

CREATIVE AND CRITICAL WRITINGS

OF

ARMANDO MENEZES

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BY

EDWARD JOACHIM D'LIMA

M.A., M.Phil.

Selection Grade Lecturer,

D.M.'S COLLEGE OF ARTS, SCIENCE & COMMERCE,

ASSAGAO - BARDEZ- GOA

Under the guidance of

PROF. A.K.JOSHI

Head, Department of English

GOA UNIVERSITY

Taleigao Plateau,

Goa.403206

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the Thesis titled, "CREATIVE AND CRITICAL WRITINGS OF ARMANDO MENEZES" has been written exclusively by me and that no part of this thesis has been submitted earlier for any award of this University or any other University.

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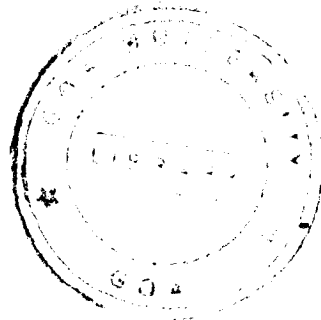
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goshiAK
(Prof. A.K. Jashi)
RESEARCH GUIDE

Taleigao Plateau,

Goa.

May, 2003



goshiAK
Professor and Head

Department of English

Goa University

Head

Department of English
GOA UNIVERSITY

goshiAK

Dean

Faculty of Language

Goa University

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CHAPTER I

Armando Menezes: The Man

CHAPTER I

1. Armando Menezes: The Man

1.1.

Professor Armando Menezes, poet and professor, was born at San Mathias, Ilhas, Goa, on 11th May 1902. He was the son of Adv. Luis Manuel de Menezes and Mrs. Arminda Correia Lobo. After primary education in his village, and a stint at the Portuguese Liceu, he studied English at Arpora at the famous 19th century school, the first of its kind run by Fr. Lyons. He passed his Matric Examination of the University of Bombay, with high percentage and obtained the "Sir Cowasjee Jehangir Latin Scholarship". He completed all his University Education at St. Xavier's College, Bombay, joining it in 1920.

In 1924 he stood first in the first class at the B.A. Examination obtaining "the Duke of Edinburgh Fellowship" for two years and a gold medal, conferred by the college. In 1928, he passed the M. A. Examination with a claim for the Chancellor's Medal for having stood first in Arts. From 1924 he joined the faculty of St. Xavier's College as a professor of Latin and English Literature and continued up to 1934. In 1934 he was selected by the Board of Public Instruction, Bombay and joined the Bombay Educational Service as professor of English.

In the same year he was nominated as professor of English at Karnatak College, Dharwar.

In 1949, he was appointed Assistant Secretary of the Ministry of Public Instruction, Bombay and worked as a bureaucrat until 1950. In 1950, he joined as professor at Elphinston College, Bombay. Later, he worked as Principal, Karnatak College (1950-52), Principal, M.N. College, Visnagar (1952-54), and Principal, Rajaram College, Kolhapur (1954-57). Although he was reemployed for three years, he resigned to join the Department of English, Karnatak University as Professor. Simultaneously he became the Principal of Karnatak college from 1958 to 1962. In March 1967, he retired from the University and continued as UGC Professor of English until he retired. He died in 1983 in Bombay at the ripe age of 81 years.

Among his other activities, he was appointed as Member-Secretary, Karnatak University Committee and functioned in that post from 1947 to 1949. In 1947, the government of India appointed him to a diplomatic post in Goa as Indian Consul but was declared *persona non grata* by the Portuguese who refused to accept his credentials because of his strong background as a freedom fighter against the Portuguese rule.

Sir Eugene Millington-Drake, Vice-President of "Poetry Society" of London, once defined him as one of the most original of Indian poets. And the great Indian philosopher and writer, Sri Aurobindo Ghose wrote about him that " he is one of the few Indians who really (in reality) succeeded in writing English verse which did not cease pleasing the English themselves, who until now viewed the efforts of the majority of Indian poets with a certain disdain." His literary works figure in various histories and anthologies of Indo-Anglian literature. He has contributed to various newspapers and magazines like *The Goan World*, *The Anglo-Lusitano*, *In the Mission Field*, *The Popular Magazine* et cetera, which were published from Bombay in the early thirties and forties. He was also the Editor of *Catholic Action* and *Youth*, both organs of the Catholic students' Union of Bombay of which he was the President. He also wrote a study in English of a number of Indo-Portuguese poets, with the title, "A Peep at our Parnassus."

He knew a number of Indian languages in depth, which helped him to translate verses from Kannada and Marathi into English. As a member of the committee of the Centenary of Francisco Luis Gomes, he organized and published in 1931, in collaboration with Prof. Avertano Fernandes, the Memorial Volume in which he published an

Ode, entitled "Centenary Ode", and translated into English the work *Le Marquis de Pombal*.

1.2.

Armando Menezes was a prolific writer and an Indian English poet par excellence. His contribution to the Indian writing in English is considerable and noteworthy. Among his earliest writings is a social satire, *The Emigrant*, published in 1933 in blank verse on the Goan emigrant in Bombay, British India from Portuguese India, running into 1000 lines. The next to follow was a long mock epic, *The Fund*, again in 1933, similarly in blank verse consisting of twelve Cantos. These were followed by three collections of lyrics, namely, *Chords and Discords* (1939), *Chaos and Dancing Star* (1940), and *The Ancestral Face* (1951). It was soon followed by patriotic lyrics, *Soul of the People*. In 1969, a selection from the various lyrics published earlier formed the *Selected Poems*, another volume of poetry. The last volume to see the light of day contained more lyrical poems in *Songs from the Saranas and Other Poems*, published in 1971.

1.3.

In his later years, Armando Menezes turned to translations, first from the Portuguese Literature. His main translation from the Portuguese was the translation into English of *Os Brahamanes*, by

Francisco Luis Gomes. His knowledge of the Portuguese language, which he had studied in the primary school, stood him in good stead in these translations. Speaking about the novel he says, "At first the title of the novel is misleading, the main charge of the novel is against Brahminism of all kinds and in all places." As far as drama is concerned, he seems to have published only one play, a social comedy called *Caste*.

Later on, he was deeply involved in the translations from the original Kannad along with S.C. Nandimath, R.C. Hiremath, S.S. Bhoosnurmth, Dr. M.S. Sunkapur and S.S. Angadi of *Vacanas of Siddharameshwara*, *Vacanas of Basavanna* and *Vacanas of Akkamahadevi*, and *Sunya Sampadane*, running into five volumes published by the Karnatak University, Dharwar in 1978. He also edited in the same year, with introduction, translation and notes and comments, a work called *Essence of Satsthala, Vacanas of Tontada Siddhalingueshwara*. This exercise of translations from the ancient religious Kannada texts provided him a mystical experience which is reflected in the choice of themes of his later poetry.

1.4.

Armando Menezes had passed his Second Degree (Segundo Grau) Portuguese primary examination when he was eight years old. Later,

in his autobiography, he recollects: "I see the second degree examination as through a mist. The small, eight- year old boy with the innocent face must have looked quite prim in his tie – for my father believed in collar and tie for his boys from a very early age. I dare say he did his act very well, or allowance was made for his size and years. The only clear memory I have of this examination is my wrestling with a sum – a conversion of the old coinage into the new, or something – and getting involved in fractions and more fractions." ¹

His passing the Second Degree Examination, on the contrary, proved to be an impediment in order to get admission for the Lyceum (secondary school institute) as the authorities were adamant that he had to be ten or no entrance. Fortunately for him an elderly man started an English school in his own village. Goa was then awakening slowly from its torpor, and feeling its way gingerly towards a higher level of emigration. All that the Portuguese primary school taught the majority of the pupils, who did not speak Portuguese at home, was to read their correspondence in Konkani. But it was deemed sufficient by a generation that had no higher ambitions out of Goa than being a butler, cook or ayah – a label which stuck to the Goan at large for many years and still dies hard in many quarters. But the middle class emigrant wanted to be educated in English, and few of them could afford to migrate to the few schools that were emerging in

different parts of Goa, and notably in the Bardez district. Hence, the English school in the village proved to be extremely useful to Armando.

But as luck would have it, Armando and his second sister were admitted to the Portuguese Lyceum when their father, who was practicing law, made Panjim his headquarters. Here he was loaded with many subjects like Portuguese and French, Mathematics and Drawing, the Natural Sciences, History and Geography and Gymnastics. He says that he was rather lonely in that 'crowded haunt of scions of fisherfolk'. Somehow failure at the Goa Lyceum was a happy turning-point for him. He was again at another English school in a 'stately old mansion, long deserted, half in ruins, but whose long halls and high ceilings came nearest to the abbeys and cloisters where learning was once kept alive in Europe'. After a stint here, the next year he migrated to St. Joseph's High school, Arpora, which was the best school in Goa in those days. Here, he studied under the influence of Father Lyons, a great educationist, and learned from him Mathematics and Latin. These were to be of great help to him when he joined higher institutions in Bombay. Because he obtained the Latin scholarship at the Matriculation, his father compelled him to leave for Bombay for his college education.

The Latin scholarship, he says, gave him a certain distinction, almost an aura, at St. Xavier's College. It gave him a good start, which, through good luck or hard work, or a happy combination of circumstances, was never lost. Bombay was in the twenties, a cosmopolitan city, attracting British dramatic companies and Italian operas. Armando and his colleagues never missed any of these shows, specially operas but did not allow these diversions to interfere with their studies.

Changing from the science stream to Literature he was introduced to Shakespeare and Carlyle and Byron, Shelley and Wordsworth.

1.5.

While he was at college in 1920, the Catholic life in Bombay was disrupted and torn with dissensions. East Indians were set against Goans and Mangaloreans and Mangaloreans against Goans. Being a Goan and a Catholic himself, he had to diplomatically veer himself from all controversies through great difficulty. He even lost a part-time teaching post for being a Goan. But when the results were announced three months later, he was standing first in the first class at the B.A. Examination and was appointed in the same college as a Lecturer in English and Latin. Soon he earned more laurels for

himself. At the M.A. Examination, he was awarded the Chancellor's Medal and subsequently continued as Lecturer in the same college.

The teacher, according to him, is like the poet, born and not made. He has to be forged in an implacable fire. The students are resistant to a young teacher. They want to be awed by age and by the aura of what is thought to be experience. They are even prepared to be bored, provided it is an old bore that bores them, for they can laugh behind his back. "But they couldn't laugh behind my back", he continues.² Armando is very modest about himself as a teacher. He says he was shy, often tongue-tied, largely unprepared, still, unconsciously, groping for a style of his own. A few years from hence he had become the most loved and wanted teacher in his institution.

