking world has swung to the two opposite extremes of temporary adulation and unthinking condemnation; and what is even more puzzling is that the most vociferous of his latter-day detractors—W.B. Yeats and Ezra Pound, for instance—were themselves his gushing admirers earlier. Secondly, Tagore's own view of his English verse is highly ambivalent. He writes to his niece, 'I did not undertake this task in a spirit of reckless bravado; I simply felt an urge to recapture, through the medium of another language, the feelings and

sentiments which had created such a feast of joy within me in past days.'⁴⁴ And again, in another place, he declares, 'I was possessed by the pleasure of receiving anew my feelings as expressed in a foreign tongue. I was making fresh acquaintance with my own heart by dressing it in other clothes.' At the same time, he also tells his niece, 'That I cannot write English is such a patent fact that I never had even the vanity to feel ashamed of it. If anybody wrote an English note asking me to tea, I did not feel equal to answering it. Perhaps you think that by now I have got over that delusion, but in no way am I deluded that I have composed in English.'⁴⁸ It is difficult to reconcile this with what Tagore has said earlier to his niece in the same letter. Furthermore, Tagore's Bengali critics—naturally specially privileged—usually find themselves compelled to judge his English verse only in comparison with the Bengali original, and thus prejudge the issue of the real artistic worth of Tagore's English poetry (which they generally declare to be inferior to the Bengali version). It is manifest that a just and fair assessment of Tagore as an Indian English poet is possible only when none of these factors is allowed to colour one's judgement. Tagore's English verse must be evaluated solely on the strength of the English text before us, both as regards content and form, and every other consideration must be held irrelevant.

The central theme of *Gitanjali*, Tagore's finest achievement in English verse, is devotion and its motto is, 'I am here to sing thee songs.' (Poem No. xv). These songs, firmly rooted in the ancient tradition of Indian saint poetry, yet reveal a highly personal quest for the Divine, characterized by a great variety of moods and approaches. In his heart, the poet has 'cut a path where fall Thy feet.' Tagore sees God as 'unbroken perfection', as the giver of 'simple great gifts', 'infinite gifts' which 'come to me only on these very small hands of mine. Ages pass and still thou pourest and still

there is room to fill.' But on occasion, He is also the 'King of the fearful night', armed with the 'mighty sword, flashing as a flame, heavy as a bolt of thunder.' He is everywhere, the light of his music 'illumines the world'; 'every moment and every age, every day and every night, he comes, comes, ever comes.' He is not to be found in the temple; 'he is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the pathmaker is breaking stones.' Hence, deliverance is not for the poet in renunciation; for one need not give up this world, itself a beautiful creation of God, in order to reach Him (this is one of the key ideas in all Tagore's work). Hence again, mortality is no tragedy, for Death is only God's servant and messenger, and when he arrives, the poet can say, 'When I go from here let this be my parting word, that what I have seen is unsurpassable' (lines which were reportedly quoted by Wilfred Owen to his mother upon going to the War) The poet adds, 'In this playhouse of infinite forms I have had my play and here have I caught sight of Him that is formless.' But Tagore's pilgrimage is not entirely a comfortable pilgrimage of joy. There are moments of despair and frustration too, in it. At one place, the poet laments, 'He came and sat by my side but I woke not. What a cursed sleep it was, O miserable me!. . .Alas, why are my nights all thus lost?' He also ruefully realizes that he is a prisoner, who forged his own chain 'very carefully'; and at another place he watches helplessly as 'they break into my sacred shrine, strong and turbulent, and snatch with unholy greed the offerings from God's altar.' Pitifully, he prays to God to 'strike, strike at the root of penury in my heart.' Tagore's final cry, however, is: 'Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day back to their mountain nests let all my life take its voyage to its eternal home in one salutation to thee.'

The hundred and odd pieces in Gitanjati, bound by the central thread of the devotional quest, exhibit a great variety of

form also—a feature surprisingly ignored by those who have hastened to accuse Tagore of monotony. Apart from the fact that they vary substantially in length, according to idea and mood, they also range from a brief lyric cry (No. XLV) to dramatic episode (No. L); and from allegory (No. LXIV) to rhetorical flourish (No. XXXV). The style too shows a corresponding variety of expression. In moments of lyrical intensity it takes wing, propelled by rhythmical repetition, alliteration and assonance, as in ‘Have you not heard his silent steps? He comes, comes, ever comes’; and ‘Light, my light, the worldfilling light, the eye-kissing light, heart-sweetening light.’ It, however, can also move appropriately nearer to the no man’s land of poetic prose, when a strong narrative element demands it, as in: ‘I had gone a-begging from door to door in the village path, when thy golden chariot appeared in the distance like a gorgeous dream and I wondered who was this King of all kings. Above all, whatever the mode of expression, there is always a verbal control, a precision of imagery and an unmistakable sense of disciplined rhythm as in Whitman at his best, though the tone is far quieter, the harmonies more muted and the general impression one of delicacy and grace rather than energy and force.

The Gardener mostly presents Tagore, the poet of love. Possibly influenced by Browning of whom he was a great admirer, Tagore exhibits a Browningsque variety and complexity in his love poetry, though his setting, unlike that of the British poet, is invariably rural and feudal. Like Browning, Tagore too is capable of both the subjective and objective approaches, and can offer both a direct outpouring of emotion and the poetry of situations, of which the very first piece in the Gardener (The dialogue between the Servant and the Queen) is a fine example. Furthermore, unlike most love poets (and here his resemblance to Browning is specially marked), Tagore is able to present both

the male and the female points of view in love. For the lover in Tagore, Love has many facets. It can be an intense and eager longing, an all-enveloping passion ('Like a bird losing its way I am caught'), a force which compels total self-effacement even in a male ('If you would have it so, I will end my singing.') It is felt as a debilitating influence ('Free me from the bonds of your sweetness, my love'); but it is fulfilment also ('for a few fragrant hours we two have been made immortal'). In a moment of acute introspection, love is also seen as an evanescent spiritual essence that eludes human grasp ('I try to grasp the beauty; it eludes me, leaving only the body in my hands. Baffled and weary I come back'—a thought that is strongly reminiscent of Browning's 'Two in the Campagna'). For the Tagore woman too, love has many moods and many voices. It is shy, timid and unspoken on the one hand ('For very shame I could not say, "she is I, young traveller, she is I" ') and capricious and self-willed on the other (Isharply chid him and said "Go" ... I weep and ask my heart, "why does he not come back?"). It involves both frustration ('Your path lies open before you, but you have cut off my return') and complete self-surrender ('But the young Prince did pass by our door, and I flung the jewel from my breast before his path'). In form and style *The Gardener* makes no further advance; on the other hand, there are already tell-tale signs of a tendency to a general slackening in rhythm, a relaxing of verbal discipline, a loss of spontaneity and freshness and occasional lapses in taste (e.g. 'saved from the shivering shame of the shelterless', LVI).

The Tagore magic is, however, still strong enough in *The Crescent Moon*, the chief motif in which is childhood. Poetry of childhood is of two kinds: it may either offer the outsider's—the adult view of the child, or the insider's—the child's point of view. Tagore attempts both with frequent success. Looking at the child with adult eyes, Tagore mostly

gives us the typically romantic view of childhood, inevitably lapsing on occasion into sheer namby-pamby. At the same time, in a piece like 'On the Seashore' ('On the seashore of endless worlds children meet' —an echo of which appears in Hart Crane's poem, 'The bottom of the sea is cruel')⁴⁸ he spontaneously invests the everyday picture of children playing on the seashore with a cosmic and symbolic significance, producing one of his most memorable poems. The 'insider' pieces reveal a true understanding of the child mind as in 'The Wicked Postman' ('Mother dear. . . Haven't you got a letter from father today?... I myself will write all father's letters. ... I shall write from A right up to K'); 'Superior' ('Mother, your baby is silly! She is so absolutely childish'); and 'Twelve O' clock' ('If twelve O' clock can come in the night, why can't the night come when it is twelve O' clock?'). It must, however, be noted that instances are not wanting, where the poet descends to the level of a clever prettiness also. There is a greater variety of situation here than in *The Gardener*, and a subdued, quiet humour is a new feature of style.

The later collections— *Fruit-Gathering*, *Lover's Gift* and *Crossing* and *The Fugitive* show a distinct decline in quality. Each, with its mixed fare, lacks the unity of theme of the earlier works. It is also clear that Tagore has, by now, become not only repetitive but stale and has very little new to offer by way of thought, mood or technique. Mostly gone too are the trenchancy of expression, the superb verbal control and the severe rhythmical discipline of the *Gitanjali* (an occasional flash like 'Rebelliously I put out the light in my house and your sky surprised me with its stars'—*Lover's Gift*, xxiii—only serves as a sad reminder of how much has irretrievably been lost). Only the *Last Poems* reveals glimpses of a new development. Written in declining years and often from the sick-bed, some of them are frightening records of a grim struggle with pain, sorrow and disillusion,

of a mind which at certain moments is not so sure of all that it had comfortably believed in earlier, though Tagore's basic ideas remain the same. The two collections of free verse epigrams— *Stray Birds* and *Fireflies* have undeservedly suffered neglect in the backwash of the general decline in Tagore's reputation in the West. Some of these chips from Tagore's poetic workshop are memorable utterances of an alert, reflective mind steeped in Hindu thought and at the same time keenly aware of the problems of the modern age. Apart from the delicate sensibility and the command of sharply visualized imagery of his best poetry, these epigrams often reveal a gift for ironic observation which has had little scope elsewhere in his verse.

'The Child'—the only published poem of considerable length Tagore wrote directly in English (the Bengali version, *Shishu Tirtha* was written later)—was directly inspired by a performance of the Oberammergau Passion play in Germany in 1930, though the 'leader' in the poem was perhaps modelled on Gandhi. It was written at the request of a German film company which wanted from him a script for a pageant of Indian life, though the film was never produced. This is a rather conventional allegory in which 'the Man of Faith', who leads the toiling and suffering multitudes on a long and arduous pilgrimage, is killed during the night by his despairing and impatient followers. They are later shocked at what they have done and panic, but the spirit of the victim leads them at dawn to a hut where a mother sits on a strawbed with a 'babe on her lap'. The poem concludes with the chorus, 'Victory to Man, the new-born, the everliving.' The crude symbolism, garish colours and general wordiness of 'The Child' stand in sharp contrast with the subtler effects of *The Gitanjali*.

