



PORTRAITS
of
POETS
AND
Philosophers

- S.M. KOMPELLA



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Dedicated

to

My Parents

BULLI SUBBARAYUDU

and

JANAKAMMA

and

Brother

GOPALA KRISHNA MURTY

A VERITABLE THESIS ON MODERN TELUGU POETRY

The articles of Sri S.M. Kompella range widely from the poetry of Sri Sri, Kundurthi, Chalam and Gnanananda Kavi to the philosophical moorings of Ramana Maharshi and Jiddu Krishna Murthy. The compilation is a veritable thesis on Modern Poetry in Telugu, although it is written in English. Sri S.M. Kompella deserves all commendation for choosing a difficult task.

Dr. T. VISWANADHA RAO ,M.A., Ph.D.
Professor of English
and Special Officer
A.U.P.G. Extension Centre
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UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION

"Very few have written in English on Telugu Literature. Mr. Kompella has, indeed, ventured successfully to project quite a large number of prominent Telugu poets and writers and Indian Philosophers in English. His articles are scholarly and deserve appreciation from all lovers of literature and Philosophy and enthuse scholars to translate Telugu poetry into English.

Dr. ADDEPALLI RAMA MOHANARAO

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PLATONIC PURITY

RAYAPROLU

"One's motherland is verily one's own paradise. Our mothertongue is rich enough to express every subtle nuance of thought and feeling. The circumambient nature can teach us the manifold purpose of human Life. Further, man and woman are not coupling animals consumed by bestial passions. Their love is not to be measured in terms of physical passions and sexual gratification. Love, unstained by the touch of physical passion, is the source of all embracing divine compassion.

Woman is a symbol of purity, truth, eternal joy and everlasting love. It is her love which unlocks the secret of creation, reveals fraternal world of enduring affection, churns compassion from the swirling sea of passions of man and helps him attain and experience bliss, joy and peace.

There can be nothing, nobler than patriotic nationalism. One has to be aware of the rich heritage handed down to the people.

Whatever be the nation,
You visit
Whatever be the land,
You set Your foot upon
Whatever seat of honour
You grace,
Hail your motherland Bharath
Hold aloft and in full
The self-respect
of
Your nation.

--Proclaims, Rayaprolu Subba Rao, one of the greatest romantic poets who profoundly influenced Telugu literature. A Scholar of encyclopaedic knowledge, he made an in dept

study of Sankrit literature and absorbed the vedantic undercurrents in his masterpieces. The celebrated romantic poets of English literature such as Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley deeply influenced, his mind and heart, and he, in turn, heralded the age of romanticism in Telugu literature. While Tagore offered him a keen insight into mysticism, scholars like Nanda Lal Bose, Andrew Pearson and Vidhusekhara Bhattacharya sharpened his intellect. The 'Maha Madhuri Bhava' in Vaishnava literature spurred him to enunciate the unique concept called 'Amalina Srinagara' in Telugu literature. Hailed as an 'Abhinava Nannayya', he adorned Telugu language as the first preceptor and poet who upheld the ancient traditions and held aloft the glory of Telugu literature.

Gurazada and Rayaprolu represented two significant facets of Telugu literature. The former wielded his pen like a sword and castigated social evils. His was a revolutionary call. But Rayaprolu's was for reformation.

Gurazada was a realist. He went deep into the problems. Rayaprolu was an idealist. He laid focus on the individual and his inner world and pleaded for an efflorescence of harmony, rhythm and order in life. He exhumed the grandeur of the past and called for a rediscovery of the novelty of literary heritage. A perfect literary artist, Rayaprolu is unrivalled in description of tenderness of feeling and richness of fancy, brilliance of imagination, marvellous capacity for identification with the life of nature probe into the flux of phenomena, portrayal of throbbing youth and beauty and a harmonious integration of all that make human life.

Rayaprolu believes in love as an expression of the

spiritual aspirations of the human mind. It is the love, unstained that sustains and maintains the continuity of life, the physical and the spiritual, the mundane and the divine. As such, woman occupies a unique place. She is the preceptor, friend, philosopher and teacher of man! Man, in Rayaprolu's works, is an aesthete or a votary of love or a love-lorn soul privileged to learn the learnable from woman. Lalitha in 'Lalitha' represents unshakable love, while in 'Thruna Kankanam' the heroine propounds love, untainted by the touch of passion, 'Anumathi' speaks of ardour of love, whereas it is platonically disinterested love in 'Kasta Kamala'. 'Snehalata' exudes emotional love touched with compassion and 'Swapna kumaram' deals with affectionate love. 'Rupanavaneetam' is about all-embracing love. Rayaprolu makes a probe into the youthful fancies and passions of the lovers of his contemporaneous times. He presents women as the very symbols of the nobility of Indian womanhood in his works.

'Lalitha', 'Naika' and 'Swapna Sundari' remain memorable by virtue of their laudable qualities of head and heart. For instance, 'Swapna kumaram' is a clarion call to the sensualists to overcome their lusty passions and look upon woman as the Mother Goddess. The heroine, Swapna Sundari, instructs the passion-ridden man in the concepts of 'pure love'. The lover in 'Thruna Kankanam' gets over passion and discovers the supreme purity of a platonic relationship.

'Lalitha' may be taken as the mouthpiece of Rayaprolu's concept of 'love, untainted'. His romanticism did not turn him into a recluse living in ivory towers of isolation. He was aware of the social evil 'dowry' and protested against it in

'Snehalata'.

Rayaprolu's fame rests securely on his khanda kavyas and laudable translations. 'Jada Kuchhulu' 'Tenugu Thota', 'Vana Mala', 'Misra Manjari' and 'Kanne Patalu' show his astounding ability and genius in writing khanda kavyas, while his translations of famous works are a witness to his keen insight into the spirit of the original works. The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam with its thematic concern for the hankering of the humans after the sweetness of an evanescent life appealed to him.

In his 'Madhu Kalasam', he pays homage to FitzGerald for his imaginative romanticism. The philosophical exposition of a universal mother in Adi Sankaracharya's 'Saundarya Lahari' touched him deeply and he translated the great work into Telugu. Tagore offered him his 'eyes' and enabled him to see into the life of things. His 'Abhyardhana', 'Urvasi' and 'Vasantham' speak volumes of Tagoreran impact. He showed an unrivalled felicity in translating the works of Iqbal, Rizal and the saint-composer Meera and the folk songs of Bengal. He felt Adikavi Valmiki, Kalidaasa and Bhavabhuthi in his pulse and absorbed, the quintessence of their philosophy in his translations. He rendered 'Megha Sandesa' into Telugu and universalised the longing of the Yaksha for his beloved. He recreated the grandeur of Uttara Rama Charitha and "Ramacharitha Manasa" in his translations.

Rayaprolu represents a happy blend of western and eastern influences. 'Lalitha' is a Telugu adaptation of Goldsmith's 'Hermit', while 'Anumathi' owes to Lord Tennyson's 'Dora.' In fact, Rayaprolu borrowed a nugget from Goldsmith and Tennyson and fashioned it into a splendid necklace to adorn his Telugu Maatha.

In short, Rayaprolu is a poet 'unrivalled, precursor venerated, and preceptor admired by generations.'

TRADITION

VEMPARALA

Mr. Vemparala Suryanarayana Sastry is one of the gigantic scholars, poets and critics who have enriched vedic traditions and strode Telugu literary scene like colossuses for over seven decades.

Born in 1895, of Venkata Chainulu and Manikarnika, Vemparala, grew-up in a pious, climate of vedic chants and srauta and smartha traditions. It is proudly said that, for seven generations, his forefathers were well-versed in the Vedas and performance of yagnas. No wonder, as a duck takes to water, he mastered ancient classical verses, prabhandas and vedic literature.

In his boyhood, Vemparala was guided in his studies of Sanskrit and Telugu literature by renowned scholars like Chavali Lakshmi Nrusimha Sastry, Maruvaada Kasipathi Sastry and Darbha Sarvesara Sastry. He inherited their literary acumen, intellectual analysis, poetic prowess and profound scholarship.

A teacher of Telugu by profession at Amalapuram High School and Gautami Vidya Peetham, Rajahmundry, Vemparala, worked assiduously and joined hands with Jayanthi Ramayya Pantulu and Sripada Lakshmipathi Sastry in the onerous task of compiling the much-acclaimed 'Suryarayandha Nighantuvu'. His most significant role lay in his arbitrament over the semantic and the phonetic disputes in Telugu. The compilation of his encyclopaedia saw the light of the day under the benevolent patronage of the Maharaja of Pithapuram.

The literary output of Vemparala comprises such verses as "Venkateswara Satakam," "Munitraya Charitra", "Sankara Vijayam" and a full length commentary on "Manucharitram"

and "Prabhavathi Pradumnam", Despite his failing health, he was able to write half of Sabara Sankara Vilasam. Vemparala also authored the biography of Maha Mahophadhyaya Tata Subbaraya Sastry in verse. The prabhandha Munitraya Charitram was published by Nadimpalli Ramabhadra Raju, while Madalasa Vilasam was published at the behest of Srirangu Satti Raju.

An undaunted nationalist at heart, Vemparala wrote spirit-stirring poems during freedom movement and made the British Raj jittery.

He belongs to the pantheon of great scholars like Nidadavolu Venkata Rao and Diwakarla Venkatavadhani who memorise countless poems of ancient times to the delight of lovers of Telugu literature. Andhra University credited itself by bestowing 'Kalaprapurna' on him, while Sri Kalayana Bharathi Swamy conferred 'Kavithabhushana' on him. A galaxy of eminent scholars hailed him with the title 'Vidvatkavi Sekhara' on the occasion of his completion of 'Sankara Vijayam'.

Vemparala regarded Vidyanaya as the greatest scholar and crusader who rescued the pristine vedic culture from the onslaughts of foreign religions and composed 'Vidyanaya Vijayam'. However, as ill-luck would have it, he lost the copy of the verse and desiderated to rewrite it. Alas! the towering poet and scholar died, with his dreams of re-writing the verse unfulfilled.

A classicist in literary craft, Vemparala was not fanatically opposed to the usage of colloquial Telugu. Till his last breath, Vemparala was humane, humble, affable and noble in word, deed and thought.

CLASSICAL TO THE CORE

VISWANADHA SATYANARAYANA

Telugu, as the most celebrated modern poet Sri Sri put it "has the potential and credentials to be India's 'Lingua franca' as it has solid sanskrit base". Prof. J.B.S. Haldane hailed it as the Northern most of the Southern languages and southern most of the Northern languages". So harmonious is the sweetsound of the vowel ending words of Telugu that it is rightfully acclaimed as the Italian of the East. Its euphonic beauty is such that great sage composers like Tyagaraja preferred it for the spread of the Carnatic Music. Eminent linguists like Charles Philip Brown were fascinated by the Phonetic perfection of Telugu. Besides, the Telugu Language is the only one that has its place of pride in the 'Ashtabhashas of antiquity'. No wonder, Viswanadha Satyanarayana, chose it as a fit vehicle for expression of the most profound thoughts and feelings and held aloft its primacy among Indian Languages.

Viswanadha Satyanarayana was born at Nandamuru on 10th October, 1895 in an affluent but orthodox family. His father, Sobhanadri was a scholar of great repute who commanded respect not only for his consummate rendering of the Mahabhagavatha and the Ramayana but also for his charitable acts. Viswanadha's aptitude and absolute mastery of Telugu Literature was, thus, inherent. But with most of the ancestral property spent away on charitable deeds, the entire family fell on evil days. Despite the encircling gloom of frustration, Visawanadha's inherent passion for Telugu Literature suffered no retreat and he turned the stumbling blocks in his personal life into stepping stones of success. An ardent student of the great poet laureate Challapalli Venkata Sastry, he relentlessly pursued the peaks

of scholarship with an indefatigable zeal and embarked on literary expeditions. He did his M.A. in Telugu from Andhra University and Sanskrit from Madras University. His father, who was buffeted by adverse circumstances, initially, warned his son against pursuing the elusive field of literature and making it a means of livelihood. He, however, advised him to delve deep into the rich treasures of the classics and then only commit himself to the creative field of Literature. The cup of misery at home over brimmed, when Viswanadha's wife passed away. Despite weak constitution, alarming ill-health and ever burning financial problems, Viswanadha did not lose heart. Adversity strengthened his resolve not to buckle under but to chart out an independent course of life and carve out a niche for himself in the Temple of Goddess Saraswathi. He worked as Lecturer at the National College, Machilipatnam, A.C. College, Guntur, and S.R.R. and C.V.R. College, Vijayawada and retired as Principal of a Government College at Karimnagar.

"Viswanadha was a Milton in his high seriousness and stylistic grandeur, a Johnson in private life and a Somerset Maugham in weaving together diverse elements of fact and fiction". He peregrinated from the humble portals of a simple lyric to the lofty heights of epic-writing. In between the two, he traversed a wider terrain of short stories, plays and playlets, essays and philosophical disquisitions. His fertile pen produced a prolific number of 30 poems, 20 dramas, 60 novels, 10 critical treatises, 200 Khanda kavyas, 35 short stories, 70 articles, 50 radio plays, 10 essays in English, 10 works in Sanskrit, 3 translations etc.

He was adamant in advocacy of his views and braved critics to the point of being branded as "conceited and egoistic." He often taunted the opponents of his literary craft and teased them beyond relief. Tactless because of his over weening, he denounced his detractors and never deigned to consider their points of view. Eminent Journalists like Narla Venkateswara Rao targeted him and even described his 'Ramayana Kalpa Vriskha' as 'Vaalmiki Made difficult' and termed his novel 'Veyi Padagalu" as "the dying hiss of a thousand hooded feudal society'. Mr. Narla was also unsparing in his vehement criticism of Viswanadha's "Madhyakkaralu" which he said, had "neither ease nor grace" and this condemnation of a mighty scholar's works comes as no surprise considering Viswanadha's own critical references to the Noble Laureate Tagore as "a poor poet, poorer prose writer, poorest dramatist but a good story writer." The lava of his indignation flowed over all, however high and mighty they were. So incisive was his castigation of those that masqueraded as literary celebrities that they dared not open their mouths in his towering presence.

Penury often stared him in the face. Yet he was royal in his demeanour and defiance. His indignation of self-styled literary stalwarts was righteous, though many of his contemporaries construed it as projective of his unbridled ego. Like W.B. Daniel, he always opined that "critics in general are venomous serpents that delight in hissing" and held the view "A fly may sting a stately horse and make him wince, but one is but an insect and the other is a horse still'.

The crowning glory of the Kavi Samrat is undoubtedly the "Sreemadramayana Kalpa Vriksham." Sreemadramayana Kalpavriksham is the story of Ramayana in 6 Khandas but is neither a translation nor an adaptation of the great original Sanskrit epic. It has been recognised as a repository of every poetical excellence and is "a veritable ornament to the goddess of Telugu poetry" said the Times of India. The National Herald Sunday eulogised Viswanadha as a rare combination of sound scholarship and poetic excellence and said that there is no literary form in Telugu on which he did not lay his hand and on which he has not left a lasting impression. Hailing him as the 'foremost among the Modern Telugu Creative Writers', The Hindustan Times weekly praised the Kalpa Vriksha as "Not a translation or an adaptation of the Sanskrit epic but as an original and creative product of the poet's prolific pen and high calibre." 'The Kalpa Vriksha is unanimously acclaimed as the greatest classic in Telugu Literature and the most authentic commentary unravelling the thematic profundity and versicoloured excellence of the sacred Ramayana of the sage Vaalmiki. Referring to this magnum opus, eminent critic P. Rajeswara Rao says 'where Valmiki suggested, Viswanadha visualised. He literally occupied a place by the side of Valmiki, Vyasa and Kalidasa.'

"He achieved the compassion, the decorum, the simplicity and the depth of Valmiki, the vivid characterisation and dramatic presentation of Vyasa and the romantic beauty, rhetorical craftsmanship, lyrical grace and diction of Kalidasa. To this combination of classical splendour, he added the occidental finish". No wonder, it won him the Jnanapith award.

Viswanadha's 'Kokilamna Pendli' and 'Kinnerasani Paatalu' were immensely popular in every nook and corner of the countryside. He suffuses the Kinnerasani Patalu with such lyrical cadence that the readers experience as if they were amidst cascades of music.

The first verse of the Kavi Samraat is 'Andhra Prasasthi.' It comprises eight splendidous sections and holds mirror to his noble patriotism. Though small, 'Sringara Veedhi' is a commendable piece of composition which highlights Lord Krishna's childhood and his amorous relationship with Radha. 'Sasi Dootam' is an iridescent piece that can invite comparison to Kalidasa's 'Megha Sandesam' in descriptive aspects. Viswanadha's 'Jhansi' is a fine instance of his patriotic fervour. His 'Madhyakkaralu' -a compilation of ten satakas won him the Sahitya Akademi Award. 'Gopika Geethamulu' highlights the 'Devotional path - Bhakti Marg' adopted by the Gopikas to realise the divine Leela of Lord Krishna. 'Pradumnabhudayam' brings out Viswanadha's inherent genius at descriptive poetry. The 'Ritusamhara' (Seasons of the year) shows him at the peak of poetic talent.

Viswanadha's 'Nartana Saala' occupies a place of pride among Telugu dramas. His portrayal of Draupadi's character in particular received the acclaim of the critics. The Kavi Samraat's 'Anarkali' is not stageworthy. Yet, it abounds in rhetorical flourishes and figurative imagery. The exuberant romanticism shows the poet within the play wright summoning all his linguistic talent to convey his thoughts and feelings "too deep for expression". 'Vena Raju' is Viswanadha's tour-de-force which, the critics say, deserves

to be ranked along with those of eminent playwrights like Ibsen. Viswanadha's 'Veyi Padagalu' is hailed for its lucidity in style and harmonious blend of "the vigour of native idiom' and virility of human passions". As the eminent critic P. Rajeswara Rao put it, 'Veyi Padagalu' is comparable to Tolstoy's 'War and Peace' and Romain Rolland's 'Jean Christophe'. No wonder, this novel, earned him enduring fame. Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao, former Prime Minister rendered it into Hindi and entitled it 'Sahasraphan' while Sri Jospula Sri Venkateswarlu did it into English. Critics showered encomiums on 'Veyi Padagalu' for its peerless descriptions of the glorious heritage and culture of Andhras. 'Eka Veera', is one of his most popular novels which portray the multi-hued longings, passions and aspirations of the human heart in an intensely appealing fashion. Dr. Viswanadha published sixteen novels under the title 'Purana Vaira Grandhamala'.

The Kavi Samraat passed away on 18th October, 1976. As an eminent critic put it "when personal rivalries fade out, old judgements and assessments reviewed, when Telugu language becomes more popular with Andhras, when literary standards grow higher than at present, it is quite possible that Viswanadha may be classed as the greatest writer of all times."

As a lyricist. Joshua has few parallels. If romantic poetry dawned with Rayaprolu, it reached its phase of prominence in Joshua. In tune with the romantic lyricists, his poetic heart visualised the splendour of a distant past, exhumed the forgotten images of history and endowed them with the lustre of life and love. His 'Mumtaj Mahal' is a shining testimony to his splendid perception of history and conception of love. How greatly heart-rending is the portrayal of the emperor Shah Jehan who "disinclined to a second marriage and divorced from the pleasures of life, tearfully waits on the outskirts of this mortal world for a reunion with his beloved of the other world- an exuberance of lyrical romanticism over the sublime love of two souls". His 'Firdousie' wrung from the recesses of his heart is the finest tribute to dedicated poets to whom "Each and every line of a poem is a drop of blood". What strikes a shrewd reader here is the masterly blend of "the particular with the universal". But Joshua has hardly any patience with those bards whose romantic lyricism borders on mere obsession with the sensual aspect of life (Ayomayam).

Joshua's tour de force is his 'Smasana Vaitca' ("Crematorium) A note of sublime melancholy runs through every line of these poems. One is struck with the profound philosophical observations of the poet on the fleeting dreams in the fugitive existence of mortals in these poems.

Deeply dismayed at the crumbling of human values in a society of soulless materialistic progress, he laments that the spread of literature and of the sky-touching libraries had not resulted in a corresponding humanism ("Musafirulu).

No doubt, he admits that the crowning glory of modern

man is his discovery of the vast energy within the atom. But he deprecates the tendency of man to use it for a destructive purpose. He advises the modern man to "Make such atomic weapons as can split his nature". This is a sane advice to a generation of megalomaniacs of our modern age bent on annihilating the accumulated wealth of centuries. Acutely aware of the inadequacy of human wisdom at the fatal cross roads of history, he calls for a harmonious blend of scientific progress with spiritual culture and 'adherence to truth and non-violence' as a way out of a nuclear holocaust.

His 'Anadha' (Orphan) is a searching comment on the agonising life of an orphan in a society of ruthless exploitation. His 'Gabbilam' (Bat) treats of those hapless poor untouchables victimised by an obscurantistic society. He is aghast at a world in which the unfortunate dregs of society who sweat out and provide food to the entire world are denied their share of subsistence.

However, Joshua's crusade against iniquity and inequality in the exploitative set-up was not built upon the dialectic materialism of Marx or Engels. His approach to the myriads of problems of society was essentially humanistic. But he shared their genuine concern for the upliftment of the depressed classes and for this he sought inspiration from enlightened souls like the Mahatma, the Buddha and the Christ. His 'Aavedana' (Anguish) is a poignant protest against the slaughter of the dumb creatures to appease Gods. How pertinent is his comment on a nation that boasts of being the abode of the Mahatma and the Buddha! His "Gijigadu" is not simply about the craftsmanship of the bird to weave its own nest. It is a devotional tribute to the magnificence of

the creation of the Almighty and a regretful comment on the "Littleness" of human wisdom and knowledge before Him. In another lyric, he describes how a "Wayfarer" rescues a man from an accident and pleads for a sense of 'sympathetic involvement' of one for the other.

Verily, what the eminent philosopher writer Chalam said of 'Sri Sri is truly applicable to Joshua:

"Here is a poet who dreams of a world without injustice, tyranny, lamentations, famines, mean poesy and scandals".

As he himself says. "To the people who are shaken with fright and tormented by violence, the voice of a poet must offer a ray of hope, level the 'ups and downs and give vent to the dumb tears of the exploited so as to enable them to proclaim themselves.

Though critical standards are variable, Joshua has few rivals in sheer richness of 'imagery, inexhaustible variety of characterisation and sensitive handling of themes.

The output of his poems which is the overflow of a contemplative chastity, emotional intensity and heightened vision makes him a humanist of a high order.

THE ICONOCLAST

SRISRI

"I had my early education at Mrs. A.V.N. College, Visakhapatnam, where my father was a teacher of mathematics. The old man was not inclined towards the world of writing poems. But then, he had a penchant for words, and he inducted me into the world of rhythms of prosody. For higher education, I left for Madras and joined Madras Christian College, reputed for its high standards of teaching. In the 30's which I call 'the hungry decade', I graduated in science. Once, I was taken ill with Typhoid and during the period of illness which lasted for over sixty three days, I underwent a sea change. In response to Rupert Brooke's recipe for happiness, I found myself 'reading poetry, writing poetry and living poetry'".

It was then that his magnumopus 'Mahaprasthanam' came to be written. At that time, Sri Sri came under the influence of the rumblings of the Great October Revolution in Russia and the formation of the progressive writers Association in London. His poetic sensibility was roused and sharpened. He had moulded himself into a pioneer of the Marxist Idiom in Indian Poetry and with a rare courage of convictions and transparent sincerity, he proudly proclaimed himself;

"MAYAKOVESKY WAS DEAD
BUT I INHERITED HIS VISION".

In his plastic years of youth, Sri Sri had flirted with wall painting. The world of words and the intensity of emotion it concealed within, surfaced to him, only later. Up to his sixth year, he used to give vent to the muralist in him. Referring to

his irrepressible zeal in painting, he remarked "I became a menace to the white walls of my house". But then, his father initiated him into 'the euphonic aspect' of Telugu and the muralist gracefully gave way to the poet in him. When he was barely 10 years old, he scripted the mythological play dealing with Savitri and Satyavan. The romantic exuberance of Devulapalli Krishna Sastry and the seductive spell of Viswanatha Satyanarayana had, of course, their impact on his early poetical outpourings. Very soon, he parted ways with them and got fascinated with the virile idiom of the common man in the works of Gurazada and that was the beginning of his talent at fusing poetry with ideological profundity. Since then, the ivory towers of romantic isolation had given way to the slums of the suffering humanity caught up in the cog wheels of exploitation, injustice and inequalities. On one occasion, he made the statement:

"Poetry, good or bad, defies definition. In the monosyllabic verb of ee cummings, poetry simply is. Existence is its essence. The Flame of poetry is consistently fed by politics and polemics, aesthetics and economics. An example of his red hot socialist rhetoric in his militantly non conformist poetry is here :

"Hail Comrades, denounce the useless,
Dust and dirt of an age gone by
See before us rise the glorious
Mankind's hope lit spire of fire
Come like serpents.
Come like grey hounds
Like Dhananjaya claim the world

Hail the Morn
And sound the horn
A never truer world shall be born
Then sing in Chorus." (Translated by A.S. Raman)

Eminent Scholar A.S.Raman aptly comments "Creative endeavour in any form negates itself, if it is not geared to a higher purpose. Great writers and artists express themselves with a view to making man closer to God (Mysticism) or with the objective of drawing the society's attention to the obscenities and cruelties inherent in itself. (Socialist realism) or in order to demolish the wall separating Man from Man (Humanism) or in an attempt to achieve one's own identity so that one evolves deeper perceptions, intuitions and insights (experimentalism). Sri Sri's poetry has in it the quint essence of each of these genres. It is a mistake to say that he does not believe in God. He does. Only he gives God a different name. If Siva or Vishnu is our God, his is Marx or Mao. His razor sharp intelligence, his wild imagination, his terse succulent turn of phrase, his heightened sensibility and his keen sense of contemporaneity impart to his poetry - as well as prose - the sort of masculinity elan and thrust that one associates with creative writing at its compelling best."

Sri Sri is the champion of Telugu in the dialect of the under dog. He says that Telugu has the potential and credentials to be the Nation's 'Lingua franca'. "Telugu has a solid Sanskrit base and so is close to the North Indian Languages. Synthetically, it has obvious affinities with the Dravidian Language and in terms of the number of people

that use a language, it is next only to Hindi. However, its script should be romanised".

A profound scholar with keen insight into beauty and strength of words in languages, he says "Today, the greatest poetry is written not in English, not in Italian, not in German, not in Chinese, but in Spanish. In the ancient times, the greatest poetry was written in Sanskrit. In the middle Ages, Persian had this unique distinction. In the contemporary Spanish poetry, Life and Literature are identical. Indeed, the greatest legislation is being made in it today."

Sri Sri published a book of his own English translations of his Telugu poems under the title "Three Cheers for Man." The verses appear under three different headings, each printed in a different colour - Green for those dealing with peace, Purple for those with the theme of Experience and red symbolising Revolution. The purple poem, below, is a comment on his poetic preoccupations.

"She wrapped her Nudity in the streets of the London Times and disappeared suddenly into the jungle of the Night".

On the occasion of his Shastiabdi Poorti (1970) five volumes of his works - Poems, stories, sketches, essays etc. were published along with a supplementary edition captioned 'Miscellany'. A glimpse of his poems:

Sri Sri's 'Nava Kavita' (New poetry) holds up mirror to his poetic credo.

That which
Moves and is moving

Turns and transmogrifies...
Shakes off slumber
Leads us on and on
And
Proffers us a life perfect

In short, Sri Sri's faith in the role of literature as one that wakes us up from deep slumber and inertia and infuses energy and idealism into life and propels society towards progressive values is of a piece not only, with the Modernists but also with the traditionalists with the exception that the traditionalists laid stress more on the form than on the technique.

In a vein bordering on bathos but paradoxically relevant, Sri Sri says,

A puppy
A match - stick
And a cake of soap
Belittle them not
All of them are worthy of verse.

Sri Sri's "Desacharitrulu" is a fine instance of fusion of form and technique. In this poem, he probes the genesis of gorgeous historical periods and finds in every brick of architectural marvels "the fret, fever and groan" of the toiling millions caught up in the coils of exploitation and injustice.

He queries,

"What is there
to be proud of
in the annals of history
of any country?"

With the exception of celebrated poets of yore like Tikkana and Peddana and of Tilak in the modern Telugu literature, the end-technique is said to have been rarely adopted.

Sri Sri peeps into the womb of history and perceives

'The horrific cries
of the helpless'.
and
'No where on earth
does one find a spot
not stained with war
The entire past
is one either blood soaked
or tear - drenched.

He concludes, not like the Marxist but like one deeply imbued with humanism.

'No longer will be
This plaguing social dogma
Of exploitation
Of man by Man
Of one race by another....

Sochi Rout Roy, one of the most prominent Oriya poets considers Konark, the great seat of Oriya architecture "just a heap of skeletons" of the people who have given their lives for the construction of such a huge structure and says that nobody has even considered how many poor workmen have laboured day in and day out to erect this temple.

"There beautiful art reigns
It has not sung of the life of Man
What it should have sung."

Sri Sri, too looks upon the Taj Mahal as a symbol of imperial vanity and exploitation and accordingly comments

"Who are those workmen
That toiled and moiled for the Taj?"
 'It is not
 The Palanquin
 That the Lord rode
 But the bearers"

That matter to Sri Sri. ('Mahaprasthanam') (1937) (The Great Odessey) consisting of 41 Sections, is hailed as the magnum opus of Sri Sri, In 'Jayabheri' (The drums of victory), he depicts the rebellion of the common workman against the iniquitous exploitation in the social and economic fields, While in 'Oke Ratri' (Only one night) he analyses the seamy side of the social set-up 'Ghantalu' (The Bells) is a comment on the euphonic character of poetry. In 'Rukkulu' Sri Sri describes the all-embracing character of poetry in the domain of which nothing is an alien element. 'Avataram' (The incarnation) deals with the theme that poetry is energised with the fusion of revolutionary themes. Sri Sri's 'Batasari' (The Wayfarer) is about the stark naked problem of unemployment staring in the face of millions of the youth of the nation. 'Aasa Dootalu' (The Messengers of hope) demonstrates his historical insight into the womb of time while 'I' is all about the cross currents of hope and despair. 'Saisava Geethi' (The songs of children) amply testifies to

his boundless affection for children. In 'Kala Ravi', he reveals his expertise at experimentation of various poetic techniques. Sri Sri's 'Bikshu Varshiyasi' is about the 'discord' in the life of modern man, while all other creatures in Nature live in amity and cheer. In 'Abhyudam', he describes the regressive exploitative set up and the progressive march of new social values. Sri Sri's 'Vatyasam' is about the dichotomy of perceptions between the bourgeoisie and the proleteriats. In 'Pratigna' (The vow), he envisages the fall of the bourgeoisie set up and the crusade of the proleterian forces against the unjust socio-economic set up, while in 'Kavitvaniki Nichhenalu' (The ladders to poetry) 'Jagannadhuni Radhachakralu' (The Chariot wheels of Lord Jagannadha), and 'Garjinchu Russia' (Roar Russia, Roar), he fervently pleads for the dawn of a new world, without the barriers of class, caste and creed.