S.S. Wodeyar, the former Vice-Chancellor, Karnatak University, Dharwar, has this to say about Armando Menezes: "the lectures were rich with allusions from his accurate reading of the classics as well as from the latest writers and poets, interspersed with sparkling wit and enlivened by relevant humour. These embellishments made his teaching a creative art, not only would his students look forward to his lectures, but students from other faculties cut lectures to attend his." He continues: "It was a continual delight to listen to these

lectures, full of beautiful ideas, images, floating up like 'beaded bubbles winking at the brim'.³

Wodeyar says that Prof. Armando always came thoroughly prepared. Even after forty-three years of teaching, he prepared for his lectures. One could see small slips of paper in the books he carried to the class. These slips would contain notes scribbled that very day in the early morning while preparing for his classes. These scribbled notes would probably not make much sense to others. They were only aids to his memory to help him in arranging his ideas on the subject of his lecturing. Wodeyar has heard him teaching the same poem at different times and at different levels in the college, and every time he would have added something more, brought in more allusions, enriched it with more comparisons from more recent writings on the subject. Nothing was ever stereotyped or hackneyed by repetition. Occasionally, he would come out with brilliant flashes of imagery more poetic than the imagery in the poem itself. Ideas and images would come as if boiling and bubbling over, and sometimes it would look as though he was choking with too many ideas trying to gush forth at once. He used to be so engrossed while teaching, so lifted out of himself, that the students too experienced a kind of rapture, a feeling of participation in the enjoyment of literature. And when the bell

rang, the students felt as if a sort of rude jerk awakened them, from a different world together.

1.6.

Another great quality of Prof. Menezes as a teacher according to Wodeyar, is his extreme attachment to his students. His interest in their welfare was unsurpassed. Both in the classroom and outside, his attitude towards his students has always been friendly and informal. He would welcome students meeting him either in college or at his house at any time of the day. He would always find time to explain their difficulties and to give them guidance and help. He would even excuse himself from joining a family outing or a party, only to help a student with his lessons or to solve his difficulties. His house was a veritable second home to countless students for more than forty years. A large share of the credit for this hospitality and friendly atmosphere in their home went to Mrs. Menezes, who by nature was extremely kind-hearted and generous. She looked upon her husband's students with motherly affection. The atmosphere in their home was so charged with love and cordiality that one was drawn closer to their family as the days went by. Prof. Menezes mixed freely with students with no inhibitions of whatever kind. He did not need any distance to be maintained between the students and himself.

Wodeyar quotes the following lines from Tagore to describe the cordiality and informality with which he treated his students: ⁴

The Great walks with the small
without fear,
The Midling keeps aloof.”

The regard and respect that his intrinsic worth commanded could not be lessened by nearness to him. It is these qualities of understanding, friendliness and informality that have made him so popular among the students without taking away an iota of their regard and respect for him.

He felt the pulse of the students. He seemed to know instinctively their thoughts and aspirations. As the best example of his understanding of the youth and its aspirations it would be useful to mention what happened in the year 1942 when the ‘Quit India’ movement broke out. It aroused patriotic feelings among the youth of the country. Students went on strike and abstained from classes. They organized demonstrations against the tyranny of the British rule in India. The movement also aroused powerful patriotic feelings in Prof. Menezes who had always been a nationalist at heart. The students’ movement found sympathetic support from Prof. Menezes whose heart responded to the call of the newly awakened generation. In his thoughts and outlook on life, Prof. Menezes had always

symbolized the spirit of youth. Up to that time, Prof. Menezes had been highly westernized in his habits and ways of living and was known for his fastidiousness about his clothes and manners. However, a sudden change in his attitude towards life and ways of dressing could be noticed. During the troubled days, he spent most of his time meeting groups of students and discussing with them and directing their energies towards effective programmes and activities in the cause of India's freedom. He appreciated their patriotic feelings and understood their anxiety to participate in the fight for freedom of the motherland and was himself prepared to play his part in the national struggle. This compelled him to give up his western mode of dress and start wearing khaddar. He was very fond of wearing a kurta and pyjamas. ⁵

Whenever misunderstandings arose between the students and the authorities, he served as a link to clear such misunderstandings and to restore amity and goodwill by explaining the students' point of view to the authorities. In ugly situations when there was a possibility of college property being destroyed or damaged by headstrong students, he could persuade them to desist from such acts, and he saw to it that saner councils prevailed. Once when Principal Farran, an Englishman was being harassed by a mob of students, only Prof. Menezes could dissuade them from doing anything that would cause

harm or embarrass him.⁶ Thus he played the role of a friend, philosopher and guide to the students and to the authorities in those troubled days of the struggle for India's Independence. He could achieve this because he enjoyed the confidence of the Principal and commanded the respect of students.

1.7.

Another great quality of Prof. Menezes was that he could understand all types of students. He could appreciate different talents whether it was in Music or Dramatics, Debating or Sports. He was as much at home with sportsmen and artists as with scholars. He did not encourage students to be mere bookworms. He took keen interest in all the curricular as well as the extra curricular activities of the college where he taught. He often took part in college debates and participated in English plays produced by the English Association of the college.⁷ Thus, both by example and precept he encouraged and assisted the students to develop an integrated personality and to play their legitimate role in the larger life of the college community.

Writing in the Souvenir, published in Commemoration of his sixty-fifth birthday, Wodeyar again says: " Prof. Menezes is a man of mature wisdom, erudite scholarship, a veteran teacher with 43 years of fruitful experience. He has dedicated his life to his noble

profession, and the number of students who have benefited from his teaching, his scholarship and his wisdom would be legion. Many have obtained doctorates and many more adorn high positions in different fields. They are scattered all over the country and abroad. He had infused in the minds of thousands of his students great love for literature and kindled in them a burning desire for learning. We in the Karnatak University are proud of him, as any University would be proud to have a teacher of his attainment and eminence.”⁸

Dr. N.R. Tawde, Vice-Chancellor, Marathwada University, Aurangabad, has this to say in a message to the Commemoration Souvenir on the sixty-fifth birth anniversary of Prof. Armando Menezes: “ His simple living and ease of associating himself with the common man coincided with his free style of English writings and orations. One always felt a touch of subtle humour in listening to him in conversation and in propounding of even serious themes in large or small gatherings. Although placed in high positions of administrative and literary spheres, he identified himself with diverse societies in social circles.”⁹

1.8.

Prof. Menezes was a creative artist. Dr. G.S. Amur, Head, Department of English, Marathwada University in his essay, “Prof.

Menezes: The Man”, confides: “For Prof. Menezes literature is not a potential source of criticism and research as it is for many scholars these days, but a joy and an end in itself. He never cared much for criticism as an organized discipline and used to say that he would rather read a third rate poem than a first rate piece of criticism. As a creative artist he knows how rare and valuable a gift creativity is.”¹⁰

Prof. Menezes never sought the refuge of the ivory tower though he was a great lover of literature and the arts. His work as member-secretary of the Karnatak University Committee way back in 1947 showed that poets could be even acknowledged legislators. Even when he was called upon to play the role of an administrator or bureaucrat, far from being overwhelmed by the role, he brought to his work an endearing unconventionality and humanness. In an age when pukka sahibs ruled even educational institutions, Prof. Menezes, much to the dismay of many of his Class I colleagues remained an Indian, in thought and behaviour. His love of Kannada Literature led him through a strange journey to the *Vacanas* and *Shunya Sampadne*.

K.S.Deshpande pays him rich tributes as a man and as a teacher: “Great teacher he is, he is even greater as a human person. Those who have been privileged to sit at his feet, remember with gratitude the miraculous way in which, he as a teacher, led them

away from one book they were supposed to concentrate on, to many other books, more interesting, deeper, more inspiring and elevating. In fact, he fired our hearts and minds with the romance of books, kindled our curiosity for that wonderful world and inspired us to win, beyond our paltry though necessary examinations, a lifetime of good reading.”¹¹ This was the common fortune of those who, whether they were keen or indifferent, devoted or casual, intelligent or dull, imbibed the spirit of his discourses in the measure of their capabilities.

1.9.

Students who were frequent visitors to his home soon became, without knowing it, full-fledged members of his family. It was here, in a climate of affection and freedom and equality that they discovered the human person that Prof. Menezes was. And this facet of his personality always predominated over his aspect as teacher. His paternal care, solicitude and love were not the exclusive prerogative of his own children, his kith and kin, but even the students who did not belong to his household could bask in the sunshine of his affection. Prof. Menezes was ever extending the sphere of his family, and it can be aptly said of him that his motto was '*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*' – the whole universe his family.

He never tried to emulate the example of the elder generation, where the head of the family was inaccessible, unapproachable, always correct, always to be respected, admired and feared. At the many dinners and tea parties, which he was fond of giving, Prof. Menezes always played the role of an elder among equals. He would tell stories and crack jokes, which sent his guests into peals of laughter. There was absolute freedom for all, no inhibitions between old and young, student and teacher, father and son. The mask of the stern administrator, the exacting teacher, slid down and there was the just human, very human person underneath.

Another facet of Prof. Menezes, which impressed everyone was his ability to converse. It was a treat to listen to him. One did not need to make any effort to cajole him into conversation. The preliminaries over, he would take the initiative and the leadership, and till your time was up he would be doing all the talking and when you left his residence, you regretted that you had not more time at your disposal. Like his classroom discourses, learned as they were, his conversation was always punctuated with sparks of wit, refined humour and apt quotations.

Menezes played the role of guardian to many of his students and played it effectively. He was a never-failing friend and would always

be ready with advice and help in times of difficulty. He would do anything and everything for you, from extending financial assistance to getting a suitable job or a suitable partner in life. ¹²

He was acutely conscious of his duties and by his example, reminded others of theirs. He never spoiled his students, and while allowing all liberty, he never let them lose sight of their primary responsibilities. And he himself set a high standard of duty and discipline. Never on any pretext did he miss his engagements, either in the college or outside. He would walk miles in any weather to keep a tea engagement at the residence of a past student. He never skipped a class.

Menezes was also fearless. He always spoke the truth whether that truth was palatable or not and many have been the troubles he has invited upon himself because of his frankness and fearlessness. But that has never worried him in the least.

1.10.

Menezes' writings are marked by their striking originality of thought as well as expression. It is, however, pre-eminently as a poet that his creative urge manifests itself. He is one of those Indian poets writing in English who do not strike a false poetic note or appear

cramped and ill at ease writing in a foreign language. He regards English as one of the many Indian languages and his exploitation of it to its fullest possibilities, both in range and depth, produces some of the best poetry and prose. To say that Menezes the lyricist is a great thinker sounds like a paradoxical statement for those at least who identify lyric with just light airy nothings. And yet here is lyrical poetry, which is unique in that the weight of intellect never overburdens their lightness of touch and feeling; there is music, which has meaning of the soul and the intellect; a wealth of fresh imagery, which is integral; happy and memorable phrases, which are organic, and spontaneous. ¹³

Menezes' prose, which is represented by his broadcast, talks *Lighter than Air and Airy Nothings* are no less remarkable than his poetry. Though he describes these as not 'shatteringly original or a result of long and painstaking research', there is in them, nevertheless, much that is remarkable and new. The talks deal with individual writers, literary forms and movements and theories and principles of literary criticism. With his discerning critical acumen he brings a new point of view to everything.

1.11.

Menezes has been throughout an ardent and frank nationalist. For a person in pre-Independence India and especially in Goa, to be a nationalist meant courting danger and self-sacrifice. It was all the more so for a Government servant. In 1942, the whole country, surcharged with great emotional fervor, demonstrated on a national scale against the continuance of foreign rule. That year, the Karnatak college had to face several ugly situations. During a students' strike the Principal, who had always looked upon Prof. Menezes as a frank nationalist, was compelled by circumstances to ask for his support in maintaining discipline in the college. Prof. Menezes accepted the challenge of speaking to the students as a nationalist. He did this even when his appointment had not been confirmed. He could achieve this because of the respect he enjoyed from the entire student community and hence could face any situation with tact and resourcefulness. ¹⁴

Prof. Menezes had a deep loyalty to every institution where he worked. This was on account of his primary concern: the utmost possible service to students and to the cause of education in general. He had the courage of his convictions and could stand on his own against an unjust government order. He was sure that what he was doing was the correct thing.