Tagore's verse in English (as that in his mother tongue) is essentially lyrical in quality, though unlike in Bengali, it is

not the song-lyric that he attempts here. (But at least one of the Gitanjali pieces has successfully been set to music—No. LXV was once sung by Dame Isabella Thorndike.) His subjects are the elemental subjects of all lyrical poetry—God, Nature, Love, the Child, Life and Death, and he brings to his treatment of them the born lyric poet's simplicity, sensuousness and passion. His is a poetry steeped in the Indian ethos, because he sings with the Upanishads in his bones. His basic ideas are mostly from this source: God is no remote Absolute for him but is an entity embodying sat, chit and ananda; and the universe is a joyous expression of God's play; evil is but part of the Infinite Perfection; the finite world and the body are both real and good, and human love a step to divine; man must remain close to Nature for Nature is a manifestation of the Divine; all misery arises out of self-will and self-love and the antidote to these is universal brotherhood. As Jawaharlal Nehru puts it, 'He was in line with the rishis, the great sages of India, drawing from the wisdom of the ancient past and giving it a practical garb and meaning in the present. Thus, he gave India's own message in a new language in keeping with the yugadharma, the spirit of the times.'

Tagore's style, at its very best, skilfully controls the pliant rhythms of free verse combining 'the feminine grace of poetry with the virile power of prose.'¹ It is a style that derives its strength from the subtly controlled tension between its easy, colloquial idiom and stark simplicity on the one hand, and the antique flavour of archaisms like 'thee' and 'thou' and the strange colourfulness of the feudal imagery of king and prince, chariot and sword, garland and gold, on the other. Tagore is, of course, a very unequal poet. His fatal fluency often led to repetition and verbosity, sentimentality and vacuity. But this should not eclipse the shining authenticity of The Gitanjali. At his best,

Tagore remains a poet with a delicate sensibility deeply Indian in spirit.

Younger than both Sri Aurobindo and Tagore, Sarojini Naidu (1879-1949), however, won recognition in England much earlier. Daughter of a Bengali educationist settled in the former princely State of Hyderabad, Sarojini Naidu, nee Chatto- padhyaya, was a precocious child and started writing poetry at a very early age. Sailing to England when sixteen, she studied at London and Cambridge for three years. Here her poetic talent developed under the influence of the Rhymers' Club and the encouragement given by Arthur Symonds and Edmund Gosse. Rightly finding in her early verse 'the note of the mocking bird with a vengeance', Gosse advised her 'to set her poems firmly among the mountains, the gardens, the temples, to introduce to us the vivid population of her own voluptuous and unfamiliar province; in other words, to be a genuine Indian Poet of the Deccan, not a clever, machine-made imitator of English classics.'*2 On her return to India in 1898, she married Dr. Govindarajulu Naidu—an inter-caste and interprovincial marriage, which met with initial opposition from her parents. Her first volume of poetry. *The Golden Threshold* (1905) was followed by *The Bird of Time* (1912) and *The Broken Wing* (1917). Meanwhile, social reform and the freedom struggle had begun increasingly claiming her energies, and thereafter she wrote poetry only sporadically. Her collected poems appeared in *The Sceptred Flute* (1946). *Feather of the Dawn*, a small collection of lyrics written in 1927, was published posthumously in 1961. In the Gandhian age she became one of the foremost political figures of her generation (she was President of the Indian National Congress in 1925) and won fame as a leading orator. She continued to be active in public life after Independence also and was Governor of Uttar Pradesh when she died.

Sarojini Naidu's lyric art has been strongly influenced both by British romanticism—especially of The fin de siècle variety, and Persian and Urdu poetic modes, with their characteristic opulence. The century and a quarter of lyrics brought together in *The Sceptred Flute* are rather unsystematically grouped under eleven mutually overlapping sub-sections, the most significant of which are 'Folk Songs', 'Songs of Love and Death', 'Songs of the Springtime' and a sequence of love-lyrics entitled 'The Temple'. The folk-songs mostly take the form of dramatic lyrics in which the speakers represent groups of Indian folk plying their traditional occupations—e.g. 'Palanquin-Bearers', 'Wandering Singers', 'Indian Weavers' etc. Some of the pieces in a latter section entitled 'Indian Folk Songs' follow a similar strategy. Here are also songs celebrating traditional Indian mythology, legends and history which reveal the poet's catholicity of sympathy and secular outlook. A Hindu Brahmin domiciled in Muslim Hyderabad, she sings of both Krishna and Allah and Radha and Gulnar, with equal zest. Love is naturally one of her favourite subjects and her handling of this age-old theme is marked by a variety of approach, mood, and technique. While, in 'A Rajput Love-song', she recreates a dramatic situation against a typical Rajasthani back-drop, in 'A Love Song from the North' and 'A Persian Love Song', she employs the conventions of Hindi and Persian love poetry, respectively. 'The Temple' is easily one of the most remarkable sequences in Indian English poetry. Tracing the progress of love from 'The Gate of Delight', through 'The Path of Tears', ultimately to 'The Sanctuary', where it culminates in mystical self-surrender, it treats its subject with sensitivity and charm. The true-blue romantic that she is, she also revels in the 'pleasure of being sad' and designates herself an 'unwilling priestess' to the God of Pain, performing his 'inexorable rites'. 'How shall I cherish thee,' she asks, 'O precious pain?' A mind like this needs must be 'half in love

with easeful death'. Hence, like Emily Dickinson, 'the blind, ultimate silence of the dead' and 'the mute and mystic terror of the tomb' always fascinate her. In a weak moment, she pleads with Death: 'Tarry awhile, O Death, I cannot die/Till all my human hungers are fulfilled'; but being deeply grounded in Hindu philosophy, she is reassured by the thought that 'Life is a prism' of God's light, and Death 'the shadow' of His face. Her 'Coromandel Fishers' too refuse to panic when caught in a sea-storm, because they believe that 'He who holds the storm by the hair will hide in His breast our lives.'

The 'Songs of Springtime' contain some of Sarojini Naidu's most characteristic work. Here she finds 'the clue/To all the vernal joy', which her response to the colourful Indian scene with its gulmo ars and sirisas, champak and lotus buds, and koels anddhadikulas evokes. Her nature poetry is lighted up by her zestful and uninhibited joy in beauty, especially of spring, her favourite season. She sings, 'O let us fling all care away and lie alone and dream/'Neath tangled boughs of tamarind and molsari andneem/And bind our brows with jasmine sprays and play on carven flutes/To wake the slumbering serpent-kings among the banyan roots.' Like the Romantics, she regards Nature as a refuge from the cares of human life, though unlike Wordsworth she is hardly a Nature-mystic. Nor is a Keatsian, sensuous apprehension'of Nature her strong suit, though she does evoke the tropical magnificence of the Indian landscape as in 'The earth is a fire like a humming-bird's wing/And the sky like a king-fisher's feather.* She is at her weakest in her occasional and patriotic poems—all those songs, sonnets and odes addressed to India, Tilak and the rest. These pieces seldom rise above the level of commonplace sentiment and conventional expression and on the whole offer flashy rhetoric rather than authentic poetry—a surprising feature of the art of one whose patriotism was beyond question.

Sarojini Naidu's finest lyrics have a perfect structure and an exquisite finish, and she handles various metres and stanza-forms with consummate ease. To her, as to Rilke, 'singing was being.' Of all the Indian English poets of her generation, she has perhaps the finest ear and her mastery of word-music is indubitable (e.g. the line: 'The serpents are asleep among the poppies'). It is true that her diction and imagery often run into conventional romantic grooves (her lines are cluttered up with too many 'golden lamps of hope' and 'rapturous notes', etc.) but those who are tempted, on this account, to dismiss her entire work as a mere carbon copy of British romanticism ignore her evocative and original use of imagery drawn from the Indian scene (in her lyrics, night descends 'like a black panther from the caves of sleep' and the white river is 'curved like a tusk') which makes for unmistakable freshness.

The meagreness of her total poetic output after her early burst of song is one of the mysteries of Sarojini Naidu's poetic career and the reasons which brought her poetic career to an untimely end are not yet clear. Perhaps, giving to public life what could have gone to poetry, she failed to grow as an artist. Her verse, at its worst, suffers from sentimentality and vagueness; and occasionally the compulsions of rhyme appear to dictate terms to both emotion and logic. Her weaker lyrics seem precariously poised on the brink of sloppiness, and she has rightly been accused of much cloying sweetness and a lack of intellectual fibre. A committed romantic, she denied herself all-sided self-expression. This explains the curious fact that though she possessed a sharp wit and a fine comic sense (of which even Mahatma Gandhi, whom she once compared to Micky Mouse, was a victim) she nowhere allowed it to function in her poetry, which remains totally denuded of the 'high estate of laughter'.

By the standards of modern poetic taste, Sarojini Naidu's work is bound to appear hopelessly outdated; nevertheless, it remains both historically significant and intrinsically important. By winning recognition in England, she brought prestige to Indian English writing long before Tagore received the Nobel Prize; and her best poetry is not just a faded echo of the feeble voice of decadent romanticism, but an authentic Indian English lyric utterance exquisitely tuned to the composite Indian ethos, bringing home to the unbiased reader all the opulence, pageantry and charm of traditional Indian life, and the splendours of the Indian scene.

Sarojini Naidu's younger brother, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya (1898—) is a poet also cast, though somewhat less rigidly, in the romantic mould. Far more prolific than his better-known sister, he has, during the half-century between 1918 when his first collection of lyrics—*The Feast of Youth*—appeared and *Virgins and Vineyards* (1967), published numerous volumes of verse, the more significant of which are *The Magic Tree* (1922), *Poems and Plays* (1927) and *Spring in Winter* (1955). Such fatal fecundity must result in unevenness, and Chattopadhyaya's better poems have been engulfed in a mass of middlings. He is essentially a short distance runner, and his occasional attempts at the long poem, like 'The Garden of Isolation', and the sonnet sequence 'In Memoriam' in *Poems and Plays* are hardly successful. His themes are the staple of all romantic poetry—nostalgia, melancholy, passion for beauty, the changing moods of love, idealism and humanitarian compassion (which in his later verse takes on Marxian overtones). Full of direct echoes from Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley, Browning and Swinburne, his verse, unlike that of Sarojini Naidu, seems to find an individual voice only occasionally. An accomplished metrist, he has a sure command of rhythm and rhyme (when once challenged to find a rhyme for the

word 'month' which is supposed to have no word that rhymes with it, he came out with: 'This has been for me a very busy month/My work has gone up to 'n' plus oneth').⁵³ Though capable of the singing note at will, he is, on the whole, less of a singer than his sister; but his style sometimes attains a greater trenchancy than hers (e.g. 'The rich responsibility of the seed/Full of some future tree') and unlike her he can also surprise us with a sudden Hash of wit, as when he compares God and the self to two hands of the clock which meet 'once in every hour'; or hears Noon, the 'Mystic dog' utter 'loud barks of light'. Chattopadhyaya's later verse has shed most of the early lushness and exuberance and shows an increasing capacity for abstract thought and more controlled expression. Unfortunately, he has not yet been able to organise these later insights firmly enough to produce major poetry.

