

## Chapter III

### Formation of Yeats's vision

It is the work of writers who are moulded by influences that are moulding their arts, and who write out of so deep a life that they are accepted there in the end.

(W. B. Yeats: *Explorations*: 1962:156)

W. B. Yeats, observed T.S. Eliot, " who is capable of experience finds himself in a different world in every decade of his life; as he sees it with different eyes, the material of his art is continually renewed. But in fact, very few poets have shown this capacity of adaptation to the years. It requires, indeed, an exceptional honesty and courage to face the change." (1961:301-302) Hence, Yeats's vision undergoes a radical change in course of his vast life span. Born in Ireland, the poet spent much of his boyhood and school holidays in Sligo with his grand parents. This country – its scenery, folklore, and supernatural legend – coloured Yeats's work and formed the vision of many of his poems. In 1880, when his family was in Dublin, the young Yeats gathered experiences by coming in contact with other poets and artists. Meanwhile, when the family moved back to London in 1887, Yeats took up the life of a professional writer. He joined the Theosophical Society, whose mysticism appealed to him because it was a form of imaginative life far removed from the work-a-day world. The age of science was repellent to Yeats. He was a visionary and he insisted upon surrounding himself with poetic images. He began a study of the prophetic works of William Blake, and this enterprise brought him into contact with other visionary traditions, such as the Platonic, the Neoplatonic, the Swedenborgian, and the alchemical. Yeats quickly became involved in the literary life of London. He became friends with William Morris and W.E.Henley, and he was cofounder of the Rhymers' Club,

whose members included his friends Lionel Johnson and Arthur Symons. Yeats's chance meeting with and loss of heart to the Irish beauty Maud Gonne, played a vital part in shaping his early poetic vision. From that moment, as he wrote, "the troubling of my life began". Maud Gonne was a public figure, and to win her he had to spend far more time on public activities than he would have otherwise done. Rejected, the poet began writing about his lost love. In the later phase of his career, Yeats's poetic vision is shaped by a galaxy of men of letters. Those interactions and influences contribute to the growth of the poet's vision.

Yeats writes to Katharine Tynan; "My life has been in my poems. To make them I have broken my life into mortar as it were. I have brayed it, in youth and fellowship, peace and worldly hopes. I have seen others enjoying while I stood alone with myself- commenting, commenting-a mere dead mirror on which things reflect themselves"(Yeats: 1986:93-94) Hence, our study of W.B. Yeats through the "mirror" which he has created in his poetry.

Yeats was born in 1865, a son of a painter John Butler Yeats, and of Susan Mary Pollexfen. His brother, Jack, also wanted to become a renowned painter, and Yeats himself studied painting once he had finished his unhappy schooldays in London and Dublin. At home his family considered that he would become a writer, and his father encouraged the boy's growing interest in poetry. When the poet was fifteen or sixteen his father had talked to him of Blake and Rossetti, given him works to read, and told him of his own essentially pre-Raphaelite literary principles. Since his father considered dramatic poetry the superior of all other kinds, the young Yeats wrote his first poetry in imitation of Spenser and Shelley.

Yeats's family moved between the two places, and the Yeats children often spent their holidays with their maternal grandmother in Sligo, whose landscape, with curiously formed shape of Ben Bulbin became literally and symbolically Yeats's country of the heart's desire. Keeping Sligo always in memory, the world he imagined in his early poems was a retreat to the memory lane. As soon as his family moved from Howth to Ashfield Terrace, Yeats had begun to collect specimens of human nature, apart from his keen interest in natural phenomena. And holidays in Sligo again rooted him in his own world. It may be noted in this connection that Yeats's father was an agnostic and his lack of belief had affected the young poet, for it made him think of the credibility of religious doctrines. Hating his father's skepticism as days passed by, the young Yeats would dream the days away, but he wanted the leisure of ease as well as the pleasure of success.

