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**LOST IN MEMORIES: A STUDY OF OLIVER GOLDSMITH'S  
"THE DESERTED VILLAGE" AND R. PARTHASARATHY'S "UNDER  
ANOTHER SKY"**

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**Abstract**

*Ancients and moderns take us to literature without walls. World poetry creates an endless ripple. As a mark to that here are two poems which lament on the past. "Under Another Sky" by R.Parthasarathy and "The Deserted Village" by Oliver Goldsmith describe the two poets' nostalgic emotions when they returned to their homeland. Parthasarathy sweetly recollects his hometown Chennai, a Metropolitan City, and bitterly describes the changes that took place in the ambiance after the British rule, when he returns from England after his self-imposed exile. Oliver Goldsmith returns to the village that he knew as vibrant and alive, and finds it deserted and overgrown, and the people have migrated to several places. Though it is an imaginary village named 'Auburn' he gives life to it. Chennai is inflated with population whereas in population Auburn is deflated. By comparing these two poems also we come to know the vicissitude of Time and resultant transition.*

**Keywords:** Transition, transformation, transcendence, vicissitude of Time.

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**"Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling: it takes its origin from  
emotion recollected in tranquility" - William Wordsworth**

On twenty-first March every year, International Poetry Day is celebrated. It is, we believe a coincidence, that Alagappa University organises a National Seminar posterior to the World Poetry Day in order to recognise and celebrate the contributions of the greatest poets who still keep the world enlightened by their legendary classics of

poetry. Many have given various worthy definitions to poetry: from Wordsworth, Coleridge, Arnold, Poe, Hopkins through Bradley, Dylan Thomas to Babette Deutsch.

Poetry is a rhythmic expression of a person who gives to his/her imaginative and intense perceptions of himself/herself, his/her environs, world, and the interrelationship of the two. Nobody knows surely the origin of poetry as no literary historian presumes to point out the beginnings of poetry. Probably, the first literary expression might have taken the form of primitive verse during the early tribal ceremonies, and the first poetry was probably associated with music and dance. When the tribes experienced any memorable -- good or bad -- great event like a war, natural calamities like flood, a migration, etc., it seemed natural for the tribes to chronicle and preserve those episodes in dance and song. In the modern times, the poetry, sometimes makes the readers to go back to the past and recall their joys and sorrows. Sometimes it makes us happy and throws us back to nostalgia and on the other side it makes us to sit with sorrow. Wordsworth, a nineteenth century Romantic poet, believed that poetry should be written in simple language about simple people i.e. rustic and their simple but idyllic world so that it is "understandable" to anybody living in the simple world. Poetry has the great power to evoke emotive responses. "Poetry can lift you up to great heights and motivate you or it can break you down into tears." Poetry is like a new born baby and it is like a first touch of a mother to a baby. It is the most fragile thing and a personalized one. It is the only palette where we can enjoy the joy, melody, melancholy and tragedy, love and, patriotism and betrayal. In everyone there is a poet living inside in him/her. So here are two poems, chosen by the present writers, which lament on the all pervading past: "The Deserted Village" by the English poet Oliver Goldsmith, and "Under Another Sky" by the Indian English poet R.Parthasarathy. They talk about their nostalgic feelings on seeing the transformation their once dwelling place has undergone after they return to their homeland after a hiatus of many years.

Oliver Goldsmith (1728 -- 1774), a poet, novelist, biographer and dramatist, is chiefly known for his poem "The Deserted Village." This poem is about the theme of privatization. He went through many villages and he observed. Many transcendences were taken place. He narrates those changes he witnessed in Auburn. Though it is not a real village he gives life to it. Auburn was the "loveliest village of the plain," says the poet. Previously, it was the state of prosperous stability but now ruined. As he recounts:

*SWEET AUBURN! Loveliest village of the plain;  
Where health and plenty cheered the labouring swain,  
Where smiling spring its earliest visit paid,  
And parting summer's lingering blooms delayed. (581)*

He remembers that village in a pleasant way but in real it is deserted because all people migrated to other places. Once there were a lot of lands without ownership like wasteland, and now it is captured by the rich people. Because of this, people lost their

livelihood and migrated to other places. It is clear in the line, "those fence-less fields the sons of wealth divide." Then he portrays the schoolmaster. The first three lines delineates the setting of the village and then poet paints the character of the schoolmaster: "a man severe he was and stern to view." This line reveals the tough and strict nature of the village schoolmaster. Further he says in the following lines:

*Full well they laugh'd with counter field glee,  
At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;  
Full well they busy whisper, circling round.*

The school children are afraid of him. They laugh at his joke even if they are not funny and if he is angry the news gets circulated around instantly.