Of minor talent, Indian English poetry has indeed never felt a dearth. Among the many practitioners of verse whose work began during this period was Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) whose collected poems appeared much later, in 1947. For the ringing tones of his militant voice, however, the other harmony of prose proved a far more effective medium. Joseph Furtado (1872-1947), author of *Poems* (1901), *A Goan Fiddler* (1927), *Songs in Exile* (1938) and *Selected Poems* (1942, rev. ed. 1967), was probably the first Indian English poet to use pidgin English for comic purposes (e.g. 'Sly rogue, the Old Irani/Has made a lakh . . . /By mixing milk with pani/' 'Wouldn't mind a little majah', etc.). Among other writers of verse may be mentioned Raj Lakshi Debi (*The Hindu Wife or the Enchanted Fruit*, 1876), Jitendra Mohun Tagore (*Flights of Fancy*, 1881), T. Ramakrishna (*Tales of Ind and other Poems*, 1896); Nizamat Jung (*Sonnets*, 1917; *Islamic Poems*, 1935; *Poems*, 1954), A.M. Modi (*Spring Blossoms*, 1919); Ananda Acharya (*Snow-birds*, 1919; *Arctic Swallows*, 1927; *Samadhi Poems and Autumn Rains*, 1956);

Roby Dutta (Echoes from East and West, 1909; Poems, 1915); R.B. Paymaster (Navroziana or the Dawn of a New Era, 1917); P. Seshadri (Sonnets, 1914; Champak Leaves, 1923; In the Temple of Truth, 1925); A.F. Khabardar (The Silken Tassel, 1918); N.V. Thadani (The Triumph of Delhi and other Poems, 1916; Krishna's Flute and Other Poems, 1919; He Walked Alone, 1948); and M.B. Pithawalla (Sacred Sparks, 1920; Links with the Past, 1933).

Prose

The Indian renaissance of the nineteenth century produced prose of many types of which, as in the earlier period, the two most prominent were historical-political and religious-cultural prose; and understandably, what was earlier only a thin trickle has by now become a steady and even flow. The prose was prompted by the twofold impulse of the re-discovery of the Indian past and a strong awareness of the problems of the day. Biography, autobiography, belles-lettres and criticism still remain areas comparatively sparsely cultivated.

Prose of Thought:

As in the earlier period, Bengal and Bombay continue to dominate the scene, though now, at least in the beginning, Bombay, the birth-place of the Indian National Congress, leads the field. Dadabhai Naoroji (1825-1917), 'The Grand Old Man of India', was one of the earliest in a long line of freedom-fighters who shaped Indian history before Independence.

A founder-member of the London Indian Society, Member of the Royal Commission and Member of the British House of Commons, Dadabhai Naoroji bearded the British lion in its own den. In his *Poverty of India* (Parts I & II, 1873) and *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India* (1901), the burden of his argument is that British administrative and economic policies are undermining the real interests of India which can only be properly served by giving Indians fair representation in the government of their own country. His numerous speeches have been collected in *Essays, Speeches, Addresses and Writings* (1887) and *Speeches and Writings* (1916). The contrast between his Address as

President of the second session of the Indian National Congress held in Calcutta in 1886 and his Address at the twentysecond session held at the same place in 1906 reveals the change that came over his political thinking during the span of a generation. In the earlier Address he had observed, 'The people of England were sincere in their declaration made more than half a century ago that India was a sacred charge entrusted to their care by Providence, and that they were bound to administer for the good of India, to the glory of their own name, and the satisfaction of God.' In the later speech he declared, 'The British people would not allow themselves to be subjected for a single day to such an unnatural system of government as the one which had been imposed upon India for nearly a century and a half... Self-government is the only and chief remedy.'

Two of Dadabhai Naoroji's most illustrious pupils at the Elphinstone Institute, where he taught early in his career, were V.N. Mandlik and R.G. Bhandarkar. Vishwanath Narayan Mandlik (1833-89), a leading lawyer and a stickler for punctuality (once when he had to appear in a murder case in Poona but missed the train, he is said to have ordered a special train and reached his destination in time) he was a nominated member of both the Bombay Legislative Council and the Imperial Legislative Council in Calcutta. He founded and edited the weekly Native Opinion (1864-71) and wrote a standard manual of Hindu Law (1867). His Writings and Speeches were edited by N.V. Mandlik- in 1896. Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar (1837-1925), the 'Nestor of Indologists' in whose name the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute was founded in 1917, was one of the greatest orientalist of his age, besides being a leading religious and social reformer and educationist. While his Report on the Search for Sanskrit Manuscripts (6 vols, 1879-91) is a monumental collection of source material, his Early History of the Deccan (1884) and A Peep into the Early

History of India(1890) are the earliest significant works on Indian history by an Indian. His Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems appeared in 1913, and his Collected Works (4 volumes) in 1927-33.

Hailed as 'Rishi Ranade' by Srinivasa Sastri, Mahadev Govind Ranade (1842-1901) was a gentle colossus of the late nineteenth century. A scholar with virtually encyclopaedic interests, he was a patriot, a social and religious reformer and a thinker, who deeply influenced the intellectual life of his age. His Rise of the Maratha Power (1900) is, like Bhandarkar's histories, a pioneering effort which laid the foundations of historical research in Maharashtra. Making use, for the first time, of Maratha chronicles, it sought to link firmly the rise of the Marathas with the social and religious resurgence in Maharashtra during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and also boldly rehabilitated Shivaji. The only other work of Ranade published in his own lifetime was Essays in Indian Economics (1898) which amply justifies his description as the 'Father of Indian Economics'. Three collections of his speeches and writings published later are Religious and Social Reform (1902), Miscellaneous Writings (1915), and The Wisdom of a Modern Rishi (1942). Deeply grounded in the Hindu tradition, Ranade's mind had, at the same time, been enriched by avid study of modern western thought; and it is this synthesis of the East and the West that is the chief characteristic of his world view. A theist in religion, a moderate in politics and a liberal in social thought, he 'brought back life to Maharashtra, which had become a cold lump of flesh and bones', as Tilak, who had often crossed swords with him, said in a well-known obituary notice in Marathi in the Kesari. Another eminent judge, like Ranade, Badruddin Tyabji (1844-1906), was a Moderate leader, who presided over the third session of the Indian National Congress in 1887. An enlightened Muslim, he advocated

national integration which, he declared, did not militate against the preservation of Muslim values. There are copious extracts from his speeches and writings in his Life by G.A. Natesan (n.d.). In his brief career, Kashinath Trim buck Telang (1850-93) crowded much hectic activity in diverse fields such as law, journalism, politics, social reform, education, orientology and the development of vernacular literature. A founder-member of the Indian National Congress and the first Indian Vice-Chancellor of the University of Bombay, Telang was one of the most effective public speakers of his day. On his speech on the Revenue Jurisdiction Bill at a public meeting in Bombay in 1876, the editor of the Bombay Gazette made the comment: 'No Englishman can appreciate the flexibility of the .English language till he had heard it spoken by an educated and naturally clever native of India.'64' Of his Select Writings and Speeches (2 vols. n.d.), the most outstanding are the essays on the Ramayana and the Bhagavadgita in which Telang establishes the antiquity of these Hindu scriptures and refutes the charge that they had borrowed certain elements from Greek and Christian writings. A fellow jurist, N G. Chandavarkar (1855-1923) was a Moderate Congress leader and a social reformer. More interesting than his Speeches and Writing? (ed. L.V. Kaikini, 1911) is his autobiography, A Wrestling Soul (1955). Two prominent Parsi contemporaries of Ranade were Sir Pherozechah Merwanjee Mehta (1845-1915) and Sir Dinsha Edulji Wacha (1844-1936). 'Ferocious Mehta', an imperious personality, was the 'uncrowned king of Bombay' for well over a generation. In politics, however, his role was that of a gentle Moderate, like Ranade. 'I accept British rule, as Ranade did, as a dispensation so' wonderful . . . that it would be folly not to accept it as a declaration of God's will,' he said in his address as Chairman of the Reception Committee of the twentieth session of the Indian National Congress held in Bombay in 1904. His Speeches and Writings appeared in

1906, and Some Unpublished and Latest Speeches and Writings edited by J.R.V. Jeejeebhai in 1918. In Mehta's case, as in Dr. Johnson's, the man was greater than his works. Wacha, though older by an year, played the second Addle to Mehta. Though hardly as powerful a speaker as Sir Pherozechah, he was as active in politics and civic affairs and was a more copious writer. Apart from biographies of Premchand Roychand (1913) and J.N. Tata (1914) he wrote a volume of reminiscences, Shells from the Sands of Bombay: being my recollections and reminiscences(1360-75) (1920). His Speeches and Writings were published by Natesan, Madras (n.d.).

The era of moderate politics ended with the rise of Bal Gangadhar ('Lokamanya'=revered by the people) Tilak (1856*1920), the 'father of the Indian unrest'. Infusing a new spirit of militancy into Congress activities, he drew the lower middle class into the freedom struggle. His English speeches, collected in Writings and Speeches (1922) and Towards Independence. Samagra Lokamanya Tilak, Vol. VII (1975) reveal a rugged, aggressive and blunt personality, disdaining stylistic graces and relying exclusively on unvarnished logic, forthright argument and precise and clear presentation in expressing itself. The other side of Tilak—the erudite scholar and Indologist—is revealed in The Orion: Researches into the Antiquity of the Vedas (1893) and The Arctic Home of the Vedas (1903). Though his attempts here to stretch the date of the Vedas back to mid- fifth century B.C. have not received support from modern scholars, these are certainly no amateurish efforts, Tilak's learning being beyond cavil. His Gitarahasya (1915; English translation, 1935), a boldly activist interpretation of the Bhagavadgita was written in Marathi. Tilak's lieutenant, N.C. Kelkar (1872-1947) lacked both his master's virility and his charisma, but had a better appreciation of aesthetic values as seen in his

writings collected and edited by his son, K.N. Kelkar in *Pleasures and Privileges of the Pen* (1929).

Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866-1915), Tilak's younger contemporary, was the ablest disciple of Ranade and was acknowledged by Gandhi as his political guru. His *Speeches* (1908; 1916) and *Speeches and Writings: 3 Vols*, (1962) are characteristic of an earnest and upright, and gentle and cultured soul, wholly dedicated to his country's cause. His ideal is summed up in the following words from the Manifesto of the Servants of India Society, which he founded in 1905: 'Public life must be spiritualized. Love of country must so fill the heart that all else shall appear as of little moment by its side.' A Moderate in politics, Gokhale believed in negotiation and compromise, adjustment and persuasion and set for himself heroically high standards of probity. His prodigious memory, patient industry, careful preparation, balanced and fair presentation, sweet reasonableness in argument and mellifluous voice together made him an outstanding speaker. Lord Curzon, speaking in the House of Lords after Gokhale's death declared that 'the Indian statesman would have obtained a position of distinction in any parliament in the world, even in the House of Commons.' H.A. Fisher found his use of English 'exact and brilliant and entirely free from the redundancy and magniloquence which is sometimes imputed to Indian eloquence.'

In Bengal, the editorship of the *Hindoo Patriot* came after the death of Hurish Chunder Mukherji in 1860 to Kristo Das Pal (1834-84), who headed the paper with great distinction for almost a quarter century. Writing in *Concord* in 1887, G.A. Stacks, editor of the *Calcutta Review* observed, 'The old race of native writers who were masters of pure, polished and idiomatic English appears to have died out with- K.D. Pal '* According to the *Englishman*, 'as a speaker he stood

far ahead of any of his countrymen, and his utterances were in many respects superior even to those of his colleagues whose mother-tongue was English, and whose training had been entirely British.'88 His *Speeches and Minutes 1867-1881*, edited by Ramchandra Palit, were published in 1882. Keshub Chunder Sen (1838-84), under whose energetic leadership the Brahmo Samaj movement spread (but also split later), started the fortnightly, *Indian Mirror*, in 1861. An impressive public speaker, he lectured widely, mostly on religious subjects, both in India and England. His lectures, models of Victorian rhetoric, have been published in *Lectures in India* (1901); *The New Dispensation or The Religion of Harmony*, (Vol. I, 1903, Vol. II, 1910); and *Discourses and Writings* (1904). Sen emphasized the essential unity of all religions ('The grammar of modern theology must be condemned by every scientific man as bad grammar. It makes no mention of the copulative conjunction. The disjunctive "or" reigns supreme, the copulative "and" finds no place') and the need for social reform in India. His message is, 'India, absorb England! Asia, assimilate Christian Europe.'

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-94), renowned Bengali novelist and author of one of the earliest Indian English novels, wrote several essays in English, including 'On the origin of Hindu Festivals' (1870), 'Bengali Literature' (1871), 'The Study of Hindu Philosophy' (1873) and 'Vedic Literature' (1894). His spirited defence of Hinduism in *Letters on Hinduism* appeared in print in 1940, long after his death. Womesh Chunder Bonnerjee (1844-1906?), first president of the Indian National Congress (1885), established the London India Society in 1865, which later merged into the East Indian Association. His speeches are collected in *Life, Letters and Speeches of W.C. Bonnerjee* (1923) edited by K.L. Bandopadhyaya. Of the three notable Ghoshes of the period (apart from Manmohan Ghose and Sri

Aurodindo) Rashbihari Ghosh (1845-1921) and Lalmohan Ghosh (1849-1909) were Moderate Congress leaders. In his Welcome Address at the Calcutta Congress of 1908, Rashbihari declared that England 'came not as a conqueror but as a deliverer with the ready acquiescence of the people to heal and settle, to substitute order and good government for disorder and anarchy.' His Speeches were published in 1919 and Lalmohan's (2 vols.) in 1883-84. Motilal Ghosh (1847-1902) founded the well-known newspaper, Amrit Bazar Patrika in 1868. His Speeches and Writings appeared in 1935. Another Moderate Bengali leader, Ambica Charan Mazumdar (1850-1922) wrote Indian National Evolution—A Brief Survey of the Origin and Progress of the Indian National Congress (1915).

Romesh Chunder Dutt (1848-1909), whose poetry has already been considered, was an administrator with wide experience. Keenly aware of the political and economic problems of India, he brought his vast knowledge and experience to bear upon them in scholarly studies like The Peasantry of Bengal (1875), A History of Civilization in Ancient India (3 Vols:1889), Famine and Land Assessment in India (1900) and The Economic History of India (2 Vols, 1902 and 1904), which has been hailed as 'the first history of a colonial regime written from the point of view of the subject of a colonial empire. It contains, in essence, a preview of what came later to be called the economics of colonialism.'^{5*} Dutt's topics are ably researched, his analysis acute and his presentation well-documented; and he shows a remarkable forthrightness in the expression of his views. In criticizing British policies, he declares, 'I cannot and will not put fetters on my tongue.' Dutt is also a pioneer in both the literature of travel and literary history. In fact, his first published work was Three Years in Europe: 1869-1871 (1872, revised and enlarged ed., 1895), a travelogue marked by a keen sense of place and an eye for picturesque

detail. *Rambles in India: 1871-95* (1895) employs a similar strategy. His *The Literature of Bengal* (1879, rev. ed. 1895) is a survey, the concluding chapter of which ('General Intellectual Progress in the Nineteenth Century') is one of the earliest notable attempts to assess the impact of western ideas on Indian life and thought.

Dutt had a burning passion to achieve something worthwhile in his lifetime; a line he often used to quote was: 'life isn't a game; once lost, we play again'.⁴⁰ In spite of his own misgivings about writing in English, Dutt's pioneering efforts in several genres prove that he did not altogether fail his ideal. Dutt's friend, Surendranath Banerjea (1848-1925) was acclaimed by his age as perhaps its most powerful orator in English. Dismissed from the Indian Civil Service for a technical breach of administrative norms, he realized that he had suffered because 'I was an Indian, a member of a community that lay disorganized, had no public opinion and no voice in the councils of their Government'; and pledged himself to the political uplift of his people. He convened the first National Conference in 1883, which became the forerunner of the Indian National Congress. One of the founding fathers of the Congress, he presided twice over its deliberations and was an outstanding moderate leader eclipsed only with the rise of Gandhi. His *Speeches 1880-1908* (6 vols., 1890-1908) and *The Trumpet Voice of India: Speeches of Babu Surendranath Banerjea, Delivered in England in 1909* (1919) declared 'self-government within the empire as our goal and constitutional and lawful methods as the only means for its attainment'. In his autobiography, *A Nation in Making: Being the reminiscences of fifty years of public life* (1925), he claims 'to have had a high patriotic purpose', viz. to trace the growth of the national movement and to do justice to the early builders of the nation. More of a public than a private document, *A Nation in Making* is an apologia for Moderate politics Though

often long-winded and magniloquent (his Presidential speeches at the Congress Sessions at Poona (1895) and Ahmedabad (1902) run to 91 and 106 pages respectively), at his best Surendranath Banerjea was a master of the impassioned utterance. Another Bengali leader who faded away after the rise of Gandhi was Bipin Chandra Pal (1858-1932) of the once celebrated radical trio called 'Lal-Bal-Pal' (i.e. Lala Lajpat Rai, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and B.C. Pal). He wrote both on politics (Nationality and Empire, 1916; Indian Nationalism: Its Principles and Personalities. 1919) and religion (Introduction to the Study of Hinduism, 1908). The two volumes of his Memoirs of My Life and Times appeared in 1932 and 1951 respectively, and a collection of his writings and speeches in 1958. Pal's younger contemporary, Chittaranjan Das (1870-1925), obeying what was almost an unwritten law of the age, plunged into the freedom struggle and created so strong an impact that he came to be known as 'Deshabandhu' (friend of the nation). He wrote both lyrical verse and prose in Bengali; his English orations (Speeches) were published in 1918.

It was another trio—this time a purely Bengali one—which produced the most noteworthy prose of the period. It comprises Rabindranath Tagore, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo. As in the case of his verse, Rabindranath's career as a writer of English prose began years after he had already established a name in his mother tongue. Here again, a firm distinction must be made between his prose writings in Bengali translated by others into English and those written originally in English or translated into English by Tagore himself. The autobiographical works, My Boyhood Days and Reminiscences, belong to the first category and have therefore no place in this survey. Tagore's prose writings in English were delivered as lectures. The earliest was Sadhana (1913) (not to be confused with the Bengali journal by the same name which was brought out from 1891

to 1895). In these lectures delivered at Harvard University in the year in which he was to win the Nobel Prize for literature, we have a clear formulation of Tagore's philosophical position. He begins with a consideration of the relation of the individual to the universe; discusses the age-old problem of evil, and indicates the way to the realization of the Infinite, through intermediate stages such as realization in love, in action and realization of beauty. Tagore ends with a reiteration of the non-dualistic faith: 'Thou dwellest in me and I in Thee'. Most of the Sadhana lectures were 'either adaptations or elaborations of his earlier Bengali work, Dharma and the Santiniketan sermons.'