THE PROTEST

SRI RANGAM NARAYANA BABU

A worthy disciple of GURAJADA, in championing the language of the masses and a Viplava Rishi on par with Sri Sri, Narayana Babu is a mighty force to reckon with. While Sri Sri's poesy tends to be propagandistic and often smacks of a western technique, Narayan Babu's poesy exudes a native sensibility: while Sri Sri's poesy has the roar of a wild waterfall, Narayana Babu's poesy, has, often the serene surge and urge of a benign brook. However, both are credited with their profundity of thought and inlook in their heart-touching poems in free verse.

A Volcanic ferocity against the nefarious injustice meted out to the muted millions of a merciless society, and a total involvement in the life of the down trodden poor and above all a clarion-call for their assertion raise Narayana Babu's 'The blade of grass' to the status of a memorable classic. For instance, the blade of grass, in its surrender to the savages of our pseudo society meekly submits itself.

"You
Are the bridegrooms.
Bowing out of the palanquin
A carpet, precious am I
Tread sir, trample
Over me
Trample and tread sir!
Over me!

Narayana Babu borrows and blends the events in the Ramayana with those of a modern society. The blade of grass' awakens itself to the need for selfassertion.

Now I Know
Who I am
Tarry a while
Tarry a while !

Tears roll down the cheeks of the poet over the lamentations of a beggar-maid, mercilessly manhandled by an exploitative set-up.

"For this nation"
which quenches
Never the hunger
And cares never
To clothe the modesty
of a maid
Burnt away
was
The maid
like the wick
In a claylamp'

(DESAMATHA)

A poignant note on the stained face of mother nature in the Mechanised world of man runs in such lines as

"Life - lost
And
Scorched of songs
Are
The Pebbles of the parched brook
Since
The mill mulcted away it stream."

To him, the donkey which bears the brunt of the hu-

mans is venerable patience - incarnate.

"Chewing the cud
Over the laughter, lost of the brook.
In the shade of a rock
His highness. The moke
Closed its eye-lids."

The tone of his poems is not an unbridled sensuality. His perception of life and its passions confirms his life-affirming attitude.

"Debauched"
The Specks with the nose
On the couch
Of the eye-lids.
So
Did the churning staff
and the wornout pot of buttermilk
In the dense dark"
(Rishis - Wake up)

His 'Kapala Moksham' is a tour de force. He exploits in an Eliotonian sense, the treasures of a classical tradition and offers us a message modern in technique. Narayana Babu projects Bhagat Singh, not merely as a martyr who defied death but as a mythological hero who is uniquely chosen by Lord Siva as the 'bowl-skull' to beg with.

Poetry is music in words, while music is poesy in its melody. His 'Fiddle Naidu' is a sublime tribute to Dwaram Venkateswamy Naidu. Hailing his musical fingers as the five-fold Ghana Raga, he calls the maestro's body a sky and his hand the 'rain-bow' and traces the science of his sono-

rous music to the philosophic concept of 'Nada' at the dawn of creation.

"It is really.
The bow ? Nay
It is
Man's chariot
The Bharata battle
The Staff

In Sri Krishna's "hands" !

A mosaic of rhythms elevates the poem to artistic perfection. He paints the picture of a for-saken widow who mothers a baby and later smothers away its life in his poem 'Kavi'. The ideographical aspect of the poem and its emotional appeal are striking. The "dense dark of the dusk" appears to the poet like

"The Fangs of a black cobra
And
The pale pots of smallpox
Are
The stars in the sky"

The anguish of an orphaned humanity is felt here. In short, the poem is a mordant comment on the deafness of romantic poets to the bleeding cry of a hapless humanity.

His 'Ooravathala' (outside the town) is a perfect ideogram mirroring the forlorn people of a decaying society.

Caw ! Caw !
The sky - crow
Disclosed its mouth
For a meal !

The sky and its reddish glow are captured in the opened beak of a crow-an incisive comment on the defenceless denizens caught up in the cobweb of a corroding society.

His 'Jwalana' is a biting comment on the fettered humanity in a fulsome society. He thunders against the sadistic conventions of a society which relegate a woman to the level of a slave and gives a clarion call for a revolution.

The poem "Visakhapatnam" is a paradoxical comment. Imagistic in its technique, it is an attack on a sinister society. The sarcasm in the poem heightens in such lines as.

"The women
Who wither away
Their life all for love
The sinister men
Are
Scaffold like
The clerks-hollow men are they
Who
Bottle away
Beerlike
The blood of the poor"

The artist, that too, a poet has no object but to present the realities of life. How true is it in the case of Narayana Babu's "who are you? (Neevevare)

"While
The mind and the heart
closed their lids
And are
in meditation bound

who are you
Showing the sunny paths out of
The subconscious?"
(The song of the poverty stricken)

Here, he comments on the hungry lot whose agony inflames the sky. Narayana Babu has carved out a niche for himself and as long as Sri Sri is venerated and progressive poesy is welcome, he is truly indispensable.

POETRY of THE MASSES

KUNDURTI

'I am
The lyric
In the scorched
And sterile
Field of Life'

sings Kundurthi Anjaneyulu, the people's poet. In fact, his poesy is the vibrant proclamation of human rights, the protest of plundered people, the flaming thunder of indignation against sham, exploitation, tyranny and cowardice. A renowned poet of Telugus with genuine Marxist perception, he recognises the potential dignity of the average humanity and interprets the life of a commoner from a socio-historic point. He makes the toilworn tiller, the famished proleteriat, the middle classes caught up in the coils of exploitation and the poorman fretting over problem-ridden life, the heroes in his poems. He opines that literature is too great to be slogan-ridden or doctrine-drugged. He goes beyond the periphery of mere ideological shibboleths and reflects the inner urge of the human mind for uninterrupted growth and legitimate dignity. In his 'Yuge, Yuge', he proclaims,

'My poesy is the Geeta the listener
is the common man the artless
illiterate the fellow slumbering in
the lap of poverty'

He is not a poet of the ivory tower or of the isolationist school which worships beauty in her secluded chamber. As a trend setter in the experimental world of form and technique, he

has hardly any rivals. A poet of 'verse liberated from the stranglehold of prosody', he has evolved over years a new social philosophy and a novel fusion of technique and form in such masterpieces as 'Telengana' and 'Nagaramlo vana'. His poetic credo is.

"If the past is prosody in fetters, the present is verse in freedom".

He comments,

I am
the first accused
To be hanged
In the trial
Of the Free Verse,
I murdered
The slender-limbed
sylph of poesy
Of those times
Robbed her
Of all her ornate ornaments
In the dock
I confessed everything....
The judges of the High Court
commuted my death sentence
On humanitarian grounds
To life imprisonment
decreed
to live for a generation
Imprisoned
In the hearts of the readers."

At the same time, he is not a fanatic opposed to the grandeur

of classical literature. He adroitly exploits all its stylistic techniques and presents familiar images in chaste Telugu idiom and refined colloquial simplicity. He invites the winds of change in tune with the season of the times.

It is meet
To be proud of our past
But to peruse the present is better,
To ignore the past is surely unjust
But to hang on to it is too bad,
As Valmiki wrote the Ramayana
As Vyasa did the Mahabharata
So is my motto
To treat of the story of 'the now'

A peep into his art, and thought ! An iconoclast in religion and a rebel in literature, Kundurthi blasts religious hypocrisy and sinister spiritual pretenses. In his 'An open letter to God', he ridicules.

'The sage
that sins
while chanting Shival Shival
And
Blindfolds my eyes
Is a devotee to you !

He questions the worshippers of mudgods,

'Of what use is it
But staining the paper
For Him that lies no where
And repels all appeals.

His 'Dandiyatra' is the very gospel of revolution. He opines that a revolutionary movement is sustained and strengthened not by a coterie of leaders but by the mighty masses. To him, they, not the individual leaders, are the backbone of any movement. In his hands, the mighty upsurge of Indian masses against the Britishers acquires a universal significance. He paints the role of Gandhi as merely nominal and describes the mute but mighty millions as the real protagonists of the freedom movement. For instance, he says that Gandhi,

'Sent word to History
The masses hooked history
By the nose and pushed it
Down to their master's feet!

Behind the facade of the historical struggle of the land-less garib against the despotic regime of the Nawaab in 'Telengana', one observes Kundurthi's keen study of time, change, conflict and revolt in any mass movement. He pays a glowing tribute to the progressive march of history.

'Whose land is this
But of the teeming Millions ?
Oh, you ! Inexorable History !
Who can say 'Nay'
To whatever some say
Forge ahead !

The masterly blend of the particular and the universal and an admirable amalgam of the stylistic nuances of the classical verse and modern techniques make 'Telengana' a unique feat in the modern Telugu Literature.

Kundurthi's 'Nagaramlo Vana' is a shrewd analysis of man's inhumanity to man. While describing the rain as,

'The sky
Shedding tears
Over the people
Famished on earth'

He exposes the exploitative nature of the milk vendor who welcomes rain into his milk vessel.

Kundurthi is a citizen of the world. He is aware of the annihilation of accumulation of human wisdom and wealth in the event of a nuclear war. He ardently wishes for a ray of sanity in the encircling gloom of despair.

'Here are my values
The values of a degenerate science
I hand them over to you
And seek shelter in the people

(Thus spake the Atom)

Kundurthi has an integral vision of life. His progressive outlook coexists with a philosophical inlook. Like Sri Sri and Pablo Neruda, he, at times, finds himself immersed in his vast within. In his 'Amudrita Kavyam', even the traces of Advaita philosophy acquire a social relevance. For instance, he calls man a watery drop, impregnated by the Sun and delivered from the womb of the clouds and regards the

process of merging of this watery drop in the sea as 'Life'. In this poem, he emerges as an ardent philosopher and a devout seeker of truth !

Kundurthi breaks away from the traditional outlook of the romantic poets in both poetic technique and treatment of subject matter. He stands for a literature that is at once virile and full-blooded and moves with the life-forces of the time. He calls upon the poets of modern era not to indulge in the labyrinth of dreams and fancies. He mocks reverently at Kavi Samrat Viswanadha Satyanarayana's ivory towers of isolation and pokes fun at Sri Sri's obsession with the ideological theories of alien lands.

His poetry offers a virile message of comfort and courage. In fact, his forte lies in his ability to see beyond all strife and struggle, the finality of peace, beauty and goodness. While calling for a change of heart and conversion of soul, he comments.

"The bliss
that is not in the soul
Is found no where at all
Wherever you search for it.
The beauty found in the broad day light
Is searched for invain in the dark"

He castigates the despondent miasma of bourgeoise defeatism and prophesies the emergence of a brave new world of indefatigable men,

Even if the dark is on
Will not the venus shine ?
Will not the fog fully clear
Once the Dawn Sun sets out its sojourn?

To a revolutionary poet of people, discord and unrest in a society of exploitation form the very staple of his poems and Kundurthi knows it pretty well. He says

"The present history

Marches with its plentiful hope on me"

Mr. Addepalli Rama Mohana Rao, an authority on Kundurthi aptly comments "Kundurthi is a humanist who cuts across the rigid isms of ideologues and slogans of propagandists and establishes an empathy with the common man, his toil, tears and tribulations.

MYSTICISM

VAZIR REHMAN

Pure poetry is unmasked. A poet who lays bare his heart establishes an abiding rapport with his readers. "The passions he uncovers, the memories he lets loose, the thoughts he exposes, the weaknesses he discovers and the spiritual strength he displays, constitute his poetic personality" opines Vazir Rehman. Deeply influenced by his mentor chalam and blessed by his brother Ismail, of repute poet, Rehman blends in himself romanticism and mysticism in equal measure. An instinct for feeling, a pursuit of truth and a yearning for intellectual justice characterise his poems; Philosophically experiential and poetically splendid, his two anthologies " Sahas!" and "Echatiki Pothaviratri?" have earned him a unique place in modern Telugu Literature. A look at his vision, art and thought !

The mystery of the cyclical process of death and life mystifies him. He witnesses life quickening in myraids of forms and defying death. In his poems, the very passion for physical beauty takes in mystic character. His poem "Chivariki" testifies to his vision.

"That's all -
Nothing lasts last
Even the tender flower of youth
That embraces and enthrals
This body into an abode of passion
And makes it drowsy
Drunk with all the spells of Music
Descends into the dust of dust

He identifies himself with every thing that is intensely human. His sensitive reaction to the "touch of tears in things

mortal" is profound. He offers himself to bear their cross in his poem "Kavi". He questions the Almighty why he had endowed him with a thinking mind and a feeling heart and then exposed him to the still sad music of humanity!

"Why have you
O Lord showed up
Those faces unmasked
Made me man
And weaned me away
From the world and my kinship with it?"

Rehman pleads with God,

"If not-
Be benign enough
To carve me into
A Milestone
Movable never
Even by the fate"
(I don't need human birth)

Then realisation dawns and darts like a lightning.

"I am the Heaven
And the Hell
The weal and the woe
I am the All
And all is from my within"

(Omar Khayyam)

Thyaga Raja, the saint composer with his spiritual yearnings and divine despair in his "Kritis" made an indellible

impact on him. While his "Atma Vicharam" prays for a shower of spiritual grace to cleanse him of his passions, "Arunachalam" beckons him to the sea of spiritual life there, His "Sahasi" is, infact, the homage of the thinker to the "Philosopher - Writer" Chalam who shed his passions layer by layer at Ramanachalam.

His mystic subjective vision admits of a consciousness in physical things and gives them a subtle physical life which is not of materialistic existence.

"Me-
The Crooked
Ungainly shadow
Daddling in the
Narrow dense dark"

In his "Hatya" (Murder) he explores the world within.
He queries,

"Which is
The dream and
Which the reality
Who is
That I AM
Who is that within me?"

While his "The Night Amidst Night" is a pure piece of introspection, the "The serpent of passion", makes a ruthless surgical analysis of his own passion, - spun life beneath which lingers a ceaseless quest for truth. He calls the surg-

ing sensuous passion " a full-hooded cobra " hissing amidst his nerves and craves for a "calm of mind and all passion - spent." In a poem called "Nirasa" (Despair) he echoes the prayer of mortals for deliverance from the bondage of passions.

"In my
Heart of hearts
is
The surging roar of the sea
The mute Melancholy
of
The wailing waves
Beating their brains
Against the bank"

(Farewell)

He is all compassion for an orphaned humanity seeking a sense of belonging. In the "The Red Rose", we have a touching portrayal of a tender baby disowned and deserted in an indifferent society.

"With its eyes just open
A lonely
Crimson - red rose
Seeks
Shivering, shuddering
For them"

Here is the vehement echo of human suffering.

The profoundly sensuous love in his poems is ex-

pressed with singular force and grandeur. "The tremor of a kind of modern eagerness, the cup of voluptuousness which nature offers is tasted by a sensibility which finds in every drop, food for poetic Thought". "Na Malle" reverberates with the echo of the passionate love for a beloved throughout the aeons of human history. In his "Premavesam", he begs of his Labelle Dame Sans merci not to cut him dead even when she is in the embrace of her paramour. He feels that all his raging passions may be quietened, when the indwelling spirit soothes him.

"Perhaps
All my foolish fears
Raging ruthlessly
In this dreadful dark
Rest in my heart
To rebound
For a novel dawn!"

While his poem "Hrudgrah anam" is surrealistic, "Krida" celebrates the enchanting eternal female. His "Rati" is a fervent plea for a time - arresting bliss in a time - harried world of mortals.

His ardent prayer is,

"When I cuddle my head
Close in your lap
And close my eyes,
The bliss is
Of the one, who tempest - tired
Reaches the shore"

Chalam is the first crusader to fulminate against the exploitation of woman in a custom-cursed society. Rehman, his devout disciple, echoes his master.

Castigating the male dominated society, he says:

"What will be
Your gain
When
You gatecrash
Ruthless
into the temple Holy ?

His "Chelagatam" raises an abstruse metaphysical question. To him, while poetry has nothing to do with fact but with truth, it is difficult to decide, what "fact" and "truth" are. A genuine mystic, Rehman invites the dark dusk to dismantle his passionbound life into anonymity.

The secret of Rehman's romanticism and mysticism is a progressive lightning up of inner horizon which extends beyond the limits of senses. A keener investigation into the realms of his poetry, shows, not the contagion of sentimentalism, but the radiance of a soul aspiring to greater heights of beatitude. His "Letters" show this amply and rewardingly.

ECSTASY AND AGONY

TILAK

The

Night it rained
Nectar,
While all asleep
Me alone
Opened the door
and Off home
Into the meadow of moonlight
Beyond the hill and the dell
I stood.
Across the Sky
are the celestial sylphs
pacing fast gracefully
with
Their Star - anklets
Jingling
And
Their Plaited Parijatas
Pending down
In comely clusters
They
Full - breasted and Broad - hipped
Bend like bows stringed tight
of youthfulness.
Smiling sweetly
They said,
Behold him !
He
The Charming
and
The Bliss incarnate

does wear a crown
That swings as in a cradle
By the tassle of dreams
composes
A bright musical lyric
At the corners of the eyes
Fillips.

A Veena of pure white smiles
On his ruby lips,
Subduing
The secrets beyond others' reach,
Lusty
And learned of life,

Like the Sun
risen
On the ever-renewing
Ocean of multi-hued fancies.
He and he
Indeed,
Is our friend, beloved and
the most noble one!

Down
Drizzled
A shower of rain
And so did a trickle
of sweet Nectar
Handfuls of it
I did quaff
And bade
Misery and Mortality out.

Covered myself with
the saffron sky of sweet desires
And bore life
Like a wreath of smiling Mandaras
And debuted
On the path triumphant.
That Night
When it rained Nectar
All were asleep
Weary of life routine
and swooned into slumber deep
Embracing the habit
and the helpless bondage
Diffidently cuddled together
unmindful, Alas!
Of the call of herald
What a pity!
Known to none
till now
is
that I am
An immortal

(Amrutam Kurisina Ratri)

Thus sings Tilak, the peerless romanticist, aesthete and humanist of modern Telugu literature. He confesses that his

"Syllables are the pigeons of
compassion soaked
in the stream of tears"

and happily states

"My syllables are the graceful girls full of mirth dancing in the moonlight". A votary of beauty in its multifarious aspects, a romanticist who listens to the still sad voice of a humanity shackled by injustice and iniquity, and a progressive poet who ardently dreams of the emergence of a new brave world, Tilak is a poet Platonically pure from the taint of ideological shibboleths and slogans. His poesy blends delicate sensuousness with the fragrance of intellectual ideas and appeals to the heart and the mind in equal measure.

Kundurthi hails Tilak as a humanist whose all embracing vision transcends the petty barriers of race, religion and creed and holds aloft the flag of humanitarianism. Indeed, he is the high priest of the modern Telugu poetry and ranks along with Sri Sri and Ajanta in carving out a niche for himself. A look at his art and thought!

Though Tilak is romanticist, he has no fascination for a regressive past. He opines that great poesy has perpetual relevance and prophetic insight. Accordingly, he says,

*Not every fellow
Khaddar-clad.
Can be complied with
Nor a piece with a prosaic theme
With a rhyming scheme
can be poesy
Poesy is alchemy
A bard alone knows it
Kalidasa knew it

He calls upon the coteries of poets to blaze a new trail in technique and theme and brands the regressive ones as

the timid and the lame, incapable of negotiating a new, curve. Castigating the untimely senility of the middle class whose meek and submissive attitude strenghtens exploitation by the affluent classes, he comments,

"These are the men
Trapped inside the past
The shadows of a dead past"

Distressed over the demolition of plous hopes, fervent prayers and fond dreams of the common man, he feels that a poet should not lull himself in the bowers of imaginary romanticism. His heart bleeds.

"Neither can I sing of my
country
Nor can I comply with your
command
Nor can I lend tone
To put the musical pipe in tune"
(Aartha Geetam)

He mocks at this great 'Bharat' and doubts its glorious heritage and culture.

"Of which civilisation
are they revelatory?
of which excellence of knowledge
are they symbolic?
And what proud memories are they
of the motherland of the Buddha"?

In 'Needalu', he bemoans the naked exploitation of women in a society of gross inequalities and advises her to

fortify herself, he says

"The dilapidated dust
Is
Belching blood
All the way are dug deep pits
Far away is the home
The hand bears not a lamp
courage is the only armour"
(Needalu)

Tohim, the entire history of human race appears to be one of exploitation of the meek by the mighty. He pities the utter impotence of God in the face of the inhumanity of Man. In 'Ninna Ratri' (Yester-Night) he says.

"Tell Me
Did I reproach Him
When he sat on my cot
Yesternight
And saw me pitiably
With his eyes downcast?
Did I, Did I just even ask Him at all
Of the brat that famished
And fought and perished
In the flames of hunger?
or even narrate the story
Of the stench of the burnt out
Time?"

His poem, 'Katinopanishat' sketches the sorry spectacle of the suicide of a common man and comes down heavily on the rhetoric of modernity which simply smacks of the

ribaldry of the inhumanity of man to man. In 'Laya Geetham' he portrays a hapless world perilously perched, on the precipice of nuclear arms,

He attacks an obscurantist society which thrives on fulsome tradition and defines culture as that, which assimilates not only the nobility of the past but also the novelty of the future in our culture. In 'New Syllabus' and 'Dwaitham' he shows up the wide gulf between the ivory tower romanticism and the world of harsh realities. He sounds the conch for the evolution of new trends in literature which can help solve, the problems of a suffering humanity. In 'Postman, he dreams of a single fraternal world unfettered by the shackles of caste, creed and colour. In 'Vasudhika Geetham', he is acutely aware of the ruthless attempts of man to extinguish the scintillating spark of humanity.

The splendid imagery and exuberance of feelings in 'Thou art not, but Thy song remains', raise it, to the heights of peerless romanticism. One is happily reminded of the Keatsian felicity in the 'Ode to Nightingale'.

Tilak's poem 'With you in the rain' is a fine instance of landscape writing. The mystical empathy shown in it, makes it appealing to our 'transcendental consciousness, while the immortal song shows the inextinguishable hope of Man.

Tilak is a free soul, A romanticist, an aesthete and above all a seeker of truth, he probes truth in and between the thorny fences and the swampy sloughs of life.

THE PREDICAMENT

BAIRAGI

Art is an escape
from life
but, how is it
to escape from art?
the dream is an escape
from wakefulness
but, then what escape
from wakefulness?

(Palayanam)

So sings Bairagi, who was posthumously awarded the Central Sahitya Akademy Award for literature for his Aagama Geethi, "The Song of Herald." A major modern Telugu poet, Bairagi is often branded as a mystical recluse at war with the world. But the fact is Bairagi is not merely a mystic but also a philosopher, a revolutionary, a reformer and a metaphysicist all rolled into one. When the dust of critical controversy settles down, a picture is sure to emerge, of a humanist with a heightened vision.

Bairagi was born on September 5, 1925. His father was a nationalist and wanted his son to imbibe nationalistic spirit by attaining proficiency in Hindi. Being studious by nature, Bairagi took to Hindi as a duck to water. At 15, he took part in a conference of Hindi poets and even recited a poem. It was at this time that M N Roy attracted him. He joined the Radical Democratic Party. His poetic power, however, found expression in 1946, when he took up teaching Hindi. His 'Cheekati Needalu' (Shadows of the Dark) at once established him as a poet and before long Bairagi claimed his place among the major modern poets in Telugu. The mystical glow and keen philosophic insight into life, coupled

with humanistic ideals in his poems, made him a poet unique in Telugu literature.

In his poems, Bairagi neither seeks refuge in the ivory towers of the romanticists nor loses himself in an outburst of fury like the revolutionary poets. He plunges headlong into the swirling sea of humanity, listens to its mute melancholy and swims to the shore of this world to project it in its travail and man in predicament. Sadly, he comments,

"In the agony,
the infinite,
life, the finite
marches

The human in him cries out.

"Caught up
am I
like an embryo
in this swirling
whirlpool
of the huge universe".

(Dark Shadows)

The urge for the redemption of a captive humanity is dominant in him. Everywhere, he finds man caught up in hesitation and despair. He perceives within the pounding heart of each Man "termites, whirlpools, scaffolds and the roar of a hungry tiger".

"Alone,
alone, all alone
like the shadow

in the shade of the tree bare
like the apparition
lost, of its way
like a god
deserted
I roam, roam
in the dark..... dark.....

But he is no Jeremiah forecasting the deluge of this world or a doctrine drugged propagandist or an abstruse metaphysicist. He is a humanist shocked over the wreckage of humanity in an exploitative set up. He fulminates.

"Tarries never
this typhoon
till your mansions
crumble down
till your towers
tumble down".

(HUNGER)

An idifatigable champion of the down trodden dregs of humanity, he conceives of the Taj Mahal as the very symbol of injustice and iniquity. He calls for its demolition.

"Batter the Taj Mahal
brick by brick,
break it and bray it all
it is the stink
unbearable, of the corpses
of the ages past
the shackle

on the shin
poised for progress
the mockery of the arrogant
affluence
the horrific cry
of
the homeless".

(Demolish the Taj)

His 'Voice Out of the Well' shares T.S.Eliot's concern for a forsaken humanity, gone astray, alienated, exhausted and entombed in a wasteland of withering values. He strips life of its layers of vanity, ignorance, illusion and delusion and shows the wounds on the human heart and the incisions on the soul! He is all pity for man who, in this confusing world of conflicting ways, is unable to decide whether to march ahead along a blood strewn road or beat a retreat in sheer cowardice.

He finds the entire humanity over-taken by a dilemma, a crisis, a welterschmerz and an angst. To him, Arjuna on the battle field, Hamlet in his indecision and Raskolnikov in his remorse, symbolise the pathos of modern man in a pathless world.

Arjuna is one lost in the ineluctable realms of the imponderables. The war weary Arjuna exclaims.

"For whom
is that battle?
for whose glee
of the eye?
who are those
diseased minds ?

In a world of absurdity, only a saner being like the poet with an intellectual commitment to the redemption of humanity from its gnawing doubts and dark despair, can show a way out, Bairagi exclaims,

'In the clarion calls
in-cessant
of the Blazing Flames
I need a voice
To sing of the lyric
human
a voice, I need"

His 'Vagdhatta Vasundara' speaks volumes of his vision of one humanity harmoniously aspiring to a brave new world. The poem 'Kavi Samasya' (the poet's dilemma) is about how a poet can give utterance to a plethora of fleeting sensations. In fact, Bairagi belongs to the genre of poets whose poesy suggests more than it means.

Many a critic mistakes him for a gloomy poet, preaching anarchism. But Bairagi is a realist. He waits for the golden dawn of the day of promise and fulfilment.

"No
Room is there
For life's frustration
Nor
For the end of the thirst
of
The human heart".

In brief, in his poems, we see the quivering pensive

sensibilities of our age. To borrow T.S. Eliot's remarks, Bairagi paints the life of man as one dangling between the idea and the reality, between the motion and the act, between the conception and the creation and between the emotion and the response!

His 'Aagama Geethi' published posthumously in 1981 is the song of herald, revealing a mystic's concern, a philosopher's quest, a crusader's challenge, a reformer's indignation, a revolutionary's call, a metaphysician's musing and, above all a humanist's heightened vision.

In fact, Bairagi's art is a plea and a prayer for the dawn of a world of harmony and order in the broad context of the human situation. It is a call to reshape humanity from egoistic separativity and internecine animosities. He asks fervently,

"Where is He?
He who is child like
with a vow unshakable
like the Himalaya
with compassion
of a Niagaric flow
the undaunted man
Great and Noble?

(Aagama Geethi)

Despite a vein of pessimism in his poems, he shows his refusal to fly on the summits of abstract idealism and readiness to descend to the hapless earth that awaits succour and shelter from the menacing forces. He pleads in 'Ontari Dega'.

'With a single stroke of my pen

I will knock out

Injustice and Iniquity

from the mighty

mansion of life

and a lot more I will do

but grant me a grain of faith.

(Nakkoncham Nammakamivvu)

(Translated by Sri Sri)

Death is for mortals, caught up in the cobwebs of hesitation and helplessness. But, the flame within the human heart is always inextinguishable.

'I am

beyond death

braving it,

I am human

Since death is, simply

"A new turn

for a monotonous path

the remote but

the lovely call of love".

(Naku Chavuledu)

Calling for love and sacrifice in a world of hatred and exploitation in Raj Ghat', he laments how "India that was Bharat, that once revelled in plenty and prosperity is now buried deep in poverty in a vicious set-up of exploitation in 'Vande Mataram'. He sounds the conch to restore the nation

from the mire of political prostitution, mud of economic exploitation and muck of moral degeneration in 'Panchajanyam'.

A play wright, a poet of repute in Hindi, a novelist and a story-teller, Bairagi is indispensable in the literary world of humanitarian values.

Economy in expression, spontaniety of style and empathy with the thematic content, acute sensibility and sharp sensitivity raise him to the highest peak of glory in Telugu Literature.

The force of an inner glow animates the poet's lines and awakens a respectful and serious admiration in the reader. The persistent portrayal of the manifold consciouness of human misery is a faithful reflection of the anguish of the times.

Dead yesterdays may remove his crusade. But, he is for the "budding generation" to brave open the gates of exploitation of all hues. His poetry has the virility and the valour, denied to the mortal hesitations.

"Me too
drowse
But, then
Dear friend
My lyric
Winks never"

(Animisha Geethi)

May be, the leaders of a movement for restoration of

human values may be destroyed. Their cause cannot be defeated.

He says;
"Your sorrow
Is of this world
Give us it
And smile like a flower
As ever."

(Nayakunaku Sanubhuthi)

Acutely aware of the still sad voice of humanity behind the fetters of injustice, he exhorts the people of India.