Prof. Menezes made mild history in 1951 by making admissions in the quickest as well as the most unexceptionable manner, without being criticized by the public or the government. He was never afraid to tell influential public men that he looked to them to develop the facilities in the college, rather than push a questionable student into it. According to S.B. Shapeti, controller of examinations, Karnatak University: “ Prof. Menezes from the first showed his fearless passion for justice, by yielding to no pressures in the administration of the college. He kept up that attitude all the time that he was in charge of Government Colleges, in the face of an administration becoming daily more erratic and partial.” ¹⁵

1.12.

As Member-Secretary of the Karnatak University Committee, Prof. Menezes played an important role. The Committee and its chairman, the late Justice N.S. Lokur, agreed to put their signatures on a blank sheet of paper which was to be the last page of a Report still to be drafted, printed and published. At the early stages of its inception, there was a great controversy over the selection of a site for the Karnatak University. The Senate was almost equally divided on this question. One group canvassed vigorous support for a site of ten acres in the collector’s compound, the other was bent on doing everything possible to select Chhota-Mahableshwar. Prof. Menezes

organized at the University as well as the Government level, support for the choice of Chhota-Mahableshwar as the site for the Karnatak University against the hostile expert opinion that it was impossible to build anything on a hill. ¹⁶

Some time later, for no apparent reason, Prof. Menezes was transferred to M.N. College, Visnagar. Being a man of philosophic attitude, he took this as a matter of routine. In a short time he had identified himself with the college and the town. The small college, in a small place, was riddled with faction and deep-rooted hatred. Principal Menezes threw the weight of his official position into the task of reconciling permanent enemies among members of his staff, who then became his devoted friends. And yet, living at Visnagar, a long way from his family, he was not bored or depressed. He had enough to occupy his mind. He had discovered a new pleasure altogether: the pleasure of catching the first train out of Visnagar when the holidays began.

Principal Menezes came on transfer in 1954 to Rajaram College, Kolhapur. The staff and students of the college were by now accustomed to accepting any stranger that the government was pleased to send as Principal. The teachers and the alumni cautiously waited to test the mettle of the new principal. The first decisive act,

which established Principal Menezes in the eyes of the students, was a small but meaningful incident. A group of student representatives approached him with a representation signed by hundreds of students about a simple matter. He quickly tore the paper to shreds and to the students disbelief, remarked that such a procedure was not necessary to get their demands met. They could simply talk it over. ¹⁷

1.13.

Prof. Menezes possessed two rare qualities not generally found in senior teachers in this country: (1) he was always punctual to the second, a model for youngsters, (2) he was an indefatigable worker who sportingly offered to do more work even when burdened with administration. One characteristic feature of his was that whatever work he undertook, he did it so meticulously as to set an example to all his colleagues. He was first in everything in scholarship, work and social virtues.

After retirement as Principal of a Government college, Prof. Menezes was appointed Head of the English Department in Karnatak University. The fact that the University had to press him gently to head the Karnatak Arts College in 1958, bears testimony to his success as an administrator. He discharged simultaneously both the

responsibilities – that of the college and of the English Department, with distinction.

Menezes, in his career as Principal, not only sought the best possible performance out of his colleagues by timely appreciation or gentle admonition, but by also securing their promotions in time and safeguarding their interests. He expected everyone to work to the best of his ability. His theory was – one must do one's maximum if so disposed; but one must certainly do one's minimum. He always preferred his staff to do their teaching, reading and research first, and then the extra curricular work. He never bothered about personal animus or disloyalty. For him, the main thing was loyalty to one's work and sincere service to students. ¹⁸

Although Menezes was a strict disciplinarian by training and temperament, he was very kind and sympathetic to the clerical staff. They felt his human touch even in small things. He would enquire about their health, the education of their children, and the difficulties they generally faced in their work. They knew that behind the seemingly tough exterior was concealed a kind and generous heart. They always knew that their interests and aspirations were safe in his hands.

As Principal, he was in a class by himself. It was aptly said by a senior professor on the eve of his retirement from Government service that it was precisely because he was a poet that Prof. Menezes could achieve such great success as administrator. But the whole truth is that he was not only a poet and a scholar but also a gentleman. ¹⁹

1.14.

To circumscribe a multi-faceted individual in words runs the risk of incompleteness, particularly, when the person happens to be a vibrant and dynamic personality as Prof. Menezes. Some aspects of his personality could easily be overlooked inspite of the best efforts to capture Prof. Menezes, the man in whom the teacher, the poet and the critic stand in symbiotic relationship. Such an exercise needs to practice neutrality and objectivity if he is to be portrayed in a proper perspective.

Prof. Menezes decided to take up teaching as his profession even before he obtained his Master's Degree in 1928. No other profession fired his imagination except teaching. His fond wish to be a teacher turned to reality in 1924 itself when he was appointed on the staff of St.Xavier's College, Bombay in the same year. Although he chose a 'road much traveled by', it made all the difference, more to the ones

who were privileged to be his students. The world would have been a poorer place to live in but for his inspired and inspiring teaching. Teaching gave him from the very start not only intellectual satisfaction but a sensuous pleasure, rather a spiritual experience. It gave him his identity, his insights and his views on world affairs.

His critical work on Indian and European writers, his cultural criticism, his travelogue and autobiographical writings, light literary essays, et cetera, published in Indian periodicals and published volumes have added up to a sizeable corpus now. His amazing facility with the English language has earned him praise of the highest order. It has made him appear elitist to quite a few of his readers who find the idiom and literary references quite taxing for their minds.

One had to be his student to know what an intellectual giant he was and what an academic treat it was to be present during his lectures. So engrossing and enlightening used to be his ponderings into literary subtleties that his classroom performance was always a pleasure. His ability to distil the spirit of the text while centering its location in a historical, political, ideological and cultural matrix was simply remarkable. He alone would stimulate his students into asking the right kind of questions; he initiated them into those secret and hidden chambers of the writers and their texts to which he alone

could provide the key. The authors and texts that he explicated for the students became their lifetime favourites. He could hold a class spellbound as he recited Milton's *Paradise Lost* or Shakespeare's *Hamlet* or quoted from Virgil, Homer and Dante. He used to weave a web of words which left his listeners wondering at the numerous interpretations that he could find with such ease and proficiency. For his students, attending his classes became a psychic compulsion, as it was there that they could drink deep and to their fill.

1.15.

His creative journalism poured forth week after week, month after month, and year after year. In *Goa Today*, a column called 'Figuratively Speaking' and 'Generally Speaking' which he wrote, made readers wait for it eagerly. Until the end he was a regular contributor to *Goa Today*, thus giving the mature fruit of his experience and expertise to his fellow-Goans.

Creative journalism became his favourite forte as late as the ripe age of eighty. It provided him an opportunity to air his strongly held views on important issues, personalities, places and things. He had the honesty to call a spade a spade even at the risk of being branded a cynic, egoist and even a pessimist.

There is some truth in the fact that his style stipulates an elite readership, which seems to be consciously cultivated. He often uses highly charged words, literary and difficult terminology, which makes his writings, an unusually delightful affair meant only for the select few. For one who played companion to literature for so long, the literary hues and artistic and literary echoes come as naturally as leaves to a tree.

As summarized earlier, the teacher, the poet and the critic in him stand in a symbiotic relationship. While he was a teacher, the poet in him was silently taking shape and it surfaced a little later with the volumes of poetry that poured forth from him. The critic must have been his constant companion. How else does one account for the excellent views he brings to bear upon almost everything that he undertakes or touches upon. There was an extraordinary grain in his genius; this grain sprouted and acquired astonishing proportions when he was roused.

Today this intellectual giant, this rare gentleman who measured up fully to Cardinal Newman's definition, is no longer in our midst. In his passing away his *shishyas* have lost their beloved *guru*, and the Goan community and the country the beacon of light which guided humanity along the true path of sweetness and light. ²⁰

But Prof. Armando Menezes was more than a teacher. In fact, his many-faceted personality found expression in numerous directions – as a poet, prose-writer, and administrator, besides having been a model husband who sired several children holding key positions in various walks of life. A student of his has this to say of Prof. Menezes at forty: “ One never failed to notice the glow of intellectual brilliance on his handsome face. There was a certain attraction, nay, and an almost Byronic charm about his personality. Always immaculately dressed, the well-tailored suits added to the charm of his tall figure, chiseled features and glowing complexion.”²¹

The forthcoming chapters in the thesis will try to assess the achievements of Menezes in many fields.

NOTES

1. Armando Menezes, *The Story of my Education* (Menezes' family collection, autobiography unpublished), 8.
2. Ibid, 48.
3. S.S. Wodeyar, 'Armando Menezes; The Teacher', *65th Birthday Celebrations Souvenir of Professor Armando Menezes*, (Dharwar: Samyuktya Karnatak Press, March 1968), 66.
4. Ibid, 67.
5. Ibid, 68.
6. Ibid, 69.
7. Ibid, 69.
8. Ibid, 70.
9. Dr. N.R. Tawade. 'Messages', *65th Birthday Celebrations Souvenir of Professor Armando Menezes* (Dharwar: Samyukta Karnatak Press, March 1968), 14.
10. Dr. G.S. Amur, 'Prof. Menezes: The Man', *Armando Menezes 80th Birth Anniversary Tribute Goa Today*, Panaji, May 1982, 17.
11. K.S. Deshpande, 'Armando Menezes: The Man', *65th Birthday Celebrations Souvenir of Professor Armando Menezes* (Dharwar: Samyukta Karnatak Press, March 1968), 53.
12. Ibid, 55.
13. W.W.S. Bhasker, 'Armando Menezes: The Writer', *65th Birthday*

Celebrations Souvenir of Professor Armando Menezes

(Dharwar: Samyukta Karnatak Press, March 1968), 37.

14. S.B. Shapeti, 'Armando Menezes: The Administrator', *65th Birthday Celebrations Souvenir of Professor Armando Menezes* (Dharwar: Samyukta Karnatak Press, March 1968), 59.
15. Ibid, 61.
16. Ibid, 61.
17. Ibid, 62.
18. Ibid, 64.
19. Ibid, 64.
20. Anne Menezes, 'Professor Armando Menezes', *Boletim do Instituto Menezes Braganca, Panaji 1984 No. 141, 5.*
21. S.S.Wodeyar, 'Armando Menezes: The Teacher', *80th Birth Anniversary Tribute Issue, Goa Today, Panaji, May 1982, 15.*

CHAPTER II

His Poetry

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2. His Poetry

2.1.

Armando Menezes' contribution to poetry consists of a mock epic called *The Fund* and a social satire in verse, called *The Emigrant*, both published in 1933 and four volumes of poetry published at different times between 1939 to 1971, titled *Chords and Discords* (1939), *Chaos and the Dancing Star* (1940), *The Ancestral Face* (1951), and the *Songs from the Saranas and Other Poems* (1971). In 1969, he came out with the *Selected Poems*, another volume of poetry which consisted mostly of lyrics chosen from the earlier volumes. On the eve of India's independence, he had published the *Soul of the People and Other Poems* in 1947.

To assess the achievements of his poetry and judge each phase strictly on its merits, without losing sight of the total historical perspective, it is necessary to make a detailed examination of the sources of inspiration of Indian English poetry right up to 1947. The outcome would show its emergence as predominantly romantic in spirit because the prevailing political and social conditions and the

general emotional climate were highly conducive to the growth of a typically romantic art.¹

2.1.2.