A conducted lecture-tour in the U.S.A. in 1916 yielded two more collections of speeches: Personality (1917) and Nationalism (1917). Personality touches on various subjects including the relationship between Man and Art, Man and Woman, Man and Nature and Man and God; and Tagore's educational ideas are expressed in the lecture, 'My School'. As in Sadhana, Tagore's basic position here also is non-dualistic: 'The one cry of the personal man has been to know the Supreme Person.* In Nationalism, the three points of reference are the West, Japan and India respectively. Tagore makes a distinction between society (a 'spontaneous self-expression of man as a social being') and nation (a 'political and economic union of people') and argues that before the British conquest Indian social life functioned undisturbed by political changes. The imperialistic 'nationalism'

Of the West has destroyed this fabric by ruthless political suppression and economic exploitation of the land. Predatory nationalism has given Western man mental and material power at the cost of moral strength, and is sure to destroy itself one day. Hence both Japan and India must guard against the temptation to ape the West in the name

of modernization; for 'true modernism is freedom of mind, not slavery of taste.' Tagore's warning to Japan not to 'lose her own soul' while learning from the West (which did not exactly endear him to that country then) was proved prophetic by the Second World War. For Tagore, the real problem of India is not political but social: 'Let our civilization take its firm stand upon its basis of social co-operation and not upon that of economic exploitation and conflict.* Nationalism sparkles with some of Tagore's most eloquent prose when he denounces western imperialism and its dangers. The ten lectures collected in *Creative Unity* (1922) do not add much by way of subject-matter or ideas, with the exception of a perceptive analysis of the East-West relationship in the essay. 'East and West'. Tagore argues that the real reason why 'the tvain' do not meet is because the West 'has not sent out its humanity to meet the man in the East, but only its machine.'

The Religion of Man (1930) comprises the Hibbert lectures delivered in Oxford at Manchester College in May 1930. The chief theme here, is 'the idea of the humanity of our God or the divinity of Man, the Eternal'. 'My religion', Tagore declares, 'is in the reconciliation of the Super-personal Man, the universal human spirit, in my own individual being.' While Tagore here again mainly restates the Vedio-Upanishadic position, the most interesting portions of the book are the autobiographical passages in which he traces the growth of his own religious opinions, characterizing his religion as 'a poet's religion', and talks about his educational thinking which led to the establishment of Santiniketan.

Man comprises two lectures delivered at the Andhra University, Waltair in 1937. These somewhat loosely argued discourses by the ageing writer touch upon various issues including the basic duality of man's nature, the essential unity of all religions, the advaita doctrine and the distinct

hope of the arrival of the Supreme Man. The same note of hope was struck in Tagore's last public utterance in prose, *Crisis in Civilization* (1941) which was translated from his Bengali original, *Sabhyatar Sankat*. Tagore's prose in English reveals him as an internationalist and a humanist preaching the gospel of universal harmony between Man and Man, Man and Nature, and Man and the Divine. While his thought, which has its sources in the Upanishads, the Gita, Buddhism, and Vaishnavism, is clearly derivative, there is an unmistakable ring of personal conviction in his words. They spring from a mind to which these age-old thoughts are not merely traditional truisms learnt by rote but living truths felt in the blood. Tagore's prose is remarkable less for qualities of precision and logical argumentation than for its frequent spells of impassioned, semi-poetic utterance.

Firmly grounded, like Tagore, in the Indian ethos, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) spoke with less charm and poetry but with more virility. Born Narendra Datta, Swami Vivekananda came under the spell of the noted mystic, Ramakrishna Paramahansa at the age of eighteen. Blessed, initiated and trained by him, Vivekananda founded, after his master's death, the Ramakrishna order of monks in 1886. His wanderings all over India during 1888-1892 and what he observed of the misery and degradation around him, confirmed him in his sense of mission. In December 1892, he spent three days in meditation on a rock off the coast at Kanyakumari, the southernmost tip of India (the spot where the Vivekananda memorial stands now). He is said to have had a spiritual experience here, during which he was bidden to take India's message to the West and to work for the uplift of his motherland. Sailing for the U.S. A. in May 1893, he attended the Parliament of Religions at Chicago. Here, in the Art Institute Building, on Monday, 11 September, 1893, at the fall end of the day and after repeated requests from the chairman, Vivekananda rose to

make a brief, extempore speech (unlike the other delegates who delivered prepared addresses) beginning with the historic words, 'Sisters and brothers of America'. In the words of Romain Rolland, it 'was like a tongue of flame. Among the grey wastes, of cold dissertation it fired the souls of the listening throng. When he woke up next morning, the obscure Indian monk found himself a celebrity. For the next three years, this 'Hindu hurricane' as the Americans described him, overran practically the entire United States, spreading the message of Hinduism; and later, lectured in England also, before returning to India in 1897. After another whirlwind tour from Colombo in the south, to Almora in the north, he established in 1898 the wellknown Ramakrishna Math at Belur, where he died in 1902. Vivekananda was a man with a two-fold mission. He wished to bring home to the West the true nature of Hinduism ('I have a message to the West as Buddha had a message to the East,' he said); and he aspired to work for the uplift of India. His Complete Works (Vols. I to VIII, 1907-1951) mostly consist of the spoken word. [Selections from Swami Vivekananda (1944; rev. ed., 1975) is a representative anthology]. In his lectures abroad, Vivekananda stresses the essential unity of all religions and the need to eschew sectarianism and fanaticism, and looks forward to the day when 'great men shall arise and cast off these kindergartens of religion and make vivid and powerful the true religion, the worship of the Spirit by the Spirit.' He finds this universal faith in Advaita Vedanta, which for him is 'the most scientific religion' and 'the fairest flower of philosophy and religion' in the world. He also elucidates the principles of Jnana, Karma, Bhakti and Raja yogas. Bold as his message to the west is, that to his own countrymen is 'bolder still'. The burden of his lectures in India is the current degradation of the country, and its causes and cure. The principal causes according to him are the fossilization of its thought-processes as a result of India's medieval insularity;

superstition and obscurantism ('Our religion is in the kitchen, our God is in the cooking pot and our religion is, "Don't touch me, I am holy." '); the devaluation in the status of woman; bad education, and the crippling diffidence of the modern Hindu Vivekananda advocates, a clear-cut programme of reform: India must rediscover her true religion, Adwaita in its pristine purity.

She must steer clear of both the Scylla of old superstitions and meaningless taboos of orthodoxy and the Charybdis of modern European materialism. Shedding all their diffidence, Indians must stand forth, strong and self-reliant. 'What we want is muscles of iron and nerves of steel'; 'Behold and fear not... We have to become Abhihi, fearless'; we must 'work, this is the time... for life is short.' Indulging merely in carping criticism is a negative attitude. 'The time has come for the re-building, the re-constructing. . . . The house has been cleansed; let it be inhabited anew. The road has been cleared. March ahead, children of the Aryas.' The name 'Hindu' is now a term of opprobrium; we must make it 'the highest word that any language can invent.' Our women, now weak, passive and dormant, must be given their rightful place in society and our present-day education which is entirely soulless must be made a 'manmaking', 'life-building' education. It must be on 'national lines' and 'through national methods as far as practical.' Resurgent India has a great mission: 'Once more the world must be conquered by India. This is the dream of my life, he declared.' In more than one lecture he tells his countrymen, 'Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached.'

Most of Vivekananda's speeches were delivered extempore, and not a little of their appeal was derived from his dominant personality which exuded a sense of both tranquillity and power. His principal assets were his large glowing eyes, the spontaneity and sincerity of his utterance,

his low, earnest delivery which made his words singularly impressive, and his voice 'rich as a bronze bell'* and 'grave without violent contrasts but with deep vibrations that filled both hall and hearts ' Vivekananda's thought can hardly be said to be strikingly original, its sources being clearly in the Hindu religious and philosophical tradition. He also claimed that in all he spoke he was inspired by his master. But as in the case of Tagore, the reader gets an unmistakable impression that the traditional message is being rediscovered by one who has actually lived his life in its effulgence.

Vivekananda's scholarship is sound, his argument generally logical and precise, and his style athletic and forceful. Though it has a striking rhetorical power, it carries no trace of any straining after effect. 'My ideal of language', he once said, 'is my master's language, most colloquial and yet most expressive.'" Like all great religious teachers he makes apt use of story and parable and a noteworthy feature is his use of analogies drawn from science, as when he compares the struggle of the individual soul to attain union with the Divine with that of a bubble of air in a glass of water to join the mass of air outside. Above all, the fact that the force of Vivekananda's words comes through after three quarters of a century after his death shows that his speeches continue to pulsate with life, though much water has flowed down the Ganga since that day in July 1902 when his mortal remains were consigned to the flames at Belur Math. Perhaps the most effective interpreter of Indian thought to the world, Vivekananda is a prophet with an imperishable -message to his own countrymen. Unlike the spoken word of Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo who, early in his career, had come under the Swami's influence, produced an enormous and varied mass of prose writings on religious, metaphysical, occult, social, political, cultural and literary subjects. His earliest prose writings were a series of

anonymous contributions to the Bombay journal, Induprakash Induprakash⁹⁴, entitled 'New Lamps for Old'. These nine essays are fiery political propaganda, advocating the kind of radical politics to which Sri Aurobindo subscribed in his youth. The series of articles on Bankimchandra Chatterjee also published in the Induprakash in 1894 represent his earliest notable attempt at literary criticism. Of his writings during 1902 and 1906 when his political work was carried on in secret, only Bhavani Mandir survives. This is a fervent celebration of the feminine principle incarnate as Goddess Bhavani. The unsigned articles in the Bande Mataram in 1906 also deal with current politics. After his acquittal in the Alipore conspiracy case in 1909, Sri Aurobindo started the Karmayogin, 'a weekly review of national Religion, Literature, Science, Philosophy etc.', which ran for one year. Prominent among the essays to appear here were 'A System of

National Education', and 'The National Value of Art'. Soon after his arrival at Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo founded the monthly Arya (1914-21), in which most of his later prose writings initially appeared. The Arya aimed at presenting 'asynthetic philosophy which might be a contribution to the thought of the new age that is coming upon us.' The various series of essays first published here and subsequently issued in book form broadly cover three areas: Religion and metaphysics, social, cultural and political issues and literary criticism. To the first category belong works such as Essays on the Gita (1928), The Life Divine (1939-40), Heraclitus (1941) and The Synthesis of Yoga (1948). Unlike some other noted commentators, Sri Aurobindo does not attempt a new interpretation in his Essays on the Gita. He tries to recapture the 'essential and living message' of the Gita, 'that in it which humanity has to seize for its perfection and its highest spiritual welfare.' Nevertheless, his characterization of the triune (knowledge-

devotion- works) way of the Gita as the means by which one can rise out of one's lower into one's 'supreme spiritual nature' is in keeping with his world-view in *The Life Divine*. *Heraclitus* is an illuminating comparative study of the Greek philosopher and Vedic-Upanishadic thought.