"Unlock you must
The prison gates
of this huge prison
That is India."
Further, he asks them to realise that
"Revolution
Has no
Back door"

and those self styled leaders who thrive on the sweat, toil and tears of the hapless humanity cannot alleviate its misery and pain; He calls upon the brands of poets to

"Come ahead
And forge ahead
And envelope like
the Locusts all over"

To

"Burn, Arouse and
march ahead."

Determined to a total demolition of images of illusions
and illusions of human images, in his "I demolish the dreams,"
he says that the world must be made safe for the future
generation:

"The dazzling light dawns
And the rain is stilled."

(Vaarasulu)

True, we live in a world where this voice of protest is
stifled, the song of joy is shattered and the conflict in the
heart is beyond the ken of many,

"It is that poser
Which you didn't pose
that poses a challenge to me
A spark of fire glimmers
into the ashes cold"

(On a Midday)

Yet,

"You
Have to forge ahead
These shadows do not
Prop you up
March, March ahead
Alone and solitarily!"

(Parajithulakoka Pata)

Deeply subjective, bordering on a mystical plane,
Bairagi exclaims,

"On the sandy banks of a fierce sea
Of the solitary souls
I am building
Pyramids for the
Hide and seek
Of life and death

(Pyramids)

The dilemma of a poet intensely human is discussed
by him often in an excessive measure

"Art is an escape from life
But, how is it
To escape from Art?
The dream is an escape
From wakefulness
But, then what escape
from wakefulness?"

(Palayanam)

A sarcasm of the gravest kind, is in "Amatyuni Akala
Maranam." He mocks at the powermad politician.

"Unresting in sleep
In the cold tomb
rolls the restive minister."

He cuts across the "isms" of ideologues and slogans
of propagandists. Despite the pessimistic out pourings.
Bairagi is a true humanist, found, where the heart beat of a
helpless humanity is heard.

THE NAKED TRUTH

DIGAMBARA POETRY

"The violation of the norm of the standard is what makes it possible the poetic utilisation of language" said Jan Mukarovsky, in his book 'Standard Language and Poetic Language' while Geofry Hartman in his 'Structuralism;-The Anglo-American Adventure' comments that the history of literature, in its broadest aspect, appears to be a continual breach of levels of style (High style being profaned, low style elevated) or a history of metaphorical transference (sacred attributes being secularised and vice versa). The traditionalists as well as the slogan ridden revolutionary poets denigrated them as 'rebels without a cause or an ideology' and berated them as 'lumpens and anarchists'. Their poetry of protest and fulmination against the establishment in literary, political and cultural fields and their call for total annihilation of the tradition was dismissed as a 'passing phase' or a 'freakish phenomenon". In their attempt at 'laying bare the truth hidden under hypocritical gestures and words and exposing the leprous decay of society, they were accused of abusing the sweet and dignified Telugu, degrading it to a 'shockingly indecorous', profane, vulgar, obscene and 'libellous' level and indulging in prostitution of language', yet, the Digambar poetry of the six angrymen - Nagnamuni, Nihilswar, Jwala Mukhi, Cherabanda Raju, Bhairavayya and Maha Swapna, has come to stay. The Digambara poets declared, in unmistakable terms.

"We are six, perceiving our own images, We, loving the men, all around, tell them also to do the same; "For the good in man, For a society of blossoming smiles of no deceit. We raise our voice with souls walking through days and nights of inextinguishable fire"

In retrospect, modern Telugu literature, has more or less been found to be a response and reaction to the middle classes who were strongly influenced by the sweeping trends like revivalism, romanticism and nationalism at home and the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, decline of imperialistic hegemony between the two world wars and the antifascist and feudal movement in the 40's. The Digambara poets intended to destroy at one stroke, the middle class cultural ethos (which shaped Telugu poetry) by snapping their umbilical cord with the past.

The Digambara poets were aghast at the dismal picture of a stale, stagnant and 'commoditised' literature. They felt that after the shock administered by Sri Sri to the revivalist and romanticist poetry of the 19th century in the 30's, gradual loss of momentum of the Telengana Peasant struggle by the 50's, exodus of the progressive writers to the filmi world for monetary gains and the craving of the few writers for governmental patronage, the literary field smacked of "irremediable hypocrisy, falsehood, deceit, betrayal and opportunism". Further, having witnessed the 'retreat' of the progressive writers from the active combat of social conflict, the Digambara poets committed themselves to 'stripping modern poetry of its artificial blandishments, niceties of ornate imagery and polished verbosity. They mounted a well timed blitzkrieg on the 'worn out literary tradition' and in their defence, hailed their poems as 'embodiments of direct naked truths beyond the ken of intransigent scoundrels and egoistic louses who love to watch the magic of worlds'. Moreover, the 60's witnessed the birth of revolutionary

Marxism and two parallel movements - Digambara poetry in literature and the Srikakulam tribal movement in the political field, the fusion of which resulted in the formation of 'Viplava Rachayitala Sangham' - VIRASAM (Association of Revolutionary Writers) in 1970. Virasam was unique as it comprised a wide spectrum of the writers of the 30's, progressive writers like Sri Sri, Ravi Sastry, Kutumba Rao etc, rebel poets of the 60's and four of the six Digambara poets. The association openly challenged the establishment and championed the cause of Naxalbari movement.

The Digambara poets discovered the roots of literature in folk tradition and facilitated the re-entry of oral literature into the Telugu literary world. 'Kolimantukunnadi' of Cherabanda Raju blazed the trail for a new kind of Telugu poetry that demanded 'folk tunes and earthy language' to voice-forth the agony of an exploited world'. To their credit, it must be said the Digambara poets sought to reestablish the missing link between life and poetry and revive folk art forms like 'Oggu Katha'. The formation of Jana Natya Mandali in 1973, further popularised the appeal of the folk songs to the masses and Gaddar who became its spokesman, proved the potential of the oral tradition in establishing an instantaneous empathy with the masses. Thanks to the Digambara poets, life and poetry have been woven into an inextricable blend and bond.

The Digambara poets who made an uncompromisingly scathing attack on tradition in all aspects and fields, and shocked the contemporary poets into disbelief had their three volumes of poetry released by a rickshaw puller, a hotel

cleaner and a beggar - Owing to acute differences of opinions among them, Bhairavayya and Maha Swapna parted ways from the other four. A look at their perception and concept of the role of literature !

In the poetry of Cherabanda Raju, one hears the smouldering sound of a volcanic upheaving.

"Look!
Who stirred
The droning honey bees!
Look!
How they come
Darkening
Like a Shower of bullets".

A teacher of Telugu by profession, Cherabanda Raju involved himself in the revolutionary movement of the masses; faced the wrath of the powers that be, suffered incarceration and finally fell a prey to brain tumour. A genuine Marxist among the modern poets to whom commitment is a way of life, Cherabanda Raju strips neo-feudalism of its false trappings and reveals the image of the famished, forlorn and forsaken people in the fields and factories. The unethical exploitation of the meek and the weak by the vested interests throughout history strengthens his belief in the inevitability of an armed struggle. Echoing the agony and the mighty upheaval of the people of Telangana and of the Girijans of Srikakulam he says;

"The fallow lands
We felled
The fields
We furrowed
Fertilizing the fields
Streamed our sweat"

And then he questions,
'We got the grain
and who the gruel'

Cherabanda Raju is of the strong opinion that once the idea of revolution is planted firmly, none can root it out, since,

"Even
The embryo
Aids
The cause of revolution"

Like the other Digambara poets, who cried down the patriot's total empathy with his motherland, Cherabanda Raju decries the image of his motherland India. Unlike the great Bankimchandra Chatterji who saluted his motherland, he comments.

"Oh! my motherland
You are both my mother and father
Yours is the modesty
Prettily frolicking
On the couches of wretches
And yours is the youth
Cuddling in sensual slumber
In the hands of the rich"

Cherabanda Raju's ferocity against the exploiters is unbridled. He advises the underdog,

'Touch not
The gruel
Unless the rotten
Corpse is entombed'

In his poem 'Nude' Bhairavayya refers to 'endeavouring to emancipate humanity, rotting at the rock bottom of a human gutter' and comments that 'words that naked poetry designs to say are not the latest nail bites of lascivious women rotting in libidinous lust'. He vehemently attacks 'incompetent impostors hailed as literary prodigies' and asks them 'to savour this naked literary universality although 'your heart must boil'. Launching a scathing attack on a society of guiles and wiles, he proclaims that the pernicious partitions must be brought down and decimated and 'the ineffective, python-like-narrow mindedness must be burnt down to ashes'.

Jwala Mukhi blasts the theory of 'Karma and Maya' calls democray 'a thieves' park and equates the commoner to a Leper wounded in searching for the corners of justice, terms the religious heads as 'holy culprits' and 'dishonest scoundrels'. Unmistakably virulent in tone, he calls the exploiters 'Hemen with hydroceles, political jackals, gentlemen bandicoots, whiskerless eunuchs... all kinds of bastards. Comparing the common man, who is beguiled, betrayed and buried fathoms deep in the stinking business of politics' to a 'poor mad, mauled dog', he says that it

'perceived he inequitable death and made a mincement of the pujari's sacred thread, planted signs of cross on the padre's palms jumped over the big-breasted damsel and pulled off a boob'. Jwala Mukhi opines,

'Defeat must revolt with all its might
Suicide must rebel and commit murder
This dog must spread the gospel
Of fight to every town"

Calling for an insurrection against this Leper establishment

In 'Glanirbhavathi Bharata' Maha Swapna declares.

'I am the third eye
Splendid and shiny
For the blind lacerated humanity on time
A high strung violin
through the strumming low
I am no maudlin over the
Mordant sea called 'history'
I am the storm.

Nagna Muni's ferocity is unbridled. His wrath against 'those who pass for greatmen' and their unspeakably heinous tactics to exploit a vulnerable society knows no niceties of expression. 'Terming democracy as' a brothel house and swaraj a 'contaminated cunt', he stares the exploiter in the

face and says,

"How many belly-fuls of
human biryani are you
going to eat"

He calls the exploiter 'a worm in life's lavatory' and fulminates,

"I dont pity your disease
Tell me the truth
How do you make a living on the ugly secretions
of the Leprosy wounds of money
on the carbuncles of pomp and dignity
on the high roads of the corpses of the Common Men
on the promissory notes that corrode the middle class"

In his poem 'Barbarians', Nikhileswar comes down heavily on the annihilation of peace and harmony in the war - battered world. Citing the holocaust after the Vietnamese wars, he comments,

"The Buddha is burnt in flames
Before a row of tanks
The citizens of the world
Are going down in history
As direct descendants of the brute"

In another poem entitled 'Violence' he refers to the "dance of countless hungry faces behind the emaciated extended hands, and proclaims his faith in 'the spotless love that sprouts from' violence".

One should wait for the verdict of the history of Literature on these poets, in the days to come.

THE VOLCANO

The volcano was very tall and steep. It was covered in snow and ice. The people who lived there were very brave and strong. They had to climb the mountain every day to get their food. The volcano was very hot and the people had to be careful not to get too close. The volcano was very beautiful and the people loved it. They had to be very careful when they were near it. The volcano was very tall and the people had to climb it every day. The volcano was very hot and the people had to be careful. The volcano was very beautiful and the people loved it. The volcano was very tall and the people had to climb it every day. The volcano was very hot and the people had to be careful. The volcano was very beautiful and the people loved it.

CHERABANDA RAJU

The fallow lands
We felled
The fields
We furrowed
Fertilising the fields
Streamed our sweat

But then,

Who got
The grain?
And who
The gruel?

Thus sang Cherabanda Raju, one of six Digambara poets who had taken the Telugu literary field of the 60's by storm and gatecrashed into unprecedented popularity among the masses. The Digambara poets, disgusted with obsolescent shibboleths of the self-styled revolutionary poets of the day, summoned history into the dock and fulminated against social iniquity, political fascism, economic exploitation, hollow intellectualism, ivory tower romanticism and moral leprosy in a decadent society of bankrupt humanism. In a language unbridled in sarcasm, immodest in incisive irony, and unmistakable in vituperative outburst, the Digambara poets launched a multipronged attack on the society of shams, guiles and whiles. They peered into the exploitative setups of all helpless and hapless nations and found an irrepressible urge of the exploited and pauperised poor for redemption and revolution against the omnivorous capitalistic systems all the world over.

A dauntless Marxist in convictions and teacher of Telugu by profession, Cherabanda Raju burst upon the contemporary literary scene like a tornado the sweep of which at once,

sniped at the literary trends and themes of the day. His literary incursion, no wonder, made the poets of all hues catch their breath. A glance at his poems which strip the modern society of its fallacious feudalistic trappings and fulsome slogans!.

His poem 'Sadhana', is a soul-piercing shriek, against the unending exploitation perpetrated on the hapless humanity. Even amidst the encircling gloom, he perceives a fulfilment of his dreams of the emergence of a new brave world unshackled by injustice and iniquity.

"in this dogged
Pursuit and Perseverance
Betwixt
The dawn and the dusk,
In this conflict eternal
Victory is just
For the East
Today or Tomorrow
It shall be
A reality
A certainty."

The more nefarious the exploitation, the mightier will be the dauntless spirit of man since,

"Even
The embryo
Aids
The cause of Revolution."

He lambastes the neofeudalists of this self-styled so-

cialistic setup who suck the sweat and blood of the poor in vampirish delight. He minces no words.

Unless pounded to death
Persish never
These political vultures
Plagued with phthisis of power

Unlike the song 'Vandematharam' of Bankim Chandra Chatterji which roused the nation to the cause of freedom of India, Cherabanda Raju's 'Vandemataram' brings an indictment against those powerdrunk politicians who have no hesitation to mortgage their motherland in the international market.

O my motherland, Dear'
You are both my
mother and father
Prettily, frolicking
On the couches of the wretch
And yours is the youth
Cuddling in sensual slumber
Close in the hands of the rich

Cherabanda Raju believes that man may be destroyed but his cause cannot be defeated. He comments,

Look!
Who stirred
The droning honeybees
Behold!
How they come
Overcasting
Like a rain of bullets'

One of his poems, belches a lava of ridicule against those who betray the revolutionaries. He calls for the collective consciousness of the masses to demolish the last vestiges of a bourgeoisie society.

Cherabanda Raju castigates all those bards who lull themselves in ivory towers and never listen to the still sad voice of a suffering world caught up in the cobwebs of exploitation. He counsels the romantic bards to realise,

It is those
Who are
At the bottom of the depths
Neck-wrung
By oppression
Are our people
They are
And they alone
Are our life.

He is unmistakably distrustful of the democratic setup. To him, it smacks of a camouflage laid by the neofeudalists cast in the costume of politicians.

Growing wild and wide
Shoot and branch
Huge and poisonous
Is this tree
This democracy",

An intrepid rebel with a vitriolic temperament, he ridicules, nay, explodes the myth of fatalistic inertia and slavish submissiveness of the ignorant illiterates to the reign of repression of the pseudo demagogues and fake democrats.

"Touch

Not the gruel
Unless the rotten
Corpse is entombed."

His calls upon all mothers to fashion their sons into
the mould of revolutionaries

When asked
About who
Shot his father dead
Sister, Dear!
Point at the setup
Tell him
All about the weapons
The Gun
And how in its womb
Are embedded
A series of victories"

Critics call his poems 'savagely sardonic, morbid in
expression and explosive in content'. Since critical stand-
ards are often variable, only posterity can test his poems
and judge the man..

THE REVOLUTION

MAQDOOM

"Out of agony wells up Poesy"

"Our of Poverty springs up Revolution".

Born in acute poverty, brought up amidst rural life and schooled in Hyderabad at a simmering time, Maqdoom, made his debut as the first terrorist in the field of Urdu literature. Totally dedicated to the cause of the proleterians and determined to annihilation of the vestiges or neo-imperialism and feudalism in Free India. Maqdoom, took up arms and pen to reconstruct a new society without shackles.

Accodingly, he weilded his pen like a sword which cut at the roots of imperlalism and feudalism here and elsewhere. As he himself says "The euphoria and the anguish of man are always in tune with the changing times in society. But the anguish of man at the bottom of his heart has its eternal appeal. The objective of any art is to lead man from the dark of ignorance to the dawn of enlightenment. The poet, being the most sensitive of all, projects the clash and conflict between the external universe and the internal world and creates a "synthesis". Any escapism or aloofness from the contemporaniety is either Ego-projection or moral degeneration. The mark of civilisation is to make society hear the heartbeats of a suffering humanity in literature.

His sharp intellect probed the empires of feudalism and imperialism built on the sweat, toil, tears and blood of the muted masses. He witnessed the struggle against the reign of Nizam and the mass movements elsewhere in the world. He was deeply moved by the anguish of the times and the

murder of the moral conscience of mankind at the hands of the imperialists and the feudalists. In this 'Nigara' he speaks volumes of his crusades and convictions. In his 'Fhagpur Atma', he paints the Chinese emperor 'Fhagpur' as a notorious symbol of imperialism. He rouses the youth of this country to take 'up arms' against injustice and redefine the image of India in 'Azadi Yevatn' (Freedom of the Nation). He condemns religious obscurantism as the byproduct of feudalism in his "Haveli." Acutely aware of the omnivorous imperialism and its product capitalism.,he thunders.

"Let the Red-Flag
Fly Sky-high
And the Rebels
Be reared and blessed immortal !

A glimpse of the volcante upheavings of his literary output ! In his 'Haveli', he laments over the decadence of society.

"Doomed to Death is justice here
Day in, Day out
Auctioned away is humanity
Nobility of death
is
What is taught here"

He Hails the dawn of a new society out of the dense dusk of imperialism and feudalism

"Hail thee!
Raise the Red-blood

Banners
On these ruins
Hail ! Thee !
Rear the Flag of Freedom
On these ruins !

A ring of a prophet's message for the redemption of
humanity is felt here.

He ridicules the mudgods of the mob.

"No deity

Can withstand

the Flames of the hungry!

His 'Mouth Kaa Geeth' invokes the fury of the elements
of nature to root out a sickening society and usher in a 'new
order', while His 'Telengan' is an incisive exposure of the
brutal imperialistic lords.

In his 'Khaidu' (the Jail), he describes his agony over a
fettered nation struggling for a second liberation. A vein of
melancholy deeply touches us in this poem. He hails the
revolutionaries.

"The Beloved lads
Of the Dells and hills
The babies
Born and reared
In the lap of the fields
Upreared in ferocious

fury ...
Flashing and Flashing
Shone the sickle
Higher and Higher
Heaving up
Danced the plough."

His clarion call is,
"Comrades,
Be drawn to the destiny
Bravo! Ahead
bearing the cross
On your back"

The poem 'Chand Taronka Bun' is his prophetic in sight into the womb of times, Standing at the cross-roads of the destination, he says

"No more
And
No longer
Is
The Reign of the Ruler of the Dark
Gone Even is
The Golden Throne
of the Godmen"

His pity for the pauperised poor turns into a ferocity. A lyrical fire of the first order burns in his verse.

"Hither is dark
Dark is Thither
Ruins at every look and nook

A silence - smeared

is

Sepulchral spot"

A discordant note in the lyre of life runs in his poem 'Jung'

"Life

Stared

In its own face

And

In shame

Down

Bowed its head"

His irony wells up.

"For all this world

Is there a Lord?"

To him, the Facade of society looks like

An

Apparition

Orphaned

Of its last rites

When despots like Shagpur still haunt to hunt down
the hapless, humanity and proclaim fanatically.

"I am

The Cancerous carbuncle

On the back of this world

Look then, who I am !

The spirit of Shagpur".

The entire society caught up in the jaws of feudalistic lords turns into a

"Haunted House"
the shadow of splintered society
The Ravens' Royal Street
Pecking at the poor corpses".

The only solution is.

"Of what import
Are the wars for peace
Unless
The Enemies are
Entombed?"

Only great revolutionaries like Iqbal can be a source of inspiration. Maqdoom pays tribute to the poet

"In this dark
Who is that
Sighing furnace
Singing songs fiery"

Very touchingly, he describes the moanings of a mutilated society.

"Again
Down
From the eyes of the Dawn
Trickled
The red-hot streams of blood"

However, a ray of hope flashes

"What has the night
But a flock of the dark?"₉₃

Maqdoom's lyrical fire coexists with a lovely romanticism. In his poems, he describes love as a 'blessed state' and equates hatred of love with feudalism - In fact, his aesthetic perception of 'love' is a part and parcel of his political philosophy. He advocates not a permissive society of sexhungly men and women but the liberation of woman from economic dependence, tyranny of man, religious fanaticism and fetters of cussed customs and traditons.

In tune with the prominent Romanticists' nostalgia for days gone by, Maqdoom sadly comments

"Whither
Are
Those crops
And
Those flowing streams?
Stories
Are they now
Standing for a splendid past"

In 'Shayar', he asserts the supremacy of a poet's creative faculty.

"Even
In the Rugged Rock
A heart-beat
I range"

His 'Jawani' is a pure piece of Romanticism with a melancholy note at its end. The poem 'Telengan' is a rich tribute to the 'tender village belles of Telugunadu. The an-

guished yearnings of the poet to find a beauty which endures is felt in his 'Sijdha' and 'Aai Ki Rath Naja'. A Sweet voluptuosness runs in his 'charagal'. The magic of the style, the over-flow of lyricism, the psychological insight and the suppleness and variety of his prosody are unrivalled. The romantic lyrics are a true testimony to the inner most pulsations of the artist's heart!

A protagonist of Liberation movements against the strangledhold of the feudal lords, he preached like a prophet of the proleterians, sang like a poet of the agony of the depressed humanity and gave us the gospel of humanitarianism.

In fact, one wonders over a harmonious coexistence of the intellectual magnanimity of the revolutionary and the emotional impulse of the romanticist in him.

EPIC IN LYRIC

MINI POEMS

"No Change

However great
Is wrought without suffering
Betwixt the turns
Of night into day
And of day into night
Behold! How the sky sheds
Its tears of blood".

(Rakta Sandhya)

In just a few lines, Addepalli Ramamohana Rao presents the image of universal anguish and suffering in the context of the emergence of a new brave world. The economy of expression is boundlessly appealing, while the suggestively is soul touching. Neither does a turgid style embellish the lines nor ornate images obfuscate the contents. It is a poem, short but striking and searching, its emotion crystal clear and its thought unfettered.

Mini-poems are not new phenomena. Their basic spirit could be seen in the Satakas, Salivahana Saptasati, Lyrics of Ghalib etc., Though fettered in prosody, they had economy of expression and boundless meaning and suggestivity. Mahakavi Gurajada's mini-poem is sarcastic of the soulless worship of mudgods.

You ignoramus!
Why do you prostrate
To the stones and pebbles
As if they were miraculous
And belittle the human
Worse than the stones and pebbles ?

The mini-poems of yore, however, had limited social relevance, Gurajada and poets of his ilk, wielded their pens to arouse the conscience of their contemporaries against certain social ills and evils. Theirs was a plea for social reformation rather than a clarion call for a radical transformation of an exploitative set up. And then came Sri Sri and the sluice gates of revolutionary literature opened. Though Sri Sri and his breed of revolutionary writers were not the protagonists of the movement of mini poems, they could be credited with leaving behind certain 'traces' for the emergence of the world of mini-poems.

The mini-poems, as the legitimate trends of modern free verse, started a decade and a half ago. Since then they have become a kind of protest poetry fulminating against oppression, exploitation, feudalism, tyranny, persecution, religious cussedness, political fascism and social injustice.

What distinguishes a mini poem from a lengthy modern verse? (or a maxipoem?) Brevity of expression, perspicuity of meaning, and manifold suggestivity are the basic traits of a mini-poem. It suggests more than it means. It affords relief from the tedium of a lengthy verse, strikes a flash, appeals directly to the heart and stimulates the mind!

A min-poem does not gild a situation, It focusses a striking aspect of human situation or contemporary milieu. It is aimed at a certain unique effect to which every detail conceivable is subordinate. It signifies a sudden flare into a revelation of an ordinary object or scene. Since its 'arena' of expression is rather limited, it permits no flights of poetic

imagination. True, the champions of maxipoems may belittle mini-poems as affording no scope for leisurely analysis and sustained development of theme or characterisation. But "the literature of a country is never static. In its onward flow, It assumes and asserts its youthful resurgence in myriads of themes, forms and techniques!" A glance at the mini-poems!

Ismail, a reputed poet of brilliant images strikes a note of defiance of the trouble-torn world.

"Torture - torn
This lass
Plucked out
The thorn
Called the world
And went away briskly
Towards the unknown".

(The Suicide)

Dr. Miriyala Ramakrishna blasts the regressive coterries which roll back the wheels of progress. He is severely critical of those who can neither blaze a trail in the world of literature nor plumb the depth of an experience.

"The sea
Stretches eternally to the shore
The waves
Sip all the sounds always
Neither can they see
Nor can they sense
Who ?

The Rocks
The age old heads
(The Rocks)

The incorrigibly corrupt bureaucracy of the educational department comes in for severest scorn and sarcasm in the mini-poem of S. Visweswara Rao.

"Came and queried
The higher officials
Where is the school ?
Came out a case of bottles
Calling themselves teachers
Branding themselves as brats
Came the currency notes
Pat,came reports
"Every thing is Okay"
(Schools on Paper)

Acharya Bhavan pays tribute to the indefatigable human spirit in his mini-poem

"To me"
The ideal
Is the wave
Not because
It sags after its surge
But because
It rises after its fall"
(The Wave is My Ideal)

He employs only one metaphor like the wave. It cap-

tures the true spirit of man's undaunted quest for the realisation of his life's mission.

Vaseera peeps into vale of tears that is life. He opines that the gigantic intellect of man with all its astounding, scientific, achievements, cannot wipe off human tears, trials and tribulations. He laments

"However mighty be
The intellectual
Who can cross the sea
With his legs unwet,
Alas! he cannot cross
Life with his eyes unwet.

Bellamkonda Ramdas has a profound insight into the philosophical, implications of human anguish and stoical endurance. In a couplet, he sums up the entire life of Man.

"Life itself is a cross
And
Man the Christ"

The economy of expression and sublimity of suggestivity here are instances of the traits of an ideal mini-poem. Asu Rajendra's "Nagarikatha " is a biting comment on the exploitation of women's lib in a society of bankrupt values.

"Culture
dolloed up
Made it to the market
Having made it
Bared itself there"

Kompella Viswam's -" Sufferings and Tears" is expressive of a "sense of tears in things mortal" since immortal times.

"In the beaten track of life
My life cannot tread
For a fistful of pity
And a mountain of hope
Eyelids ope their bowl
In the crematorium I live
Are
Unexplained lamentations
Sufferings of centuries
And
Tears".

Though social concern and crusade for a radical transformation is the theme of many a mini-poem, it can encompass, thematic diversity and richly, echo any one of the situational contexts of our society. In brief, does not the world of mini-poems, represent the sprightly youth of Telugu literature!

SARCASM

சமீபத்தில் நான் ஒரு நண்பரை
கொஞ்சம் கவனித்துப் பார்த்தேன்.
அவருக்கு மூன்று குழந்தைகள்
இருந்தன. அவர்களைப் பார்த்து
கூட அவர் மகிழ்ந்து சிரித்தார்.
அவர்களைப் பார்த்துக் கொண்டு
நான் நினைத்தேன்: "அவர்களைப்
பார்த்துக் கொண்டு சிரிப்பது
அவர்களுக்கு நன்மை செய்யும்
பொழுதுதான்."

அவர்களைப் பார்த்துக் கொண்டு
சிரிப்பது அவர்களுக்கு நன்மை
செய்யும் பொழுதுதான். அப்போது
தான் அவர்கள் மகிழ்ச்சியடைவர்.
அவர்களைப் பார்த்துக் கொண்டு
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செய்யும் பொழுதுதான்.

TAMIL MINI POEMS

As in Telugunadu, so too in Tamilnadu, the age of prosody has given way to that of mini poems. The inherent virtues of these poems such as "brevity and perspicuity" and "suggestivity and sarcasm" have captured the hearts of many young poets in TamilNadu. No wonder, the Tamil minipoems have become the expressions of the "growing protest and dissent" and a total non-confirmity of the common man to the existing social and political order. A look at some of the minipoems of recent times!

The commonman is aware of the liberation of his country from the foreign rule, Yet, sweat, toil and tears are his lot. To him, real freedom in, its full form is still a far cry. How beautifully and effectively a Tamil poet echoes this idea in just two lines! To him, freedom,

"Has come at night

Yet, no trace of dawn is insight".

In a mini poem entitled "India", Rayan sees a bright streak of optimism even in the midst of encircling gloom. He says,

"Rather than search for the matches
and knock myself down and break the lamp
and get myself hurt
Let me be in the dark.
After all, won't the day break?"

Rahula Dasan in his poem. "The Fire of the Crematorium" makes a sarcastic comment on mortal life.

"what else is left
Of this mortal body
For the fire of the pyre?
When half of it is
consumed by time
And the other by passion."

"Two Children" of Kamala Mananya expresses the decadence of democracy and political morality'.

"Mother India
Bore two
One is democracy
The other Socialism
One - freedom
The other a fake vote
The elder is comely
The younger is ugly."

Rama Swamy's "Nepotism" is a biting comment on 'corrupt bureaucracy.'

"An ideal person
Is our commissioner
Never does he write
His own letter with his official pen
Nor does, he fill it
With the ink in the office
He merely writes his letters
During his office hours."

Siva Kumar ridicules the dowryhungry bridegrooms in his poem "Dowry". His sarcasm is incisive.

"Running hither and thither for houses let,
These fellows demand 'rent'
For living in permanent homes
From the owners themselves."

Bala Kumaran laments over the insane life of the stone-hearted men of modern times. To him, a modern city is more like "a jungle wherein stone-trees have sprouted up in the place of the huge uprooted trees which served as the abodes of the birds."

A minipoem like "Progress" by K. Balu Swamy exposes the economic mismanagement of national industries and resources and shrewdly comments on the gullible masses who are cheated of their legitimate dues in the unscrupulous game of power-crazy political parties.

"A news item in a paper:
In our country
The production of cloth
Has doubled up,
Not for the people
But only for the flags of political parties."

A touch of irony is keenly felt in Bhakta Vatsalam's poem "Why so"? The sufferings of the poor in their struggle for existence are paradoxically painted in the minipoem.

"Despite standing in the queue

On a midday noon and
Carrying rice home
With a body heated and legs aching
Why has not the rice boiled?