Yeats's first published poem appeared in *The Dublin University Review* in which the two poems, "Song of the Faeries" and "Voices" reveal the gentle languor of the poet. The first poem is all the more relevant, for it draws attention to the three elements in his early poetry: his love of natural beauty, his growing interest in the supernatural and his desire for quietude. Yeats often used to walk round Laugh Gill, which involved his sleeping in Sleuth Wood, the experience of which formed the poetic vision of the early poet. John Butler Yeats had read Thoreau's *Walden* to the poet that in fact gradually stimulated him to live like Thoreau in search of wisdom in Innisfree, a wooded island in Laugh Gill. On the other hand, the mysterious fires of the village of Ballisodare left an indelible influence upon Yeats who began to take a greater interest in fairy talks of old men and women. He told people about things to be believed rather than to be doubted: "But I was

already to deny or turn into a joke what was for all that secret fanaticism" (Yeats: 1966:97).

The shyness of his nature added to his gentleness, and he lived in a fairy world of dreamy thought, which his early verse reflects:

A man has a hope for heaven  
But soulless a fairy dies,  
As a leaf that is old, and withered and cold  
When the wintry vapours rise

(Yeats: 1949:28)

True to his spirit, another romantic poem of almost same vein, "The Island of Statues" shows the influence of Spenser and Shelley. The whole tone of the poem is melancholy, imbued with a sense of loneliness amid a delicate beauty of nature. Thus, Yeats was writing under the spell of a fervid imagination that had its root in literary sources available to him and romantic surroundings around him.

Yeats despised traditional ethnographic practice and is thus better classified as a mystic rather than as a folklorist. Indeed, he "railed against scientific folk-lore which treated what he considered living things as specimens not to be felt or allowed to penetrate the present"(Thuente: 1981: 65). This aversion was due in part to his interests in the spiritual movements of the day. According to Mary Catherine Flannery,

Yeats was predisposed to an interest in Eastern philosophy, having rejected an earlier flirtation with science...Like many young men of his time, Yeats finds science and established religion incapable of answering

the questions he finds most important--here stated as the nature and immortality of the soul (1978:17).

Though he eventually lost interest in the folklore movement, Yeats continued to believe in the correlation between poetry and mysticism (or "magic") throughout his entire life: "He was given to long walks in the country...and begin to play at being a sage, a magician or a poet. For Yeats to be a poet was to be sexually potent and to be a sage and magician too. Sex, magic and poetry were to be part of the same whole for him" (Flannery: 1978: 15). Thus, his consequent interest in peasant folklore, according to Mary Helen Thuente, was born out of his interests in mysticism:

Yeats was not only interested in the peasant as visionary, but in the most extravagant, unexplainable examples of their imaginary and visionary powers (1981:87).

At the same time, Yeats was also highly influenced by the Irish Nationalist movement. One of the most damaging effects of prolonged colonial influence was the general degradation of Irish culture: "For centuries the character of the Irish people and consequently their literature and culture, had been the objects of derision in English eyes. England's ban on the teaching of Irish, through which it hoped to destroy the last remnants of Irish culture in nineteenth century Ireland was typical of the English attitude towards Irish culture" (Thuente: 1981: 7). Though Protestant, Yeats believed in the value of Celtic folklore, and the need to "canonize" it as the legacy of the Irish: "Yeats tells how he had realized that he must build a new tradition...It was Yeats himself...that revived a dying tradition and united the shattered fragments into a symbolical, mythical, coherence" (Raine: 1981: 17).

Yeats reiterates this hope in his collection of original folklore, *The Celtic Twilight*:

I have desired to show in a vision something of the face of Ireland to any of my own people who care for things of this kind. I have therefore written down accurately and candidly much that I have heard and seen, and, except by way of commentary, nothing that I have merely imagined (1981:32).

Thus his involvement in the folklore movement of the time was one of recapturing of identity, culture, and society. His goal was to restore voice to those who he believed not only possessed a greater spiritual and visionary awareness, but indeed maintained a link to the true Irish identity, lost due to centuries of Colonial rule.