The Life Divine is easily the crown of Sri Aurobindo's writings in prose. This massive treatise of more than a thousand pages has for its central theme 'the affirmation of a divine life upon earth and an immortal sense in mortal existence.' It argues that man's highest aim is the manifestation of the divine in himself and the realization of God within and without. Human existence is a sort of refraction of the divine existence in inverted order of ascent and descent. The Divine descends from pure Existence through the play of Consciousness-Force and Bliss and the creative medium of Supermind into cosmic being. Man ascends from Matter through a developing life, soul and mind and the illuminating medium of Supermind towards the divine being. The knot of the two, the higher and the lower hemispheres, is where mind and supermind meet with a veil between them. 'The rending of the veil is the condition of the divine life in humanity; for by that rending, by the illuminating descent of the higher into the nature of the lower being, and the forceful ascent of the lower being into the nature of the higher, mind can recover its divine light in the all-comprehending supermind, the soul realize its divine self in the all-possessing, all-blissful Ananda, life re-possess its divine power in the play of omnipotent Consciousness-Force, and Matter open to its divine liberty as a form of divine Existence.' The goal of human evolution, according to Sri Aurobindo, is 'fullness of being, fullness of consciousness, fullness of life.' Human evolution must lead inevitably towards an evolution in the Knowledge, a self-finding and self-unfolding of the Spirit, a self-revelation of the Divinity in things in that true power of itself in Nature which is to us still

a Super nature.' The Life Divine is an ambitious metaphysical statement the sheer magnitude of which appears to be as forbidding as the abstruseness of its frequently repetitive argument. Yet, in its vastness of conception, the sweep of its intricate thought-structure, its penetrating vision, its bold insights and the uniform dignity and elevation of its style it has no equal in the history of Indian English prose. The Synthesis of Yoga, even longer than The Life Divine, is a complementary work, expounding in detail the strategy to be employed in achieving the goal set forth in the previous work. More practical in spirit than The Life Divine. The Synthesis of Yoga considers the existing systems of Yoga advocated by various thinkers in the past, notes the advantages and difficulties of each, and advocates an 'Integral Yoga', which radically differs from all these. While each of them involved the individual's ascent to the world of the spirit leading to personal salvation, 'integral yoga' aims at ascent to the Supermind only to make it descend to this earth for the salvation, not of an individual but of the entire human race.

The series of essays on cultural, social and political issues published serially in the Aiya have been collected in The Renaissance in India (1920), The Foundations of Indian Culture (1953), The Human Cycle (originally entitled The Psychology of Social Development) (1949), The Idea! of Human Unity (1919; revised ed. 1950) and War and Self-determination (1920; revised ed. 1962). While Foundations of Indian Culture is a spirited defence of the Indian tradition against the amateurish attack by William Archer in India and the Future (1917), The Renaissance in India is one of the most perceptive analyses of the nature of the Indian resurgence in the nineteenth century. In The Human Cycle Sri Aurobindo traces the evolution of social man from barbarism to the present rationalist state of civilization and posits a 'society founded upon spirituality' in future. The

Ideal of Human Unity and War and Self-determination were written at the time of the first World War. After exposing the inadequacies of the then current notions of state, nation and empire, Sri Aurobindo emphasizes the 'the necessity and inevitability of some kind of world-union ... a federation of free nationalities.'

The Arya essays on literary criticism have been collected in *The Future Poetry* (1953) to which Sri Aurobindo's letters on poetry, literature and art were added in the Centenary Library Edition (Vol. IX, 1971). The questions discussed here are the nature, constituents and techniques of poetry, the spirit and the development of British poetry, assessment of individual poets, and Sri Aurobindo's idea of the poetry of the future as the 'mantra' or 'self-effective language'. The most remarkable feature of Sri Aurobindo's literary criticism is that he studies poetry in general and British poetry in particular, not by employing second-hand tools borrowed from Western critics—the bane of much Indian English criticism, but as one steeped in ancient Indian literature and aesthetics and at the same time at home with the European tradition as well. This enables him to adopt a comparative approach and makes his survey of British poetry refreshingly original. His ideal of poetry is, by and large, in tune with the romantic one, and his defence of English classical metres is unlikely to receive wide support. He also appears to be mostly unaware of the poetic revolution ushered in by Eliot and the later Yeats. (In one of his letters, he declares as late as 1943 that contemporary English poetry 'has not yet produced anything very decisive, great or successful.'⁶⁶ But his taste is catholic enough to make him eulogize Whitman as 'the most Homeric voice since Homer.' With all its limitations, *The Future Poetry* remains an impres-

sive achievement in an area where the paucity of excellence is painfully evident. Sri Aurobindo's numerous other letters

on diverse topics ranging from religion to science and literature to Ashram life have been collected in many volumes. The short poetic essay, *The Mother* (1928), celebrating the 'divine Conscious Force that dominates all existence*' in her four forms representing 'Wisdom, Strength, Harmony and Perfection' is notable for its lyrical fervour. The last of Sri Aurobindo's prose writings, eight essays entitled *The Supramental Manifestation*, first appeared in the *Quarterly, Bulletin of Physical Education*, in 1949-50. There are also a host of other essays on Sanskrit, Greek and Bengali literature, translations, speeches notes and aphorisms now brought together in the exhaustive Birth Centenary Library Edition. Sri Aurobindo's style is Protean and shows itself capable of diverse tones and effects such as irony and satcasm in the *New Lamps for Old* and *Bande Mataram* essays, forensic skill in *The Renaissance in India*, elevation in *The Life Divine* and even playful banter in some of his letters to his disciples. In sheer amplitude and variety Sri Aurobindo has no equal among writers of Indian English prose. As compared to the Bombay and Bengal presidencies, north India produced fewer figures of national stature during this period. Among the most outstanding were Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya (1861-1946), Motilal Nehru (1861-1931), and Lala Lajpat Rai (1865-1928). Malaviya, twice president of the Indian National Congress (1909 and 1916) was an oriental scholar with distinct orthodox leanings, which made him a Hindu Mahasabha leader later. His speeches have been collected in *Speeches and Writings* (1919). Motilal Nehru, overshadowed by his illustrious son, Jawaharlal, was a prominent leader of the Swarajya Party. A selection of his speeches has appeared under the title, *A Voice of Freedom* (1961) edited by K.M. Panikkar and A. Pershad. Lala Lajpat Rai, the last of the celebrated trio Lal-Bal-Pal to be considered, was one of the greatest leaders of the Punjab. A public worker with an inclusive vision, he espoused several causes such as political emancipation,

religious, social and educational reform and socialism (of which he was one of the pioneers in India). He founded and edited the English paper, *The People*, and wrote several books including *Young Indip* (1917), and *The Political Future of India* (1918). His *The United States of America: A Hindu's Impressions and a Study* (1916) is an interesting account of his sojourn in the U.S.A., where he picked up his socialist ideas. Muslim political thought from North India is represented by Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-98), whose role in the reawakening of his people has already been considered. His *Causes of the Indian Revolt* (1858) was translated into English by Colvin and Graham in 1873 and his *Writings and Speeches* were edited by Shan Mohammed in 1972. In contrast with Badruddin Tyabji, the Moderate leader from Bombay, Syed Ahmed Khan, argued that the interests of the Muslims would be best served by remaining aloof from the Indian National Congress. Ameer Ali (1849-1928), author of *The Spirit of Islam* (1891) and *A Short History of the Saracens* (1916) was the first Indian Muslim to become a High Court Judge and member of the British Privy Council. He advocated a rediscovery of the basic principles of Islam and its former glory.

In the South, the first noteworthy name is that of Maharaja Sir Rama Varma of Travancore (1837-84), one of the earliest of enlightened Indian princes. Interested in the study of science, history and literature, he wrote both in Malayalam and English. A frequent contributor to the *Madras Athenaeum* in which he published a 'Political Sketch of Travancore' (1856), Rama Varma wrote in the *Indian Statesman* open letters with the heading 'Topics For Mr. F.N. Maltby' (The British Resident of Travancore) in 1858-59. These letters, which appeared under the nom de plume 'Brutus', caused quite a sensation in those days.** The Maharaja's Dewan, Raja Sir T. Madhava Rao (1828-91) was a brilliant administrator, who wrote regularly after his

retirement in 1882 in Madras newspapers under the pseudonyms. 'Native Thinker' and 'Native Observer'. His Three Addresses appeared in 1884 and his pamphlet, 'Hints on the Training of Native Children, by a Native Thinker' in 1889.

Among the prominent political figures in the south then was Sir S. Subramania Iyer (1842-1924), called the 'grand oldman of South India'. His Speeches and Writings (1918) have been edited by D.V. Gundappa. M. Veeraraghavachariar(1857-1906) founded The Hindu in 1878 and S. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar (1859-1923), who acquired it in 1905, made it one of the most influential English dailies in India. Sir P.S. Sivaswami Iyer (1864-1946) was a noted liberal leader. A Great Liberal: Speeches and Writings of Sivaswami Iyer, edited by K. Nilakantha Sastri appeared in 1965. The most renowned of the Southern Moderate leaders was V.S. Srinivasa Sastri (1869-1946). A disciple of G K. Gokhale, he was known as 'the silver-tongued orator of the Empire'. The Birth Centenary edition of his Speeches and Writings (2 Vols.) appeared in 1969. A representative selection is The Other Harmony (1945). Sastri's biographical studies include Life and Times of Sir Pherozeshah Mehta (1945), My Master Gokhale (1946) and Thumb-nail Sketches (1946), which consists of brief pen-portraits of Dadabhai Naoroji, Tilak, Gandhi and other political figures. Sastri's speeches reiterate the typical Moderate faith in the British connection. In a speech in London in 1921 he even called the British empire 'the greatest temple of freedom on this planet and hoped that it would be said of England that she 'took charge of a people divided from her by colour, by race and by culture. She fitted them for the tasks of the empire, and when the time was ripe she gladly admitted them to be full and equal partners in the glory of the empire and the service of humanity. Sastri's Lectures on Ramayana delivered in 1944