Indian English poetry had not other alternative but to be born under a Romantic star. According to V.K.Gokak, "it learned to lisp in the manner of Byron and Scott in the verse of Derozio, M.M. Dutt and others. It began with verse romances and lyrics written in the Romantic vein."² However, the deeper tone and accents of Romanticism were caught by poets who came later, during the third quarter of the 19th century. Govind Dutt, the father of Toru Dutt, was the first to introduce the introspective vein in poems like *Romance* and *Wordsworth*. The process of assimilating Romanticism in all its aspects continued well on into the century and even later. But genuine lyric poetry and lyrical narrative poetry, both of the Romantic and Victorian type, came fully into their own in the last quarter of the 19th century with the generation of Toru Dutt which consisted of R.C.Dutt, Manmohan Ghose, Sri Aurobindo and Sarojini Naidu.

The first quarter of the 20th century produced a number of poets who continued to write in the Romantic and Victorian manner. The only contribution of these poets was that they exploited India or oriental thought and wrote in the typical Indian manner. But there

were other Indian English poets who responded to the new trend that was perceptible in English poetry – Georgianism. The poets whose writings reveal a Georgian love of the colloquial idiom and of a simple and forthright handling of poetical themes were Robi Dutt, Joseph Furtado, P. Sheshadri, J. Vakil, G.S. Chettur and S.K. Chettur.

The second quarter of the 20th century may be said to yield a richer harvest. V.N. Bhushan, S.R.Dongerkerri, T.S. Kailasam, M. Krishnmurthi and Armando Menezes continued this humanistic trend even though some of the poets who used to write in the Romantic tradition, later changed over to modernistic techniques. The third quarter of the 20th century has seen the further strengthening of modernist as well as neo-symbolist trends. The Calcutta Writers Workshop has published the works of poets like P. Lal, Kamala Das, V.D.Trivedi, Mary Erulker, A.K.Ramanujam and others, which reveals significant developments on modernist lines in Indian English poetry. Nissim Ezekiel and S. Mokashi-Punekar also belong to this tradition.

Indian English poetry started as romantic poetry simply because it was born under Romantic influences. It became Victorian because English Romantic poetry became Victorian. And when English poetry went modernist, Indian English poetry had no alternative but to do the same. It could not be considered as gross misunderstanding of

the literary situation to hold such a view. All the movements that affected the character of English poetry from time to time also had influences on Indian English poetry some years later, after they had made their impact on English poetry. It would only be natural to expect this specially when one is dealing with poetry written in a second language.

Besides, in India there was the additional fact of tremendous significance – the meeting of East and West. The advent of the English language in India took place at a time when India was still in a semi-feudal state of social development. The English language introduced into India, its 'bourgeois' culture, art and democracy. It also introduced modern literary forms to the Indian people. This impact brought about a veritable renaissance in India and her men of letters were busy assimilating the new consciousness and the new literary forms for nearly a century. This was also the reason for English literary movements making their impact on Indian English writing from time to time.

It would appear that Indian English writing was more imitative than necessary in its earlier stages. But the reasons for this emulation seem to have come about from the fact that English was, after all, a second language to Indian English writers. They had to go

by the best models that they could lay their hands on in that language.

But this does not mean that the Indian English poetry never stood by its own existence. "It was no mere satellite moving around the sun of English poetry", states V.K. Gokak in his introduction to *The Golden Treasury of Indian English Poetry*. No doubt, it may have taken over an idea of a poetical romance or legendary or historical material but what the poets attempted was to explore Indian oriental themes. Once the forms of the song, the lyric, the sonnet, the elegy and the ode were assimilated along with those of the ballad and romance, it was possible for the poets to express their most intimate joys and sorrows in verse.

2.1.3.

A second image of the Indian English poet was also projected during the last quarter of the 19th century. It was the image of Indian English humanism, religion or spirituality being kept in the background. Humanism was at times accompanied by laughter at crudeness and superstition. The Indian English poet who was converted to Christianity sometimes adopted this attitude. But generally, fearless thinking and social criticism are a motive in all Indian writing and they are a direct legacy of the Indian Renaissance.

The first decade of the 20th century brought major political changes in the Indian scene. The Indian National Congress, which had come into existence by then, began promoting a growing political awareness among the Indian people. The Partition of Bengal resulted in a nation-wide upsurge and the launching of the Swadeshi movement by Sri Aurobindo received wide support. Although the Indians gave full support to the Allies in their war, the British Government was in no mood to concede freedom to India. An angry wave was sweeping the country. It was at this moment that Mahatma Gandhi appeared on the scene. There was almost a non-violent war declared on the British government in India. Powerful emotions were let loose and the various modern Indian languages seemed to be the tongues destined to express them. But the medium of English continued to be used by a number of gifted men and women. These had been denied through their public school education the possibility of expression in their mother tongue and hence, on the contrary, had developed an unusual facility in English. English came naturally to them. They may have had their education in rural or district schools, but they had read and cultivated English with loving care. And moreover, most of these writers realized that they could reach the whole of India and even a world audience, through English.

2.1.4.

The spread of education had aroused the energy of the people hitherto dormant and the publication of Indian English poetry was as popular as ever. English was pressed into service against the British rulers in a number of poetical political satires. Patriotism also became a passion with the Indian English poet as he also experienced the same fervor for freedom as his brethren. Again in the words of V.K.Gokak : “Indo-Anglian poetry like the rest of modern Indian poetry, is Indian first and everything afterwards. It has voiced the aspirations, the joys and sorrows of the Indian people. It has been sensitive to the changes in the national climate and striven increasingly to express the soul of India, the personality which distinguishes her from the other nations.”³

Indian English poetry has its own intrinsic value. To understand it we have to examine its creative perceptions with regard to the major themes of poetry like Nature, Love, Man and the heritage of man consisting of myth, legend, history and the fine arts. In balance with these, we have another world of themes like metaphysical longing, devotion, mystical contemplation and spiritual illumination. Much poetry of significance has been written on the second set of themes. Indo-Anglian poetry has also several vital things to say about the destiny of man and his heritage.

2.1.5.

The Indian English poetry of nature reveals both the unique loveliness of the Indian scene and the freshness of vision with which it is perceived. Examples of this kind of poetry may be Toru Dutt's 'The Lotus', 'Our Casuarina Tree', G.K. Chettur's 'Mysore'. R. de Loyola Furtado's 'Buffaloes', Tagore's 'Breezy April' and Sarojini's 'Summer Words' among a host of others.

The following poems could be considered as the best illustrations of Indian English poetry of love: Manmohan Ghose's 'The Garden Passion', Kamala Das' 'In Love', M.M. Dutt's 'The Captive Lady' and R. de L. Furtado's 'The Moment' besides others written on themes of disenchantment, married life and poems of bereavement.

The Indian English poetry of Man has a great variety. There are lyrics expressing a fervent love of the motherland like Derozio's 'To the Pupils of the Hindu College' and 'Harp of my Country', Sarojini Naidu's 'Awake' and Armando Menezes' 'Vande Mataram'. The Indian English writers have also written several poems based on Western myth and legend like Aurobindo's 'Ilion' and M.M. Dutt's 'King Porus'.

A poet has not only to see the world around him but also study the face of Nature, Love, Man and Human achievement. He has also

to look into his own heart besides the world of his imagination and fantasies. Reflective poetry lies between the two worlds – the external and the internal. If the poet reflects on the world around him and expresses his reactions to it in a thoughtful manner, he writes reflective poetry. If his attention turns inwards on the significance of his own life, then he is writing introspective poetry. Reflective poetry is concerned more with the poet's ideas about the external world and the images that come to him in its total significance. Reflective or introspective poetry is thus the meeting-point of the two worlds of poetry. The poet dwells in both these worlds. He explores Nature, Love, Man and the Human Heritage in one direction. In another, he is on the way to metaphysical thought, passion, visionary power and spiritual illumination. He writes as a reflective poet when he stands at the threshold of the outer world and as an introspective poet when he is on the threshold of the inner world. But examples of this kind of poetry is Sarojini Naidu's 'Parda Nashin', Amanda Acharya's 'The Youthful Prophet' and Armando Menezes' 'Aspiration'.

Indian English poetry is particularly rich in metaphysical reflection. Some of these are Tagore's 'The Child', a poem written originally in English, Swami Vivekananda's 'The Cup' and Sarojini Naidu's 'The Soul's Prayer'. We have fascinating examples of the

poetry of ecstatic devotion and exultation in Swami Vivekananda's 'Kali the Mother' and Sri Aurobindo's 'Rose of God'.

2.1.6.

The Indian resurgence received a fresh impetus during the Gandhian age (1920-1947), which witnessed a tremendous upheaval in the political, social and economic spheres. The freedom struggle had reached its peak and there was an unprecedented awakening among all sections of society – women, youth and the depressed classes. The time appeared to be ripe for the flowering of romanticism as never before. There was more than one reason for this. First, the major Indian romantics had, with the exception of Sri Aurobindo, already produced their best work by this time. But after the blossoming of this Romanticism, a natural twilight came in. The minor romantics that followed were the disciples of Sri Aurobindo like K.D. Sethna, N.K. Gupta and others like the academicians G.K. Chettur, Armando Menezes, V.N. Bhushan and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya. There was also a downward trend in the writing of poetry and the conditions were more conducive to the writing of the novel.

The post independence phase of Indian English literature was completely different from the earlier period. With the question of

political independence solved at last, the tensions of the Indian psyche seemed suddenly to relax. The era of hope and aspiration was gone and a new age of power games had replaced it. The 'free' national identity also made the post-Independence poet bolder and more confident. Although his predecessor indulged himself in dreams and visions, the post-Independence poet found himself in line with British and American poets. No doubt there was more imitation of Eliot, Yeats, Auden, Lowell and Sylvia Plath, which had now succeeded Milton, Wordsworth, Shelley and Tennyson. The new poetry written in the modern style is not more authentic than the imitative romanticism of the minor writers of the earlier periods. These new writers wrote poetry, which was conveniently freed from the restraints of metre, rhyme and form, which their predecessors religiously obeyed.

Armando Menezes asks: "Why should we, after 15th August, go on writing in English? Because one would write worse in any other language. Because English is one of the many Indian languages."⁴

He continues to say that most of the writers cannot write, verse or prose. But then, most of the writers cannot write in any other language, prose or verse. Besides, if there was time to think, English has a wider appeal, even in India. For Armando Menezes poetry must have a rhythm and a rhyme, otherwise it is not poetry. He says that

‘for so much of modern poetry is either just verse or only eccentric prose.’⁵

2.1.7.

The new poets like Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujam and Jayant Mahapatra had rebelled against the moralizing, mystical attitude of their poetic predecessors. They wished to be more radical in their writing by adopting a highly critical and eclectic attitude towards life and preferred writing in colloquial speech rhythm and conversational tone. It appears that Menezes’ comment is critical of this style of writing.

It is in this background of the flowering and development of the Indian English Literature that Armando Menezes, a teacher of English Literature, began writing poetry in English. We have to bear in mind the literary situation in India as well as the political scene in order to study his true achievements in verse. A nationalist to the core, he could not have remained unaffected by the freedom struggle and the sequence of events that followed it. It cannot be forgotten that although he was in the midst of the freedom movement in India, which saw its final attainment in the form of Independence, his own land – Goa, was still enslaved by the Portuguese. His own people did not enjoy the freedom of thought, speech and action, which he, as an

inhabitant of free India, exercised. This would naturally have an impact on his thinking, his psyche and his writings.