Scholars, however, raise questions about Yeats' involvement in the folklore movement. Though he claimed that his works were reflective of intimate knowledge of his subjects and not the product of his personal vision, the Introduction to *Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland* indicates otherwise:

These folk tales are full of simplicity and musical occurrence for they are the literature of a class for whom every incident in the old rut of birth, love, pain and death has cropped up unchanged for centuries: who have steeped everything in the heart: to whom everything is a symbol. They have spade over which man has leant from the beginning. The people of the cities have the machine, which is prose and a parvenu. They have few events (Yeats: 1973: 5).

This personal vision is apparent in "The Stolen Child," which appeared as the only original work in his first collection of folklore, *Fairy and Folk Tales of Ireland*. In "The Stolen Child," Yeats creates a distinct contrast between the urban world that he originated from, and the imagined "Other": the mystical world of the Irish Peasant.

In the poem, the contemporary urban world, the world of the "machine," is a cold and cruel one, while the fairy world (here a metaphor for the "authentic" Irish peasant) is "at one" with nature: "Come away, O, human child! / To the woods and waters wild/ With a fairy hand in hand" (Yeats: 1955:20). Indeed, the world of the fairy is empowering in its distance from the urban world: "Where dips the rocky highland/ Of Sleuth Wood in the lake/ There lies a leafy island/ Where flapping herons wake" (1955:20). This "Otherworld" is one of mystery, dance and joy: "Where the wave of moonlight glosses/ The dim grey sands with light/ Far off by farthest Rosses/ We foot it all the night/ Weaving olden dances, / Mingling hands and mingling glances/ Till the moon has taken flight" (1955:20). The poem concludes with the impression that the child will be offered a better life among the fairies: "Away with us he's going/ The solemn eyed/ He'll hear no more the lowing/ Of the calves on the warm hill-side/ Or the kettle on the hob/Sing peace unto his breast...With a fairy hand in hand, / From the world's more full of weeping than he can understand" (1955:21).

"Into the Twilight," which first appeared in Yeats collection of original folklore, *The Celtic Twilight*, also reveals the opposition of Yeats's imagined "mystical" peasant and the contemporary urban world. In contrast to an "out-worn heart, in a time out-worn," (1955:65), Yeats states that "your mother Eire [Ireland] is always

young/Dew ever shining and twilight grey" (65). This "youthful" land is a supernatural one, which is connected to nature and is thus the authentic self: "Come heart, where hill is heaped upon hill/For there the mystical brotherhood/Of sun and moon and hollow and wood/And river and stream work out their will" (66). In contrast to Yeats's vision however, the reality of colonial occupation distances his hope of returning to this perceived authentic state: " And time and the world are ever in flight/And love is less kind than the grey twilight/And hope is less dear than the dew of the morn" (66).

In the era which William Butler Yeats lived, the occult was not as inaccessible as it is today. Magic proved to be a solution to the ennui which pervaded many lives of the Anglo-Irish cast. Yeats, a member of this circle, was eager to discover his own identity as an Irishman. To accomplish this, he developed his own form of magic via incorporating the Celtic myths of his native land. Maud Gonne, the object of his desire throughout his life, was fused with his vision, thus creating a sense of a new generation that must be spawned to create the perfect Irish race. Yeats's early poetry is laden with some of the most complex yet classic images in the occult, which are often misunderstood in contemporary times. Yeats's 1899 collection of poems, *The Wind Among the Reeds* proved to generate "reactions to the volume [that] were quizzical. In some quarters bewilderment was expressed at [Yeats's] deliberate search for obscurity...above all, the new volume's reliance on elaborate magical symbols was worrying" (Foster:1998: 217).

In the poem, "The Song of Wandering Aengus", one can clearly see Yeats's fascination with the occult as a way of incorporating classic pagan and Celtic myths as a means of creating an alternative reality for his own nationalistic intentions. Maud Gonne is more than the tangible woman for Yeats--she is a symbol of that entire he is trying to attain.



Therefore, Gonne is not just the physical woman, but is a place of stature in the occult community, and of a new Irish race. In the poem, Yeats magically transports the reader into a Celtic collective subconscious where a union between himself and Maud Gonne is displayed as the hopeful salvation of the Irish race.