(included in Speeches and Writings, Vol. II) have worn better than his political orations. He treats the Hindu epic not as a religious but an essentially human document. His remarkable success as an orator was due to his melodious and well-modulated voice, his fluent and finely articulated delivery, his purist's sure choice of words and his perfect control of sentence structure. Sastri's art as a biographer has received surprisingly scant attention. In his biography of Pherozeshah Mehta, Sastri protests against the Indian biographer's passion for lionizing and declares, 'Let our sense of human values be robust. Let us be to our children in the pages of biography and autobiography no better and no worse than they see us in everyday life.' Practising what he preached, Sastri draws his portraits with warts and all. While admiring Mehta and Surendranath Banerjea, he observes that Sir Pherozeshah was a 'great' man but hardly a 'good* one; and comments on Surendranath's love of flattery, his gullibility and the superficiality of his ideas. Like all successful biographers, Sastri also has an eye for the telling detail and the human idiosyncrasy. He notes the great Gokhale's childlike habit of clapping his hands in his lighter moments, his passion for playfully 'betting on all occasions and sundry', and his love of sweets; and Sir Dinsha Wacha's squeaking voice. Sarojini Naidu, whose poetry has already been considered, was also one of the most noted orators in an age abounding in accomplished platform speakers. ' Her speeches have been collected in Speeches and Writings (1919). What set her distinctly apart was the bardic quality that gave wings to her words. As Harindranath Chattopadhyaya puts it, 'Her extraordinary oratory poured through her like music, silver shot with gold, cataracting from summits of sheer inspiration.'"7 Though much of the magic of this impassioned utterance is inevitably lost in cold print, enough of it survives in the process to indicate its quality. Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy (1877-1947) the distinguished Indo-

Sinhalese scholar, the spirit of whose work vindicates his own rhetorical query, 'Can we think of India as complete without Ceylon?', must legitimately find a place among Indian English prose writers. The son of a Sri Lankan Tamil father and an English mother, Coomaraswamy was trained as a geologist and worked as Director, Mineralogical Survey of Ceylon for sometime before embarking on the study of Eastern art. For a number of years he was keeper of Indian and Muhammedan Art and Research Fellow in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. He was a prolific writer and the bibliography of his publications comprises about a thousand items, including books, pamphlets, and articles on art, religion, metaphysics, language and culture. Among his principal works are *Me Aie Gal Sinhalese Art* (1908), *Essays in National Idealism* (1909), *Art and Swadeshi* (1911), *Arts and Crafts of India and Ceylon* (1913), *Introduction to Indian Art* (1913), *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism* (1916), *Rajpur Painting* (1916), *The Dunces of Shiva* (1918), *History of Indian and Indonesian Art* (1927), *A New Approach to the Vedas* (1933), *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (1934), *The Bugbear of Literacy* (1943), *Why Exhibit Works of Art?* (1943) reprinted as *Christian and Oriental Philosophy of Art* (1956) and *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought?* (1946). His numerous articles cover, apart from art, diverse topics such as 'Some Pali Words', 'Symbolism of Archery', 'Indian Coins', 'Sati', 'The Shadow-Play in Ceylon' etc. Coomaraswamy began as a critic of oriental art, but he soon came to believe that 'Art history is the history of the spirit'. This led him to a deep study of Hindu religion and metaphysics and the entire oriental culture and tradition which he then related effectively to modern eastern civilization and its problems. One of the pioneers of a just evaluation of Hindu and eastern art, he demolished several prejudices and misconceptions regarding the nature, aims and techniques of oriental art held by earlier critics like Ruskin, Birdwood and Fergusson, and showed how Hindu

and Buddhist art was a meaningful expression of the Indian ethos. Another signal contribution of his was his discovery of Rajput painting. A firm believer in the doctrine that the greatest art was rooted in life, he found this art perfected in ancient Indian civilization at its height. He ascribed the degradation of modern India to its neglect of its own ancient art, culture and tradition, and warned his countrymen, 'Before we can have India, we must become Indians.' A scathing critic of modern industrial civilization, he denounced it as one with 'exaggerated standards of living and depreciated standards of life.' He diagnosed the modern malaise as due to the divorce of art from life and life from its perennial concerns and pleaded for a world civilization based not on competition and conflict but on mutual understanding and cooperation. His ideal man was to unite the virility of the West with the serenity of the East thus to become 'a citizen of the world' in the 'profoundest sense'. Coomaraswamy wrote a compact and muscular prose full of energy and vigour. His numerous, apt and annotated footnotes are not intended as an exhibition of his vast scholarship but as ramifications and clarifications of his ideas. He is occasionally apt to take a rather starry-eyed view of the oriental tradition and pre-Industrial life; and some of his theories regarding Rajput painting and Mughal art have been disproved by later scholars. Nevertheless, his importance as an ambassador of Indian and oriental art, thought and tradition cannot be over-estimated; and his stature as a thinker and a sage is perhaps yet to be fully measured. His trenchant criticism of modern life and civilization and his passionate concern for the abiding values make him a prophet whose words are of urgent relevance to the human condition today.

Biography , Autobiography, Travel Books, Essays and Criticism Apart from Srinivasa Sastri's biographical studies (which, chronologically, come later), this period produced a number of biographies of various kinds. These include lives of

ancient prophets and sages like Ameer Ali's *Life of Muhammad* (1873), Manmath Nath Dutt's *Prophets of Ind.* (2 Vols., 1894), Khetrapal Chakravarti's *Life of Sri Chaitanya* (1897) and Sisir Kumar Ghose's *Lord Gauranga: Life of Krishna Chaitanya of Nadia* (2 vols., 1897-8); political biographies like T. Rama Row's *Biographical Sketches of the Rajahs of Venktagiri* (1875) and W.E. Dhanakoti Raju's *Queen Empress Victoria* (1887); collections of brief sketches of the lives of modern Indians like Ram Gopal Sanyal's *A General Biography of Bengal Celebrities* (1889), Sohrabji Jahangir's *Representative Men of India* (1889), Samuel Sathianadhan's *Sketches of Indian Christians* (1896) and C. Paramaswaran Pillai's *Representative Indians* (1897) , full-length biographies of modern Indians like *Lights and Shades of the East: or A Study of the Life of Baboo Haris Chander* by Framji Bomanji (1863); *Memoir of the Late Hon'ble Justice Onooucool Chunder Mookerjee* by Mohindranauth Mookerjee (1873), two studies of Kristo Das Pal by Ram Coomar Dey (1886) and Nagendra Nath Ghose (1887) respectively; two studies of Behramaji M. Malabari by Dayaram Gidumal (1888) and R.P. Kakaria (1896), respectively; and R.P. Paranjpye's *Life of G.K. Gokhale* (1915) and *Life of D.K. Karve* (1915). As regards autobiography, besides works like Surendranath Banerjea's *A Nation in the Making* and N.G. Chandavarkar's *A Wrestling Soul* which have already been mentioned, an early notable attempt is Abdul Latif Khan's *A Short Account of my Public Life* (1885). Among travel books, perhaps the earliest notable effort is Bolanath Chandra's *The Travels of a Hindoo to Various Parts of Bengal and Upper India* (2 Vols., 1869). Chatrapati Rajaram the Maharaja of Kolhapur's diary of his- brief sojourn in Europe ending in his untimely death appeared in 1872 under the title, *Diary of the Late Rajah of Kolhapur*. R.C. Dutt's *Three Years in Europe* (1872, 1895) and *Rambles in India* (1895) have already been considered. More diverting owing to the strong admixture of comedy in them are the travelogues

of Behramji Merwanji Malabari, the Bombay poet, social reformer and editor of *East and West* and *Indian Spectator*. He is less remembered to-day for his writings on social and political reform like *Infant Marriage and Enforced Widowhood in India* (1887) and *The Indian Nation* (1894) than for two delightful travel books in the manner of Mark Twain. The twenty-six pieces in *Gujarat and the Gujaratis* (1882) are an engaging medley of description, character-sketches, comic incidents, anecdotes and social criticism. Malabari's comedy takes various forms including satire, irony, parody, wit and humour. He reveals himself to be an extremely shrewd observer of men and manners, whether in characterizing Broach as 'a henpecked town' ('hen-pecked by the river', her husbands 'henpecked by their wives', and her officials 'hen-pecked by their mistress, the Bombay Government'), or parodying the darbar customs of Baroda State. His sketches of the village barber and the small town pleader and their ways are uproariously funny. Beneath this varied comedy there is a persistent undertone of social criticism also, exposing the British bureaucrat's apathy during a famine, the over-zealous ways of the white missionaries and the obscurantism of Hindu, Muslim and Parsi priests. *The Indian Eye on English Life or Rambles of a Pilgrim Reformer* (1891), an account of Malabari's visit to England is a much less successful book, though it has its own comic felicities. The description here is far more, generalized, with fewer characters and incidents (the sketch of the London Policeman is outstanding). The social reformer in Malabari comes out when he admires the self-reliance and the spirit of English women, though he is shocked by their generally bad teeth and their refusal to nurse their babies. Some other travel books of the period are P.C. Mazoomdar's *Sketches of a Tour Round the World* (1884); Bhagvat Sinh Jee the Thakore of Gondal's *Journal of a Visit to England in 1883* (1886); Sambhu Chandra Mukerji's *Travels and Voyages between Calcutta and Independent Tipperah*

(1887); G. Parama- swaran Pillai's London and Paris through Indian Spectacles (1898), and T. Ramakrishna Pillai's My Visit to the West(1915).Nagesh Wishwanath Pai's Stray Sketches in Chakmakporefrom the Notebook of an Idle Citizen (1894), though not exactly a travel book, is similar in conception and strategy to Malabari's Gujarat and Gujaratis. The 'notebook' comprises thirty six pen-portraits or various Indian types including the 'Irritable Sahib', the 'Mithaiwalla', 'Medicos of the Street', the 'Parsi girl,' the 'Pooranik', etc. Pai's sketches certainly compare unfavourably with Malabari's since his humour is rather heavy- handed, his persistent, trite moralizing being an additional irritant. Another early collection of essays is A. Madhaviah's Thillai Govindan's Miscellany (1907), which discusses in a serious vein subjects like the position of women and caste. There was hardly any critical writing of note in the earlier period. Now, with the spread of English education, criticism in various areas slowly begins to appear. The earliest treatises concern the arts in India and Sanskrit literature. Prominent examples are two studies of Indian music: Hindu Music (1873) by Loka Nath Ghose and Yantra Kosha: A Treasury of Musical Instruments of Ancient India (1857) by Sourindra Mohan Tagore, who also wrote Bharatiya Natya Rahasya: A Treatise on Hindu Drama (1878) and Dramatic Sentiments of the Aryans (1883). R.G. Bhandarkar's The Critical, Comparative and Historical method of Enquiry as applied to Sanskrit Scholarship and Philosophy and Indian Archaeology (1888) is a pioneering methodological attempt. Among the earliest critical studies of the ancient Sanskrit epics are C.V. Vaidya's The Mahabharata: A Criticism (1905), The Riddle of the Ramayana (1906) and Epic India or India as described in the Mahabharata and the Ramayana(1907). K. Narayanaswami Aiyar's The Puranas in the light of Modern Science (1916) employs an interesting approach. B.K. Sarkar's Love in Hindu Literature (1916) is a noteworthy thematic study. Along with Sanskrit, literature in the several

Indian languages also begins to be studied critically. Prominent examples are Ramesh Chunder Dutt's *The Literature of Bengali* 1879; revised and enlarged ed.. 1895;) D.C. Sen's *History of the Bengali Language and Literature* (1911); and *Folk Literature of Bengal* (1920); v.s.C. Pillai's *History of the Tamil Prose Literature* (1904); C. Ramakrishna Rao's *Vemana, the Telugu Poet and Saint* (1914); and K. M. Jhaveri's *Milestones in Gujarati Literature* (1914).