Discussing his poetry, Armando Menezes has this to say: "As critics and other readers of much of this verse have been interested in its derivations, it would not be impertinent to say here that my poetry has been made by many things: Goa (its history as well as landscape); a Christian upbringing; a live curiosity about other faiths and cultures; the Classics; some acquaintance, in varying measure, with the Romance languages and literatures; a quick interest not only in music and art but in history, philosophy and science, and, of course, in the enduring masterpieces of English Literature. We may add to these influences an inherited passion for freedom and personal independence, and a quite early discovery of India."⁶

2.1.8.

Thus various conditions and circumstances and a variety of experiences had shaped his character and his thinking. Born and bred as a Goan village boy, his studies at St. Xavier's College, Bombay, and his travels across the Deccan Peninsula had made him imbibe many of the characteristics, which we come across in his poetry.

As proof of this, Menezes further says that “How much of this motley heritage was consciously felt and how much only unconsciously, it is not for me to say, but for anybody to say, glibly, that my essential verse had a Portuguese quality, or that its form is cast in Latin moulds, has always seemed to me more than usual guesswork. More perceptive critics have recognized a great deal of the Goan scene in my imagery, as would only be expected, although it was something of a revelation to the poet himself to be told so”⁷. For Menezes, the Goan consciousness is, by and large, a good example of cultural synthesis.

2.2. Early Poetry

Though Menezes may have written a few poems for magazines, his first published volumes of poetry were *The Emigrant* and *The Fund* in 1933. *The Emigrant*, a satire, is in the form of a discussion between Jose Maree de Souza, who is a bit of a poseur, and the poet. Both are Goans thrown amidst the hustle and bustle of city life in search of jobs and away from their homeland, Goa. De Souza is very bitter of the city life in Bombay and decides to leave this ‘busy hive’ where one must ‘starve one’s mind to live’. The poet reminds him of professors who ‘starve the body to sustain the mind’. Jose Maree, on the other hand, longs for the life in Goa and thinks of his lands, which are lying fallow. He feels imprisoned in the city life and says: ‘I must be free –

must call my soul my own.’ Here, he is the slave of the landlord and at his workplace, his boss rules over him. He is forever longing to ‘recline on a grassy hill’ and to watch ‘the river flowing still’ and ‘the golden miles of waving rice.’ Armando is nostalgic of the beautiful island of Divar and San Mathias in Goa from where he hails. The river Mandovi flowing peacefully by the golden sheaves of paddy fields, which wave with the breeze, a sight very different from his present one. Jose Maree continues to complain throughout the poem that in his present situation, there is no peace or joy. He feels like returning home where he can build his cottage, pay the loan and marry, as his parents are alone. He dreams of showing off to his neighbours by celebrating the village church feast. He is just fed up of the deafening clamour of newspaper boys, of the hooting of the taxies, of ‘the rattle of the lumbering, clattering cart, of the murderous din of crowded thoroughfares, of the hawkers and of the trams which shriek and shunt and grunt and groan.’

The Professor poet on the other hand takes all the inconveniences of the city life in a stride. Although he is tired of Bombay, he feels ‘in Goa endless weariness.’ He loves the touch of books, the clash of minds, the swift-changing life, the race and the strife. What Jose Maree would call a fever, is joy to the poet. But one really wonders whether the poet is really convinced about all this or is only consoling

himself. There is no doubt that the poet's heart flutters as Jose Maree recounts the life in Goa.

The reader, on browsing through *The Emigrant*, cannot avoid the feeling that Jose Maree is the other half of the poet himself. Both the characters are actually one and the same. It is one half of the poet that is disgusted with the city life and the other half searching for plausible reasons to continue living there. In short, it is the story of the Goan emigrant in Bombay and his struggle for adjustment to the city life, told by the poet who feels a nostalgia for what he has left behind in his quest for intellectual and financial success. This satire, written in heroic couplets, points to the facilities of mere intellectualism. *The Emigrant*, for all its Prufrock-like poses of spiritual negation, is an honest attempt to probe the futilities of mere intellectualism; its touch is surer, its tone certainly severer, and its emotional background far clearer.⁸

The Fund is a mock epic of about 1000 lines in heroic couplets consisting of XII Cantos. It depicts the Goan emigrant community in Bombay and their problems of existence in an alien world. The epic is intended to avert the danger of the Goan community being demoralized by the acceptance of doles and subsidies from the Goa Government.

It contains sketches of many Goan personalities in public life at that time – which are also types: the orator, the poet, the philosopher, the politician and others. The village middle-class lad living in the village clubs of Bombay and ekeing out his existence is referred to again and again.

The action is described as a heroic conflict between various forces – Gods, Titans, Giants, et cetera as is expected in a mock epic. While some myths have been adopted, others have been invented for the purpose. There are verbal travesties as well as formal; and the mocking echoes of Homer, Virgil and Milton among others.

According to W.W.S. Bhasker, *The Fund* won a *success d'estime*, even a *succes d'escandale*, in the community as a work of art. Compared with *The Emigrant*, its scope is narrower, while its plan ampler.”⁹

K.R.S. Iyengar praises the work by saying that in *The Fund* he has attempted a ‘mock-epic’ with astonishing success. The portraits are vivid and the mock-epic similes are eminently enjoyable.

2.3. Later Poetry

Armando Menezes later published three collections of lyrics – *Chords and Discords* (1939), *Chaos and Dancing Star* (1940), and *The*

Ancestral Face (1951), to which he added *Selected Poems* (1969). Later on the last and fifth volume of poetry to be published by Armando Menezes was *Songs from the Saranas and Other Poems* in September 1971.

2.3.1. Chords and Discords

With the publication of *Chords and Discords*, Armando Menezes rose to his full stature as a poet. There are about forty pieces in all, displaying a pleasing variety of theme and treatment of temper and technique. The volume was devoted to the memory of his father, Adv. Luis Manuel de Menezes, whom he described as “mute inglorious Milton”. The volume was divided into five parts as *Religio Poetae*, *Eros* and *Psyche*, *Roots*, *Many Strings* and *Epilogue*.

It opens with a Proem – a very challenging, thought-provoking synthesis in which the author suggests an answer to what poetry is: its gift of discovery; the difference, if any, between ancient and modern poetry; its problems of technique. Every poem shows the author a scrupulous artist, a fastidious critic, an original thinker with a profound imagination.¹⁰

I would agree with Manuel C. Rodrigues that Armando is an artist and an original thinker whose verse is fashioned in a unique manner with new themes and fresh imagination.

Armando Menezes is a romantic poet. He lives in a world of dreams. But his dreams bear on the realities of life. Any provocation, however slight, stirs the depth of his being. It comes like the first conscious dawn and opens the windows of his soul, bringing in a sense of wonder – or sadness, as the case may be. And his spirit soars, a skylark singing in the skies, true to the kindred points of heaven and home. ¹¹

Armando's dreams become real in his poetry. In the words of Manuel C. Rodrigues, his soul opens up to new experiences whatever they may be, happy or sad and the poet rises to the occasion.

Chords and Discords consists of forty poems divided into five sections. The poems have a variety of themes but are predominantly love poems. The other themes are children, beauty, death, silence, truth, dreams, war, brotherhood, creation, adolescence, loneliness and sin.

Let us study some of the poems and the themes which are handled by Armando Menezes in his individual manner. Menezes sings about beauty and love as lyrists mostly do. But, as in everything else, with a difference. He sees the spirit of beauty shinning everywhere in the world:

I have seen thee lift a corner of thy tent's
Cloud's canvas, like an arch purdanashin.

(‘Ode to Beauty’, 45-46)

He yearns to gaze on her naked loveliness. The poet is even ready to die if only he could view her beauty for a moment:

If thy white lily feeds on dungy dust,
And final glory asks for final pain,
Destroy me now, with death or derision
So may I see Thy face, O Mistress of my Vision.

(‘Ode to Beauty’, 101-104)

In another long poem the poet says that all the world's beauty is his possession and he enjoys it thoroughly whether it is the tiniest flower blooming or the squirrel darting around. He loves the ‘sunset bleeding in the west/ and dawn, the eternal bride who blushes red’. He loves the very young and the old. In fact, there is very little that the poet does not love. The drift of the clouds, the miles of ricefields,

gold or green, and even ice tinkling in the glass give him pleasure. For the poet there is beauty everywhere in nature:

Both shade I love and light; and light and shade
Commingled in fantastic masquerade;

(The Mighty Lover, 129-30)

His poet sings of unborn generations and

Sitting alone upon the ruined heap

Of his self-blasted years, the poet sings. ('The Poet', 1-2)

In a six stanza poem addressed to silence, Menezes describes silence as a mystery. If silence could laugh, it could also weep but silence is far above the human tears. He tells silence:

Yours is the blossoming of nocturnal skies
And yours the slumbering surges of the ocean.

('To Silence', 25-26)

The poet elsewhere describes a vision of modern day war, which destroys and kills and brings pain and devastation everywhere. He describes it as:

A panic of white wings flying,
A howl of women crying
For children dead and dying,
And blasting shells. ('A Vision of war', 18-21)

In another poem the poet describes how Lord Buddha sat meditating 'cross-legged upon a palm leaf woven mat'. His great soul

transcended above all the earthly things. His only mission in life was to spread love and brotherhood among all men.

“No peace for me,” he mused, “no rest from pain,
While of this vast creation one but should
Be to his brother-creature curse or bane.”

(‘Brotherhood,’ 9-11)

Although a stone may be worthless or meaningless to some, the poet finds plenty of meaning and feelings in a stone. In a short poem of fourteen lines, the poet says that others may find a stone worthless

But in the bosom of a wayside stone
There is a world of aching melodies
Predestined to a dumb and dawnless night.

(‘The Stone’, 12-14)

The poem ‘Prospero Speaks’ is divided into six parts. Each part has three stanzas of three lines followed by a single line. The poet says that he is the lord of this enchanted world, which has been specially created by God. The Painter, the Bard and the Sage, who are the only ones who have visualized its beauty, are the only ones who can understand God’s creation. All the creatures of the earth and Nature play their part. The poet questions the meaning of his own existence here but is reminded:

And, far above us, there is He –

The playwright of this scene we play,
The unplucked heart of Mystery. (58-60)

The poet looks at adolescence from different angles. This poem of six, four-line stanzas, begins with a question: 'What would you I shall be?' The poet offers various choices: a cloud hovering above when the sun is hot, a bird sitting and chirping on your window sill or a delicate flower in his beloved's hair? Again, the poet offers other devices like a placid stream chuckling and coiling around his beloved's feet or a book between her hands the pages of which she may turn leaf by leaf. At the end the poet concludes:

I must be I; a body doomed to ache
And taste the scented lust of sacrifice,
A spirit dedicate to Beauty's eyes
And bursting into music for her sake.

(‘Adolescence’, 21-24)

In another love poem, ‘The Reason’, the poet wants to know the reason for his loving his beloved. Is it the music of her laughter or is it her Beauty? The poet finally finds a divine answer to his questions. He tells her:

Thou art an echo afar;
Or must I think that Beauty chose
To tempt my Vision with a star

And bar my footsteps with a rose?

(14-17)

The poem has six stanzas and ab ab, cd cd, rhyme scheme.