As Yeats had begun to study psychical research and mysticism, he naturally broke away from his father's influence. Though his father's skepticism had a great effect on him, he still wished for some system of philosophy, which would include his belief that the legends, personality, and emotions handed down by poets and painters, philosophers and theologians were the nearest approach to truth. Steeped in Shelley, bubbling with romance, it was only natural that he should desire larger achievements than his father's expectation. He found in O' Leary the more inspiring idealism and positive patriotism that he sought, and turned from ideas of dream-land to the more absolute demands of nationalism. O' Leary, whom Yeats first met at the contemporary club, had the air of a sage and martyr that the poet's reading and imagination demanded of any leader. As A. Norman Jeffares points out, "It was to O' Leary that he owed his knowledge of Irish literature"(1949:37). John O' Leary's influence helped him formulate his ideas, and introduced him to the national elements in the verse, hence setting the example of a man, the service of whom was nonetheless devoted to a romantic ideal, a romantic concept of nationalism. At last Yeats realized the need for a style, un-English, and yet musical and colourful, a non-political tradition. As Yeats says in his *Essays and Introduction*:

Then with a deliberateness that still surprises me, for in my heart of hearts I have never seen quite certain that

one should be more than an artist, that even patriotism is more than an impure desire in an artist, I set to work to find a style and things to write about that the ballad writers might be the better (1961:4).

In 1887, Yeats's family had moved to London, and the poet gained an opportunity to expand the fields of his personal relationships. Although disappointed, Yeats was still in all things romantic, and in all things pre-Raphaelite. Despite his admiration for Morris, he became less socialistic in his ideas. The benefit of over-valuing moral zest made him tiresome. Meanwhile, the poet's growing interest in mysticism and psychical research maddened his father who happened to be a disciple of John Stuart Mill. Yeats first met Madame Blavatsky in a house at Norwood out of a great and passionate being, out of touch with the commonplace formalism. He was all praise for the theosophists, for they possessed an aim of improving mankind. He thought that wisdom could be found in the world only in some lonely mind aspiring for divine grace. He had also been admitted to the Esoteric Section of the society, which had its weekly discussion on oriental mysticism.

Yeats came also under the influence of Macgregor Mathers who was the author of the *Kabbla Unveiled*. The latter introduced Yeats to a society of Christian cabbalists, "the Hermatic Student", known to the members as the order of golden dawn. Swayed by the august companions of Madame Blavatsky and Macgregor Mathers, Yeats became interested in their symbolic systems, and the upshot of these upon his writing was to make it more sensuous and vivid, and his mind drifted from image to image. He believed that only images could afford more profound states of the soul. Thus, Yeats's first step away from his

father's intellectual acumen had been his interest in mysticism and psychical research. Yeats saw nothing good in London, an unhappy creature throughout. His longing to go back to the Sligo setting and his passion for Ireland did never go away. A letter, which Yeats wrote to Katherine Tynan in December 1891, props up this:

I have an ambition to be taken as an Irish novelist, not as an English or cosmopolitan one, choosing Ireland as a background. I studied my characters in Ireland and described a typical Irish feeling... I remember when we were children how intense our devotion was to all things in Sligo and I still see in my mother the old feeling.  
(1986:274-275)

Yeats's home-sickness for Ireland, and in particular, Sligo incited his poem "The Lake Isle of Innisfree". The poem, probably still the best-known example of Yeats's work, owed its success to the proper fusion of universality and personal emotion. The poet was touched by the universal appeal of the subject, and lulled by the lure of the hermit's life spent amid beautiful surroundings.