Studies of Indian English and Anglo-Indian writers too make their earliest appearance—these include two books on B.M. Malabari—G.A. Natesan's *Behramji M. Malabari: A Sketch of his life and an Appreciation of His Work* (1914) and Jogendra Singh's *B.M. Malabari: Rambles with the Pilgrim Reformer* (1914); Jogendra Nath Gupta's *Life and Work of Romesh Chunder Dutt* (1911); G.A. Natesan's *Mrs. Sarojini Naidu: A Sketch of her Life and an Appreciation of Her Works* (1914); and two studies of Rabindranath Tagore—B.K. Roy's *Rabindranath Tagore: The Man and His Poetry* (1915) and K.S.R. Sastri's *Sir Rabindranath Tagore: His Life, His Personality and Genius* (1917); P. Seshadri's *An Anglo-Indian Poet: John Leyden* (1912) and *Anglo-Indian Poetry* (1915) and S.M. Mitra's *Anglo-Indian Studies* (1913) are among the earliest appraisals in this area.

British literature also starts engaging the attention of Indian English critics. One of the earliest specimens is the nineteen page preface in English written by M.M. Kunte of Poona to his long poem in Marathi, *Raja Shivaji* (1871). This piece deals with critical issues such as the nature of poetry, the antinomies between Science and Literature and the Classical and the Romantic and generally echoes contemporary Victorian critical opinion on these problems, though the author's analysis of the aesthetic taste of the Marathas is an attempt at independent critical enquiry. Ramchandra Ghose's *A Synopsis of English Literature* (1896)

is a workmanlike survey. Brajendranath Seal's *New Essays in Criticism* (1903) deals with the Romantic movement with special emphasis on Keats. R.V. Subba Rao's *Othello Unveiled* (1906) and *Hamlet Unveiled* (1909) are probably the earliest appreciations of Shakespeare; Ramaraya Mohanraya wrote a brief brochure, *Shakespeare the Artist*, in 1914. Harendra Coomar Mukhapadhyaya, who enjoys the distinction of earning the first Indian Ph.D. in English for his thesis on the origins of the English Novel in 1918 had earlier published his study *The Supernatural in Scott* in 1917.

Drama

Indian English drama dates from 1831, when Krishna Mohan Banerji wrote *The Persecuted or Dramatic Scenes Illustrative of the present state of Hindoo Society in Calcutta*. In his preface, Banerji claims that 'inconsistencies and the blackness of the influential members of the Hindoo community have been depicted before their eyes. They will now clearly perceive the wiles and tricks of the Bramins [sic.] and thereby be able to guard themselves against them.' This somewhat crude presentation of the conflict in the mind of a sensitive Bengali youth between orthodoxy and the new ideas ushered in by Western education remained a solitary dramatic effort, not only in Bengal but also anywhere in India for more than a generation. Michael Madhusudan Dutt, the poet, translated three of his own Bengali plays into English: *Ratnavali* (1858)—a version of Harsha's well-known Sanskrit play, *Sermista* (1839) and *-Is This Called Civilization?* (1871). Another play of his, *Nation Builders*, was published posthumously in 1922. Ramkinoo Dutt's *Mani pur a Tragedy* (1893) completes the all too brief tale of Indian English drama published in Bengal in the nineteenth century. In fact, even in Bengal—the fountain-head of most forms of Indian English literature—drama in English failed to secure a local theatrical habitation, in sharp contrast to plays in the mother tongue (both original and in the form of adaptations from foreign languages); and the appetite for plays in English could more conveniently be fed on performances of established dramatic successes in English by foreign authors. For instance, the first Bengali play to be staged (27 November, 1795) was an adaptation of a musical farce—*The Disguise* by Jodrell; and the Hindoo Theatre established by Prosannakumar Tagore on 21 December 1831 staged portions of *Julius Caesar*** Owing to

the lack of a firm dramatic tradition nourished on actual performance in a live theatre, early Indian English drama in Bengal, as elsewhere in India, grew sporadically as mostly closet drama; and even later, only Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya produced a substantial corpus of dramatic writing.

Between 1891 and 1916, Sri Aurobindo wrote five complete and six incomplete verse plays. Of these, the earliest are two fragments written during his student days in London: *The Witch of Uni: A Dream of the Woodlands* (1891) and *Achab and Esar* (n.d.). To the Baroda period (1893-1906) belong *The Viziers of Bassora—A Dramatic Romance*, *Perseus the Deliverer*, *Rodogune* and three fragments: *The Maid in the Mill*, *Love Shuffles the Cards*, *The House of Brut* and *The Birth of Sin* (which appeared as a poetic dialogue in *Collected Poems and Plays*, 1942). *Prince of Edur* (a revised version of *The Prince of Mathura*) was written in 1907, while *Eric: A Dramatic Romance* and *Vasavadutta* are assigned to the period between 1912 and 1916. All the five complete plays, with the exception of *Perseus the Deliverer*, were published years later, between 1957 and 1960, *Perseus the Deliverer* having been first serialized in *Bande Mataram*, Calcutta, in 1907 and also included in the *Collected Poems and Plays* (1942). All the eleven plays have now appeared in the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library Edition, Volumes 6 and 7—*Collected Plays and Short Stories: Parts I and II* (1971).

The two early fragments— *The Witch of Uni* and *Achab and Esar*—already indicate Sri Aurobindo's abiding fascination for Elizabethan drama. *The Viziers of Bassora*, based on a story from *The Arabian Nights* shows how a pair of young lovers are reunited after a series of trials, through the benevolence of Haroun Al-Rasheed, Caliph of Bagdad. The contrast between the 'good' Vizier and the 'bad' is the

mainspring of the action. Entirely Elizabethan in conception and structure, the play is clearly modelled after Shakespearian comedy. The disguised Caliph controlling the destinies of his subjects recalls the Duke in Measure for Measure; Fareed, the bad Vizier's deformed son is a compound of Caliban and Richard III; and Balkis and Ajebe are Arabian versions of Beatrice and Benedick. Perseus the Deliverer which, in the author's own words, is 'a romantic story of human temperament and life-impulses on the Elizabethan model' is a more substantial play, which tries to use the ancient Greek legend of Perseus and Andromeda to represent the evolution of the human mind from a primitive conception of a vengeful deity towards the idea of a godhead full of grace and compassion. But the message of the play is all but drowned in persistent and loud Shakespearian echoes in character, incident and even dialogue. This is also true of Rodogune, Sri Aurobindo's only tragedy. Set in ancient Syria, the play is a representation of a fratricidal conflict arising out of a love-triangle, and is perhaps the root derivative of all Sri Aurobindo's dramatic creations. Of the fragments. The Maid in the Mill is a comedy with Spain as the background and The House of Brut a tragedy of unbounded egoism, set in ancient Britain; while The Birth of Sin centres round Lucifer. Prince of Edur, which also remained incomplete, draws on Rajput history, and deals with the romantic motif of a usurper's daughter falling in love with the rightful heir in disguise. It is again love that resolves the political conflict in Eric, the setting for which is Norway. Aslaug, the sister of Swegn, a rebel earl, comes to slay Eric, the King of Norway, but stays to fall in love with the intended victim. Vasavadutta is a variation on the same theme. Based on a story in the Kathasaritsagara, it shows how Vvtsa Udayan, the king of Cowsambie, captured through treachery by Chunda Mahasegn, the king of Avunthie, neatly turns the tables on his captor by

capturing the heart of Vasavadutta, Chunda Mahasegn's daughter.

An interesting feature of Sri Aurobindo's plays is their variety of period and locale, ranging from ancient Greek times to medieval India and covering diverse lands including Iraq, Syria, India, Spain, Britain and Norway. The two characteristic Aurobindoean themes in the plays are the idea of human evolution in *Perseus the Deliverer* and love as a benevolent force destroying evil and conflict and making for harmony and peace in *The Viziers of Bassora*, *Prince of Edur*, *Eric* and *Vasavadutta*. However, only committed disciples will maintain that these themes have been realized in the plays with the same amount of creative power as has gone into the making of *Savitri* and *The Life Divine*. Modelling his plays exclusively on late Victorian pastiches of Shakespearian drama, Sri Aurobindo unfortunately imposed crippling limitations on his dramatic talent, while in *Savitri* he boldly experimented with age-old epic conventions. In the large whispering gallery resounding with Shakespearian echoes which his plays in the main appear to be, Sri Aurobindo's distinctive voice is scarcely heard as effectively as in the other forms. It is sad that even in handling purely Indian material in *Prince of Edur* and *Vasavadutta*, the dramatist could not throw off the yoke of Shakespeare, with the result that his characters seem to think, speak and act less like authentic Indians than like Elizabethan personages in Indian garb. In spite of some scenes of dramatic tension, stray passages of poetic beauty and a few moments of bright wit and humour in the comedies, the drama of Sri Aurobindo is perhaps hardly in the same class as his major poetry and prose.

In examining, the plays of Rabindranath Tagore, a distinction has once again to be made, as in the case of his verse, between translations done by the author himself and those