The poem 'Eternity' is again a love poem. The poet imagines a situation when the lovers have separated and stopped loving each other. Is such a situation possible? Can the experiences and pleasures of love be ever forgotten? True love has an enduring quality.

The poet asks:

How could the scent forget the flower.

The tune forget the thrill of strings;

How could the flight forget the power

Of wings? (13-16)

The poet concludes that every experience of love becomes a part of the beloved and can never be forgotten.

'Loveliness' is another love poem where the poet feels the hunger of unfulfilled love. His spirit longs for something that is higher and above this mundane existence. The poet consoles his beloved that he is not tired of her kisses or her embraces but there is a call from heaven, which he dare not disobey, and he must tread that path of self-denial and purity in order to be face to face with God. He tells his beloved:

But I have seen the Vision; and my feet
Must tread a perilous pathway, strong and pure,
To that enthroned Peace which waits above.

(12-14)

Menezes' 'Ode to Laughter' is a poem running into twelve stanzas. The poet welcomes Laughter into our lives and make us better persons than we are. There are innumerable references to humorists and writers like Horace, Swift, Aristophanes, Plautus, Jonson and Chaucer, who represented various humorous forms of literature. The poet speaks of Shakespeare's Falstaff and Rabelais and Moliere in the same vein. The poet wishes that the joy of laughter may dissolve the darkness of our spirit. His words of welcome are:

Oh, come, and laugh with all who dimly grope
Within the daedal mazes of their minds;
Laugh with the dupe of love, the fool of hope,
Laugh with the soul whom frozen Silence binds;
Laugh us back humble, laugh us to forgive,
Laugh, laugh, great protean god: laugh and let live.

(67-72)

The short poem, 'To a Fallen One', is a different kind of poem from the rest. Here the poet advises the sinner to keep the secret even if he or she has sinned and not to divulge anything to inquisitive

neighbours. The poet tells the sinner to keep silent and hence to guard the sanctuary of the soul within. He asks:

Why should they pluck your silence, bit by bit? (9)

'The Sweeper's Song', is a beautiful and short poem. The first line of the poem is repeated as the fourth line of the poem: 'Sweep, sweep, sweep.' Similarly, the fifth line of the poem is repeated after every stanza: 'And my dust is the dust that is gathered into sleep'.(53)

The lines add a lilting rhythm to the poem, which describes the sweeping motions of a sweeper. The poem, which is like a song, tells its own tale, which is the tale of men's happiness and sadness, of happy days, which are no more.

We may conclude that in *Chords and Discords*, Menezes had set out to prove that modern poetry was actually only ancient poetry written by the moderns. He had said in the preface to *Chords and Discords* that metre and rhyme was necessary to every poem and in this volume he had set out to do exactly that. Every poem in this volume has its own metre and rhythm even though the poems may differ in thought and theme.

2.3.2. Chaos and Dancing Star

The volume 'Chaos and Dancing Star' was published by Armando Menezes in 1940 and was devoted to his beloved mother,

Mrs Armida Correia-Lobo. This volume is divided into four sections: The Mirror, Lacrumae Rerum, Counterpoint and Transpositions. This volume consists of forty-six poems. The themes of the poems are predominantly on love and nature.

After the prelude, the volume opens with a long poem of nine verses, named 'Instead of a Dedication'. In the poem the poet wonders as to what he should dedicate to:

White flower of womankind
You who made bloom
My shapeless limbs of mind
In your heart's tomb
As in a womb. (6-10)

The poet finds that there is nothing worthwhile he can offer his mother and concludes:

You I can nothing give,
O strength to fight,
O breath by which I live,
Eternal light
On the soul's height. (41-45)

In the poem, 'The Mirror', Menezes tells his beloved that he is like the faithful glass reflecting the beauty of his beloved without asking for any reward in return:

He never asks for recompense:

He waits alone

To see your image in suspense

Over his own. (9-12)

Another love poem, 'Broken Melody' is in the form of a dialogue between the Poet and the Lover. The Poet warns against turning love to lust and dreaming to desire. For the poet, love must be sacred and pure. The Lover on the other hand replies that the flesh is weak and that 'mouths are made to kiss'. The poet is not convinced by this and continues:

When love is turned to lips

And loveliness to pain,

The sun endures eclipse

The heavens suffer stain.... (21-24)

In the poem, 'The Palm', the poet regards himself as a solitary palm that had enjoyed its quiet existence until his beloved came into his life and there has been no rest for the poet since then:

And then you came and built your nest

Amid my crown of green....

Alas, no more for me the rest

That once had been! (9-12)

'Parenthood' is a short poem of two stanzas where the poet tells his beloved that their love and life is barren without the presence of a child:

Our love is barren, Sweet!

No pattering faltering feet

Are heard

On its unlittered floor. (1-4)

This poem, as many of the other lyrics, deals with children and provides excellent study of the child. A child is a symbol of wonder, affection and innocence. It is also a symbol of universal love and beauty.

For Menezes, an expectant mother is a wonder full of dreams and expectations. Who can guess what passes her mind in the expectation of the great joy? The mother's eyes would soon have a tender look as she enfolds her child. The poet therefore says:

When the ineffable splendour

Of those eyes so lone and wild,

Softened to a fire more tender,

Shall be smiling on a child? (9-12)

In another poem, 'Play', the poet compares all human relationships and deeds to a child's play. Just as the child cannot understand the significance of the various relationships in his play, so

does man in his. The poet concludes that all that happens to us in our lives is destined by God. Therefore, he says:

All is play, it seems:
All our deeds and dreams,
All we think or say! (13-15)

Menezes looks at the journey of a train very differently in his long poem of eight stanzas, 'The Train'. For him, the train produces different musical sounds along its course as it runs through woods, over bridges, across grasslands, tunnels, ravines and neglected stations. He compares the sound produced by the passage of the train to the various musical notes produced on a violin. He concludes:

A little pause, and off I go....
My simple art
Touches to music with my bow
Earth's silent heart! (29-32)

A long poem, 'Hampi' on the ancient Vijaynagar kingdom takes us back to history. The poem has eleven stanzas and the rhyme scheme is ab, ab. In this poem the poet brings back to us the images of the glory of the Vijaynagar city – its elephant processions, its

queens and temple-girls, its religious ceremonies, its glories, joys and pains. For the poet, the very ruins speak of the ancient splendours:

Man's joy and sorrow and his shame and glory
Are deathless; for, though men sometimes forget,
The Felt and Done survive the human story,
Wove in Time's substance unperceived as yet. (21-24)

'The Lotus and the Lake' is another long poem running into twelve stanzas. In the first part of the poem the lotus complains to the Lake that it cannot fly to a cloud in the sky because:

While my foot is bound in earth
From my birth! (11-12)

The Lotus would like to be free to move hither and thither and complains that it is obscurely rooted in the lake. In the second part of the poem the Lake answers the Lotus that it is Nature's law that has made them inseparable like a child and mother. The Lake also tells the Lotus that it is also a prisoner by birth and is confined to one place when it would have also liked to meet the ocean. It is Nature's law that has destined that they should spend their lives in this way till the end.

'Counterpoint' is another of Menezes' love poems. The poet, who loves his beloved, would like to be free and not to be bound by love.

The poet would like to love his beloved just as he loves the clouds, moonlight on the sea or the air around him. In the final stanza the poet tells his beloved that she should only let him yearn for her love and need not return his love:

No, no, you need not love me!

Just let me yearn!

I love, don't I, unhopeful ever of return, (25-27)

In another short poem, 'Way and Goal', Menezes compares the yearning of two lovers to two parallel tracks of steel, on each a train. The lovers are yearning to reach each other but are unable to do so as the parallel tracks never meet. Hence there is only despair. Therefore, the poet concludes that there is:

The lonely-aching loss

When they are faring

On parallel tracks, and cross

Despairing. (5-8)

'Love and Light' is another short and beautiful poem where the theme is love. For Menezes the Night is like a pretty damsel that charms her beloved with her dew and her fragrance in the dark night and flies away with her sobs and thrills behind the hills once the sun's

light spreads everywhere. The poem has only two stanzas and the rhyme scheme is ab ab, cd cd.

“Maid in Waiting’ is a delicate lyric portraying in a series of similes the eagerness with which a maid waits for love and happiness, like the ‘lotus for the dew’, ‘sky for the star’, ‘bud for the bloom’ and symbolizes the whole life in terms of waiting:

Like the sky for the star, you wait;
Like the field for the corn;
As the night for the morn;
You stand at the darkling gate
Of a day unborn. (5-9)

In conclusion we may say that the majority of the poems included in this volume are love poems. The poet explores the relationship of lovers in different situations. There is novelty of thought and expression although the rhyme scheme and the metre used in the earlier poems still continues. The lone poem, ‘Hampi’ takes us back into history and rediscovers the past glory and splendour. Similarly the poem, ‘The Play’ is of a philosophical nature where God’s actions are juxtaposed against his human creatures.

2.3.3. The Ancestral Face

The Ancestral Face, published in 1951, consists of sixty-six poems and the volume is devoted to his wife, Matilde Rebelo. The

contents are divided into six parts under different themes like The Pilgrimage, The Garden of Dreams, The Breaking of the Nations, Soul of the People, Songs of Circumstance and Renderings. The Soul of the People deals exclusively with nationalistic themes and consists of eight patriotic lyrics like 'Gandhi Jayanthi', 'Soul of the People', 'To thee Mother', 'Thirtieth January' and 'Vande Mataram'.

Many of the poems included in this volume have a variety of themes, ranging from nature and humanity to nationalism and religion. There are poems devoted to eminent persons, children, creation, to his grandchildren and festivals and school hymns. In fact, there is an infinite variety in the themes which he chooses to write on and also uses a variety of techniques and verse forms like division into three line stanzas and eight line stanzas. Most of the poems in the section, 'Soul of the People', are poems on nationalistic themes and a discussion on these poems will be found elsewhere in this chapter that deals with poems on nationalistic themes.

A study of a few of the poems included in the volume *The Ancestral Face* will be useful to understand the kind of poetry included here.

In the very first poem, 'The Poet', Menezes tells us how the poet tries to grasp reality behind the shadow. The poet can dream of Heaven on a patch of grass and can see beauty in everything. The poet laughs at the one who in his foolishness would strike him a blow. The poet is like a child and therefore Menezes says:

And like a child that looks into a glass,
Turning it sharply to surprise the thing
That mocks it from behind. (6-8)

The poem consists of four stanzas with five lines each and a rhyme scheme that changes in every stanza.

In another poem, 'The Fall', the poet wonders at the waterfall that falls from a great height over the black rocks. The poet compares it to great Lover, fearful and majestic at the same time. It produces muffling music with its sudden flash and roar. This is one of the magnificent nature poems of Menezes. The poet asks the waterfall:

What is your quest? Why does your terrible favour
Search so incessantly the soul of the earth? (9-10)

Though the poem consists of only three stanzas, the poet has succeeded in portraying the glory and beauty of the mighty waterfall. The rhyme scheme employed here is ab ab.