London is always horrible to Yeats. According to the poet, the mere presence of more cultivated people is a gain, of course, but nothing in the world can make amends for the tranquil hours of one's own countryside. Still the poet's Irish background retained its certain charm and haunted him always. The strangeness of his interest, his vehemence, and his never-ending babble of conversational monologue added to the effect of originality. Yeats's passion for "know thyself" as well as the world outside impressed Ernest Rhys, who wrote fairy and folks tales of the Irish peasantry. Yeats later discussed with Rhys the need for the poets to know one another. The result was the Rhymers'

club, formed by the efforts of Yeats, Rhys and T.W. Rolleston. As Norman Jeffares observes, "The foundation of the club in 1891 was a climax to Yeats's efforts to escape nostalgia or loneliness"(1949:66). His ability to act a part was necessary for his poetic vision.

However, the greatest change that came upon his poetry and did most to bring him fame as a poet was due to his loss of heart to the Irish beauty Maud Gonne. His poetry was inspired by her and its wistful strain was all for the beloved. The poet sought to serve her, and she found in him a useful friend. But as ill luck would have it, after his proposal and her refusal in 1891, his position was unsatisfactory and full of stain. He was her close friend, and he had some hope in his own mind that his romantic devotion might have some reward. But he suffered much anxiety and torture on her account also. Yeats sought reasons for her unhappiness and began to persuade her that her political activities were swamping her noble qualities. He was to turn to political activity himself, partly because of his own ambition. It is evident that Yeats's attitude toward Maud Gonne had a great deal to do with the state of mind that generated Yeats's poetry. A public figure that Maud Gonne was, Yeats had to spend far more time on public activities that he would have otherwise done. As a result, the dream life became harder for Yeats to sustain. In poems such as "To my heart, bidding it have no Fear" and "His bids his Beloved at peace", Yeats makes his passion unrecognizable by subduing it. His love for Maud Gonne was so deep that he was always in uncertainty as to how she would finally act towards him. Unfortunately for the man but may be fortunately for the poet, his passion was not requited. This frustration led the deserted lover to unlock his heart in such poems, as "When You are Old":

But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,  
And love the sorrows of your changing face.

[Yeats 1955:46]

Yeats did everything to impress Maud Gonne. Mysticism, which fascinated him, was not enough to hold his beloved's interest. He began to take a more active part in life itself. He rushed into the vacuum caused by the death of Parnell with the aim of establishing societies. It seemed to him that with the death of Parnell all romance had left Irish public life and that youthful national feeling would seek apolitical channels for some years to come. He seemed to himself 'for the only time in his life to be the popular personage, my name to the crowd', and remembered in the affections of the wise. In his political activities, the one indispensable figure was John O' Leary, whose personality towered head and shoulder above the other nationalists. As time passed by, Yeats immersed himself in works, activities and enthusiasm as a means of creating better Irish literature and art. The vacillation of the poet's personality resulted in dichotomy between his subsequent writing for the Irish and the English audience. His poetic vision was very much shaped by the poets of the Rhymers' club.

Lionel Johnson's thought dominated the scene and gave the Rhymers' club its character. The authentic poet had learnt from him to assume a dignity and courtliness of manner that gained in sincerity and strength with later years. He turned to a more artificial concept of what a poet should be. Yeats was able to distance his life from his poetry, for he realized that the secret of producing pure poetry was to seek a chosen pattern, untainted by personal life-experiences.

The friendship with Johnson was replaced by a closer companionship with Arthur Symons, who "took a hold

upon my friendship that became very strong in later years... he was nothing in literature but a source of impassioned philosophy (Qtd. in Jeffares: 1949:99)

Since he grew in Yeats's mind interest about Verlaine and Mallarme, Symons had a large effect upon the poet's vision. Yeats found encouragement and help in this.

A more congenial influence, however, came from Lady Augusta Gregory, the living symbol of the old Irish Aristocracy, whose house at Coole park was a second home for Yeats and with whom he collaborated in the collection of the old legends and ballads, and later in the founding of the Irish national stage, which in time, emerged as the Abbey theatre. He later summed up their achievement in "The Municipal Gallery Revisited":

John Synge, Augusta Gregory, and I thought  
All that we did, all that we said or sang  
Must come from contact with the soil, from that  
Contact everything Antaeus-like grew strong  
We three alone in modern times had brought  
Everything down to that sole test again,  
Dream of the noble and the beggar-man

(Yeats 1955:369).