In a poem, "Elections have to come", a poet expertly shows how the commonman knows all about the farce of political demagoguery on the eve of elections.

It is, indeed, heartening that the movement of mini-poems has given rise to a new kind of 'Cartoon poetry' in Kerala also.

COMMITMENT

ADDEPALLI

" A modern poet has to be committed to a socio-political philosophy, effect a fusion of speech rhythm and poetic language for a new verse pattern. Budding poets have to guard themselves against slogan ridden and doctrine-drugged verse. A poet, in order to be committed to the cause of revolutionary movement has to master the science of technique and form and reflect the life of commoner in the 'idiom' intellegible to masses. A genuine marxist perception alone can give vent to the problem-plagued life of the common man", opines Addepalli Rama Mohana Rao, a poet and protagonist of modern free verse.

Addepalli himself has journeyed from the romantic moorings to the revolutionary literature. His 'Madhujwaala' is a romanticist's philosophy. The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, in his hands, turns into a miracle of literary adaptation. As in Fitzgerald's poems, his poems combine imaginative romanticism with the discipline of a sober form.

As an eminent critic and engaging speaker, Addepalli has few rivals. Incisive analysis, scholarly insight and honest evaluation characterise his writings and speeches. To him, Sri Sri is a Mahakavi, more in respect of technical innovation than in thematic conception. Kavi Samrat Viswanadha Satyanarayana, is the most erudite scholar, although of the isolationist school. Kundurthi is a people's poet, with a new social philosophy! Tilak is a poet, purely experimental, with a striking touch of progressive ideology.

Addepalli is a protagonist of modern free verse in general and of minipoems in particular. Hailing minipoems as

the legitimate product of modern literature, he says that literature is never static, "In its onward flow, it asserts its youthful resurgence in myriads of forms themes and techniques. He calls brevity of expression, "the breath" and suggestivity, 'the soul' of a minipoem. His 'Rakta Sandhya' testifies to his convictions!

In 'Rakta Sandhya', he portrays the emergence of a new brave world out of the anguish of a struggling humanity.

"No change,
However, great
Is wrought without suffering
Betwixt the turns of
Night into Day
And of day into night,
Behold! How the sky sheds its
Tears of blood"

He decries the fatalistic tendencies and senses the volcanic upheavals of the imprisoned passions in his 'Awaiting the typhoon'. The fiendish forces of exploitation are always bent on destroying revolutionary leaders. But history tells us that man may be destroyed, but his cause cannot be defeated. He sings,

"When they moved back
The flower they burnt to ashes
Bloomed into blood red flowers
By leaps and bounds
Burst into a bristling laugh
Bracing the twilight sky".

His "The voice out of the Tomb" is a splendid piece on commitment. Its symbolic significance is boundless. The theme of the poem, in brief is that a poet loses his pen in the circumambient universe. He asks the sea and the sun about his missing pen. After a futile enquiry, the poet hears a call from the grave.

"Bustling in
The fairs of experiences
Listening
To the discordant notes of my
Nerve - filliping heart
Somewhere
I lost my pen
I lost it
When the waves of my flesh and blood
Are surging to a breaking point.

I lost it
When the sea
was frantically struggling
With its hand and foot
To chase away
The hollow image of the sky
That embraced it every inch
And roaring out from within
The corners of its heart
Standing
On the boundless shore of the sea
I queried it,
Have you found out my pen ?

The sea surging into a roar
Said,
"I have enough of my own anguish
I have too little stamen
To absorb the mighty appeal
In the poet's pen".
When the cicadas were glossing over
Into the compassion
of the wailing night
that, embracing the silence
was shedding star-tears,
I stood up and ... thus, asked,
"Have you seen my pen ?"
The Night blew
Into the wavy wind and said,
"To
the primeval womb of the night
Of this creation,
Hardly is the might
To bear the light in the poet's pen"
the Sun, sliding down the western hills
with his heart pierced
By the thorns of the Babul trees
was bleeding
The stream, drunk with the blood of the Sun,
tear - frozen, stood.
I questioned the Sun
"Do you have my pen ?"
The Sun slid down

pointing to the rows of
Homing birds
As circles round
And pouted his lips.
When I was
Homing back
thus, sighing in despair
Beyond the burial grounds,
Out came a call from within the tomb,
"Oh poet!
Here am I,
soaked in full in your sea of tears
Stirred up every inch in your
Dark sighings
and
feeling all along my body
The agony of your mute blood
piercing through
The confines of the tomb,
"I shall be born
In a form fresh and new
in your hands!"
Daubing the dreams
On my eye-lids
Bearing the future in my unlit eyes
I walk
On the wavy winds
filling the blood up with
The echoes of my pen's rebirth.

GODAVA

Addepalli in "Intellectuals in the room" makes a scathing attack on the intellectuals of today, who are blind to real problems. Their hypocrisy, tall talk of revolutionary movements, lectures on the role of literature in the making of a just society, and metaphysical discussions are mere exercises in futility contributing nothing to the alleviation of suffering humanity. His poem 'Down the drain flows the dignity of the nation' calls upon the youth to shake off their romantic illusions, deceptive political ambitions and be manly enough to demolish the citadels of capitalists.

In 'Red Rose', he appeals to all those crusaders of mass movements not to miss the chances of ushering in a new socialistic setup. His 'Antar Jwala' is a treatise on revolutionary literature. He calls for a rational approach to life and literature in it. His 'Sri Sri Kavita Prastanam' is an authentic critical evaluation of the Mahakavi and 'Vimarsa Vedika' holds mirror to his theories and reviews.

In short, Addepalli, is a humanist, with a sincere commitment to the cause of the suffering humanity.

VERSATILITY

GODAVARI SARMA

A POET is a free soul. His poesy admits of no barriers. He seeks no shelter in mansions nor does he lose himself in the idyllic bowers of romanticism. To him, the vast world is a fascinating spectacle of valleys of thoughts, summits of emotions, and oceans of feelings. An image, truly poetical and as such appealing to the heart and stimulating to the mind, surges out of his poems. K. Godavari Saram is such a poet to whom the world symbolised much more than it looked. A look at his art and heart!

Godavari Sarma's poesy is truly experiential. He comments.

"Poetry is not my profession but my passion. That devotion to anything beautiful is beyond my will".

Referring to the modern poets who take refuge under a flag, he says.

"They are angry
that my poems don't yell
and my works don't preach"
I can't help
I know the truth.

Godavari Sarma's poetry is romantic. He establishes a rare empathy with the circumambient nature and sees into the life of things. For instance, in a poem entitled 'Samudram pai Sanubhuthi' [Sympathy for the sea], he visualises the sea as an Ideal Mother and says

"Behind the
Wrinkled skin

Of the old sea
Who knows
how deep is its heart
and how many
aeons of experience
it does hide?
Who knows
In the cheeks of the sandy
deserts
Of the beach
how many tears are absorbed?"

In 'Manishi-Manu' [Man and the wood], he blends both irony and agony in equal measure and comes out with a biting indictment of the inhumanity of man.

'In the scorching sun
I used to stand
In its shade all these days
Tomorrow
I shall warm myself
In the fire of its heart'

Godavari Sarma's concept of literature breathes an Elitonian sense of tradition. He studied avidly the ancient classics of Sanskrit and the experimental feats in techniques and form of modern poetry and desiderated to find a via medium or a golden mean. In his poem 'Aakasam lo mrutyuva' [Death in the sky] he decries the deepening gulf between the 'past and the present', and reveals the truth that modern and ancient literatures are just like drops

merging in the vast uncharted ocean of literature'. He calls tradition "a mighty tree of which the poets of yore are the ripe leaves and the bards of the present the budding leaves."

Experimentalist : An adroit experimentalist of modern literary "isms", Godavari Sarma is essentially a humanist. His insight into the life of things, is evident from such poems as 'Nirjeeva Nayanalu'

"Life
like
a line of ants
walked its way out
from the eyes of the kitten
while its eyes
like the yellow grapes
were squashed".

His poem, 'The sea and the dog' is a glowing testimony to his superb ability to effect a happy amalgam of form and technique. Referring to the dog drowned in the sea, he says,

'The roar
of the sea echoes
Its motion is dog's
Its looks are dog's
Yes, the sea lives
A dog's life
The dog
tasting ingratitude
Is a log of wood

Lifeless, it stood!"

Though a romanticist, he does not portray 'Love as a mere physical gratification.' It is beyond the mortal limitations of this transient world.

In 'Kapaala Moksham', he says :

"The face
Of the pyre
Reddens
with sobbing
If you are satisfied
that your life
has gone
To the bones,
The skull
bursts out
in laughter"

Versatile : Godavari Sarma is a versatile genius. His scholarship in Telugu, Sanskrit, and English is amazing. No wonder, his ambidextrous talents have stood him in goodstead. His anthology of English poems 'On the banks of Nagavali' was already published, while 'Vesavilo Brindavanam' is yet to be published. 'Poola Vantena' a collection of short stories will soon see the light of the day 'Veena Dhari' and 'Ee abbayiki pellavutune?' which were serialised in a Telugu daily won him recognition. An anthology of poems entitled 'Godavari gala galalu' is a popular book. His 'Trends in post independence Indo Angian poetry' is a voluminous doctoral thesis serving as a reference book.

Godavari Sarma, wrote more than a hundred short stories. His articles found place in 'The encyclopaedia of Indian literature,' and 'Encyclopaedia Asiana'. Mr. Sarma, evinced keen interest in children's literature. He translated 'The story of our newspaper' and 'Alice in Wonderland' into an eminently engaging Telugu, "Marupurani Papa," was another commendable Telugu novel translated by Sarma into English. He also translated Tagore's 'Gitanjali' and 'Chitra' into appealing Telugu and proved his mettle. It is indeed lamentable that such a gifted poet, critic and story writer met with a tragic end at a time when he was about to prove his credentials as a highly talented writer.

WHAT ARE YOU ?

WOMAN IN TELUGU LITERATURE

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The test of civilisation is said to be the estimate of woman. If one wishes to know the political, social and moral condition of a society, one must ask what rank women hold in it. A glimpse of the history of Telugu Literature shows the miserable life of an exploited woman in a male dominated society of cussed customs and regressive measures.

The woman characters as presented in the translated version of the Mahabharatha are highly individualised. They are the very pictures of assertive moral courage, fortitude, and forbearance. For instance, in the Virat Parva. Draupadi mocks at Dharma Raja's addiction to the game of dice and questions whether she, being the wife of such an addict, enjoys any reputation. Sakuntala, in the Adiparva, warns Dushyanta of any ill-treatment of wives and says that such a husband deserves no place either in this world or in heaven. The poetrio, Nannayya, Tikkanna and Errapragada, have, however, shown their penchant for a male dominated world in which a woman who followed and obeyed her husband submissively is considered ideal and chaste. The age of epics was followed by that of Kavyas. Renowned Srinagara poets like Srinadha, revelled in description of the physical beauty of women. A great devotee like Pothana also could not avoid describing sensual (sexual) exploits of Lord Krishna. The Prabandha period did not lag behind its precursors in treating woman, as an enjoyable, purchasable commodity and depicting her bodily features and graces. The post-Prabandha literary period abounded in unbridled Srinagara, which often bordered on licentiousness. For instance, the

Prabandha poets such as Muddu Palani, often characterised Lord Krishna more as one indulging in sensual exploits and depicted such characters as Radha as one fettered by the man-made customs and seeking a wayout of the tyrannical social milieu. An enlightened critic like Gidugu Sri Rama Murthy struck the nail on the head by terming such unchecked Srinagara as "Kshudra Sahitya." An instance of the helpless bondage of a woman whose natural physical cravings are neglected by her hermitic husband and who dreams of and desiderates fulfilment with another man is in 'Ahalya Sankrandanam' written by Samukham Venkata Krishnappa Nayakudu. The "Satyabhama Swantanam" of linganamaku Tirukamayya shows the double standards of man and degrades women as mere animals devoid of knowledge. Anantha Matya in his 'Bhoja Rajeeyam' squarely blames man for the degradation of womanhood. What shocks the readers of the classics of this period is that even women writers like Rangajamma portrayed woman as enjoyable creatures meant to quench, the sexual thirst of man.

In the 19th century the romantic, literature in Telugu was strongly influenced by several reformistic movements that blew across the nation. Raja Ram Mohan Roy who raised the banner of revolt against the heinous practice of sati, became the source and strength of inspiration for such Andhra reformers as Kandukuri who fulminated against child marriages and pleaded for widow remarriages.

Besides, the Brahma Samaj and the new concept of womanhood in the romantic poetry of England brought about

radical changes in the very outlook of the new romantic poets of Andhra. Woman, till then, treated as a sensual creature, acquired a new dignity, nobility and purity in the hands of the new romantics.

In the beginning, the Telugu romantic poetry written between 1910 and 1940 was called new poetry. It, later, assumed the title 'Bhava Kavithvam'. The romantic poets, in their preoccupation with the physical charm, grace and beauty of women in their verses, distanced themselves from the blazing realities of life; they wove a beautiful world of imagination, wherein one seldom came across the wailing voice of a woeful woman trodden under heinous customs. But, unlike the Prabandha poets who viewed women from sensual angle, they looked up to her as a veritable goddess of love.

It is said by critics that while the women, in the verses of Prabandha poets possessed only a body and no heart, she acquired only a heart but lost the body in the verses of the romantic poets. Despite the encomiums showered on women, it must be said that the romantic poets have not cared to take up cudgels against the feudalistic society in which child marriages, bride selling and child widowhood were heinously perpetrated by the obscurantistic forces. Barring very few poets like Gurajada, Mangipudi Venkata Sarma and Mutnuri Venkata Subbarayudu, no other romantic poet dared touch the burning problems of those days. Gurajada, in fact, is the first poet to portray realistically the pathetic plight of woman in his "Purnamma". It is said that

had the poets after Gurajada trodden his path, there would not have been any period of romantic poetry in Telugu literature.

Rayaprotu Subbarao is the first poet to propound the concept of platonic love unstained by physical desires and cravings. His characters show an amazing self control over pleasures and desires. They reckon beauty of soul as more valuable than beauty of body. They redefine Srinagara as unsullied affection, undiluted attachment, unstained love and disinterested friendship. Rayaprolu's distinction lies in his redefinition and concept of womanhood. He has pored over the Upanishads and brought out the noblest qualities of womanhood as embedded in the classics. He visualises the circumambient nature as Sakti and describes his heroes as votaries of Love and Beauty; The heroines are verily the benevolent preceptors, friends and philosophers who preach the abiding values of life and eternal purity of love. It is said that in his new concept of woman, Rayaprolu was deeply influenced by the Saundarya Lahiri of Adi Sankaracharya and the classics like Ramya Lokam and Madhuri darsanam.

In 'Trunakankanam' Rayaprolu depicts the relationship of Lovers as one which goes beyond fulfilment in conjugal union and pleads for purity of feeling and chastity of emotion. The message in 'Swapna Kumaram' is that one should look up to woman not as an object of sensual enjoyment but as the very replica of motherhood. Rayaprolu attacks the pernicious practice of dowry and eulogises the towering for-

titude and nobility of Indian woman in 'Snehalata'. 'Kasta Kamala' of Rayaprolu deals with the emotional shock of a tender girl over the overtures of a man whom she regards as a brother and describes the nobility of her heart. Anumathi the heroine in 'Anumathi' is the very picture of self sacrificing love. "Anumathi", an adaptation of Tennyson's Dora scintillates by virtue of the superb nativisation of the heroine's character.

Despite their surgical analysis of society, the progressive poets and the Digambara poets, have not succeeded in projecting the predicament of woman exclusively. It is also said that romantic literature viewed the place of woman in society only against the background of the transition of society from a feudalistic stage to that of bourgeois. Barring a few prominent revolutionary poets like Gaddar and Siva Sagar, there have not been considerable number of poets committed to the redemption of woman.

Courtesy - Jayaprabha

THE PROPHET

GUNTURU SESHENDRA SARMA

"Suddenly I heard a voice of hoary past and I knew it was Valmiki. It came resounding through the vaults of time. It was now cursing the hunter of Maupassant. I heard dazed in my death. This Valmiki had cursed a hunter before and was cursing another one now. Does he keep cursing all the hunters all the time. How? It is a voice raised against brutality for all ages to come? Does not Valmiki die? Is not Valmiki dead. Is he cursing even today those tribes of hunters who have made it their life's mission to violate humanity and propagate hate in letters of blood? Is this voice piloting the highways of time day and night to shield humanity from attacks of the brute? Great minds turn into sound and thus revolve around the Universe, around the world from age to age, from country to country and from language to language eternally and endlessly." This prefatory remark to his collection of poems entitled 'Sesha Jyotsna' shows Guntur Seshendra Sarma as the high priest of humanism in the contemporary world of literature.

A prominent romanticist, a scholar of repute, a champion of a brave new world, a crusader against iniquity and exploitation in life and above all an aesthete, Guntur Seshendra Sarma has contributed richly to the efflorescence of Telugu literature..

To him, great literature evolves out of the womb of a noble past, assimilates the novelty of the present and anticipates the emergence of a golden future. His 'Mande Suryudu' (Blazing Sun) is a tour-de-force. The blazing Sun symbolises the idifatigable energy of the youth.

"The stars
That shot through
The shackled Servility
of the Dense Dark
Turned into my lines
To merge in the Sun".

A poet alone has the agility and ability to

"Cross the oceans
on the wings of fancy
and fly high

To the surging summits".

A poet is not a detached spectator of life. On the other hand, he has a role in the making of a new society without shackles.

"Can poesy
That is away from life
Be penned on paper?
Could there be a rain down
without a rack of cloud?"

He regards "words" as sensations incarnate". An intoxication with the melody of words and an ability to polish his diction to a diamond glitter are his alone. Like the celebrated romanticist Devulapalli, his poesy exudes an exuberance of romanticism. For instance, he exclaims,

"The night fled away
with the songs
It snatched away
from the throats of the Birds"

Unlike many a doctrine drugged poet, he handles poesy, in a delicate style. His 'New shores' paints the dawn of a "new age of revolutionaries".

"The sun of a new age
Rises and speaks
Brings us a gift
of New testament

A proclamation
of Rebellion and death. (His own translation)

To him, poetry is alchemised in the depths of inner world. His 'Blazing sun' is the finest instances of imagism and symbolism.

"I am
The sweaty drop
I am the sun
surging up
from the Mountains of Muscles'

The rebel in him thunders that if,
"The sun
Does not rise
I tear my blazing heart
And place it at its heart".

An empathy of a sublime ardour is felt here. As Mrs. Indira Devi comments 'Man situated anywhere on the globe can share with him (Mr. Sharma) the fruits of his thinking unlike in the case of poets who cling to the borders of mere language. A scholarly display of imagery is seen in the lines below.

"I am
"The song round
Rising on the summit of sunup
Scintillating the blood red lights"

In his poems, every word does its work at the same level of power and ease. A revolutionary commitment hidden under an over flow of romanticism is here.

'If my hand
Is up reared,
It is a blazing sun.
Cast down.
It is the dusk

Suspended by the Sun Rays
("The Native village of the Sun")

His 'withering leaves' is a humanist's anguish about the atomic pollution in an age of soulless scientific progress.

"Life
Droops down
Its MOMENTS
Like the withered wintry leaves
Like the stars
Fading out at dawn
In the air
We breathe for life
This age
has
Packed all the cries of Horror!

The word 'experimental' best explains his literary art. In his 'Silences', he proclaims,

"I gauge the jungle
By the chirping bird
or by the murmuring brook"

His "Diganta Rekhalu" has a sea of significance in a drop of thought.

"The Rivers
Hied back into the hills
And the hills back into the caves"

He is aghast at the regress of revolution in a world of injustice and exploitation. In his 'Sunken ship' he says,

"The Time

YAWNING
KENNED
the Setting Starry world"

'Ideograms' are heaped upon one another in these poems.

As an expert at exploiting the ideograms, he is a trend-setter to many of our, prominent poets. "Cinare's poem", 'Whither are you humanity?' is an instance. Another eminent poet Cherabanda Raju rendered an appealing idea of Mr.Sharma in his own fashion.

'The Heads
That rolled into the land
Bloomed blood-red flowers'

Very movingly, he projects the emergence of a new world on the ruins of an old one.

"Leapt
The Tongues of Flames
Out of the street lanterns
The Bricks
Shook off their slumber
And battered the ABODES"

His 'Binduvu sindhuvu' deals with the agony of nature over the exploited farmers and depicts how the grain-heaps groan million mouthed over those sunturbanned soil tillers who are cheated of their due share in the produce. A poem lilke 'Hunger' is a striking testimony to his poetic faith. For instance, he calls the cunning capitalist

"The Fellow
Who gobbles me up
And gulps down my sweat

Is
Like a tomatoe smooth"
How heart-touching is his conception of a poet!

"Though
Shackled are my shins
My fancy

Strolls over the summits of hills".

His 'My path' stands for a land hallowed by the holy feet of the saviours of mankind. The 'Typhoon' is a staunch defence of the under currents of the values of literature in the mainstream of a nation's culture. He pays a glowing tribute to the Banglabandhu and hails the 'Freedom of the struggling nations.

"Look there
Behold, Freedom is coming
Wearing garlands
of Blood and hope'
(Boats and sails as Translated by him)

Keatsian felicity of expression is craftily captured by him.

In 'This night' he comments,

"More Eloquent
Is the Scar than the wound
MIGHTIER
Is
The memory
Than mere experience"

His philosophical universe is not far off from mother earth. It is rooted firmly in the earth.

"In this
Dream like life

Hanker not
After the Truth
Make the Dream it self
a golden life"

His "Voice of the Reason" makes a profound observation on life.

"The cross
you carry
Is of the cost
Of the dream of this life"

Besides his scholarly translations and other memorable lyrics, an abundance of Tagorean images is presented in his poems. 'The Domes' concretises before us" the dream in marble". In short, in Seshendra Sarma, we have a dreamer who is wide awake to the realities of life. How privileged we Andhras are to have one in whom the poet, prophet and revolutionary are rolled into one!

THE INVISIBLE FROM THE VISIBLE

THE HAIKU

Haiku is a Japanese verse form of 3 lines, the first and the last of which have '5' syllables, and the intermediate '7'. The term Haiku, is derived from the first elements of the word 'Haikai' and the latter element of 'Hokku'. The Japanese have formalized many ordinary objects of life into poetic symbols. Trees, rivers, flowers and even historical personages have been mentioned over lines rather than personal ones in poetry. This provides an economical, metamorphical structure that connotes much.

Matsuo Basho (1644-94) of Japan was the first among poets who elevated haiku to a highly refined and conscious art. The great Imagist Ezra Pound was profoundly influenced by the Japanese haiku. An instance of this is his poem 'In a Station of the Metro'.

'The apparition of these faces in the crowd
Petals on a wet, black bough'.

Taoism, Buddhism and Shintoism lay stress on attention towards non-human nature and fusion with nature. Thus the traditional Japanese idea that 'Man is a part of the natural world and that he should live in harmony with it' has become the theme of many a Japanese haiku. The haiku, in short, follows the poetic traditions of the East in its concern with an ontological union of Man's consciousness with nature and differs with the western poetic tradition of describing, "an intellectual relation of Man to Nature."

The protagonists of the haiku movement are Matsuo Basho (1644-94), Yosa Buson (1716-1827) and Masaoka Shiki (1867-1902). Besides being credited with establishing

the haiku form, Basho turned the traditional haiku into "a serious form of literature" by using it 'to address, in the deepest manner, the relation of consciousness of nature as objectively represented, charged moments of experience.' In the poetry of Basho 'simplicity, timelessness and silence' emerge as the dominant traits. Simplicity, here, refers to the expression of subjects 'in a straight forward unadorned manner unsupported by poetic stylization'.

The idea of timelessness implies that haiku subjects should provide a universal insight into life. The revelation of haiku subjects in their simplicity and timelessness occurs in silence which is a metaphysical as well as a physical state.

Buson laid stress on the universal nature of subject matter, modified the aesthetic nature of the traditional haiku and highlighted subjective or imaginative expression. Issa made 'the Coolyman' the subject of his description and provided the commonman with 'an accessible kind of poetic experience.' Shiki popularised the term 'haiku' and infused 'a modern tone of wit and mental play into haiku.'

AMERICAN HAIKU POETS

In the hands of American poets like Gary Snyder, Alan Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac, the haiku gained prominence. In tune with the reaction of the Beat Movement of the fifties to the prevalence of cerebral academic poetry, they started focussing on the emotional vividness of 'the subjectively felt present moment' and 'grasp of experience' without literary devices or fancies of expression.

Gary Snyder put it aptly "A real haiku's gotta be as

simple as porridge and yet make you see the real thing.' Unfortunately, Beat's understanding of Zen Buddhism was said to be 'uncritical'. Their commitment to 'Passionately lived experience paved way for the second generation of American poets who preoccupied themselves with over-determination of the subjectively felt external movement. In the sixties and seventies, a plethora of Haiku Literature surfaced in such haiku journals as American Haiku (1963), Haiku Highlights (1965), Haiku (1967), Haiku West (1967), Modern Haiku (1969), Dragonfly (1973), Cicada (1977) and Frog pond (1978). The theories of the Haiku of the contemporary American and Canadian were collected and included in the 'The Haiku Anthology (1974)' of Cor Van den Heuvel. George Swede edited a commendable collection of the Haiku in his 'Canadian Haiku Anthology (1979)' and made a creditable contribution to the haiku as a new literary venture. A glimpse of the Haiku Anthology enables us to understand pre-occupation of the third generation of American poets with words becoming an ontological presence offering 'a glimpse of the infinite' and demonstrating the nature of all things of this world, their unique identity and yet their sameness, their evanescence and their eternal quality.' Despite their prominent contribution to the emergence and popularity of the Haiku literature, Robert Spiers expressed the need for 'Japanese likes of modes of poetic consciousness, Japanese Haiku's disciplined orientation towards heightened awareness, direct perception, immediacy and brevity, suggestion and indirection but nonetheless concreteness and particularisation and poetic naturalness". He strikes the nail on its head when he criticises the American poet's inability

to develop the selfless state desired in the classic haiku poetics. The fourth generation of American haiku poets have bidden goodbye to the 'requisite form and substance of classic Japanese haiku' and started emphasising 'the human rather than nature' and made the haiku a vehicle for eroticism, psychological expression and political and social commentary.

What are the attributes of a haiku in brief ?

A haiku echoes the Buddhist idea that the world is made anew each moment. Robert Spiers says "The whole of life is in each moment, not in the past nor in the future and thus a true haiku is vitally important because it is a moment of total and genuine awareness of the reality now". In short, it does not simply portray nature but reveals 'the universal importance of each particular in Nature'. Besides, a haiku reflects the Zen Buddhist concept of 'No Mind' and a desired higher than ordinary state of consciousness. In short 'subjective receptivity to external reality and objective presentation of natural images' that connect one with "the real thing" are the main features of haiku composition.

GRASP OF EXPERIENCE

THE TELUGU HAIKU

The Japanese haiku made a profound impact on the modern Telugu poets. As early as 1991, Ismail brought out his haiku in a book form entitled 'Vaanakalam Haikulu' (The haiku of the rainy season). Close on the heels of publication of Ismail's haiku, a number of publications saw the light of the day. B.V.V. Prasad's 'Drisya Drisyam' (1995), Lalithanand's 'Akasa Deepalu' (1997), Sirisha's 'Sitakoka Chiluka' (1997) and K. Ramachandra Reddy's 'Rangula Ningi' (1997) were some of the additions to haiku literature. Besides, a host of haiku poets like Vamsi Krishna, P. Sivarama Krishna, Ratnamala, B. Venkatarao, Saidachari., P. Jagannadhdas, Dr.R.VenkateswaraRao,Shafi,j.Vili,Sankara Narayana,Dr.M.Suryanarayana Raju, have been pouring forth their haiku in various journals. Makineedi Bhaskar, who brought out his compilation of articles in 1999, says that "the haiku in Telugu deal with Nature, her numerous moods, stages of human life, profundity of thought through images, brevity in expression of the boundless, fusion of picture and mood and above all bring out the uncanny ability of the poet to probe Nature and uncover her mystery."

'From the inert world of objects, the poet of Haiku draws out a pulsation, and hues it with throb of life' says Avantsa Soma Sundar, an eminent poet. " Like the ripples that still last, even after the stone was flung into the pond and later found no clue, the haikus leave lasting impressions" opines Ismail, a renowned modern poet and critic. "To hold infinity in a meditative mood and embrace its totality of effect and experience and enable the reader to empathise with it is the purport of a haiku", according to Dr. Addepalli. The mini poem establishes an instantaneous relevance to the societal/ social context, while the haiku delves deep into the sub conscious layers and implants an indelible image. To the mini

poem, "thought is the very breath of its existence while a haiku is born of a flash of a meditative mood." An abstract image assumes a concrete shape and feel and leaves an inerasible image on the mind of the reader.

Ismail, blazed a trail in the field of haiku. His haiku experiential in every aspect, display a rare empathy with the circumambient nature, throw light on the inner life of things, and project images of enduring appeal. His 'silence of the Frogs' amply testifies to his insight into the life of things.

'Since the lights are off
She lit the candle
Lo! In the glow-lovelier sights!

Ismail rouses us into an alert awareness of seeing into the life of things beyond their normal shape and colour in the context of a new light casting its own glow on the objects and presenting them as objects a new and afresh. For instance, the inhumanity of humanity is condensed in a single 'dense image'.

"The tree crashed
Even the shadow
They carried away".

In Ismail's haiku, the image and the mood blend into one. In his haiku, the wind does not simply carry the chirp of many hued birds but even acquires their hue.

The birds are chirping
The wind abounds in
Sounds of all hues.

Profundity, rather than obscurity, of thought and feel-

ing, and clarity of a mental picture rather than blurred vision of concrete objects characterise his haiku.

"The bird alighting on the Mirror
was pecking at its image-
Memory of the beloved far away."

Here, Ismail hints at the sweet incisions of a sad memory. Negative images are simply the products of a prejudiced mind. A keen insight into the soul of things, presents a different truth.

The distant light
- Protecting it
Pervades the boundless dark.

The paradoxical situation points to the profound truth of the inseparableness of light and dark.

Somebody flung a pebble
Into the pond
The ripples still astir
Where is the pebble ?

The after-effects of an action haunt even when the agent is forgotten.

N. Narasimha Murty explores the eternal unrest that haunts Man even in his non-conscious state.

Man is asleep
But then
hunger is still awake.