'Christmas' is another poem in five stanzas on the Christmas festival. The poet describes how the divine soul becomes incarnate with the birth of Jesus as man. Jesus is at once the baby boy as well as the Divine Father. The poem is full of words like 'light, Bethlehem, Angels and Mary, which recall the happy days of Christmastide and the worship of the godchild. The poem opens with these beautiful lines:

Every morn is Christmas morn,
Every day is Jesus born,
And we can kiss His garment's hem
Everywhere, at Bethlehem, (1-4)

The poem 'Work', is a long poem of five stanzas which has a refrain at the beginning of each stanza:

How many meanings lurk
In Work! (1)

The poem is full of alliterations and a lilting rhythm:

They can't afford to tarry
They can't afford to sleep
Who've everything to carry
And nothing at all to keep. (17-20)

For the poet work has many meanings and connotations. There is the work of farmers which is never ending, backbreaking work until they

get the golden corn. There is the work of the load carrier, who carries loads of which he cannot keep anything for himself. There is the work of the silent housewife with her heartaches and frustrations. Among the different kinds of work mentioned by the poet, there is also the work of the poet, who:

Makes the song of his Dream
From the moan of his meaning
And the flow of a stream... (57-59)

'The Tree' is a seven-stanza poem on the theme of Nature. The poet who used to climb the tree and its wandering boughs, now feels he is one with the tree. He feels all the joys and sufferings of the tree because he has totally identified himself with the tree. Even when they cut the tree, he says, 'to me the axe is laid'. The wind that wanders through the boughs of the tree, rustle the poet's soul and the aspirations of the tree heavenward are because of the aspirations of the poet. Therefore, he says that the tree is no more a separate object but:

Now in rare ecstasy I find
Your being merged in me. (17-18)

'The Poem' is Menezes' masterpiece on the art of poetry. The poem consists of six stanzas with the rhyme scheme aa, bb, cc. The poet

tells us how he composes his poem. He compares his task to that of a builder, who builds brick upon brick. So does the poet build his dream upon a dream with words that are slow to come in the beginning. He tests his rhythm and selects the words while not hesitating to even discard and reject those, which do not suit him in his creation. He is constantly, 'shaping, forging' and 'hammering hard' until he gets perfection. In seeking perfection for his poem, the poet says he seeks to be perfect as a man. Elsewhere in the poem the poet tells us:

Out of the heart's womb, shrieking, torn,
The poem's fluted limbs are born.... (19-20)

'The Great Servant' is Menezes' long poem of fifteen stanzas. It has a rhyme scheme: ab ab and a stanza of four lines. For the poet, the great servant is no other than God who created the heavens and the earth. He has given us the stars, the sun and grassy meadows like carpets. He describes him doing various chores and serving humanity. He is at once the sweeper of the clouds, the tireless coolie burdened with mystery, the postman trudging along with messages and the dreaming engineer. He sends us friends to console us when we are desolate and sends a beam of light when we grope in the dark. Menezes is a devout Christian and firmly believes that Jesus died on the cross to redeem mankind from sin. Therefore:

When we lose ourselves in strife
He chiefly bears the loss
For when He came to give us life,
He died upon the cross. (49-52)

'The Sitar Speaks' is a beautiful lyric, which expresses the feelings of the sitar. The poet can 'thrill or still' the sitar with this magical touch of his fingers. The sitar tells us that it came into existence with the rising sun and the rainbows. Its spirit was taken and bound to the frame of the sitar. It can produce whatever music one would wish. It can echoe 'the nightingale's voice or rustling of a leaf or the winter of grief'. The Sitar knows everything that one could feel in one's heart before hand. This is on account of its past existence. Therefore, the sitar says:

Thrill me or still me
With your hands distil me
Crushing me strong;
With your soul's power will me
To silence or song. (36-40)

The poem consists of eight stanzas with the first stanza, 'Thrill me or still me' repeated again at the end of the poem.

In another poem, 'Reprieve', Menezes longs for respite from the burdens of life. The poet finds every creature enjoying a reprieve, be it the cattle from its pasture or the setting sun. The poet sees the egrets flying and vanishing in the sky and the stars doing the same. He wishes he could just fly and vanish. The dark clouds in the sky remind him of death but the rays shining across a rainbow make him wish to live for another day.

The poem has five stanzas with each stanza of three lines. The rhyme scheme is a a a, b b b, c c c, e e e.

'Creation' expresses Menezes' own views on the creative art. He explains in detail how a poem comes into existence; how the poet searches for the right word that would express his thought and give a meaning to the words. The poet depends on his imagination to provide the music for his song as he experiences dim vibrations in his heart. The poet right in the beginning describes the art of creation as:

To beat a tune together, find the word

True-feathered for the bull's eye of the thought. (1-2)

The poem has four stanzas. The first two stanzas have four lines and the last three stanzas have three lines each. The rhyme scheme is abba, abba, cdc, cdc.

Many of the poems by Menezes are on the theme of children and their behaviour. 'Tara, Sarah, Clara' is one such poem, where the poet

makes pretty sketches of three little girls named Tara, Sarah and Clara. Tara is a pretty girl, Sarah, a steady girl. Though Tara is shrewd and sensitive, Sarah has the gentler eyes. The poet delineates the characters of each one of them with daft touches of his pen. But the one the poet admires and calls as his favourite is Clara, who is much fairer and bigger. She has a clear complexion and is neat and clean in manners and appearance.

The lyric has thirteen stanzas and a varying rhyme scheme. The poet expresses his admiration for Clara thus:

Her frock is clean as clean can be

Her mouth a deep vermillion;

She's never changed, she's never washed –

A maiden in a million!

(45-48)

The poem 'The Hero' is another such poem on children. The poet describes a ten year old boy in the forties, who is influenced by the on going freedom struggle against the British. He has heard of the sacrifices of so many Indians for the country and himself decides to lead a procession of five children on the street near the station and give their lives if need be. But, suddenly along the street, the boy leader remembers that his granny would beat him if he were late for lunch and becomes frightened. The poet gives a sudden turn to the gallant action of the children who remember that their duty comes

first. The poet describes the fancy of the children to fight for freedom thus:

They bid their books and ...backs to hell;

They, only they, would save the nation

And should there need be, hang alive. (26-28)

The main themes of the poems on which Menezes writes are Nature, children and religion. The religious theme is manifested in his poems 'Christmas', 'The Great Servant', and 'Creation'. Poems like 'The Hero' and 'Tara, Sarah, Clara' are on children. 'Work' and 'Reprieve' are poems dealt seriously.

2.3.4. Selected Poems

The volume *Selected Poems* consists of poems, as Menezes confides in the Introduction, written over a period of forty years and more. He has selected many of the poems, which had already appeared in the earlier publications like *Chords and Discords*, *Chaos and Dancing Star* and *The Ancestral Face*. Some seventeen new poems have been included in this volume. The dominant themes here are the same as in the previous volumes: love, nature and God. There are two poems with nationalistic themes like 'Mahatma Gandhi' and 'Nehru' and a poem on Goa.

Let us now go through some of these poems in order to understand the themes, style and technique as these poems appeared after a gap of eighteen years after the last volume, *The Ancestral Face* in 1951.

'To my Father On the Centenary of his Birth' is actually an elegy running into six long verses. It seems to be written on the occasion of the centenary of the birth of Menezes' father, Adv. Luis Manuel Menezes. The poem begins with the narration of an incident, which had occurred while Menezes' father was on the deathbed. The prayers for the dying were being recited by the family gathered around on their knees. Menezes' father commanded him to kneel down also and a great peace seemed to have settled on his face after that was done.

Remembering this incident after many years, the poet tells his father through the poem that he had always knelt in worship and in love before all things. He says, since his childhood, he had felt 'divinity in man and nature'. But the poet asserts that he had not learnt to bend in order to display false humility. He had refused to bend in support of what he considered as wrong, even though he had to stand alone in life. May be, the poet says, he has not become successful in the ways of the world but in his deepest soul he had found peace. In this way the poet tells his father he had lived for thirty years. The lines:

I have not learnt to bend the body's knee –

Too humble to parade humility. (30-31)

sum up the poet's philosophy of life as expressed through the poem. The poem consists of a new variety of stanza form and is written in blank verse.

'The Poet to His Heart' is the poet's prayer to God. The poet says he has done whatever he could and now the time has come for him to depart. Everything reminds him that his time is near. The poet's imagination is also at an ebb and hence Art has to come to a stop. The last stanza expresses strong faith in God who exists forever and loves every human being. The poem echoes the holy sonnets of the Elizabethan period, particularly the last stanza:

Lord, all things break and pass away:

Thou only art.

All hearts that ail, or fail, but stay

Within Thy heart. (17-20)

'Platonics' is a poem on the theme of platonic love. The poet tells his beloved that his shadow must not stain her perfect beauty. But it seems to be impossible to avoid each other's gaze. It is extremely difficult for the poet to forget her nearness and avoid speaking to her. The poet is even afraid to touch her hand but concludes:

But should I dare so much,

You will understand. (11-12)

The poem has only three stanzas and is simple in form and construction.

'I am a Pool' is another simple poem where the poet imagines that his life is like that of a pool in the middle of a crowded city. The poet suffers a lonely existence in a city square with nothing but the glare of the sun at noon and reflection of the sunset in the evening. During the day, the pool experiences a variety of people like urchins and clowns and pigeons and fair maidens coming down to the pool. But as the sun sets, it is again lonely and forgets all that has passed during the day. With nightfall it longs to embrace a solitary star in the sky. In the same way the life of the poet is similar to the pool.

'Tact' is a passionate love poem by Menezes. The poet is tired of tactfulness and all pretences. He would like to physically possess his beloved and satisfy his desire. But he has learnt to practice patience from Nature, which patiently waits for everything to happen. The poet concludes:

Therefore I wait as morning waits the bud

As summer waits the green and golden corn;

I wait for power to unfold within your blood,

As the womb waits the wonder yet unborn. (13-16)

'A Girl to Her Own Heart' is a beautiful love poem where a young girl discloses the excitement she feels when her beloved calls her by her name. She cannot imagine that the one who she had imagined to be so far above her, could actually call her by her name. She expresses various other experiences, which lovers experience. She dreads the moment when his eyes and hers would meet. She tries in various ways to hide her feelings for him and finally decides:

I will be nothing: never speak to him,

Although my love heart brim

With thirst; (41-43)

'Night in Goa' expresses the nostalgia of the poet for Goa. Menezes, who lived in Dharwar and other places in India, could never forget the lovely memories of his youth, which he had spent in Goa. The poet describes vividly various night scenes, which are typically Goan. The poet misses the warm sea-beach and the native language and the candlelight atmosphere. Truly, it is the Goa of the forties and the fifties before Liberation when life was simple and there was no electricity. Various images like the boiling cauldron of rice, the fishing smack going to the sea, the Christmas festival, the Shimga fair and devotees walking through fire at Sirigaon describe the old scenes of Goa faithfully. The poet writes verse after verse nostalgically about

the village church feast and the people dancing to the tunes of the fiddle. He also describes how the rain thrashes and the thunder gets louder and louder. The poem at the end takes on a sad note and laments for those who are dead:

But there's never any returning

For those who kept the home fires burning:

They have gone Home and shall never come back! (38-40)

There are two poems, 'In Memoriam: Mahatma Gandhi' and 'Nehru', which do not seem to belong with the other poems. The themes are nationalistic and hence it would be more fitting to discuss them under nationalistic poems elsewhere in the chapter.

In conclusion we can say that though Menezes added some new poems to these selections, the themes and the technique used in his earlier poetry had not changed. The only poem, which appears a little different from the other poems is the poem, 'Night in Goa'.

2.3.5. Songs from the Saranas and Other Poems

Songs from the Saranas and Other Poems is a volume that consists mostly of religious and mystical poetry. This poetry will be discussed in the section that deals with religious and mystical themes in the Poetry of Armando Menezes.