Yeats's nationalism, thus, was primarily literary and artistic, not political. He was concerned more with the cultivation of the taste of his people than with the oratory. Through art and literature he sought to heal the old breach between the Catholic and Protestant religions. United Ireland will become the real country of his golden dream, which the work of William Morris had inspired in him. As to his attitude

towards England, he confessed frankly in his "A General Introduction for My Work":

The 'Irishry' have preserved their ancient 'deposit' through wars, which, during the sixteenth and seventeenth century, became wars of extension; no people, Lecky said at the opening of his Ireland in the eighteenth century, have undergone greater persecution, nor did that persecution altogether cease up to our own day. No people hate as we do in whom that past is always alive, there are moments where hatred poisons my life and I accuse myself of effeminacy because I have not given it adequate expression. It is not enough to have put it into the mouth of a rambling peasant poet. Then I remind myself that though mine is the first English marriage I know of in the direct line, all my family names are English, and that I own my soul to Shakespeare, to Spenser and to Blake, perhaps to William Morris, and to the English language in which I think speak, and write, that everything I love has come to me through English; my hatred tortures me with love, my love with hate. I am like the Tibetan monk who dreams at his imitation that he is eaten by a wild beast and learns on waking that he himself is eater and eaten.

(Yeats: 1961:519).

It was no wonder, therefore, that Yeats gradually drifted away from the contemporary trends of Irish politics. In practical life, he frequently came in direct clash with the common multitude, their selfishness, their irrational fury and modern democracy, which led him to prefer a benign dictatorship. At any cost the romantic Ireland was dead for him and was in the grave along with O'Leary. In isolation he

developed a passion for the country aristocracy as the fostering mother of culture, art and courtesy and much did it grieve his heart to contemplate the vandalism of the Irish partisans in the civil war. Disgusted with the present, his fond imagination retreated to the past round Ireland of eighteenth century. It is quite amazing to note that even in the days of disillusionment Yeats never ceased to respond quickly and whole-heartedly to the heroism and sacrifice of the political leaders. The pen, which was reluctant to respond to the terrible slaughter of the First World War, was animated with passionate intensity to celebrate the martyrs of the Easter of 1916.

And what if excess of love  
Bewildered them till they did?  
I write it out in a verse--  
MacDonagh and MacBride  
And Connolly and Pearse  
Now and in time to be,  
Wherever green is worn  
Are changed, changed utterly  
A terrible beauty is born

(Yeats: 1955: 204-205)

Yeats's meeting with Synge exercised a lasting influence on his poetic vision. Synge's theory that "before verse can be human again, it must learn to be brutal" influenced the poet profoundly, and the terseness and violence that we find in the maturer vision of Yeats's later poetry owe much to Synge. He learnt from Synge defiant gaiety and brutal irony and the command over living speech. Yeats appeared to have attained the poet's lifelong goal of an impersonal poetic vision free from the exigencies of everyday life through his interaction with



Synge. He knew that the poet "had to take the plunge into the world beyond himself, the first plunge always from himself that is always pure technique, the delight in doing..."(Yeats: 1966:344). Combined with this and his sense of the historical pattern in which the past and present form a new synthesis, Yeats produced the great and magnificent poetry of his mature years.

The contact with Ezra Pound affected greatly the quality of Yeats's poetry. Pound attempted to convert the poet to the modern movement. He insisted on the distinct presentation of something concrete and accuracy, precision and economy of language. Yeats himself felt an inner necessity to change his style, and Pound theory reinforced his own attitude. The most distinctive trait reflected in the later poems is an increase of self-consciousness, which may be traced not only to Pound's influence but also to Donne's. The intricate pattern of thought and passion in Donne's poetry impressed him greatly and he learnt to control the fury of passion in his later poems.