A.S. Rajarao uncovers the ignorance of such values as individual freedom and liberty in an exploitative setup.

Around
The Black veiled woman
The Dense dark.

P.R.L. Swamy's description of the impracticability of restoration of a past goneby is here.

Chewing the cud
of Memories
- The hollow Mouth.

Sirisha's haiku on the flying kites underlines the need for 'unfettered freedom' of things that seek a reunion with nature.

'Though snapped
unbound on the wind
Are the Kites'

Unlike the mini poems which deal with the multi-dimensional aspects of society, the haikus penetrate the subconscious layers and create a meditative mood wherein the mind establishes an empathy with the object contemplated. Sirisha's haiku summonforth the image of a revolutionary soaked in blood and yet heralding the advent of a new era in the annals of humanity.

'Sign posts are they
Crimson eyed all over
- A coral Tree.'

In another haiku, he establishes a rapport between the inanimate benches and the bubbly kids.

'After the Long Bell
To the homing kids

Bade the benches a silent bye'.

Referring to the 'eternal sweetness of a longing unrealised' he says,

"Beyond reach in boyhood
Now Grapes in hand
Whither the taste?"

The self-effacing role of the moon is brought out in another haiku.

"Rubbing the dark
Shrunk the soap
Like the crescent Moon'.

The haiku are recent phenomena but they have captured the imagination of the budding poets of Andhra.

THE UNIVERSALITY

of the human mind is the fact that it is universal.

It is the same in all cultures and all times.

It is the same in all languages and all dialects.

It is the same in all religions and all philosophies.

It is the same in all sciences and all arts.

It is the same in all ages and all places.

It is the same in all hearts and all minds.

It is the same in all souls and all spirits.

It is the same in all beings and all creatures.

It is the same in all things and all beings.

It is the same in all worlds and all universes.

It is the same in all times and all spaces.

It is the same in all places and all times.

It is the same in all ages and all places.

It is the same in all hearts and all minds.

It is the same in all souls and all spirits.

It is the same in all beings and all creatures.

It is the same in all things and all beings.

It is the same in all worlds and all universes.

It is the same in all times and all spaces.

It is the same in all places and all times.

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It is the same in all places and all times.

It is the same in all ages and all places.

It is the same in all hearts and all minds.

It is the same in all souls and all spirits.

It is the same in all beings and all creatures.

It is the same in all things and all beings.

It is the same in all worlds and all universes.

IQBAL

Iqbal, the bard of "Saare Jahan Se Acha" is the first poet philosopher who transcended national barriers of race and religion, embraced the whole world and proclaimed that the world is one single family. His life and lyrics have a sharp relevance to India in particular where religious fundamentalism, political and communal disharmony and hatred are rearing their ugly heads. A glimpse of his life and convictions!

Born of Shaik Noor Mohammed, a humble Kashmiri Tailor and pious lady Imam Bibi, on November 9, 1877, Mohammed Iqbal rose from humble beginnings to the Himalayan peaks of National renown and international acclaim. A child prodigy, Iqbal showed promise of poetic talent and intellectual progress very early in his life. He acquitted himself creditably as a student at Scottish Mission School and the College of Stalkot and pursued his graduation at Lahore in 1897 and distinguished himself in post graduation in 1899. A thinker by nature, Iqbal, since his plastic years of youth, was haunted by the spectacle of a sorrowing India under colonial bondage and exploitation and the nefarious political and economic exploitation of the poor nations in Europe and Asia. Endowed with a fascinating poetic skill and scholarship, he ardently committed himself not only to reflect the unceasing ills of the exploited people for liberation in his poems but also to redeem them through his rapier like writings. His "Tharanari-Hindi" testifies to his convictions in ample measure. He took up the job of a lecturer in the Government college, Lahore and later, at the behest of his brother left for Europe. He made an in-depth study of philosophy in Trinity college, Cambridge and obtained Doctorate in Philosophy from the Munich University. His intellectual accomplishments drew the attention of London University where he was offered the prestigious professorship of Arabic.

However, the pathetic political bondage and economic exploitation in India deeply distressed him and he returned to India in 1908 to contribute his mite to the liberation of his mother land. His brief stint as practitioner of law, in the chief court of Punjab showed him limitless vistas of earning money but he gave up his lucrative practice to satisfy the inner urge of discharging his prime role as a poet. The globe-shattering events in the War-ravaged world during the period between 1914 and 1918, made him a practical philosopher-poet pondering over the hapless humanity caught between two worlds, one already dead and the other slowly but steadily emerging with a spirit-stirring call for turning the tiny sparks of protest into stars of unrelenting progress with unshakable faith in the destiny of Mankind.

A profound humanist, Iqbal assimilated the quint essence of various philosophical systems. He drank deep at the fount of the spiritual and religious literatures of the Hindus. He eulogised the vedic tradition and the fascinating poetic dignity and grace of the mantras in them. One of his Urdu poems, embodied the significance of a mantra from the Adharvana Veda. It is also affirmed that Iqbal made the upanishadic essence the background of his poems. He had deepest reverence for the Buddha and dealt with the pristine purity of Buddhism in his "Javed Nama". He learnt Sanskrit and saluted the peerless poetic and spiritual character of the Gayatri Mantra. Infact, he christened one of his early compositions "Gayatri". The Bhagavad Gita with its stentorian call for disinterested and detached attitude towards the fruits of one's action influenced his mental make up and revolutionary commitment to the redemption of humanity. He was an ardent admirer of the Sanskrit scholar Bhathruhari and spoke, often, highly of his faith in Bhakti Marga as the only reliable way to attain salvation.

Iqbal wished to translate the Ramayana into Urdu and even requested the Maharaj Sir Kishan Prasad to send him

a copy of the Persian version of the Ramayana. His wish, however, remained unfulfilled.

Iqbal took up cudgels for the liberation of religion from ossified beliefs, cramping customs, hollow ritualism, base bigotry, soulless idol worships and sinister practices. He viewed the role of religion from a historical stand point and bemoaned its fall from the heights of spiritual disinterestedness into the mire of mundane exploitation. He envisaged the evolution of a new Islam called international Islam which absorbed all, progressive thoughts and held aloft love as a supreme force. He opined that Islam was in tune with communism in its advocacy of an egalitarian society and remarked "Islam minus God is Bolshevism and Bolshevism plus God is communism". He found in communism a viable ideological commitment to the improvement of the economic conditions of the millions of masses everywhere in the world and rejected historical materialism as totally unacceptable. His concept of International Islam rejected such loyalties as nationalism and atheistic socialism. He was deeply critical of Hellenistic humanism, which he thought, had distorted the Islamic world, view and sought its reconstruction in the context of contemporaneous trends and needs. In his 'Javid-Nama', he proclaims "Rechisel, then they ancient frame and build up a new beginning. In his view, international Islam meant "a superior cognitive, and dynamic principle and not merely a political rallying point."

He always held the view that, a religion, when it degenerates into meaningless ritualism, fanaticism, blind superstition, fossil beliefs and meaningless charlatancy and chicanery abets the rich classes in their criminal exploitation of the poor and leads to the domination of one class by another. He considered religion not as a tyrannical task master trampling down the free conscience of the people, but as one embodying the eternal verities of life.

'Payam-e Mashriq' (Message of the east) shows Iqbal's insight into the history of Man's incessant search for identity and purpose and meaning and promise. He blasts the high sounding shibboleths of European war-mongers and visualises the emergence of Asia from centuries of colonial slavery and slumber of cultural inertia. In fact, the first world war jolted him out of his metaphysical moorings and philosophical abstractions and made him a realist taking up cudgels for the liberation of Man from the clutches of iniquity, exploitation and injustice. His 'song of the stars' pays homage to the self-sacrificing saga of the Russian Masses who overthrew the last vestiges of imperialism in 1917. He sang

"A new sun has risen
from the womb of the earth
Heaven, why cry for the stars that
have set?"

The verses in this classic acquire a rare lustre of authenticity by virtue of Iqbal's indepth study of movement and change, action and inaction, mutability and permanance and advance and progress. Iqbal rejected the Maya as a realm of inner consciousness and stressed the fostering of self-hood which he defined as ' Self-creation through self-expression, action and experience in the concrete world of men.

A universal bard preaching harmony, tolerance, love and understanding in a world plagued by internecine religious fanaticism and - fundamentalism, he opined that "mere nationalism was a soporific blinding people to the higher vision of humanity." He exclaimed,

"My forefathers were Brahmins. They spent their lives in search of God. I am spending my life in search of me. In "The Zarb- e - Kalim" published in 1936, he commented,

"A ray of the sun begins to sing of the glories of India

and says a lot of work is to be done: as the Brahmin is sleeping at the door of the temple and the Muslim is crying under the arch of the Mosque. My destiny is to awaken all the world: Every night has to be turned into a day".

The encircling gloom of despair and frustration in the Asian continent smarting under colonial and religious inequity worried him deeply. Yet undaunted, he thundered,

"Measure not life by the hour glass of yesterdays and the tomorrows to come. Life is eternal and ever is changing forever renewing its youthful vigour".

An intrepid critic of the capitalistic system in the west, and an advocate of an egalitarian society, he warmly exhorted the toiling masses to carve out their own world and said,

"In my eyes, the hands of a carpenter, rough and coarse due to constant use of his saw are far more attractive and useful compared to the soft and delicate hands of a scholar which never carry more than the weight of a pen".

Lenin and Marx exercised a profound influence on Iqbal's mental make-up and intellectual development: In his 'Javed Namah' he portrays the Inhuman exploitation of the means of production. He proclaimed "O Land Lord! Take they bread and take a space from the land but do not claim it as thy own!"

A poet endowed with a historical perspective and insight, he felt that the West with its emphasis on intellect and the East with its stress on the primacy of pure and disinterested love were not poles apart but complementary to each other". He said that the greatest discoveries of science which undoubtedly show man's ingenious nature and inventive genius, would be irrelevant if they were divorced from the pure springs of sympathy and empathy of mankind with the suffering humanity.

Iqbal's anthology of poems entitled 'Payan-e-Mashriq (message of the East) shows Iqbal's humanistic insight into the womb of history, urge for spiritual and cultural revolution, and advocacy of the need to shake off the slumber and stupor of the Asian continent for an onward march!

Adverting to the historical inevitability of awakening the muslims and the ultimate collapse of imperialism under its own weight of exploitation, he warned Europe. "Your civilisation will commit suicide with its own dagger' and termed Europe's civil war as hypocritically outrageous' and antiChristian. He also labelled the league of Nationas 'a league of bandits bent on annihilating the fraternal world in suicidal warfare.'

Iqbal's concept of the role of literature is unique. He warned the poets of his day not to vegetate in the ivory towers of romantic visions, intellectual isolation and metaphysical abstractions but to listen to the still sad voice of a shackled humanity groping in a dark world of decadent values and degenerate practices. He advised the bards of his day.

"Create your own cups of wine
from the earth of India"

And said

"A rich man's ways are not mine
and I am a fakir".

REHABILITATION

BANDARU TAMMAYYA

Born in 1891, on September 24 at Gangalakurti, near Amalapuram in a middle class Saivite family, Bandaru Tammayya rose to become one of the greatest critics and scholars of Saivite literature of Andhras. He discontinued his studies at High School and joined as clerk in the Revenue Department. Yet, with unswerving devotion to literature, he mastered Telugu, Kannada and Sanskrit languages and deserved such titles as "Eitihāsika Samrat", "Dharma Bhushan", "Vimarsakagresara", "Siva Sarana" and "Saiva Sahiti Sarva Bhouma."

He excavated the thousand year old Telugu literature and discovered that Saivite literature has carved a unique place for itself. With painstaking research, he rehabilitated Palkuriki Somanatha and Pidaparti poets and dispelled the prejudices over Srinatha's epicurean life and hedonistic pleasures and proved the contentions of even such literary stalwarts as Veeresalingam wrong. But for his critical acumen and depth of scholarship, Srinatha and Palkuriki Somanatha would not have enjoyed a place of primacy along with the renowned poets like Nanne Chodudu, Tikkanna, Nachana Somana and Erra Progada. Bandaru Tammayya, one of the most eminent scholar critics proved that dislodgement of a poet's place is the very negation of constructive criticism.

The multi-splendoured Telugu literature in general and Saivite literature in particular fascinated Tammayya. He was pained to know that Srinatha's life and works were grossly misrepresented and misinterpreted. Countering the views of well known critics like Vonguri Subbarao Pantulu, Veeresalingam, Veturi Prabhakara Sastry and Panchagaula Adinarayana Sastry which painted Srinatha as a poet of unbridled 'sringara'. Tammayya, with his unbiased insight,

proved that Srinadha was the greatest of Saivite poets. He declared that Kreedhabhi Ramam, purported to have been written by Srinatha, was in fact, authored by Vallabha Raya and that the fugitive verses, which smack of unbridled sringara were not composed by Srinadha. Citing literary and historical evidence, he determined that Srinatha, an Aradhya, Brahmin, was mistaken for a Niyogi Brahmin. No wonder, he was regarded as a competent authority on Srinatha and his 'Srinatha Kavi Yugam' was prescribed as a reference book by the universities in Andhra Pradesh.

Next to his enthronement of Srinatha, Tammayya, left no stone unturned to rehabilitate Palkurki Somanatha. He proved with unmistakable authenticity that Tikkana and Srinatha learnt the art of exploiting the fertile Telugu idiom in their works from Palkurki Somanatha. Endowed with the objectivity of a disinterested historian, he challenged and disproved Veeresalingam's observations on the historicity of Somanatha's life and proved that Somanatha lived between 1160 and 1240 during the reign of Pratapa Rudra. He authored the book 'Palkurki Somanatha Kavi' with such competence that Madras, Osmania and Andhra Universities prescribed it as a reference book for the postgraduates and graduates. At a time when the works of eminent poets were cluttered with interpolations, Tammayya took upon himself the arduous task of editing Dwipada Basavapuram, Chaturveda Saram and Laghu Krutis, Basava Purana and Panditaradhya Charitra of Somanatha and restored their primacy in the annals of Telugu literature. With indefatigable zeal, he made a comparative study of all treatises written on Hareeswara Pidaparti Somana and Palkurki Somana and analysed the prosodic features of Telugu and Kannada classics.

A polyglot : Tammayya was a polyglot. His mastery of Sanskrit language and grammar stood him in good stead. He translated such great classics of Kalidasa as Raghuvamsa and Kumara Sambhava into Telugu prose. His scholarly insight into Kannada literature helped him do a thorough comparative study of Telugu and Kannada classics. He put Kannada Classics like Veera Saiva Vivaha Vidhi and Veera Saiva Darsaha into Telugu. Tammayya's articles on the Basaveswara literature and its historicity are hailed as authoritative. The Siva stotra of Malhana turned into graceful Telugu prose in his hands. He also contributed a prefatory essay to Umrili Shahi's book, on the Prophet Mohammad.

The startling disclosures and revelations he made in his articles roused many a critic from his stupor of dogmatic prejudices. In 1925, Tammayya made a scathing attack on the votaries of Pina Veerabhadra Kavi in his articles 'Pillalamarri' Pina Veerabhadra Kavi: Vani Na Rani'. Such eminent avadhanis as Chellapila Venkata Sastry and Sripada Krishna Murthy Sastry wondered at Tammayya's critical insight and objective analysis. His article 'Palkurki Somanadha Kavi Anubhava Saaram' in the souvenir of Andhra Sahitya Parishad, received encomiums from many a discerning critic in 1935.

He 'Kalyanapuri Prasansa'- a collection of poems and scholarly speech on the Veera Saiva Literature in 1955 at Bangalore drew the attention of the King of Mysore, Jayachama Rajendra Vadayar to the richness of Saivite literature in Telugu.

Bandaru Tammayya passed away on 5th December, 1970.

TELL ME A STORY !

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PALAGUMMI PADMARAJU

"Rao entered the waiting room. He sagged down into the easy chair. To him, it looked that the hurricane would barge in once the doors were closed. Two window panes blew up into pieces. It appeared as if some ruthless forces were riotously bent on demolishing and rendering shapeless all those things made by man and created by God. In such perplexity, no vedanta came to Rao's rescue to fortify his heart... She, this creature enabled his long hidden humanity to blossom.... None... not even his wife or any one of his children had ever come so closer to his heart
"('Gaalivana')

Thus wrote Padma Raju, the master story writer who had the unique knack of seeing into the very life of things.

As one of the greatest short-story writers in Telugu, who have delved deep into human life, its toil and tears, hopes and despair and smiles and sufferings, Padmaraju is unchallenged. Endowed with sharp intellectual analytical powers and imbued with humanitarian sympathy, he chisels his characters into pulsating humans, paddling their canoes in the vast sea of the world. His short-stories cut across the 'isms' and ideologies and appeal directly to the heart and stimulate the mind.

As he himself says "As I began writing about a certain event, the story unfolded itself without my conscious direction. I wanted to write about the oppressed, the poor and the downtrodden about suffering and social injustice. But when the story got going, the oppressor a land lord or a moneylender ceased to be oppressive. The victim of oppression also did not come out as I would have wished. I had seen men who were down and out but what interested me was not their suffering but the cunning they usually de-

veloped for pulling on with the burden of their lives".

Palagummi Padma Raju was born on June 24, 1915 at Tirupathipuram in the West Godavari district. After his post-graduation in Chemistry from the Banares University, he worked as lecturer in the P R College at Kakinada, from 1938 to 1945. Here he came under the influence of pioneers like Devulapalli Krishna Sastry, Nanduri Subba Rao in poetry and Muni Manikyam in prose. M N Roy, with his radical humanism, profoundly influenced him, while T S Eliot, Joyce, Kafka, Shaw and Shelley sharpened his intellectual perception and literary craft. Freud offered him an insight into the world of the mind of man and Marx unlocked before him a new brave world of socialism. His mind stored the phenomenal progress of science, technology, engineering, electronics, economics and moulded his rational and refined approach to life and literature.

His first story, 'Subbi', published in 1938, is a prosaic record of the attitudes of a mother and father towards a servant girl who had an illegitimate child by their own son. In his short story 'Eduro Choostunna Muhuram', Padma Raju makes a psychoanalytical exploration into the sub-conscious world of woman. Santa, a woman encrusted with layers of illusions over her beauty and status in society, fails to know what she needs in her life. She, who deems it fit to sit in judgement on the life of others, discovers herself too frail and timid to face life.

His 'Gaalivana' is characterised by Chekavian texture and Shavian twists. It won him second prize in the world short-story competition held by the New York Herald Tribune and brought him international repute and recognition in 1952. A humanist with a heightened vision. Padma Raju under-

lines the basic humanity which peeps out through the layers of Pseudo culture and civilisation of our modern age. The protagonist, Rao who is fettered by his conventional moorings and inflexible intellectual make-up, stands stripped of his illusions at the sight of a dead beggar woman, who kindles the dying embers of his humanity in the waiting room of a railway station. In 'Vaasana leni puvvulu', he examines the divergent approaches of a husband and his wife to life. As he himself says, "it is the duty of a short-story teller to perceive the primitive world of instincts within and without in our society, and establish an empathy with it". In 'Pariharam' Raju pays tribute to the self-sacrificing spirit of a woman who saves the son of her paramour by bearing his cross, while 'Deyyala Gadupu' depicts the changes in the social life of people in the context of the transition of feudalistic society to a capitalistic one. In 'Udvegalu', he peeps into the raging memories of childhood in the sub-conscious world of a woman. 'On the Boat' deals with the unbreakable involvement and total identification of the life of a woman with her man.

His short stories do not project grotesque images or metaphors. He selects the simplest word combinations and deliberately eschews glittering figures of speech. In this, he emulates Hemingway and like a refined writer gives the most complete explanation of a given situation. Besides portraying the subtle tremors of the mind of the common man, he stands, unsurpassed in many ways for his ingenious delienation, and skilful characterisation.

Coming to the field of novels, Padma Raju is unparalleled in his absolute command of the subject and thematic development. His insight into myriad aspects of life is fasci-

nating. His 'Bratikina Kaleji' is Wodehousian in its comic strain, while 'Nalla Regadi' paints the political manoeuvrings in the country side. His 'Rendava Asokuni Moonnalla Palana' shows his expert handling of political satire. He studies the freedom movement from a non-partisan angle in 'Ramarajyaaniki Rahadari'.

Padma Raju was an ardent admirer of the great romantic poet Devulapalli Krishna Sastry. He says "I wrote several abstract poems. I accepted the implied compliment (even though I know that poems could never be scientific) because it tickled my vanity. With a bang I gave the goby to prosody both old and new. I started writing prose poems. They were speculations about darkness, of power, of light and such other abstract entities, speculations based on the abstract concepts of science". A sharp intellectual insight, passionate tenderness and delicacy of feeling characterise his poems.

Critics hail him as one who has brought into Telugu poetry the tradition of cerebral poetry of T. S. Eliot. In his 'Puriti Pata', he depicts the universal anguish beyond and behind the world of human experiences. As Mr Addepalli says "here 'Padma Raju reflects the moods of the circumambient nature in the context of the labour pains of a pregnant woman.

Padma Raju is endowed with rare dramatic genius. His fertile pen poured forth a creditable number of radio plays and stage plays. His 'Veluguneedalu', 'Rakta Kanneeru', 'Santhinivasam'. "Inti Alludi Katha", 'Kaliyani Daarulu', etc.. are a unique contribution to the art of dramaturgy in Telugu.

Padma Raju, in short, is the pride of Telugus! When shall we see such a profoundly moving writer!

WHAT IS IT ?

ISMAIL

ISMAIL defines and defends his conception of what a true poem is, how it is to be appreciated and above all what distinguishes a genuine poet from the many so-called committed poets of today. A look at his thought and vision! "Poetry needs no labels to proclaim itself. Such labels as Bourgeois, Proletarian, Revisionist, are too easily banded about to arrest the process of thinking out the true nature of poetry".

Poetry, when it is written with, and for a political end loses its basic spirit and no wonder modern Telugu poetry is-bogged down in the swampy sloughs of political slogans. Such poetry has nothing to do with a poet's sensibility. It ceases to be poetry of experiences and acquires the name of the poetry of ideas. It is a pity that many of our modern Telugu poets are repetitive and slogan ridden. A poem is a quest, endless and unquenching. As such every poetic piece is perpetually and refreshingly new.

A poet, needs such freedom as to enlarge his vision and widen his field of experiences.

"In my poetry, the language is refined and unstained by the odour and hue of over - worked words culled from the literature of yore.

Chalam is the precursor of this experiment. May be I stand next to him in this. To me, the models of excellence are Krishna Sastry and Sri Sri and they have a bearing on me.

One who wants to be a poet must know, not only how to write but also how not to write. Blind imitation lands him

no where. I learnt how to write and how not to write from Krishna Sastry indeed. I appreciate the European poets in general and enjoy the American poets. Of course, I had written my poetry of experience even before I read them.

The world of poetry brooks no unshackled frenzy of emotions. Poetry is an organised activity. It suffers without discipline or control. True poetry does not aim at an intellectual exposition of ideas. It has nothing to do with reason but only with the sensibility. A good poem writes itself".

Mr Ismail, in his book 'Kavitvam lo Nissabdam' displays his honest erudition, and incisive critical analysis, and frankly exposes the discipline and the fall of modern Telugu Poetry. He proclaims that poetry is a bridge between the poet and the world. There is hardly any difference in the mental make up of a traditional poet and a marxist poet. Both are instructive and propagandistic. But new poetry is not such. It is essentially explorative of an inner experience. It not only stimulates our levels of experience through images but also makes us experience it.

The first realist poet in Telugu is Sri Sri but his poems were largely imitative. Surrealism could not survive even in France. Its merit, however, is that it widened the frontiers of imagination and made allowance for association of ideas. A Mini poem is an adroit play upon words. A poem is born of one's anguish and sensitive reaction.

To those who lambaste Chalam as one who betrayed the social cause and sought shelter in Arunachalam, Mr. Ismail replies, "to Chalam, spiritual bliss is a step above the pleasure-spun sensuous experience. To him, spirituality did

not mean religion, or worship, or ritualism or detachment. He felt 'the spiritual experience is an ambrosia far beyond the reach of Bairagis, vedantists and sanyasins. It is greater than mere experience of love. He merged the music of his self in the harmonious orchestra of universal self. As such we need not be astounded over his sojourn towards Arunachala. His entire life was one of an unending quest. The Modern world can learn from Chalam that peace can not be found unless man renounces the wordly values and embarks on a relentless quest for freedom and bliss within.

Expatriating on "whether literature is necessary?", Mr ismail blasts the myth of political commitment in literature and points out literature is not a collective product. It is born out of fusion of an individual, his creative genius and the life around. Each poet is unique in his own way. Poetry simply originates from one's experience and vision. In the context of a clash between a poet's vision and the political ideology of the party he belongs to, honest poets like Pablo Neruda valued their vision and conscience far above their political beliefs or faiths.

Brecht, did not kill his poetic self for the sake of his party. True poetry surges out of one's experience. There cannot be a heart transplantation in poetry. Sri Sri wrote the best of his poems, 'Mahaprasthanam' even before he embraced Marxism. After his conversion to Marxism, what he wrote were mere festival lyrics. So far, no honest and unbiased assessment of Sri Sri's works has been made'.

Ismail opines that there is hardly any difference between the traditional poet and the modern Marxist poet in terms of their poetic perspective. Their concern has been

excursive, one sided and therefore incomplete in vision. A modern verse is like a pulsating and throbbing being which loses its completeness once its limbs are fragmented. A great German Poet like Brecht could achieve a rare and harmonious blend of poetic values and political convictions. It is indeed lamentable that modern Telugu literature is deliberately and systemtically exploited to serve political ends. For the last thirty years, Telugu literary field has turned into barren ground.

Adverting to Ravi Sastry's, prominence. Ismail says that his characters transcend mere mean, transient political shibboleths, narrow ideologies and shallow sermons. He defines a great writer as one who can transcend his own limitations and enjoy the vision of a universe in order and rhythm. Chalam's greatness lies in his ability to envision a world far bigger than the one he lived in.

Mr Ismail redefines the much abused word "Romanticism" and hails it as the very root of the irrepressible desire for freedom and creative reaction.

FROM HUMBLE GROUNDS

GNANANANDA KAVI

SURAGALI Timothy Gnanananda Kavi, is a towering bard whose fecund poetic output and fervent humanism, has made him a household name, wherever the nobility of classical poetry is mentioned and discussed. His literary profundity, poetic talent and depth of scholarship, have earned him encomiums from such gigantic literary personalities as Kavi Samarat Viswanadha Satyanarayana. No wonder, he is rightly acclaimed as 'Abhinava Joshua', Kavita Sri Nadha' 'Kavi Kokila', 'Sahiti Vallabha' and 'Kavi Sarvabhousma'.

Born in 1922, in a poor Harijan family at Pedapenki, he showed a precocious talent for poetry at an impressionable age of nine and made a creditable debut on the literary stage in 1932. But the way to the summits of glory and fame proved formidable for him in the early stages. The caste Hindus and the conservative Christians mocked at the very idea of a Harijan boy, gatecrashing into the domain of a privileged few. But undaunted, Gnanananda Kavi, pursued his goal indefatigably, braved the social obstacles and hardships and before long claimed his place in the world of Literature. A prolific poet of such worthy works as Bharatha Mata, Pillangrovi, Eswara, Prabhodam, Kanuka, Prajaswamyam, Panchayati Rajyam, Vijayabhishekam, Swechha Dinam, Kshama Devi, Bharathi Upadhyaya, Sarada, Akhanda Bharatam, Rytu, Kalidasa Prasasti, Avedanam, Sahoninadam; Bhavi Bharatam, Swechha geetam, Sweecha Ninadam, Asha Sandesam, Prabhu, Subhas Babu, Gandhi, Tagore, Viswa Bharathi, Sandasam, Desamante, Santigeetam, Jateeya Samaikyam etc. Gnanananda Kavi, is truly a people's poet, whose commitment to humanism is unquestioned. A glimpse of his poetic art and vision!

"Modernity is a question, not of date but of out look. Gnanananda Kavi, took to classical poetry with a view to

establishing the truth, that progressive human values need not be clothed in the modern uniform of freeverse and that they can equally shine through the disciplined form of prosody. In this age when slogans are the stuff of modern free verse, he however, makes out a stentorian case for a fresh lease of pure poetry, which can ennoble itself by its sheer merit, irrespective of the form with which it is adorned and help the efflorescence of society. Though a champion of the classical prosody, Gnananda Kavi is not opposed to the experimental trends in the field of modern poetry. It is his conviction that, a poet can adopt a form of his own in which he can best express himself. A much sought-after bard who can speak eloquently on both the ancient glory of literature and the fresh vigour of modern free verse, he pleads for a labourious and meticulous study of the classics of yore before one can express one-self in poetic style. "A single line, laden with poetic splendour and appeal conceals beneath, the weight of scholarship of the poet." He opines, Gnanananda Kavi's poesy emits the fragrance of spiritual values and the radiance of the glorious teachings of such great spiritual leaders of ancient India as, the Budha, Vasishtha and Sri Ramanujacharya and the relevance of their Dharmic messages to the modern society smarting in the scorching climate of cancerous casteism, communal disharmony, political prostitution and religious fundamentalism, A classic like 'Samathaganam' is a splendid instance of his humanistic insight into the contemporaneous world.

In thematic content and poetic style, Gnanananda Kavi, is a worthy follower, of such eminent poets as Karuna Sri and Joshua. The compassionate fervour in Karuna Sri and the humanistic idealism of Joshua blend in his poetry, an instance of which is his 'Adarana'. In this work, Gnanananda

Kavi castigates the inhumanity of Man to Mother Nature. In a touching style, he portrays the bleeding cry of all helpless animals over the brutal instinct of a thankless humanity, one is reminded of the multimouthed lamentation of the flowers in Karuna Sri's "Pushpavilapam."

Being a humanist, to the core of his heart, Gnananda Kavi, is against the power drunk and chair crazy politicians, who mouth Gandhian Maxims in public but demolish the golden dreams of the Mahatma in practice. Acutely aware of the centuries of servitude of the downtrodden denizens of our society, he wields his pen like a sword against the unethical practices of political lords and fondly dreams of the emergence of a brave new India, unshackled by political injustice, social taboos, and religious bigotry. His 'Saho Ninadam' and 'Bhavi Bharatam' are a glowing testimony to humanistic ideals and poetic integrity. He calls, for a purposive Literature which is devoid of false sloganeering and hollow rhetoric and sounds the conch for a vibrant upsurge and virile movement of the masses for the uplift of the helpless humanity, caught up in the clutches of exploitation of all hues.