Goldsmith gently mocks at the schoolmaster. The village schoolmaster impresses the villagers with his little learning of Latin and doing some sums. And the schoolmaster is very furious and argues even when he is defeated by the parson, the clergyman -- the religious leader of the village. Nevertheless, there is a small appreciation about the schoolmaster. He is a man of modest and helpful to the illiterate people. In the last two lines, he indicates that the schoolmaster was no more. All of his name and fame has gone and, "the spot/ where many a time he triumphed is forgot". Finally Goldsmith is mourning for the community which is no more in the village.

R.Parthasarathy, who too does the same in his "Under Another Sky," was born on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1934 in Tirupparaiturai near Tiruchirapalli. He had his university education in Bombay and spent a year (1963-64) as a British Council scholar at the University of Leeds. In 1971, he joined the Oxford University Press as an editor. In 1976, Parthasarathy published a collection of poems entitled *Rough Passage*. Though it consists of several poems written through a period of twenty years, *Rough Passage* is treated as a single poem. There are three sections in it:

1. Exile - the poet describes his life in England where he felt like an exile uprooted from his culture.
2. Trial – the poet celebrates love and human relationships.
3. Homecoming – the poet gives expression to his joy of discovery when he discovers his native roots and tries to harmonize the English language with Tamil culture.

In "Under Another Sky" when Parthasarathy returns from England to Chennai he observes many changes. First he goes to the sea and sees St.George fort and Santhome. It looks tried and old. The ambiance of the place echoes the lassitude of the poet. As the poet writes:

The sun  
has done its worst. Skimmed  
A language, worn it to shadow.

The above lines speak of the British rule in India. Once the harbour was busy in trading but now it accosts the visitors. The poem starts with the poet's return to Chennai after his chosen exile. Finally he finds himself in loneliness. Writing poem is his only

companion and he just starts to love the words. It is seen in "loving only woods". The seashore and the interior of Chennai remind him how the Tamil culture was flourished. "wells" and "alleys" are symbolic and most of it is vanished and some of them are found in the interior parts. Most of the heritage places had been replaced by the tourist spots and shooting places. He also says that many "bridges" and rivers too. He says that after the British colonization there are a lot of changes in Indian culture. The city has got its own changes due to the westernization like golf-links and clubs, etc. He mentions British as "aliens" and they ruled and ruined the wealth and precious things and finally made Indians poor, "the borne urn of his mind." In this line mind is compared to an urn. Just as an urn carries the ashes of the dead, the mind of the poet would carry, the memories of what he has seen and experienced. Talking about the Parthasarathy's style of poems, his rough passage came out from the Oxford University Press under the three crowns scheme. Parthasarathy greets the poem with warm and pleasant tone. The strength of his poetry lies almost entirely in its visual juxtapositions and the startling images. He cultivates the deliberately prosaic style. He crafts his poems in a skillful way and it has an expression. One of the salient features of his art is the use of startling sensuous and concrete images. These images are often evocative and suggestive. It evokes the picture of place etc. In "The Deserted Village," the village schoolmaster also shows other characteristic features of eighteenth century. The vocabulary is carefully chosen. The tone of the poem is balanced and figures of speech often provide emphasis, freshness of expression, clarity. The poem is in the form of rhyming pentameter couplets. Sometimes called heroic couplets. The favorite poetic form of the eighteenth century.

Comparing the themes both the poems discuss about how things have been changed. In "Under another Sky", Parthasarathy talks about his returning to hometown from England and he is observing the changes. This same thing is also spoken in "The Deserted Village." He too keenly watches the changes in the village. The only difference between the poems is that Goldsmith talks about the imaginary place and he presents his observations on all the villages he goes through in an imaginary village. Chennai is inflated with populations whereas in population Auburn is deflated. The two poems disclose the fact that due to a technological civilisation and mechanisation of life there are many changes. The old culture is "dying beast."

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