The influence of George Russel on Yeats's poetic craft cannot be ignored. Yeats met George Russel, "A.E., the poet and mystic" (1956: 80) at the Metropolitan school of Art in Kildare Street, Dublin. A.E. did not set any pattern as others tried to, "for some other image rose always before his eyes" (80), and he spoke to Yeats of his visions. This gift for vision impressed the poet. It was with the help of Charles Johnston and George Russell that Yeats founded the "Dublin Hermetic Society" (1885). With their association Yeats was convinced that images welled up before the mind's eye from a deeper source than merely conscious or subconscious memory. This affirmed Yeats's belief in the "anima mundi", a concept that influenced much of his thinking on art and philosophy.

Shortly after his marriage with Miss Hyde Less, Yeats discovered his wife's "automatic writings" which formed the very hub of his book *A Vision*. The doctrine that a man desires his opposite and that there is a clash of personality within the same person, has been logically worked out in the volume, and much of Yeats's later poetry is related to this theory. Yeats writes:

If we cannot imagine ourselves as different from what we are, and try to assume that second self, we cannot impose a discipline upon ourselves. Active virtue, as distinguished from the passive acceptance of a code, is, therefore, theatrical, consciously dramatic, the wearing of a mask (1966:469).

Bearing in mind Yeats's grooming in mysticism from an intensive study of the human heart and the mind, he launches his mystic experience of civilization from a purely penetrating analyzing of the future of mankind—the future which denotes man's life in arduous and serene contemplation and thought of action, and poignance of cathedral of saner ideas and experiences:

Civilization is hoped together, brought  
Under a rule, under the semblance of peace  
By manifold illusion; but man's life is thought  
And he, despite his terror, cannot cease  
Ravening through century after century,  
Into the desolation of reality:  
Egypt and Greece good-bye, and good-bye, Rome!  
Hermits upon mount Meru or Everest,  
Caverned in night under the drifted snow,  
Or where that snow and winter's dreadful blast  
Beat down upon their naked bodies, know,

That day brings round the night,  
That before dawn  
His glory and his monuments are gone.

(1955:333)

Notwithstanding the sadistic vision that sometimes lurks in the backdrop of the folly of human being, Yeats never compromises with constraints, petty or legion whatsoever. Rather he is interested in going deep into the thin rope of hope where human passions and sentiments find efflorescences and make new rooms for living the life not merely as a challenge but also as a means of fulfillment.

Yeats's vision of mystic endlessness gets its sustenance from Rabindranath Tagore's mystic quest where life and love are intermingled for a journey beyond with a view to making a promise that "We are blest by everything, / Everything we look is blest."(1955:267):

Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure. This  
frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it  
ever with fresh life.

This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and  
dales, and hast breathed through it melodies eternally  
new.

At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart loses  
its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable.

Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small  
hands of mine. Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and  
still there is room to fill. (Tagore: 1983: 1-2)

Yeats was very much fascinated by "Asiatic form", which he "first found in [Tagore's] books and afterwards in certain Chinese poetry and Japanese prose writers." (qtd. in Chatterjee: 1931: 269)

The poetry of W.B. Yeats also bears his long sojourn for mystic fulfilment. The background is well made and the common thread of poetry as it is and poetry of mystic consciousness assures an invitation of what may be called religion in the form of skepticism and vice-versa. As Jeffares rightly points in an elaborate fashion on the role of religion, skepticism and magic of Yeats in his association with a great Indian creative writer, Mohini Chatterjee:

Yeats was by nature at once religious and skeptical. He wanted a faith, he wanted to believe, but what was he to believe in? His father's unbelief had a very strong influence on him when he was a child and so the Christianity of his day seemed to be ruled out. His youthful interest in science did not last long. It was replaced by a passion for poetry—stimulated no doubt by the effect on him of Laura Armstrong, a dashing girl for whom he wrote his first verse plays. At the High School he had joined with some friends in inviting an Indian, Mohini Chatterjee, to come from London to discuss his beliefs with them in the Hermetic Society they had formed in Dublin. Yeats was interested in theosophy, but soon after he joined the Theosophist in London, he was asked to resign—the skeptical side of him having wanted proofs. Magic then occupied him; he joined the Order of the Golden Dawn in 1890, and his interest in Rosicrucianism and Cabbalism developed. Study of the occult formed a large part of his life, though he kept it, in general, out of his writing. He wrote to John O'Leary in July 1892 that it was absurd to hold

him 'weak' or otherwise because he close to persist in a study which he had decided four or five years earlier to make, next to his poetry, 'the most important pursuit of my life'. He went on to say that if he had not made magic his constant study, he could not have written a single word of his Blake book nor would The Countess Kathleen ever have come to exist. (Jaffares: 1991: xxiv)