'Amrapali' is, truly, an iridescent piece which won him the prestigious Sahitya Academy Award and proved his splendid poetic talent and fecund scholarship. The adroit poetic style, splendid theme, and keen analysis of human emotions and passions make it a commendable classic apart. His consummate handling of Srinagara Rasa reminds the readers of the magnificent romanticism in the Works of the masters of yore. The classical lustre of Telugu is also evident from such works as 'Prabhantakam, Golconda, Gandhi, Desa Bhandu, Akshara Gucham' etc.

To him, true religion is adherence to the dictates of a

pure conscience but not a blind faith in meaningless ritualism and shallow spiritualism. His "Parijanyam" with its plea for a change of heart and conversion of soul in a world of soul scorching materialism shows his anguish over the decline in human values.

In 'Esu Christu Satagam' and 'Christu Prabhandham' he portrays Christ as the protagonist of a spiritual revolutionary movement who laid down his life at the altar of service to humanity.

In 'Vijayabhishekam' Gnanananda Kavi paints the glorious freedom struggle and fondly wishes that the blood, toil and tears of the martyrs had not gone in vain. His vision of an egalitarian society in which the toiling tillers and workers are given their due, and exploitation by the Feudal Lords is ended once for all, is prominent in almost all his poetical works.

In appreciation and recognition of his poetic stature, the Andhra University bestowed upon him the much coveted, Kala Prapoorna in 1974. Hailed as Kavi Sarvabhouma in Andhra Pradesh, he had the rare privilege of being honoured with 'Kanakabhishekam' and 'Gandapendaram' Now even at the age of 80 Gnanananda Kavi, pursues his poetic world untiringly and inspires all those who value human values in Telugu literature. The Government of India conferred upon him the much coveted civilian honour "Padma Sri" in January, 2001.

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

THE EUPHORIA AND THE AGONY

'This was the period of euphoria, when it was still possible that was tolerably chivalrous affair, offering welcome opportunities for heroism and self-sacrifice and to hope that this war would be over in six months'.

The first global war in which twenty one million people died, eight and a half million men fell in action and twelve and a half million civilians died as a result of military action, through genocide and massacre, starvation and disease, started with a bang in 1914. The visions of glory envisaged by the muse and man, thrilled the populace and the powers of England and Germany. In the early years, it was more in the spirit of a Jihad or a crusade. It was, in fact, more true of England than of Germany since most of the earlier English wars had nearly centered on the affairs of the governing class, with no visible impact on the masses! Manifest have been the reactions of the people of England to the spectacle and spectre of war! The enthusiasm of the nation, in the early phases of war, was owing to a sense of relief from the unbearable tension of the years preceding the war and from the tedium and monotony of the highly commercialised civilisation. This enthusiasm to wage a war was further strengthened by the belief that the English should break down their barrier of insularity and reassert their identity and unity with the rest of the changing world.

Pinto says "part of it was the outcome of the moral sense derived from the English puritan tradition, which had been starved, corrupted but not killed in a world of competitive commerce and which now seems to have found an outlet in heroic action." Eminent critics like C.M. Bowra who felt the pulse of the times remarked that the mood of England,

grew out of a belief that only through a great sacrifice and redemption could society be purged of its complacency and grossness.

Thomas Hardy, the poet who inhaled the air of fatalism and exhaled pessimism gave poetic vent to the spirit of young Englishmen in 1914 in his 'Men who march away'. The fervour almost religious in its earnestness and a righteousness justifying the cause in this poem, in fact, heralded the advent of patriotic poems in the hands of the war-poets.

'In our heart of hearts believing
victory crowns the Just
And that braggarts must
Surely bite the dust.'

The climax of the poem is in the line ,

'England's need are we' .

Sir William Watson, who represented the entrenched forces of conservatism and revolted against the fag end of Victorian rhetoric, went a step beyond mere nationalistic fervour in his comments on Germany.

'Out of the gutters and slums of Hell
Disgorged from the vast infernal sewer
vomited forth from a world where dwell
childhood, maidenhood, wifehood pure
She arose and towered on earth and sea,
clothed in her green putridity.'

'A mere chauvinistic rubbish at the outbreak of the war' remarks John Press. Rupert Brooke lagged behind none in echoing the mood in which thousands of young men volun-

teered for military service in the early months of the war to defend the heroism, glory and honour of England. As a war poet who sprang into sudden prominence and stamped himself on the national consciousness, Rupert Brooke carved out a niche for himself. His sonnets such as 'Peace', 'Safety' 'The Dead' and 'the soldier' grew out of a tension between a longing for peace and the urge to fight, the zest for life and the impending fate. In his 'The Soldier', he ardently wished:

'If I should die, think only this of me
That there is some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England.
There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed.

Here is not merely stoical resignation but heroic fortitude at its best. Like Tennyson in 'Blow Bugle, blow', and Henley in 'England my England', he calls on bugles to "muffle the rich dust," and exhorts the valiant youth.

'Honour has come back, as a king to earth
And paid his subjects with a royal wage
And nobleness walks in our ways again
And we have come into our heritage.'

Here is a striking note of refusal to surrender to frustration and despair. Like a visionary, Brooke looks upon the war as a godsent chance to bestow martyrdom on the selfless youth and facilitate, a pious transition from life to eternity. His 'safety' is full of his faith in war which knows no war. In a letter, he admits 'I can well see that death might be an admirable solution. The poem is a homage to the unshakable will and indefatigable strength of the British soldiers.

'We have built a house that is not for time's throwing
We have gained a peace unshaken by pain for every
War knows no power, Safe shall be my going,
Secretly armed against all death's endeavour
Safe through all safety's lost, safe where men of all
And if these poor limbs die, safest of all'

His 'peace' overcomes all the uncertain moments and doubting phases of the war. The call for a concerted action once again is sounded.

'Now god be thanked who has match'd us with His hour
And caught our Youth and wakened us from sleeping'

Brooke's poem '1914' reflects not only the sluggishness of a notoriously industrialised world but also the emotional patriotism of Englishmen in 1914 which equated the war to a defence of a beautiful English against an insensate enemy. No wonder, despite all the criticism against the shallowness of feeling, his sonnets proclaim something which went off to fight and be killed in the early years of the war. Mr. Bernard Bergonzi comments that Brooke seemed to be speaking for his generation; "Innumerable young men responded to the war with feelings that were a compound of traditional patriotism and boredom with the world they had grown up. His poetry offers us an impression of a brilliant attractive personality absorbed in the contemplation of itself ... tender with a sense of suffering of others and the comradeship of endurance and of pain. John Press's comment that 'most of them regarded conflict if not as a crusade at least as a high adventure undertaken for noble ends,' is applicable to Herbert Asquith who served on the western front and authored "The volunteer and other poems 1912 - 1933".

He paints the picture of a clerk who goes to join the men of Agincourt.

'His lance is broken; But he lies content
With that High hour in which he lived and died.'

Grenfell, a professional soldier who won honours for gallantry in France and later died of wounds is another poet whose comments on war are rather jingoistic. He says 'I adore war. It is like a big picnic without the objectlessness of a picnic' and harps on the same string in a letter 'I have never felt so well or so happy or enjoyed anything so much. It just, suits my stolid health and stolid nerves and barbaric disposition. The fighting excitement vitalises everything, every sight and word and action. One loves one's fellow man so much more when one is bent on killing him.' His poem 'Into Battle' celebrates the flattering ideals of heroism.

'And when the burning moment breaks
And all things else are out of mind
And only joy of battle takes
Him by the throat and makes him blind.'

The feverish urge for battle rises to a crescendo of religious fervour behind which one feels a strong defence of national cause. Robert Nichols is another poet of Georgian descent, who having fought in France with the Royal Artillery and been declared invalid after the battle of Somme returned home in dejection. The poignant quality of 'Ardour and Endurance' (1917) is striking. His 'The Day's march' describes the arduous march of the soldiers braving 'the power of dust', 'lunging guns' and 'Chilly blasts'. The last

line which unfolds his reaction is anti-climactic.

'I lift my head and smile'

While the young soldier, as described in 'Fare well' bids good bye to his home, with his thoughts on our emotions.

'And now tears are not mine I have released
From the Former and the latter pain
Like the mid sea, I rock in boundless peace
Soothed by the charity of the deep sea rain
Calm rain! calm sea! calm found
Long sought in vain'

Gates, the subaltern in the poem 'Comrades' simply struggles back to die with his own company in the trenches, thinks only of the men to whose safety he is accountable and not at all even for a moment, of himself. No wonder, an anonymous remark surfaced in 'Times Literary Supplement', eulogising that 'Nothing can prevent poetry like this from taking its place among those permanent possessions of the race which will remain to tell the great grand children of our soldiers to what pure heights the spirit of Englishmen rose out of the great war's horror of waste and ugliness, noise and pain and death.'

Robert Nichol's "Thanksgiving" is symbolic of the valiant heroism which forges ahead even amidst odds and uncertainties. He celebrates the strength and tenacity of purpose here.

'Yet give I thanks : Depite these wars
My Ship-though blindly blown
Long lost to sun or Stars

Still stands up alone
I need no trust in borrowed spars
My strength is yet my own.

Edmund Thomas who was killed at Arras in 1917, speaks of the zeal, of his times in his 'Collected poems'. 'The Trumpet' is a clarion call to all to witness "the earth new born amidst the smoke and fire of the war". He pleads for 'chasing away the dreams of men and calls for a halt to the day dreaming of the romanticists and an identity with the nation in an hour of crisis.

'Up with the light
To the old wars
Arise, Arise'

Walter de La Mare's 'Virtue' brims over with optimism. Acutely aware of the 'loveliest impossibilities, of efforts wasted and delights foregone' and poignantly conscious of the 'struggling soldiers, who are 'spent, baffled, wildered, hated' and despised 'and hasten to defeat', he prays to God to grant 'my son's ashes lie' 'where these men are'. W.B. Yeats, unwilling to be a bard of the war, strikes a peculiar note in his 'An Irish Airman foresees his death. 'His 'Irish Airman' epitomises all those daring souls who were driven to this tumult in the clouds by a lonely impulse of delight. 'Subconsciously, Yeats finds himself in league with the warring soldiers of Ireland who felt that

'The years to come seemed a waste of breath
A waste of breath the years behind
In balance with this life, this death'

Ford Madox Ford typifies the customary unworldliness

and chivalry of his crisis-ridden times. He plunged head-long into the swirling whirlpool of warfare and his poem 'Antwep' written in 1914 is an instance of his involvement. T.S. Eliot praises the poem as the only great poem he has met with on the subject of the war. Charles Sorley, one of the major war poets who explored the profound meaning of the crisis 'never abandoned the ideals of self-sacrifice, courage and devotion to duty which he had learned at Marlborough, nor could the war diminish, what his house master called 'an extraordinary thrust of life. He discovered that in that man's no man's land and long grave yard, there is a freedom and spur. His poem 'All the hills and vales along' begins with an invocation to 'the marchman' to sing, give, your gladness to earth's keeping and surges to the peaks of pious fervour.

'Earth that blossomed and was glad
Neath the cross that christ had
shall rejoice and blossom too
when the bullet reaches you'

and clinches the entire issue of their participation in the war to

'so be merry, so be dead'

The vision of a triumphant England haunts Sassoon. He tends to write

'The anguish of the earth absolves our eyes
Till beauty drives in all that we can see
War is our scourge. Yet war has made us wise
And fighting for our freedom we are pure

We are the happy legion, for we know
Time's but a golden wind that shakes the grass

He provides the knowledge of high companionship in
a great cause as an antidote to the horrors of war.

'From life we longed to share no less than others
Now, having claimed this heritage of heart
What need we more, my comrades and my brothers?

Rosenberg who, shared with Owen his agony over 'the murder and mayhem of the human conscience in those troubled times' was enthusiastic about war when he wrote on receiving news of the war in 1914. Though he reacts to the 'corrosive consequences of war', he says

'Some spirit old
Hath turned with malign kiss
Our lives to mould'

He calls them in the later lines of the poem 'salutary effects'. He is aware that though the war-kiss moulds the lives of the soldiers into temporary evil, it finally has the power to purge them of their sickness and restore them to man's first innocence.

O! Ancient crimson curse!
Corrode , consume
Give back this universe
Its pristine bloom.

The Agony

The war, supposed to halt, 'by Christmas' continued and slid into a war of attrition in the Flanders mud. The strain of war and the stress of its multi-pronged attack began telling upon the conscience of the nation. The nation was rocked with discussions whether the British armies were to 'chew the barbed wire' as Winston Churchill put it or to turn flank via Baltic or the Balkans. The Battle of Somme began in July but the genocide of twenty thousand men and more than forty thousand casualties shocked the nation into a stupor. The massacre of soldiers on the Somme and at Arras cleared out the last vestiges of patriotism and there was a heated debate as to whether there was any *raison d'être* to prolong and motivate the war which 'blew the soldiers to bleeding patches of flesh' amidst 'the wreckage' of the earth. Further a vertical division between the nation at home and the nation overseas was seen in Britain. "The nation at home still believed in the patriotic myth of a beautiful heroic war against diabolical enemies. The nation overseas was in touch with realities of life and death and was completely disillusioned with regard to the heroic nature of the struggle! C.B. Cox and A.E. Dyson admirably painted the days of turbulence and conflict.

"After the slide into suicide of August 1914, the sleeper did not awake, he merely turned upon a pleasing dream to nightmare. In either case, it was impossible to wake up. The misgivings, the profound distrust of modern civilisation which had led twenty years earlier to the growth of symbolist poetry now had their tragic justification. 'After us the savage

God' and the savage God was here and as if in a dream the world's most progressive nations were revolving their young men marching with polished boots into his maw".

Frederic Manning's prefatory note to *Her Privates we* (1930) summed up the feelings of the French poets "to call it a crime against is to miss half of its significance. It is also the punishment of a crime". No wonder, Rosenberg told Edward marsh that in his *Daughters of war* he had striven to get that sense of inexorableness of the human (or inhuman side of the war' as 'it even penetrates behind human life. 'Owen, too, confessed to his mother". "It is like the eternal place of gnawing of teeth, the slough of despond could be contained in one of its crate-holes; the times of Sodd om and Gomorrah could not light a candle to it to find the way to Babylon the fallen. It is pockmarked like a body of foulest disease and its odour is the breath of cancer. I have not seen any dead. I have done worse. In the dark air I have perceived it and in the darkness, 'felt'. Those 'Somme pictures are the laughing stock of the army like the trenches on exhibition in Kensington. No man's land under show is like the face of the man, chaotic, cratter-ridden, uninhabitable, awful, the abode of madness'. Charles Sorey's letter to Arthur Watts infact underlined the horror of the trenchlife of the soldiers. "The tension and silence of encounter, when one struggles in the dark for moral victory over the enemy patrol, the wail of the exploded bomb and the animal cries of the wounded man. Then death and horrible thankfulness when one sees that the next man is dead. We wont have to 'carry' him in under fire, thank God! dragging will do', hauling in of the great resistless body in the dark, the smashed head rat-

ting, the relief that the thing has ceased to groan; that the bullet or bomb that made man an animal has now made the animal a corpse. One is hardened by vow, purged of all false pity perhaps more selfish than before. The spiritual and the animal get so much more sharply divided in hours of encounter, taking possession of the body by swift turns".

Blasting everything that seemed hypocritical, tawdry and false in British propaganda and sentiment and exploding the humbug preached by the journalists and the Churchmen, Sorley looks upon the First World War as "a hideous fratricidal massacre."

'And in each other's dearest ways we stand,

And hiss and hate.

And the blind fight the blind."

I.M. Parson puts it effectively. "They set out to make us see with our own eyes' the gibbest trees like bones or thorns sticking up from the mud-filled crates of No-man's land to near' the mad gusts tugging on the wire'. The poets saw war through myth and symbol of Man who fought in it and concerned themselves with stripping the tinsel from the robes of Bellona and revealingly exposed the stark and chattering skeleton beneath. No wonder, their sense of personality broke the bonds of self and individualism and expanded into a passion for comradeship. Here are a bunch of poets who analysed the horrors of war "in terms of a crisis in civilisation, a split in human consciousness and a schism in soul".

Richard Aldington, who was severely gassed during his front-line service showed the mute indifference of nature to the mighty tragedy that engulfed the soldiers "amidst the wreckage of the earth;"

We left our holes
And looked above the wreckage of the earth.
To where the white clouds moved in silent lines
Across the untroubled blue'.

The indifference of nature to 'the toil and tears' corresponded to the hollow rhetoric and callous irresponsibility of the civilian population. Sassoon bitterly complains,

You smug-faced crowds with kindly eye
Who cheer when soldier lads march by
Sneak home and pray you never know
The hell where youth and laughter go

Rudyard Kipling questioned his countrymen how they could bear such demonic inhumanity of Man and invest it with a romantic glamour.

"I was seen from afar and killed
how is this matter for mirth?"

The patriotic ideals of self-sacrifice smacked of a brutal victimisation of soldiers on the blood stained grounds of Britain. Sassoon describes a soldier who, along with millions of his countrymen thought 'Dulce Et Decorum Est' and plunged into the mire of war.

..... "Then the gloom
Swallowed his sense of slight: he stopped and swore

because a ragging wire had caught his neck"

Owen mocks at the axiom 'Duke Et Decorum Est' and warns

"My friend, you would not tell with such high zest to children ardent for some desperate glory the old lie; Duke Et Decorum Est. Pro Patria Mori"

He opines how it could be 'sweet and noble to die' on the bloody battle fields when "All went lame, all blind." No wonder Owen, who himself fell a prey to the brutal inhumanity of war on November 4th, a week before Armistice, had to ask his countrymen."

"If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood come gurgling from the froth, corrupted lungs obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues'

In fact, 'patriotism' which was mouthed by the jingoistic generals proved a soporific blinding all to the higher vision of humanity. The soldier poets mocked at God and the utter abandonment of his responsibility towards the human race blinded by hatred and animosity. In the grip of a spiritual crisis, Arthur Greeme remarked

'Yet still God's in His heaven, all is right
In this best possible of worlds ...
and smiles in pity, blows pipe at times
and calls some warriors home

He pokes fun at those 'epic days' during which the soldier in the trenches is

- Choked by sickly petor, day and night.

blown down his throat; stumbled through ruined hearths."

A.E. Houseman agrees,

"What God abandoned, these defended"

The soldiers whether they fought on behalf of Germany or Britain were felt to be simply pawns in the hands of war mongers. G K Chesterton had to overcome his romantic preoccupations in his verse when he came down heavily on 'the stay at home.'

'And they that rule in England
in Stately Conclave Met,
alas, alas, for England
in Stately Conclave Met,
alas, alas, for England
they have no graves as yet."

Having seen his only son slaughtered, he was provoked to comment on those who involved men like his son

"Shall they come with years and honour to the grave?"

The loss of all decency and dignity of human-race during the war and utter deprivation of all its values were acutely felt by Herbert Read. The hysterical outburst of violence unleashed by many an insane soldier incensed him to say.

"I saw him stab

and stab again
a well killed boche

Slaughter of soldiers on the shell-rent ground was not simply ghoulish. It left behind a trail of gloom and a host of ghosts haunting the living. A sense of guilt dominated the heroic-soldier who felled many a promising youngman cast fatalistically in the robes of a soldier. Isaac Rosenberg puts it pathetically.

"I killed and killed with slaughter mad
I killed till all my strength was gone
and still they rose to torture me
for devils only die for Fun."

Osbert Sitwell gives a graphic picture of how war besides damaging the psyche, disfigured and dismantled life.' Serenity, long sought came only later preceding which every shaft and shock of fate had turned 'the rosesilver haze' of the town into 'a rat-infested maze' in the face of 'night's dark humanity and how the 'monstrous myths of iron and blood' seemed to obscure 'Gods' charity.

As to the final judgement over who should own up the responsibility, Laurence Binyon, who was on the war front in 1914 pinned the blame on the soldiers themselves as

'Makers of widows, makers of orphans, they
pass to their burial alert and gray.'

Owen, sublimated the emotions of the suffering soldiers by comparing their anguish to the passion of Christ in 'Greater Love'. Rosenberg comments,

Red fangs have torn His face
God's blood is shed
He mourns from His lone place
His children dead.

As the vicious war was running its full circle, the war poems began acquiring a solemn spiritual hue and philosophical touch in the hands of Edmund Thomas.

'Here love ends,
despair, ambition ends,
all pleasure and all trouble,
although most sweet or bitter,
here ends in sleep that is sweeter
than tasks most Noble.'

Soreley, having been in the holocaust remarks,

"Victor and vanquished are a one in death:
Coward and brave. Friend, foe"

The Pity

Thomas Hardy's poem '*I looked up from my writing*' showed the state of mind of the poets when confronted with the senseless rage of the brutish battle.

The moon in the poem asks the poet how he would start about his business about one slain in brutish battle 'though he has injured none.'

'And now I am curious to look into the blinkered mind
of one who wants to write a book.
in a world of such a kind.'

Owen's 'Strange Meeting' shows the way out. The poet stumbles upon 'encumbered sleepers' one of whom startles him by staring with piteous recognition fixed in his eyes. Symbolically, he is the enemy slaughtered and the poet himself symbolising humanity going beyond the barriers of the war.

'Now men will go with what we spoiled / Or discontent,
boil bloody, and be spilled / They will be swift with the swift-
ness of the tigress. None will break ranks, though nations
trek from progress.

'Courage was mine and I had mystery;
wisdom was mine and I had mystery
to miss the march of this retreating world
into vain citadels that are not walled.'

The enemy had the 'courage' and the 'wisdom' not to involve in war but the poet 'jabbed and killed him' and he could not pass on the 'truth' that he had learnt.

'I mean the truth untold
the pity of war, the pity war stilled'

In his preface to his projected volume of war poems, Owen speaks out

"This book is not about heroes. English poetry is not yet fit to speak of them nor is it about deeds, or lands except war. Above all I am not concerned with poetry. My subject is war, and the pity of war.

"Yet these elegies are to this generation in no sense consolatory. They may be to the next. All a poet can do is

to warn. This is why true poets must be truthful."

Sassoon too echoes Owen.

"I imagined myself describing it in a comprehensive way, seeing it like a painter and imbuing my poetry with Whitmanesque humanity and amplitude."

Sorley's sonnet 'To the dead' regards death in action as no longer an act of heroism or a deed of romantic glamour.

Osbert Sitwell gives a final call to end the ravages of war since

'The world' must be made safe for the young.'

Thus, the euphoria of nation in its early romantic pre-occupations with the vision of a victorious England 'defended and vindicated', proved merely vain glorious amidst an excruciating human tragedy. Betrayal and disillusionment, having given way to the horrors of the war, the poets of the war pleaded for a sense of pity for those caught up fatalistically in the cob webs of animosity and struck at the 'conscience of England in regard to the continuance of the war.'

DEVOTION INCARNATE

SRI RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHANSA

"O Mother! Where art Thou? Reveal Thyself to me. Am I a wretch that you do not come to me? Pleasure, wealth, friends, enjoyments, I do not want any of these. Let this body go to pieces but leave me not, O Mother, I have taken shelter at Thy Lotus Feet. Thou art my only refuge" so prayed Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, in devotional ecstasy in the Kali temple at Dakshineswar.

They called him a lunatic, his visions a result of neurosis and his samadhi a cataleptic fit and ridiculed him as an impostor or a self, deluded enthusiast. Yet this poor, illiterate, shrunken, unpolished, diseased, half-dressed, half-idolatrous Brahmin was later hailed as the consummation of two thousand years of spiritual life and venerated as one who gave a moral sanction, a philosophical basis and a new significance to neo Hinduism which laid the foundation of Hindu nationalism on a secure foundation. Verily, Sri Rama Krishna was the Paramahansa who reached the culmination of Vedantic sadhana and raised the beautiful structure of bhakti on the bedrock of Vedanta and attained what is called the state of contentless consciousness - an absolute union with absolute spirituality. In short, he represented the extreme culture of Indian yoga and bhakti at a crucial moment in the history of the spiritual renaissance in India.

Born on 18 February, 1836 at Kamarpukur to Kudiram and Chandramani, Sri Ramakrishna, who was then named Gadhadhar, grew up in a salubrious climate of piety and charity.

Called at home Gadai, Sri Ramakrishna showed signs of avataarhood early in his boyhood. His precocious intellect unfolded a rare genius. Strangely, he shunned scholas-

tic education and developed keen interest in the spiritual lives of saints of all faiths. His wakeful soul responded often to divine bliss and beauty in nature and plunged him into rapturous trances. The spectacle of a thunder cloud enveloping a whole sky across which a flock of snow white cranes flew or a scene on the stage with an actor donning the role of Lord Shiva simply thrilled him into indefinable beatitude. The sudden demise of his father shook him into unspeakable agony and he started pondering over the earthly life and the futility of human passions. He began befriending wandering monks and minstrels, sufis, saints and yogins and found the same thread of a spiritual faith in all scriptures. The unique feature of Sri Ramakrishna's sadhana was that it was not practised according to enlightened modern methods. As Joseph Campbell once commented, "he would be hanging to a tree like a monkey, now posturing and dressing as a girl; now weeping before an image. Now sitting day and night, like a stump, six years unable to close his eyes, himself terrified at what was happening to him, swooning into oceans of love, stunned by the experience of the Brahman, he lived on a higher plane of consciousness."

However, domestic tragedy once again struck Sri Ramakrishna. His sister-in-law died all of a sudden and plunged Sri Ramakrishna into deep grief and Sri Ramakrishna was persuaded to shoulder domestic responsibilities. Consequently, he and his elder brother left for Calcutta with a view to starting a Sanskrit school. At that time, a rich devotee called Rani Rasmani thought of installing the image of Goddess Kali on the eastern banks of the Ganges at Dakshineswar. Ramkumar became the priest in the temple and Sri Ramakrishna was entrusted with the sacred duty

of decorating the image of Goddess Kali with flowers, leaves and sandal paste in the morning and costly jewellery and clothes in the evening. Under the guidance of a Brahmin scholar, he received spiritual instruction and was initiated into the worship of Shakti or Kali.

Once again, ruthless fate stared him in the face. When his elder brother passed away, he felt orphaned and in unbearable despair and acute disillusionment, he even tried to end his life. But, as he himself said, Divine Mother revealed to him. "I fell unconscious on the floor and what exactly happened after that or how that day or next day passed I do not know but within me there was a steady flow of undiluted bliss altogether new and I felt the presence of the Divine Mother." Hriday, a close friend of Sri Ramakrishna witnessed the divine frenzy and said, "He would move like a drunkard with tottering steps from his seat to the throne of the Goddess, touch her chin as a sign of endearment and begin to sing, talk, joke or laugh or even dance taking the image by the hand.

Once Sri Ramakrishna had a strange experience. His palate started bleeding profusely and blood clotted like a rope from his teeth. The ashramites grew nervous and anxious. However, a sadhu of Kali temple diagnosed it as haemorrhage and exclaimed that the blood instead of reaching the brain made a passage through the palate and prevented Sri Ramakrishna from attaining Jada Samadhi (the highest form of concentration mentioned in the Yoga Shastra) at the instance of the Divine Mother. As sceptics of all faiths dismissed Sri Ramakrishna as a deranged sanyasin, Sri Ramakrishna sobbed and prayed to the Divine Mother, who in a vision, soothed him with the advice "to remain on the

threshold of relative consciousness". His Mother Chandra Devi, was greatly disturbed over his other-worldly philosophical attitude and took him to Kamarpukur with a view to suggesting grihasta dharma. Sri Ramakrishna in a trance advised his mother to seek a bride called Sarada Devi at Jayaram Bati. Even after the marriage, he was haunted by the call of the Divine Mother at Dakshineswar and very soon landed back at Dakshineswar.

Sri Ramakrishna's life was transmogrified after his spiritual kinship with Bhairavi Brahmani, a scholar in Vaishnava and Tantric literature. Sensing his anguish at the way Sri Ramakrishna was misunderstood, she comforted him saying : "Who calls you mad, My son! your state is what is called Mahabhava in the sastras".

A galaxy of great scholars and sadhaks like Vaishnava Charan Gaurikanta Tarka Bhushan dispelled the growing doubts of carping cynics and hailed Sri Ramakrishna "as the mine of infinite spiritual power" appearing in the world from time to time in the form of incarnation. The Brahmani subjected Sri Ramakrishna to a rigorous practice of 64 principal tantras and shaped him into a sadhak of supreme discipline. No wonder, Sri Ramakrishna's practical spiritual sadhanas made such eminent savants as Pandit Narayana Sastry, and Pandit Padmalochan Tarkalankar his ardent followers.

Sri Ramakrishna practised all different phases of devotion such as shanta (placid attitude of mind towards divinity), dasya (relation of servant to the master), sakhya (attitude of friendship), vatsalya (relation of parent and child) and madhura (the highest relation between two lovers). He,

however, spent restless days and sleepless nights, yearning for "Nirvikalpa Samadhi the highest flight of "Advaita philosophy" a state where knowledge and knower become one indivisible consciousness". A strange event, however, transpired in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. A wandering monk called Tota puri, who enjoyed the bliss of Nirvikalpa Samadhi advised Sri Ramakrishna to regard Shakti as a kinetic state of the Brahman. In his trance, he received (from the Divine Mother) the essence of Advaita philosophy and realised that "Brahman is the only reality, ever-free, beyond the limits of time, space and causation, and it pierces through the maze of name, form, time and "space". Sri Ramakrishna transcended his deep rooted faith in image worship and attained a state of absolute identity with Brahman, far above all subjective and objective experiences. However, at the command of the Divine Mother, he deigned to remain on the threshold of relative consciousness". In the words of Sri Ramakrishna." For six months I remained in that state whence ordinary men can never return the body falling off after three weeks like a sear leaf".

Rani Rasmani, discovered in him the seeds of a supreme sainthood and became his ardent disciple. Even an eminent physician like Kavi Raj found in him, no symptoms but signs of a prophetic wisdom and saintly purity. He prostrated at his feet hailing him as a siddhapurusha who had a direct spiritual vision of the Divine Mother. In fact, Sri Ramakrishna reached the culmination of Vedantic Sadhana and looked upon Brahman as the only Truth. He placed his unflinching faith "in the simultaneity of the one of Shiva and Shakti of Purusha and Prakriti and their eternal Leela. He integrated all disciplines in a rare synthesis which produced

a sweet symphony unknown to any spiritual seeker of yore. Holding up the glorious tradition of sanatana dharma, he went through all disciplines like Islam, Christianity and Sufism.