An associate of Madame Blavatsky, Mohini Chatterjee drew Yeats's attention through his ideas on rebirth. In his poem addressed to Mohini Chatterjee, Yeats is preoccupied with the idea of reincarnation:

Birth is heaped on birth  
That such cannonade  
May thunder time away,  
Birth-hour and death-hour meet,  
Or, as great sages say,  
Men dance on deathless feet.

(1955:280)

Chatterjee's philosophy established the poet's "vague speculations and seemed at once logical and boundless" (Yeats: 1956:92). Jeffares confirms that "The Indian upon God" and "The Indian to his love" were "inspired by the Brahmin Theosophist (1984:07). Mohini Chatterjee "taught that everything we perceive, including so-called apparitions, exist in the external world; that this is a stream which flows on, out of human control; that we are nothing but a mirror, and that deliverance consists in turning the mirror away so that it reflects nothing"(Hone 1942:48).

Purohit Swami, an Indian monk, largely influenced Yeats. The poet incorporated many of his ideas in relation to the Indian conception of the identity of the Soul and the Brahma. Yeats read the monk's autobiography, wrote introductions to Purohit Swami's books, and translated *Upanishads* in collaboration with him. That the soul is liberated from the bondage of action and becomes aware of its identity is a concept Yeats enunciated by means of his august association with Swami.

During the later period of his life, Yeats read Spangler's *Decline of the West*, which corroborated his vision of the disintegration of the present historical cycle. The year 1918 saw the publication of the present historical cycle. The year 1918 saw the publication of *The Tower*, in which he reached almost the summit of his creative vision. The intricate beauty of *The Tower*, effected by a combination of a tense, astringent bareness with mythological embroideries, was fully retained in the poems of the *Winding Stair* in 1933. *Words for Music* perhaps with its *Crazy Jane* and *Old Tom the lunatic*, was published in 1932, and showed a new vision of Yeats's poetry--a vigorous and passionate zest for life with curious mingling of the sensuous and the cerebral, which found an effective outlet in the heroic, defiant, ironical gaiety of the *Last Poems* (1936—39). The last phase shows the antimony between the body and the soul, between the self and the anti-self, between the recluse and the man of action, which is really resolved, but there is an attempt to have encompassed a fuller vision of life.

Yeats had lifelong desire for three things—truth, knowledge and mystery of life and love. He does not know how to compromise love with mere facts, nor does he want to know how to lose mystery or desire for knowledge to be lost unattended and ignored in the human experience

and human sensibility. The adventure of life and love as he delineates in his sonnets with skilful handling of emotions and sensibilities—sometimes passionate and sometimes poised—brings forth a new wonderland of serenity of vision where all intuitions and expectations, promises and performances are baked in the warmth of mystic resonance. In fact, Yeats has a promise, quite unlike others, to look at himself not merely in isolation but also in association with all experience—insignificants or otherwise. All these contribute to a mystic grandeur. As he frankly admits:

I sing what was lost and dread what was won,  
I walk in a battle fought over gain  
My king a lost king,  
And lost soldiers my men;  
Feet to the Rising and Setting may run,  
They always beat on the same small stone.

Yeats makes a quest for expressing himself clearly in all his visions where the medium of poetry gives an added advantage—the advantage of making oneself restrained in tone and temperament. His joy of entering into the world of mysticism in wonder and fulfilment thrills and excites us. Yeats makes an earnest endeavour in almost all the poems to make us sharers in his visionary experience.