To him, all the deities of all religions were incarnated principles tending to reveal the supreme relation of the soul to the eternal and formless being who is unchangeable in his blessedness and the height of wisdom. He would often proclaim that such incarnations as Prophet Mohammad, Jesus Christ and Sri Rama were but the forces (Shakti) and dispensation (Lila) of the eternally wise and blessed (Akhanada Satchidananda) who was "one, endless and an ever-lasting ocean of light, truth and joy". To him, religion meant ecstasy, and worship transcendental perception. He poured his soul in a rhapsody of spiritual utterances and explained his experiences with matchless lucidity and philosophical clearness.

No wonder, although dreadful austerities had inflicted debility and paleness on his body, his face glowed with divine radiance and showed a profound visible humbleness, childlike peacefulness and immeasurable love and affection. He called Christ an avatar and venerated him as a master yogin who poured out his blood for the redemption of mankind and suffered agonies for its sake, chanted the holy name of Allah and practised Islam and respected the Sikh gurus as the incarnations of saintly King Janaka. He realised, Dvaita, Vishishtadvaita and Advaita as stages in man's progress towards the Brahmin. He said, "The tank has several ghats. At one, Hindus draw water in pitchers and call it jal; at another Mohammadans draw water in Leathern bottles and call it pani; at third, Christians call it water. The

substance is one under different names. The advaita is the last word in realisation. It is something to be felt in samadhi, for it transcends mind and speech".

In 1867, Sri Ramakrishna suffered from dysentery and stayed at Kamarpukur for recovery of health. During this period, he trained his wife Sarada Devi, later known as Holy Mother in things ranging from house keeping to the knowledge of Brahman. Later, when she became a maid of great charm and grace at the age of 18, she asked him gently what he had thought of her, Sri Ramakrishna replied gently.

"The Mother who is worshipped in the temple. Verily I look upon you as the invisible representation of the Blissful Mother".

Saradamani, realized the divine state of her husband and exclaimed:

"I used to feel always as if a pitcher full of bliss were placed in my heart. The joy was ineffable".

Sri Ramakrishna performed the sacred ceremony called Shorashipuja in the Shastras and surrendered the fruits of his life-long sadhana to her and that blessed moment divinised her whole being. During his pilgrimages to northern India, Sri Ramakrishna would often pass into trance. For instance, he found Benares a condensed mass of spirituality, and lost his outward consciousness at Brindavan in his worship of Lord Sri Krishna.

Before long, Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual sadhanas attracted the leading intellectuals, scholars, devotees, eminent tantriks and he was acknowledged as the very incarnation of God, who descended upon the earth to offer the material-

istic world spiritual solace and succour. Scholars were fascinated at his lucid exposition of the abstruse philosophical concepts. For instance, on God vision, he said:

"God is seen when the mind is tranquil; when the sea of the mind is agitated by the wind of desires, it cannot reflect God... and then God vision is impossible.

Referring to personal God and impersonal God, he commented. "There is no distinction between impersonal God (Brahmin) on the one hand and personal God (Sakti) on the other. When is this Supreme Being thought of inactive? He is styled God, the Absolute (Sadha Brahman) and when He is thought of as active, creating, sustaining and destroying, He is styled Sakti or personal God.

Referring to the 'Nirakara' he said, "God is formless and God is with form too and He is that which transcends both form and formlessness. He alone can say what else He is".

On Sakti, he observed:

"Brahman and Sakti are, in fact, not different. That which is the Blissful Mother is again. Existence-knowledge-Bliss-absolute. They are like the gem and its lustre.

An interesting observation of Sri Ramakrishna on supernatural powers, was "It is the mean-minded who covet supernatural powers such as curing diseases and walking on the waters. The Mother showed me that occult powers are as abominable as the faith of the prostitute".

He castigated the materialist bogged down in the quagmire of worldly pleasures and carnal instincts.

"The world - bound soul, like the filthy worm lives and dies in the mire of worldliness without any idea of impurity. But the bee drinks of honey and nothing else, and advised the devotees to cultivate a spirit of Nishkama Karma in one's domestic life".

"There is no fear of making the hands sticky with the milk of jack fruit if one breaks it, after wetting them with oil. A boat may stay in water but, water should not stay in the boat. An aspirant may live in this world but the world should not live in him. He suggested that, when raging passions could not be quietened, they could be educated and, turned into a different channel.

"When the fruit grows out of the flower, the petals drop off, themselves".

Pitying the vast masses, wallowing in the mire of illusions and clouded by the veil of Maya, he observed;

"The Sun lights up the earth, but a small cloud will hide it from our view. Similarly, the insignificant veil of Maya prevents us from seeing the omnipresent and all witnessing Sachchidananda - Existence - knowledge - Bliss".

Explaining the efficacy of spiritual exercises, he commented,

"If you wish to make butter, you must turn milk into curds and churn it well. Then alone you can get butter. So if you long to see God, practise spiritual exercises". Deeply disturbed over the caste-distinctions, he said, "When the fruit is ripe, it falls from the tree of itself. To wrench unripe fruit is not good".

Sri Ramakrishna and Swamy Vivekananda were indissolubly found up with each other. The message of Swamy Vivekananda was really the message of his master to the modern man. Swamy Vivekananda who was a rationalist and an atheist in the beginning bowed his head to the Master and learnt of the mighty strength of spirituality and held aloft the glory of this ancient land.

Referring to the blessed moment of his encounter with his master, he said,

"I had asked him the question which I had been asking others all my life... Do you believe in God Sir ? Yes, he replied. Can you prove it Sir ? "Yes". "How ?" Because I see Him just as I see you here only in a much intense sense' That impressed me at once - for the first time I found a man who dared say that he saw God, that religion was a reality to be felt, to be sensed in an infinitely more intense way than we can sense the world". Swamy Vivekananda's vibrant call to India to recognise herself, practical Vedanta, burning patriotism and humanism were indeed the messages of his master, Sri Ramakrishna.

Severe austerities further sapped away his physical strength and his fragile body, showed symptoms of decay. Yet, divine light and saintly radiance hovered around him. He would often say.

'O Mother! The body is but an exploded drum. How long can it last ? As His sore developed into a cancer, he found it difficult even to swallow food. Vivekananda divined the hastening of Master's so-journ in the world and said "perhaps he intends to lay down his body: Strive your best for spiritual uplift through service unto him along with prayer and meditation, while yet there is time". Seeing the excruciating

ating suffering of his master, even Vivekananda could not repress the stream of tears and begged of his master to use his yogic powers to cure his illness. But Ramakrishna gave a classic reply.

"How can I withdraw the mind from the Lotus Feet of God and turn it into this worthless cage of flesh and blood?"

Plunging into a trance, he exclaimed "I saw everything passing from embodied state to a disembodied state. I wish to reveal more, but I cannot. Well, is not that trend towards the impersonal an indication of the coming dissolution of the body?"

Before shuffling off his mortal coil, he fulfilled Vivekananda's ambition of enjoying Nirvikalpa Samadhi and gave him diksha of Rama Mantra. At once Vivekananda felt an immense flood of energy and enlightenment penetrating through his body and lost outward consciousness : With tears of Joy rolling down his cheeks, the Master said.

"Today I have given you my all and have become a Fakir! Though this power, you will do immense good to the world and then only shall you go back".

In a unique way, the master chose Vivekananda as an effective instrument to bring about a world - transformation through propagation of practical Vedanta. On August 15, the Master experienced difficulty in breathing and slowly passed into Maha Samadhi.

As commented aptly by a scholar: "His life became a mighty influence of the diverse streams of human thoughts, where the weary pilgrims could meet and slake their spiritual thirst".

PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY

SWAMY VIVEKANANDA

A towering colossus among the spiritual savants of India who burst upon the Indian horizon of the last century as an authentic spokesman of India's spiritual culture, Swamy Vivekananda has assimilated the quintessence of Sanathana Dharma. He focussed our attention on our national defects, stimulated our energies in the direction of forging our national character, liberalised and energised Hinduism and took it back to its roots and form. A messiah who believed in oneness of mankind, practising and preaching universal brotherhood, he laboured for the rebirth of India with a view to organising a service of love for the poor, the lowly and the lost and making India the harbinger of spiritual harmony and succour. This was at a time when India was wrecked by communal discord, cultural decadence, religious bigotry, cussed customs, social ferment, economic regress, suicidal segmentation and mutual exclusiveness. As Dr S. Radhakrishnan put it aptly "Swamy Vivekananda raises work to the level of worship and exhorts us to seek salvation through the service of God in man"... and dedicate ourselves to the task of establishing a spiritual religion which transcends ecclesiastical organisations and doctrinal sophistries and subtleties, a religion, which leads to the transformation of human society and brings it nearer to the Ramarajya or the kingdom of God which our prophets have set before us.

Distortion of religion : Swamy Vivekananda was acutely aware of the spiritual decadence and degeneration that had set in India. He felt that religious ideas had been distorted into an excuse of worship and service of the human ego.

"Our religion is in the kitchen. Our God is in the cooking pot and our religion is "Don't touch me", I am holy," if this goes on for another century, every one of us will be in a lunatic asylum"

His heart ached and his mind was restless over the appalling poverty and ignorance of the teeming millions of India. Condemning the hollow ritualism and dearth of disinterested service to the cause of the needy and downtrodden brethren of his country, he lamented.

"The crying evil in the East is not religion. They have religion enough. It is an insult to a starving people to offer them religion, it is an insult to a starving man to teach him metaphysics.

In a bleeding letter to Miss Mary Hale he said.

"My God the poor of all races, of all species, is the special object of my worship".

A rationalist to the core, he expounded the truth of the Indian renaissance that "both matter and spirit, this world, and the next-are divine. Castigating the practitioners of meaningless rituals of the fanatical Hindus, he declared,

"It is better that mankind should rather become atheist by following reason than blindly believe in two hundred millions of Gods on the authority of anybody".

Advocating a masculine spirituality and criticising the attitude of fatalistic submissiveness, he pinpointed the reasons for the downfall of Indian ethos and culture.

"We have become weak and that is why Occultism and mysticism-came to us. These creepy things may have great truths in them but they have nearly destroyed us. Make your nerves strong. What we need is muscles of iron and nerves of steel. We have wept long enough. No more weeping but stand on your feet and be men".

Vedas-rich treasures : Hailing the Vedas as the richest treasures of spiritual laws and philosophical revelation, he called for an unfettered passage to the knowledge of truth.

"Don't you see that the age for esoteric interpretations is over? For good or ill, that day is vanished, never to return. Truth, in the future, has to be open to the world".

He stressed the need for the perfection of all faculties in man on the higher plane of yoga and the apprehension of integral reality.

"Would to God that all men were so constituted that in their minds all these elements of philosophy, mysticism, emotion and of work were equally present in full! That is the ideal, my ideal of a perfect man. My ideal of religion is attained by what we in India call Yoga - Union".

Having toured the western world and seen its materialistic prosperity, scientific progress and mechanised culture amidst the loss of its spiritual values and in contrast, shocked at the unrewarding toil, tears and tribulations of millions of impoverished Indians, caught up in the web of obscurantism, he pointed out the need for a synthesis of world culture.

"In India, we have to take off the shackles from society. In Europe, the chains must be taken from the feet of spiritual progress. The Western world is governed by a handful of Shylocks. All these things you hear about constitutional government, freedom, liberty and Parliament are but yokes. The West is groaning under the tyranny of the Shylocks, and the East is groaning under the tyranny of the priests. Each must keep the other in check, and warned, " The whole western civilisation will crumble to pieces in the next fifty years if there is no spiritual foundation".

Practical vedanta : Perhaps in renascent modern India, no other spiritual savant, social reformer, cultural protagonist or intellectual, has propounded the universal religion- "The Sanatana Dharma in such a virile and vigorous manner as Swamy Vivekananda did. His 'Practical Vedanta' emphasised the need to shift from mere externalities to psychological evolution and blossoming. "If the priests and other people, that have taken upon themselves, the task of teaching different religions simply cease preaching for a few minutes, we shall see the universal religion".

At a time when the Fabian society in England was growing stronger and the slogans of socialism were profoundly influencing the mental make-up of the Western People, Swamy Vivekananda pleaded for humanitarian socialism and for 'man becoming the master of his self and society!'

"The time has come for the labourer to rule....I am a socialist not because it is a perfect system but because half a loaf is better than no bread."

Vivekananda was sadly aware of the devitalised and denationalised educational system which sapped away the energy of the youth of the nation. Criticising the sorry state of education, he styled it as getting by heart the thoughts of others in a foreign language of others and stuffing your brain with them and taking some university examination. Calling for man-making education, he said, "Be strong my friend, you will be nearer to Heaven through football than through the Gita". Stressing the role of positive ideas and emphasising concentration, he commented.

"If I were to do my education once again. I would develop the power of concentration and then with a perfect instrument select facts at will".

His ideas on education have yogic affiliations. He opined "The imparting of knowledge has always been done through men of renunciation and that the charge of imparting knowledge should again fall upon the shoulders of renunciants or tyagis".

Neglect of masses : Vivekananda traced the downfall of India to its continued neglect of our men and of our masses and was bitterly critical of the self forgetful slumber and self-imposed superstition of women. He appealed to our men and women to rise above sex distinctions, to the perception of the 'Atman' the sexless self. In one of his letters, he spoke of the two evils in India, one 'trampling on the women and grinding the poor through caste restrictions and in a letter written in America he referred to the ages of tyranny, mental, moral and physical that has reduced the image of God to a mere beast of burden; the emblem of the Divine Mother to a slave to bear burden and life itself a curse. Accordingly, emancipation of women and uplift of the masses formed the two most important items in Swamy Vivekananda's programme of national regeneration. To him, national freedom meant, "not only the freedom of the nation as a whole from foreign domination but also freedom from all bonds within the nation which thwart the free development of men and women. Its content, therefore is social, economic and spiritual as much as political". It is the realisation of the spiritual oneness of humanity and the resulting equality of vision that made Swamy Vivekananda the powerful champion, friend and the guardian angel of the weak, the lowly and the lost".

Swamy Vivekananda, was however, not oblivious of the significant studies made by the West. A Catholic in outlook, he called for synthesis and all-inclusiveness as against sui-

cial segmentation and mutual exclusion. He said,

"That we did not go out, that we did not compare our notes with other nations has been the one great cause of our downfall. The little life that you see in India begins from the day when Raja Ram Mohan Roy broke through the walls of that exclusiveness".

After his most triumphant return from the Parliament of Religions, he thundered,

"Hence again must start the wave which is going to spiritualise the material civilisation of the world. Here is the life-giving water with which must be quenched the burning fire of materialism in the core of the hearts of millions in other lands Believe me my friends, this is going to be".

The modern self-styled revolutionaries who, mouth fiery words and call themselves leaders of the poor can learn a great deal from Swamy Vivekananda who analysed the root causes of exploitation of all hues. For instance, he said, "so long as millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor, who having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them. I call those men who strut about in their finery, having got all their money by grinding the poor, wretches, so long as they do not do anything for those two hundred millions who are now no better than hungry savages'... The poor, the illiterate, the ignorant, the afflicted let them be your God. Know that service to these alone is the highest religion... Think of them, work for them, pray for them incessantly'.

Brave new India : Swamy Vivekananda envisaged the emergence of a brave New India fortified by ancient ideals of self-sacrifice and selfless service to the masses.

"Let her arise out of the peasant's cottage grasping the plough, Out of the huts of the fisherman, the cobbler and the sweeper. Let her emanate from the factory, from marts and from markets... Arise, awake, wake up yourselves and awaken others: Achieve the consummation of human life before you pass off. Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached."

THE PARLIAMENT OF RELIGIONS

The Parliament of Religions was held in Chicago on September 11, 1893 as an adjunct of the celebrations of the discovery of America by Columbus in 1492. Mr Charles Carrol Bonney, an eminent lawyer was the brain behind the holding of the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. It is said that Raja Rama Mohana Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen, P.C. Mazoomdar etc, had gone earlier to America to enlighten the west with the Vedantic wisdom and Upanishadic thought of India. But their tone and tenor was akin to the Christian thought... and that the influence they exerted evaporated with their departure.

Dr Satish K. Kapoor comments that "the going forth of Swamy Vivekananda marked out by the masters of the heroic soul destined to take the world between his two hands and change it, was the first visible sign to the world that India was awake not only to survive but also to conquer. Although the oriental delegates included such eminent scholars as Virchand Gandhi, H. Dharmapada, Kinza Riuge M. Hiran who sought to dispel the myth of Christian superiority to other religions, Vivekananda alone, as a scholar like Marie Louise Burke says "championed the cause of Hinduism but also occasionally observed that Christianity with its boastful civilisation was only 'a collection of scrap from the Indian

mind -a very patchy limitation'. So triumphantly great and unprecedented was Vivekananda's fame that his name was selected for inclusion in the National Encyclopaedia of 'America'.

The great Assembly opened on September 11, 1893. Vivekananda, the orange monk in saffron robes and with a saffron turban was the last of the speakers of that day to make a speech and Lo'. He turned into a roaring fire of spirituality. His profound address to the people of America as 'Sisters and brothers of America' had an electrifying effect on the audience and touched a responsive chord. Hundreds rose in rapture and applauded him thunderously. In short, Swamy Vivekananda with the Vedantic message of catholicity, liberalism, sublimity and human dignity stormed the hearts of his listeners. He addressed the parliament about a dozen times between September 11 and 27 and preached the gospel of joy, hope, virility, energy and freedom for the races of man.

Tongue of flame

His speech at the Parliament was like a tongue of flame."Among the grey wastes of cold dissertation, it fired souls of the listening throng. His voice was deep, impassioned and full of beauty and power." The stately syntax, astounding dramatic flourish, sublime, niagaric eloquence, which displayed and demonstrated shower of Vedantic wisdom and dynamic spirituality of the east made him a modern Messiah and the pioneer of a great intellectual, moral and spiritual revolution in the relations between the east and the west. His spiritual conquest in thundering voice was compared only to an admirable baritone of a Chinese gong.

Hailed as an orator by a divine right, Vivekananda projected the dynamic message of Hinduism with its stress on universalism before the entire humanity. He commented that from 'the high spiritual flights of Vedanta philosophy of which the latest discoveries of science seem like echoes, to the low Ideas of idolatry with its multifarious mythology, the agnosticism of the Bhuddists and the atheism of Jains, each and all have a place in Hindu religion, Stressing the concept of divinity and oneness of all beings, Vivekananda thundered that Man is to become divine. "Idols or temples or churches or books are only supports and the helps of his spiritual childhood. One is the only soul of which all souls are but delusive manifestations.

Vivekananda ridiculed the rivalry of creeds and said that the whole world of religion is only a travelling, a coming up of different men and women, through various conditions and circumstances to the same goal. Every religion is only evolving a God out of the material man and the same god is the inspirer of all. While many a delegate spoke of the superiority of his creeds, Vivekananda represented the Hindu ideal of spirituality and its universal outlook. He said, "I am proud to belong to a religion, which has taught the world both toleration and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration but we accept all religions as true. I am proud to belong to a nation which has sheltered the persecuted and the refugees of all religions and all nations of the earth". Elucidating the spiritual profundity of Hinduism, Vivekananda proved that Hinduism was not a jig-saw puzzle or a jumbled matrix of cults but an ancient faith with a catholic outlook, comprehensive system of ethics, lofty metaphysics and a monotheistic base, and lifted religion from the abyss of dogmas and doctrines.

The bubble

Vivekananda pricked the bubble of the 'Holier-than thou' attitude of the Western, religious heads and said "Holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world and every system has produced man and woman of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of others. I pity him from the bottom of my heart and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written "Help and not fight, assimilation and not destruction, harmony and peace and not dissension".

Vivekananda opined that both science and religion were not contradictory with each other in their approach to the ultimate goal of the discovery of truth. He said that 'the same method of investigation which we apply to science of religion will have greater strength, because physics or chemistry has no internal mandate to vouch for truth, which religion has god as truth. The absolute truth will certainly withstand the scientific investigation to satisfy the modern minds".

Vivekananda's message to the youth of India steeped in bottomless despair was spirit-stirring and soul-elevating. He exhorted. "Make your nerves strong. What we want are muscles of iron and nerves of steel. We have wept long enough. No more weeping but stand on your feet and be men. It is man-making theories that we want. It is man-making education all round that we want..."

Supremacy myth

Vivekananda demolished the myth of the supremacy of any other religion and enunciated the Vedantic message

of catholicity, liberalism, sublimity and human dignity. Challenging the Christian notion of man as sinner and calling, all men 'divinities on earth', he said such a term as 'sinner' is a standing libel on human nature. "Come up O, lions: and shake off the delusion that you are sheep. You are the souls immortal, spirits free blessed and eternal: Ye are not matter. Ye are not bodies. Matter is your servant and not you the servant of matter'. In a voice 'virile and vibrant', he lampooned the proselytizers and infallibists in the domain of religion, and minced no words in saying "Ye are not Christians. Go back to Christ. He drew a clear line of distinction between the eastern and the western culture and thundered". "Social life of the west is like a peal of laughter but underneath, it is a wail. It ends in a sob. The fun and frivolity are all on the surface. Really, it is full of tragic intensity. Here in India it is sad and gloomy on the surface. But underneath, there is merriment. East and west must work hand in hand for the good of each other.. without destroying the special characteristics of each". It is indeed no wonder that consequent on the glorious conquest of the West by Swamy Vivekananda, the contributions to Indian missionary funds decreased in one year by as much as one million pounds.

The great Odyssey and spiritual conquest of the west by Swamy Vivekananda was hailed by the press with unanimous adulation. The New York Herald said, "After hearing him, we feel how foolish it is to send missionaries to this learned nation, while all other newspapers applauded him as "the cyclonic monk", "Indian yogi" and "a sensation of the world's foremost parliament". Mrs. Ella Wheller Wcox, founder of the New thought Movement in America called his 'teachings' "an anodyne for despair and gloom".

Nivedita reacts

Inspired by the enthralling oration of the Swamy, Margaret Noble, Later known as Sister Nivedita, commented, 'To us, not a few of the words of Swamy came as a living water to men perishing of thirst. Many of us had been conscious for years past of that growing uncertainty and despair with regard to religion, which has beset the intellectual of Europe for half a century. Belief in the dogmas has become impossible to us and we had no tool such as we now hold, by which to cut away the doctrinal shell from the kernel of reality in our faith. To these, the Vedanta has given intellectual confirmation and philosophical expression of their own mistrusted intentions. Marie Louise Burke in her 'Vivekananda in the west' said "New American people" had not been merely intellectually impressed by the nobility and supreme wisdom of eastern doctrines which, hitherto, in the words of Dr Alfred Momerie "something far more important and far reaching had taken place than an intellectual appreciation of eastern religions. Romain Rolland praised Vivekananda's speech for uniting "the whole credo of human spirit from the enslaved fetishism of the savage to the most liberal creative affirmations of modern science and said that he (Vivekananda) harmonised them into a magnificent synthesis which helped all hopes to grow and flourish according to their own proper nature." Rt.Rev. John J Keane of Washington D.C. was honest enough to admit "if by these criticisms, he could stir us into better teachings, they would remain beholden to the Hindus monk. I endorse the denunciation that was hurled forth last night against the system of pretended charity that offered food to the hungry Hindus at the cost of their conscience and faith. It is a shame and

disgrace to those who call themselves christians." Sir Hiram Maxim, a gun expert who was in the audience wrote in his book "Li Hung Chang's scrap book" that Vivekananda's first speech was no less than a revelation".

Eloquence

Swamy Vivekananda stole the show and demonstrated human eloquence at its highest pitch, yet, there were enviously slanderous attacks and canards that threatened to belittle his astounding spiritual conquest of the west. He was mocked at as a fake Hindu representaive of India and described as a 'fraud', "a deceit" and "a man without character".

A Boston daily, basing its views on the Brahma report published in 'Unity and the Minister' wrote that Vivekananda was neither a genuine monk nor an orthodox Hindu but only a singer and actor and condemned his speech as 'glaring nonsense'. The inveterate critics of Hinduism, mounted an attack, calling Hindus a 'fiendish race' that burnt widows, killed female babies and wallowed in mysticism, jugglery, puerile beliefs, quixotic rituals and cloistered caste system and denigrated Vivekananda as a representative of such a barbaric race.

Tirade

Rev. George... T. Pentecost (London), Prof.M. Valenti of Pennsylvania Rev. Maurice Phillips of Madras and launched a tirade against Hinduism, while Pratap Chandra Mazoomdar, a delegate on behalf of the Brahma Samaj at the parliament of religions tried to defame the Swamy as 'a

nobody, a thug, a cheat and a 'pretending monk' and soon after his return from Chicago spread the canard that Vivekananda indulged in unchastity of most degraded type. Such was the vehement opposition to the Swamy that Sir Goodroodas Banerjee refused to preside over the proposed Town Hall meeting of September 5, 1894 which was convened to express the nation's gratitude to Vivekananda. In his *Vivekananda O Samakalin Bharatavarsha*". Sankari Prasad said that Swamy Vivekananda, on his return to India, was not permitted to enter the Dakshineswara Temple in Calcutta.

No wonder even in 1991, George M. Williams, Professor of Religions studies at Claifornia University, Chicago in his article 'The Ramakrishna Movement - A study in Religious Movement' and 'Swamy Vevekanada archetypal Hero or Doubting Saint', employed his fiendish pen to 'Demythologise the image of the warrior monk marching into the citadels of western materialism.

I AM INDIA !

SRI RAMA TIRTHA

"I am the whole of India and its east and west are my arms and I spread them in a straight line to embrace humanity. I am universal in Love. When I walk, I feel it is India walking. When I speak, it is India speaking, when I breathe, I feel it is India breathing" I am India, I am Shankara, I am Shiva.

..... thus spoke Swamy Rama Tirtha whose spirit - stirring call roused our nation from its slumber of serfdom and torpor of inaction and made it realise the need for practical vedanta. In fact, he wanted his fellow countrymen to 'Tune themselves in love with their country and people'. As a peerless spiritual leader, he remarked "Be a spiritual leader. Lay down your life in the interest of your land, abnegating the little ego and having thus loved the country, feel anything and the country will feel with you. March and the country will follow".

A star of singular radiance in the firmament of Adhyatmic wisdom, he fulminated against the other - worldly vedantins whose intuitive perceptions and experiences have hardly helped the common man to wriggle himself out of his political servitude, economic bondage, cultural obscurantism and religious fundamentalism. No wonder, he is hailed as a great soul who 'Vivified Vedanta with the vitality of his own inspired life and shining example, presented vedanta not so much as knowing and realising but as a 'Becoming and Being' and who revealed how the eternal secret of all lofty activity lay in attunement with the Divine Law of oneness, harmony and bliss.

In fact, as a peerless patriot, practical vedantist, spiritual humanist, great Karma Yogi, and champion of Indian Culture and philosophy, Swamy Rama Tirtha holds a unique place in the history of India.

Swamy RamaThirtha, like every other sage of recent times, wanted every Indian to deify the Motherland and call forth the inherent glory, evoke fire and life - In the more real Durga of Mother India. He said,

"A person can never realise his unity with God, the All, except when unity with the whole nation throbs in every fibre of his frame - let every son of India stand for the service of the whole, seeing that whole India is embodied in every man" and wished every Indian to feel that

"The Land of India is my own body; the Commorin is my feet, the Himalays, My head, From my hair flow the Ganges, from head come the Brahmaputra and the Indus".

A self-effacing nationalist, Swamy RamaTirtha argued that poverty of practical, wisdom and 'Plenty of population' were the causes, for the disharmony, disunity and downfall of India. Castigating the self-styled reformers and selfish revolutionaries, he said,

"Lack of Practical wisdom comprehends all social evils like contempt of manual labour, unnatural divisions and subdivisions on caste and creed lines. It is an utter absurdity to believe that an individual can be perfect in an imperfect society.

He said that 'unvedantic thought' was responsible for the pitiable dismemberment of the community and commented that 'A country is strengthened, not by great men with small views but by small men with great views".

According to Rama Tirtha, the object of education should be to enable us to utilise the resources of the country. He made it clear that 'education should enable the people to make the land more fertile, the mines more productive, the trade more flourishing, the bodies more active, the minds more original, the hearts more pure, the industries

more varied and the nation more united; He criticised the narrow minded pedagogues who 'show off their learning and denounced "the study of subjects which we never have to use in life". He aptly said that the 'Talking of knowledge which we can not carry out in practice' is spiritual constipation or mental dyspepsia!

Swamy Rama Tirtha's uniqueness lies in his enunciation of Practical Vedanta or Renunciation - through love - in action. He said that 'True action is inseparable from true love and true wisdom' and stated the 'Practical Vedanta makes our life a 'Yajna' which in turn implies 'feeling oneself as one or identical with all, losing one's little self to become the self of all. "He called this process 'Crucifixion of the selfishness and 'resurrection of All self". He equated 'National Dharma to the Motherland' to 'spiritual Dharma of Virat Prema', called upon his fellow country men to abnegate the little ego and be a spiritual soldier laying down one's personal life in the interests of the land.

Vedanta, is to him, by no means a more intellectual asset but a most solemn and sacred offering of body and mind at the holy altar of love".

Swamy Rama's greatest contribution to the world of Indian philosophy and culture lay in the fact that 'he took Vedanta into the quiet houses, into busy offices, into the crowded streets and into the noisy markets of the western world and awakened the materialists of the Mechanised west to the intrinsic worth of Atman Living".

Swamy Rama Tirtha was an indefatigable crusader and Karma Yogin who sounded the conch for the liberation of the down-trodden from centuries of superstition, slavery and segregation. Terming most of the sanyasins as "no more than dasas or slaves of caste", he said that "most of the professors of Vedanta are like University Professors of

Hydro Dynamics who teach about the ascent of balloons, the sailing of ships, the principles of swimming but have never waded across a ford; He lamented over the distortion of Manu Smriti and said, "All this class-system and the system of division of labour was stultified, Ossified, Mummified or petrified. They gave it rigidity and made it crystallised.

The poor, the low are always the feet base or support of Society. The over bearing society which obstructs and stunts the growth of the lower - castes, the society which maltreats and denies education to the poor ignorant sinner, that society cuts down its own feet that society must crumble down.

Swamy Rama Tirtha wanted "Martyrs in the name of Truth, real workers, sacrificing men who will be willing and ready to lie down with the pariahs upon the floor and who are content to be clothed in rags with them, who are content to strive with them, who are content to share with them, who are content to share with them the tough and hard crusts or half cooked bread".

Swamy Rama Tirtha became an M.A. in Mathematics at the age of about twenty. He distinguished himself as an erudite lecturer and eminent professor. It is interesting to know that he elevated the study of Mathematics and equated it to Karmayoga, Describing Mathematics as 'the best remedy for mind wandering, he said that Mathematics aids Religions, strengthens the foundation of moral character, puts us in a humiliating mood, makes us realise our own incapability, tends to do away with our vanity and self - conceit breaks us down and consequently exercises the will of God in us" and advised the youth of the Nation to 'try to leave the world better than we found it

Swamy Rama Tirtha's observations on spiritual freedom of man stripped of sentimental religious beliefs and faiths must have made an indelible impact on the great Non-Gurus like Jiddu Krishna Murty. He said, "Accept not a reli-

gion because it is the oldest. It being the oldest is no proof of its being the true one. Accept not a religion because it is the latest..... Believe not in a religion on the ground of its being believed in by the chosen few. Believe not in a religion because it comes from a famous man. Sir Isaac Newton is very famous and yet his emissory theory of light is wrong, his method of fluxions does not come upto the Differential system of Liebnitz. Believe in a religion on its own merits. Sell not your liberty to Buddha, Jesus, Mohammad or Krishna. Be Free, free to look at everything by you own light.... Truth is nobody's property. If you are convinced that what they (Buddham, Mohammad, Krishna..) go against your own experiences, throw them over board and Judge for yourself..... That is the true spiritual path...."

Bhagawan 'Ramana is hailed as the concrete expression and embodiment of Advaita Vedanta and the ideal of a perfect jeevan mukta who enunciated that the transcendental experience of the non-dual Brahman could be got only through an incessant enquiry into oneself, who am I ? It is also said that Bhagawan Ramana had not become an Advaitin only after going through Adi Sankara's teachings. On the contrary, Bhagawan Ramana first had Advaitic realisation and later discovered that all that he had experienced perfectly tallied with Adi Sankara's teachings.

Born of Sundaram Aiyar, a middle class Brahmin pleader and Alagammal in Tiruchuli, Bhagawan Ramana, named Venkata Raman had his elementary education at Tiruchulli. On completion of his elementary education, he studied in Scott's Middle School at Madurai. His boyhood, however, showed no signs of his avataarhood. He used to read a few-books like Periyapuram, the Bible and Tayumanavar.

When he was 17, Sri Ramana was suddenly and inexplicably overtaken by the fear of death. He described it later. "The shock of the fear of death drove my mind inwards and I said to myself mentally without, "Now death has come what does it mean? What is it that is dying? This body dies but with the death of this body, am I dead? Is the body I? It is silent and inert but I feel the full force of my personality and even the voice of the "I within me, apart from it. So I am spirit transcending the body. The body dies but the spirit that transcends it cannot' be touched by death. That means I am the, deathless-- spirit. Fear of death had vanished once, and for all."

This strange encounter with the fear of death transformed the youth into a Muni lost often in contemplation of the purest form of Advaita Vedanta. He shunned friends, preferred solitude, cared little for food and with tearful eyes would often stand motionless and stare longingly at the images of Lord Siva and Meenakshi in the temple. His changed mode of life affected his school studies and worried his uncle and elder brother. Sri Ramana heard the haunting call of the holy hill. Arunachala and made up his mind to liberate himself from the 'trammels of human bondage and the trivialities of domestic life and undertook his spiritual odyssey towards Tiruvannamalai. He explained, "O Lord, obedient to thy call, here have I come, deserting all, no boon I ask, no loss bemoan, take me in and make me Thine own".

He, however, left a note to his brother which stated that he had set out in quest of his father in accordance with His command. On September 1, 1896, Sri Ramana arrived at Tiruvannamalai and had his divine hunger quenched with the darshan of his Father Arunachaleswar. Since then, Sri Ramana submitted himself to a rigorous practice of self effacement and immersed in samadhi. Sri Ramana, however, had to beg for food in the streets of Tiruvannamalai simply to sustain his poor physical frame which, he simply regarded as a burden to be thrown off someday or other.

In his inexorable quest, Sri Ramana had to face and surmount impediments in the person of his Mother Alagammal. When his mother burst into tears and beseeched him to return home, Sri Ramana smiled away her entreaties and said philosophically. "The Ordainer controls the fate of souls in accordance with their prarabhakarma (destiny) to

be worked out in this life, resulting from the balancesheet of actions in past lives. Whatever is destined not to happen will not happen, try as you may, whatever is destined to happen will happen, do what you may to prevent it. This is certain. The best course, therefore, is to remain silent". When his mother, after a series of domestic tragedies, came to stay with him, Sri Ramana attended on her most dutifully. Once, when she fell ill, he composed a highly philosophical verse and prayed.

"Oh God who slayest death! Reveal! They feet in the Heart Lotus of her who bore me to take refuge at thy Lotus-Feet and shield her from death. What is death if scrutinised?".

Later when the ashramites, conveyed the news of the death of his mother, he corrected their expression and said that 'she did not passaway but was absorbed'.

Sri Ramana Practised tapas in the thousand pillared man tap near the Patala Linga Subrahmanya's shrine, mango garden, Sadguru Swami Cave and Core hills. From 1900 to 1916, he lived in the Virupakshi cave and used to lose himself in samadhi. His Ashram became a centre for spiritual pursuits and fulfilment. Man, bird and beast lived in harmony under his benign grace and ceased to be inimical, Kavyakantha Ganapathy Sastry, a great Sanskrit Scholar, Siva Prakasam Pillai, an intellectual, Natesa Mudaliar, F.M. Humphrey, a western occultist, and others, testified to Sri Ramana's life and teachings and became his ardent admirers and followers.

Early in 1949, a malignant tumour appeared below the elbow of his left arm. The Ashram doctors tried to cut it out,

but Alas! the tumour returned only to grow larger and higher up. Eminent physicians who were summoned to cure Sri Ramana suggested amputation of the arm. Sri Ramana smiled beatifically and said, "there is no cause for alarm. The body itself is a disease, let it have its natural end. Why mutilate it?" Even as the tumour, now diagnosed as sarcoma, was eating into the vitals of his body, Sri Ramana was enacting the role of a jnani as defined in the Yoga Vasistha.

When his devotees enquired about his bodily suffering, Sri Ramana would smile and comment,

"What a pity! They take this body for Bhagawan and attribute suffering to him."

He drew a line from the Bhagawata and said that "a sage who has realised the self is not aware of the body. Just as one in a drunken stupor is not aware of his clothing."

As the days rolled by, his body started showing signs of deterioration and decay, yet, most amazingly, his face became more serene, benign and divinely bright and beautiful. The Ashram doctors, however, foresaw his end and conveyed the sad news of the inevitability of Sri Raman's death to his followers. The tumour, grew menacingly up near the shoulder confirming the brief sojourn of Sri Ramana in this world. But he would often philosophically comment.

"The body is like a banana leaf on which all kinds of delicious food have been served. After we have eaten the food from it, do we take the leaf and preserve it? Do we not throw it away now that it has served its purpose" and de-

defined moksha (Liberation) as " getting rid of nonexistent misery and attaining the Bliss which is always there."

On Friday, the disease racked body showed its pitiable vestiges of pain as if it were bearing the burden of the temporal life to all people. Yet, Sri Ramana's face showed no trace of anguish. On April 14, while tears born of beatitude were trickling down from the outer edges of his eyes, Sri Ramana's breath stopped and the great sage attained Maha Samadhi.

Verily, Sri Ramana demonstrated in his person the transcendental experience of the non-dual Brahman and enunciated self realisation as the path of life divine. An embodiment of teachings of the Gita, he stationed himself in Brahma sthithi and smiled away the cacophonous discussions and hair-splitting distinctions of arm-chair philosophers. His poetical and prose works show amply his vedantic approach and philosophical outlook.

The prose works such as "Self enquiry" and 'Who am I?' reveal Sri Ramana's profound philosophical answer to the baffling questions of materialists who grope in soul scorching spiritual darkness, while the poetical works throw light on his supreme knowledge of the self. His 'Five Hymns to Sri Arunachala', point out devotional approach interspersed with the knowledge of Advaita. In it, Sri Ramana proclaims that "he who turns inward with untroubled mind to search where the consciousness of 'I' arises realises the self and rests in Thee, oh! Arunachala! as a river when it merges in the ocean". The most significant part of it is the 'Marital garland of a hundred and eight verses to Sri Arunachala, 'which he just wrote as it came.' Its iridescent symbolism of

the pain of longing and the bliss of fulfilment shows the great sage's life-long quest for the realisation of the non-dual Brahman.

Sri Ramana composed 'Upadesa Saaram' or 'Instruction in 30 verses' in which he enunciated the efficacy of silent meditation. Sri Ramana's effervescent humour tinged with philosophy was evident from a symbolic poem on 'Poppadum' a South Indian savoury.

One of the Telugu poems he wrote was 'Ekatma panchakam (Five verses on the self) in which he said that "He who asks 'who am I? although existing as the self, is like a drunken man who asks about his own identity and whereabouts.

Besides compilation of 42 verses from the Bhagavad Gita, the last of his works was an effortless Tamil translation of Sankaracharya's 'Atma Bodha'.

Ranked next only to Adi Sankaracharya, Sri Ramana left behind neither an ism nor a doctrine but only expounded the recognition of pure being as one's self. He said, "All religions postulate the three fundamentals, individual, God and world. It is only as long as the ego endures that one says either. The one manifests itself as the three or the three are really three. The supreme state is to be inherent in the self, the ego extinguished.

To countless devotees, he said. "The self is pure being, pure consciousness, pure bliss but the mind creates the illusion of a separate individuality. In deep sleep, the mind is stilled and a man is one with the self but in an unconscious

way. In 'samadhi' he is one with the self in a fully conscious way, not in darkness but in light. If the interference of the mind is stilled, the consciousness of self, can, by the grace of the guru, awaken in the heart, thus, preparing for this blissful identity, for a state that is not torpor of ignorance but radiant. Knowledge, pure I-am-ness".

When scholars questioned that if the "real or the self is not the body, nor any of the five senses, nor sense objects nor the organs of action, nor the prana nor the mind, what else, 'I' was, Sri Ramana said.

After, rejecting these and saying this "I am not that" which alone remains, is the 'I' and that is 'consciousness'. He defined consciousness as Sat-chit-Ananda (being consciousness bliss).

Referring to the belief that the world and what takes place therein are the result of God's will, he said:

'God has no purpose. He is not bound by action. The world's activities cannot affect Him, like the sun which rises without desire, purposes, or effort. But as soon as it rises, numerous activities take place on earth, but the Sun is not affected by any such activity as it merely acts according to its nature, by fixed laws, without any purpose and is only a witness. So it is with God, his acts of creation, maintenance, destruction, withdrawal and salvation to which beings are subjected. As the beings reap the fruit of their actions in accordance with His laws, the responsibility is theirs, not God's. God is not bound by any actions".

"I would not accept anything as truth until I found the truth myself, until I become dissatisfied with every creed, dogma and belief. I was not able to find the truth, during my research. I have watched people trapped in their desires as a fly is caught in the web of a spider". I have seen that they build walls of prejudice, walls of credulous thought, walls of great fear against which they fight, trying to escape from the very walls, they have themselves built. Nothing satisfied me. I listened. I observed. I wanted something beyond these phrases, the maya of words. In India, they may have the most sacred books and the greatest philosophies but none of these are able to give me what I wanted. Neither in India nor in Europe could I find happiness. Still I wandered in search of happiness. I knew it must exist. I wanted to drink from the source of life. I wanted to destroy the separation that exists between man and his goal. I began to reject, to renounce, to set aside what I had gathered and little by little. I approached my goal. I set out to find for myself the purpose of life and I have found it without the authority of another. I have entered that sea of liberation and happiness in which there is no limitation or negation because it is the fulfilment of life" thus said Jiddu Krishna Murthy, the world's non-guru whose attainments are contrary to all mystic traditions. As remarked by Rene Fouere "His way of discovery was not through belief and surrender but through doubt and revolt". This makes him so significant to the modern man, who is essentially a man betrayed-betrayed by the innumerable political, economic, religious and technological experts, each highly specialised, each entrenched in his limited field and refusing to see the whole beyond the part. Over these heads of experts, Krishna Murthy appeals to man's under-

standing.

Jiddu Krishna Murthy was born of Brahmin parents, Narianiah and Sanjeevamma on May 11, 1895 at Madanpalle, 150 miles north of Madras. His mother fondly believed that her eighth son Krishna Murthy would become a profoundly remarkable personality and even insisted that the baby be born in her puja room. She died when Krishna Murthy was hardly ten years old. His father, a functionary in the British administration lost his post and scraped a living. Consequently, acute poverty and fear stared in the face of the family. It is said that all the nine children of Narianiah used to get more cuffs than food. Later, he moved the family to Adyar where Krishna Murthy, a shy and dreamy, child along with his younger brother Nityananda used to roam on the beaches. One day, the librarian of the general headquarters of the Theosophical Society spotted the two brothers on the beach and brought them to the president of the Society. Dr Annie Besant, one of the founders of the British Labour Party and a Lady of global fame. Her coworker Loudbeater who was a well-known clairvoyant, saw an aura of saintliness around Krishna Murthy and prophesied that Krishna Murthy, with his unconventional philosophical teachings, would revolutionise the current of thought and traditions of his times. Before long, Dr Annie Besant contacted Krishna Murthy's father and with his consent, adopted the two children. The headquarters of the Society buzzed with the news of the imminent coming of a world-teacher like the Buddha or the Christ who would show the way out of the world's confusion. Krishna Murthy received spiritual training which included initiation into the occult. In 1911, George

Arundale and Dr Annie Besant started an organisation called The Order of the star in the East to prepare the way for the coming of the world-teacher and began to groom Krishna Murthy for that role. At the same time, Narianiah charged the Society with imparting education which was not in conformity with the traditions of his caste and demanded the return of his children to him. Suspecting even the kidnap of the two brothers, Dr Annie Besant sent the two brothers, away to France and England, where Krishan Murthy made an excellent progress in French and Sanskrit. His classmates used to tease him by calling him 'the little prince' as Krishna Murthy would often conduct himself like a saint in royal robes. DR Annie Besant not only made him the head of The Order of the Star in the east but also allotted him the role of the chosen vehicle through which the world teacher was to manifest himself. "A child was thus, made to carry the crushing burden of an extraordinary prophecy". The path of Krishna Murthy was not, however, paved with roses! The sudden death of Nityananda in 1925, plunged Krishna Murthy into depths of suffering and his faith in the future as outlined by Dr Annie Besant and Loud beater appeared shattered. He started questioning the very purpose of life and the burden of sorrow and suffering carried by the entire humanity.

"My brother has died. I have wept in loneliness where ever I went, I would hear his voice and his happy laughter. I have prayed. I have worshipped but the Gods have remained silent."

The death of his brother, however, led to his complete transformation. As he himself said,

"I have suffered.... I began to free myself from all by

which I was found. Still, I was united with the beloved ... till I entered the ocean of liberation and established it within myself".

During those days, he would often, feel the invisible presence moving around him. But unlike a mystic dazed by his vision, he kept his mind uncluttered by any illusions or hallucinations. He said,

"We must doubt everything so that out of the agony of this doubt, certitude is born. Do not doubt only when you are tired or unhappy, anybody can do that, invite doubt in the moment of ecstasy for then in what remains, you will discover the true and the false".

At the time, a controversy raged whether he would put on the robes of office prepared for him and take charge of the liberal catholic church. He was in the dilemma of either to keep his message pure and lose the majority of his followers or to step down his teaching and adopt it to the level of mediocrity and thereby increase the number of his disciples. To the shock and surprise of his countless devotees and followers, he, at once, dissolved The Order of the Star in the East in 1929 and proclaimed. "Truth is a pathless land and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever by any religion.. by anysect. Because I am the whole truth. I desire those who seek to understand me to be free. Not to follow me. But to be free from all fears, from the fear of religion, from the fear of salvation, from the fear of spirituality, from the fear of life and from the fear of death, My purpose is to make man free. I want, therefore, to set man free rejoicing as the bird in the clear sky, unburdened, independent and ecstatic in that freedom. No man from outside can

make you free".

All of a sudden, the Theosophical Society was torn by an internal crisis. Its financial strength having dwindled, many of its disciples abandoned Krishna Murthy. However, an organised Nucleus continued the meetings and publishing Krishna Murthy's speeches and addresses. To those of his devotees who sought miracle and healing powers from him, Krishna Murthy said:

"Which would you rather have a teacher who will show you the way to keep permanently heal or one who will momentarily heal your wounds. I am concerned with the healing of the heart and the mind. Not of the body!"

He even rejected the age-old Guru-disciple relationship and said:

"Be responsible to yourself for all your actions, do not take shelter in the outside authority".

J K wanted humanity to think and feel greatly and live with harmony. Commenting on the age-old taboos on sexual enjoyment, he said:

"So called holymen have maintained that you cannot come nearer to God if you indulge in sex. But by denying sex, they deny the beauty of the earth" and castigated those who had false notions of love.

"Most of us want the security of loving and being loved. But is there love when each one is seeking his own security?"

To him, "Meditation is end of the word, silence, not introduced by a word, the word being thought. The action out

of silence is entirely different from the action born of the word. Meditation is the freeing of the mind from all symbols, images and remembrances".

J K's emphasis which is always on "freedom from the known" embraces the whole gamut of human thought, aspirations and endeavours. As a master philosopher, he analyses the relationship between idea and action, the contradictions of effort, the perils inherent in the acceptance of tradition and dogma uncritically. He makes it clear,

"My teaching is neither mystic nor occult for I hold that both mysticism and occultism are man's limitation upon truth. Life is more important than any beliefs, dogmas and in order to allow life its full fruition, you must separate it from belief, authority and tradition. But those who are found by these things will have a difficulty in understanding truth".

Commenting on the Guru-disciple relationship, he says: "Both the guru and the disciple are part of the cultural and religious conditioning of the particular society, in which they live. When they assert that they hope to come into contact with reality, you may be sure that what they know is not reality. What they know is only their own projection from the past. So the man who says he knows does not know. You can only recognise something you have known before, therefore, it is of the past, hence it is time bound and not timeless. So called religious experience does not bring benefit but merely conditions you according to your particular traditional inclination, tendency and desire and therefore encourages every form of illusion and isolation".

J K declares that the search for personal security

though acquisitions causes general insecurity, suffering and misery. He calls for an end to all exploitation. Stating that physical exploitation created two poles with accumulation of riches at one end and poverty with all its miseries at the other, he criticises emotional, intellectual and spiritual exploitation as expressed in the abuses of authority in obscurantism, in the standardisation, both of the individual and the masses in religious, cultural and political struggles for power over the minds in suppression of talent and genius by those in key positions.

J. K is unsparing in his denouncement of the selfprotective morality "In order to halt the murderous strife of man against man, the wellintentioned preach ideals of unity. The problem is not a question of feeling, a sense of union with others but of knowledge of oneself truly. As long as you feel yourself as 'yourself', others will appear to you as others and your feeling of unity will remain a mere cloak to cover. True virtue is never conscious of itself."

According to this supreme philosopher, " The disappearance of self consciousness is the natural result of the stopping of the 'I' process, which is based on a fundamental intradiction, the very cause of self-consciousness, when man thinks he is self-conscious of a bundle of habits which prevent his true fulfilment. This bundle burns in the final crisis. Its disappearance restabilises his contact with reality. This is the true beginning of true experiencing. His energies previously wasted in endless contradictions, now, become supremely concentrated. The inner being enters into an

immeasurable fullness, into a serene intensity which makes it proof against exploitation and also takes away all the desire to exploit others. Thought and feeling, formerly split by the process of the 'I' are now united in intelligence which is beyond time, there is the complete integration of all his powers and love is born "which is its own eternity".

Such love neither chooses nor enslaves. It is like the Sun which shines on everybody and gives its light to the golden butterfly and to the shapeless worm. It enfolds with its rays both the saint and the sinner".

J K is incisive and straight forward in his comments. For instance, he calls 'self-satisfaction, self-contentment and lack of determination and effort and above all lack of ecstasy in any pursuit, the essence of mediocrity. He laughs at the words defined despotically beyond change. For instance he says that character is not a matter of being obstinate in one's knowledge or strong in one's experience. There is character only when the mind, being fully aware of its accumulated experience, is free of that back-ground and is, therefore, capable of clarity. Only a mind that is clear has character". He minces no words about the hypocrisy of the self-styled champions of the practitioners of non-violence.

"To restrain oneself from violence by practising non-violence, is no change at all, though in this country there is a glib talk about it everyday. Non-violence with a motive is still violence.

He comes down heavily on the fake gurus and pseudo spiritual teachers who try to condition minds. He says "A consistent thinker is a thoughtless person because he con-

firms to a pattern. He repeats phrases and thinks in a groove".

He lambasts the pseudo intellectuals who pride themselves on their knowledge "Addiction to knowledge is like any other addiction. It offers an escape from the fear of emptiness, loneliness, frustration and the fear of being nothing".

According to J. K whatever may be our illusions, we ourselves are the ultimate and the only judge of our being, truth and action. Speaking to a man in New Zealand who craved for spiritual guidance and authority, he said:

"You think you need a priest to take you to truth, But unless you know truth already, how can you be sure that you are guided well? And if you know it, why do you seek a guide?"

In brief J. K believed that man's spiritual freedom must come from within, for each one objectively is alone and if man has to liberate himself completely, to transform totally his life, he must accept responsibility for the full change of his actions and behaviour. As Rene Fouere says, "Krishna Murthy rejects all authority in order to give man a chance to do his own and deep thinking. He seeks to establish a sort of sanitary screen between the pure source of man's spirit and the contamination by outer values. Then only thought can be like the lamp sheltered from all wind, which the Bhagavad Gita puts forth as the example of the effective mind."

AMID CONFUSED JUMBLE

THE MAHATMA

They put him in a niche, lifted him into a hierarchy of saints, turned his message into a kind of cult, and his preachings into empty slogans. Alas! The real Gandhi is today lost amid a confused jumble of casual observations and personal eccentricities. To those who pinned him to an "Ism" and distanced him from millions of masses, Gandhim himself said.

"I have 'received no special revelation of anykind from God. I do not desire to be anything but a simple workman, a humble servant of India and of mankind. There is no such thing as Gandhism and I do not want, to leave any sect after me".

In today's India when communal discord, religious fundamentalism, social disharmony, political immorality, economic disparities, cultural regress, spiritual decadence, moral decay and erosion of all values, stare in the face, the message of the Mahatma has a sharp relevance. As he himself observed long ago.

"I cling to the hope that I am not yet buried alive. So long as my faith burns bright, as I hope it will even if I stand alone. I shall be alive in the grave and what is more, speaking from it".

In fact, there is not an area of human relationship, be it economic, political, educational, religious or cultural which has not gained from his multi-faceted personality. A look at his convictions!

It is uncharitable to label Gandhi as one irrationally opposed to science and technology. His concept of a village oriented set up was in fact based on historical grounds in general and the exigencies of Indian conditions. While stat-

ing "I want the cultures of all lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible, I refuse to be blown off my feet by any" he said,

"Provided the character of the village industry is maintained, there would be no objection to villagers using even the modern machines that they can afford to use. Only they should not be used as a means of exploitation of others'.

Gandhi was aware of how industrialism had been responsible for the exploitation of the countries of Asia and Africa by the nations of Europe. He felt that exploitation consisted in making other people a mere means for getting an advantage of oneself. In fact, his opposition to capitalism was as strong as that to communism since both were based on force.

Human philosophy: Gandhiji's views on the state flowed from his philosophy of human nature. He observed: "I hope to demonstrate that real Swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when abused. In other words, Swaraj is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority".

He opined that the existence of the state was to ensure the psycho- social, moral and spiritual growth of its citizens on the grounds of economic security and political stability. He, however, warned "my notion of democracy is that under it, the weakest should have the same opportunity, as the strongest".

Since the early days of his public career, Gandhiji subscribed to the principle of social justice. Though he did not style himself as a socialist, he called for the principle of "each

according to his needs, from each according to his capacity". He commented:

"Socialism is a beautiful word. In socialism, all the members of society are equal, none low, none high even as parts of the body are equal, so are the members of society. This is socialism".

On the eve of the salt satyagraha, he made a reference to the vested interests in India and said: "All those (vested interests) do not realise that they are living on the blood of the masses.. Socialism begins with the first convert". He knew that privileges abolished by legislation had the knack of entering in by the back door under a variety of faces and pleaded for love, not coercion and a voluntary sharing to usher in socialism.

"The prince and the peasant will not be equalled by cutting off the prince's head. Not by confiscation or by expropriation or by cramping of superior talent can the wealth and happiness of all be increased but by those who have more of the world's goods and superior talents using their advantage not for self but for the good of the society as a whole".

Trusteeship: Gandhiji gave this doctrine the name "Trusteeship". His Doctrine of Trusteeship laid stress on a chance of reformation for the owning classes, voluntary repudiation of the right of ownership, providing an antidote to residuary ownership and recurring inequalities. His trusteeship was backed by the sanction of Satyagraha and provided the most reliable means for realising the values for which socialism stands. He devised the theory of trusteeship because non-violence was incompatible with a feudalistic and capitalistic society. Gandhiji felt that accumulation and preservation of

wealth inevitably led to violence and adopted trusteeship to avoid confiscation. In "Harijan" he wrote,

"The present power of the zamindars, the capitalists and the rajas can hold sway only so long as the common people do not realise their own strength".

Gandhiji evolved this doctrine through which he contemplated the transformation of a capitalist society into a socialist one.

Gandhiji was a staunch champion of the rights of women. A sworn enemy of all injustice and inequality, he had an instinctive understanding of women and their problems and a deep sympathy for them; Hailing them as equal partners, he said prophetically:

"I am uncompromising in the matter of women's rights. In my opinion, she should labour under no legal disability, not suffered by man. I should treat daughters and sons on a footing of perfect equality".

Calling for a rational approach and enlightened understanding, he commented, "The saying attributed to Manu that 'for woman there can be no freedom' is not to be sacrosanct... Expurgate all the texts that have no moral value or are contrary to the fundamentals of religion and morality...."

No wonder, under his dynamic leadership, fostering care and loving guidance, women played a significant part in the freedom fight.

Gandhiji was of the opinion that nationalism, when distorted, was like a soporific blinding us to the higher vision of humanity. In 1925, he said:

"We want freedom for our country, but not at the ex-

pense or exploitation of others, not so as to degrade other countries. For my own part, I do not want the freedom of India if it means the extinction of England or the disappearance of English. My love, therefore, of nationalism is that my country may become free, that it need be, the whole country may die, so that the human race may live".

As early as 1947, he suggested that Indian political leadership should make a worthy contribution to disarmament in this war plagued world. He said:

"The West is despairing of the multiplication of atom bombs because such multiplication must destroy, not merely all this West but the whole world. It is up to you to deliver the whole world and not merely Asia from wickedness and sin...

His concept of (Nai Talim) Education' implied 'education for life, and throughout life", and aimed at the efflorescence of all faculties latent in boys and girls, leading to an all-round growth of their personality both as individual human beings and members of a just peaceful and progressive human society. It especially called for a harmonious existence of learning and working. He said that a community in which some would toil and produce by the sweat of their brow and others would consume would be an unjust society. In fact, Gandhiji's social order conceived of a sarvodaya society. It is impregnated with the idea that full and equal justice should reach the weakest in the community and stands for revolution by consent and not by coercion of anykind.

SATYAGRAHA : His whole philosophy of satyagraha rested on absolute freedom of the soul to follow and abide by the truth one perceived and experienced. While cautioning the truth seeking individual against the use of force and vio-

lence, he demanded the highest sacrifice of oneself in quest of truth. He said that his satyagraha was a way of life based upon the only truth, which was the sound foundation of the essential goodness of man. He said :

"Non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of brute. The spirit lies dormant in the brute and he knows no law but that of physical might. The dignity of man requires obedience to a higher law - to the strength of the spirit.

He, however, condemned power politics and cowardly submissiveness alike as beneath human dignity. He wrote

'I do believe when there is only a choice between cowardice and non-violence, I would advise violence.

After relentless struggle, his efforts bore fruit in his age and for India and many emerging states in Asia and Africa took hope and strength for their independence and self determination from the example of India.

A saint among politicians, Gandhiji was a karma yogi unparalleled. His karmayoga was grounded in the bedrock of jnana yoga and bhaktiyoga. Like a karmayogi, he rendered service to mankind without attachment to the fruit always with the full consciousness that he was the instrument of God of cosmic forces. In a unique way, he embodied in him the triple yoga, karma, bhakti and jnana.

To Gandhiji, Satyagraha was not merely a philosophy but "a practical philosophy of life of action of self and God-realisation. The satyagraha, besides being a source of self-elevation, self-culture and self-realisation was supposed to offer solutions, to political economic and social problems without loss to conflicting parties and without bitterness. He

exploited its efficacy for the redressal of the grievances of the Indian community in South Africa, for the removal of untouchability in India, for easing communal tension, securing relief to the Indigo cultivators of Champaran who were oppressed by the European planters and above all for ridding our country of the cursed curse of British rule. As Gene Sharp observed once "Satyagraha as a concrete expression of the moral approximation of the ends and means relationship can be regarded as the most unique contribution to the philosophy and technique of revolution in our time" Gandhi always insisted that the end did not justify the means. The greater the end, the purer, he said, must be the means to achieve it. He declared,

"It is true that we cannot rise till our political condition is reformed. But it is not true that we shall be able to progress if our political condition undergoes a change by any means and in anymanner."

Though he was engaged relentlessly in political work, Gandhiji was a religious man. He thought it his duty as a religious man to enter the political field. As Gokhale remarked once, 'it was his constant effort to spiritualise politics.' Gandhiji remarked once.

'My patriotism is for me a stage on my journey to the land of eternal freedom and peace... thus, it will be seen for me there are no politics devoid of religion. Politics bereft of religion are a death trap ... because they kill the soul'.

In fact, it was the Hindu religion which drew him to untouchables and his fight against this social evil blot inspired many a leader in the world also.