Now let us see the various dominant themes in Menezes' poetry and study the poems that come under these themes. According to these themes the poetry of Armando Menezes can be divided into Romantic or Love Poetry, Poetry of Exile and Poetry with religious and Mystical themes.

2.4. Love or Romantic Poetry

Menezes continued to write in the Indian English Romantic tradition even after the Independence. Though many poets tried to turn their backs on the romantic tradition and tried a verse more in tune with the age, Menezes had already chosen his path and was not to imitate these modern Indian English poets.

Menezes lets us into the secret of his art and 'craft' in several of his poems. The true poet is a dreamer, an architect, a blacksmith all in one as he visualizes him in 'Creation':

To beat a tune together; find the word

True-feathered for the bull's eye of the thought;

To marry sounds; together to be stirred

By the vague stirring of some unbegot

Imagination...

(The Ancestral Face, 41)

Elsewhere, in 'The Poet', the artist seeks the Real behind the shadow:

Like a child that looks into a glass,
Turning it sharply to surprise the thing
That mocks it from behind... (*The Ancestral Face*, 2)

The poet is a pilgrim who walks towards his 'one Desire' with 'feet of fire'. He discovers beauty of various types in unexpected places, as in 'Beauty':

The egret rides the buffalo, a pond
Of muddy water burns with sun or moon;
A sudden sunbeam nets a swarm of flies
Upon a dunghill.... (*Selected Poems*, 15)

In the same poem, quoting Keat's well-known line, 'A thing of beauty is a joy forever'; he adds a corollary, which makes it more meaningful:

Neither the beauty's lasting, nor the joy,
Unless there's beauty in the passing
And joy in marking it. (*Selected Poems*, 14)

It is not given to everyone to have this experience unless there is a feeling of oneness with the object, which the poet feels:

The flower or bird
Is but the poet himself

Experiencing himself as bird or flower. (*Selected Poems*, 14)

The man of science also experiences reality but in quite a different way. This contrast comes charged with a new poetic beauty in 'Science and Art' where, describing the artist's attitude to a child he says:

I do not pause to count or scan
Each dimple and each curl,
Nor seek to read the oyster's plan
In every grain of pearl. (*Selected Poems*, 25)

And adds:

I thrill
To silhouettes crossing over the hills
I do not know
Where they come from, where they go,
Nor care
Where, or where... (*Selected Poems*, 11)

Menezes sings about the beauty and love as lyrists mostly do; but as in everything else, with a difference. He sees the spirit of beauty stirring everywhere in the world:

I have seen thee lift a corner of thy tent's

Cloud-canvas, like an arch purdanashin.

(Chords and Discords, 3)

He yearns to gaze on her naked loveliness. In 'Ode to Beauty', he declares:

If thy white lily feeds on dungy dust,

And final glory asks for final pain,

Destroy me now, with death or derision.

So may I see thy face, O Mistress of my Vision.

(Chords and Discords, 5)

Many of Menezes' poems abound in love themes. Love transforms this monotonous world of miracles of scent and sound and hue. True love has an enduring quality. In the poem 'Eternity', the poet says:

How could the scent forget the flower,

The tune forget the thrill of strings?

(Chords and Discords, 35)

Love can make man the 'heir of immortality'. In 'Tonight', he cries, 'Let me once forget that man is dust.' But love sometimes turns to lust, and in 'Broken Melody', he denounces it:

When love is turned to lips

And loveliness to pain,

'Two Worlds' exposes subtly the fondness of the impatient lover to deny separate life and being to his beloved. The beloved has her own existence in an 'ivory tower' blooming like a 'fragrant flower'. Therefore, the poet says:

I have imagined you, miraculous bud,
And yet I know you have your life apart,
Outside my dream, outside my fancy's chart,
Your own, where you, autonomous, taste your blood.

(Selected Poems, 150)

'Maid in Waiting' is a delicate lyric portraying in a series of similes the eagerness with which a maid waits for love and happiness, like 'lotus for the dew', 'sky for the star', 'bud for the bloom' and symbolizes the whole life in terms of this waiting. The poet says the maid waits for love:

As the field for the corn
As the night for the morn;

(Chaos and Dancing Star, 58)

Many of the lyrics deal with children and provide excellent studies of the child. A child is a symbol of wonder, affection and innocence. He is a dreamer, impetuous and frank. In 'Parenthood' he speaks of the barrenness of love if:

No pattering faltering feet

Are heard
On its unlittered floor
No more
The adventure of a word.

(Chaos and Dancing Star, 18)

The poet laments that they have not been gifted with a child
although they have been united for a longtime.

The child is sometimes a rebel with his weak mutiny of bitter
tears. God himself is a child and the world is his play-pen:

He bumps this world with shade and shine
Romps with mortal grief and joy...

(Chaos and Dancing Star, 21)

Children, according to Menezes, unlike adults, still have the
power to dream. For us, chairs are just things to sit on. For a child,

A chair laid low – behold a car!
A little shake – a horse!
A few more chairs – a railway train,
Also a bridge, of course!

(The Ancestral Face, 25)

And then the poem takes wing and soars beyond the eye of childhood:

For while we sit around a board
And talk prosaic things,
Our chairs must thrill with memories
Of hours when they had wings.

Before they swore to keep quite still,
Resolving to be wise,
And wait upon our paltry needs
Like angels in disguise. (*The Ancestral Face*, 25)

A child sits with a book 'rapt in the adventure of festooning words'. In 'Gradus ad Parnassum', the poet reminds the child:

Child, you are all the pages of the book
You are the scintillation of the star
That turns to music in the throats of birds.

(*The Ancestral Face*, 33)

'Tara, Sarah, Clara', is Menezes' beautiful attempt to describe three little girls and bring out their different qualities.

A child can be impish and full of tricks. Armida finds a pair of scissors and cuts off a strand of hair. She is afraid to face Mummy, but a happy idea crosses her innocent mind:

That poor Correia-Afonso

His hair it has all gone so!

I've cut this bit for him. (*The Ancestral Face*, 44)

Of course, she means to stick it on his head when he is asleep.

Many times children like to play the hero from the stories that they have read. One such attempt by a ten-year old boy gives us the mock-heroic poem, 'The Hero' (1942):

He towered.....

Above the rest a quarter-inch. (*The Ancestral Face*, 48)

The hero who leads a procession of little rebels suddenly remembers his granny and

He shook as shakes a mountain rock;

My granny...

Would beat me were I late for lunch.

(*The Ancestral Face*, 49)

The mother's love for her child is so real and poignant in 'Ultimate', where the mother says:

Let me not give – Oh ask me not to miss

This lovely thing that suckles at my breast

Whose toil and hunger are my meat and rest –

Not this! (Selected Poems, 145)

And the absence of the child leaves a void:

But oh! the missing laughter and the kiss,

And the sharp silence of a baby's voice!

(Chaos and Dancing Star, 35)

Menezes is a great Nature poet. There are a number of poems on Nature and the experiences of the poet. He can identify himself so completely with a tree that he can say:

It is my soul that burgeons forth

And laughs itself to leaves... (The Ancestral Face, 19)

The poet can even feel the pain of the tree when it is cut. He adds:

In me you grow and fade,

And when they think to cut you down

To me the axe is laid. (The Ancestral Face, 19)

The calm of a tree is disturbed by birds in 'The Palm'. The parched fields waiting for the rain are described as the 'furrows patience of the fields'. A waterfall is a great lover ceaselessly searching for the soul of the earth in the poem, 'The Fall':

Over the rock's black ruin you leap, great Lover,
Fearful-majestic here, sweet feminine there.

(The Ancestral Face, 5)

In 'Sunsets at Dharwar' he marvels at God's power to create new variations on old sights and scenes for the delight of man. As a Goan, it is a new experience for the poet to watch the sun set in the Western Ghats as in Goa the sun sets in the Arabian Sea. In 'Lotus and the Lake', the sky itself is imagined as a large 'lotus-lake on high', which the lotus, rooted to one spot in the lake aspires to reach. Laughter is compared to the 'morning sea' and by contrast a 'midnight sea' is strange, sad silence.

'I am a Pool' illustrates the poet's freshness of outlook, which sees unsuspected meanings in ordinary things. The pool has a life and secret of its own:

I am a pool amid a populous town,

Suffering its lone existence in a square. (*Selected Poems*, 149)

After describing the many types of images it is forced to reflect, it reveals its own romantic yearning:

Patient, to hold in innocent embrace,

The solitary image of a star. (*Selected Poems*, 149)

Most of the poems therefore are on the theme of love, nature and children. Though published in separate volumes the poems belong to the same romantic pattern and were published in the forties and fifties.

2.5. Nationalistic Themes in Menezes' Poetry

Menezes is truly Indian in all that he has written, and his sentiment is free from cheap and misguided nationalism. He sings of India's struggle for independence, commemorates her great men and celebrates significant events. The early poems – when freedom was yet an unrealized ideal – are, rightly, stirring poems of encouragement. 'Gandhi Jayanti' is one such poem, which excites the national sentiment with its marching rhythm and a popular refrain:

Mahatma Gandhi was born today;

Gandhi-ki-jai, Gandhi-ki-jai! (*The Ancestral Face*, 64)

'Soul of the People' and 'Dawn' hold out promise of freedom. They sound the call to continue the struggle and strike hard at the cramping fetters. The marching lilt of the poem is unmistakable:

Soul of the people, marching, marching,

Heaving the flag of Freedom high,

Can you not see above you arching

The calm procession of the sky? (*The Ancestral Face*, 60)

'Vande Mataram' enshrines the spirit of worship of Mother India, in traditional style. The poem uses imagery and emotions, which are characteristically Indian:

With noise of gong and roll of drum

Lo, thy sons and daughters come

To do thee worship, Mataram! (*The Ancestral Face*, 73)

The poem was written on 15th August 1948.

The sonnet 'Rabindranath Tagore' also uses the theme of freedom. The poet cries out against 'blind walls of creed' and 'muffling woofs of tongue', which divide and weaken the people in their march towards freedom. Menezes says:

You sang, and our hearts found their ancient tears;

And our souls sought a haven where you sung –

Bengal, the earliest home of Liberty.

(*The Ancestral Face*, 61)

The poem was composed on 7th August 1941.

The idea of freedom is symbolized in 'Waterfalls', where the waterfalls are a blind force-giving rise to beauty and music. In anticipation of the freedom of India, the poet awaits:

Blind force crashing

Through all wrong,
Freedom flashing
Into song.

(The Ancestral Face, 63)

In 'Thirtieth January' he laments the loss of Mahatma Gandhi, 'Freedom's unstained, unbending blade', and express shock at the news of his assassination:

A silence fell upon us all
As if a star had vanished quite,
As if a world beyond recall
Had vanished in the vacant Night.

(The Ancestral Face, 70)

His poems written after 1947 strike a very realistic note on post-Independent India and convey feelings of disillusionment and bitterness in no uncertain terms. 'Republic' Day (1950) wonders whether Mother India is in fact free:

Why is your rising, Mother solemnly cold?
.....condescend to seem
What you indeed must be! ...

(Selected Poems, 111)

The poet expresses his frustration through the poem on finding poverty and violence all around him.

'Freedom' (1962) is bold and direct and voices great concern about the state of affairs in Independent India:

Freedom is greed, is violence,
Lust, and the lordship of the fool
...Freedom's image cannot keep
Even a poet's loyalty.

(Selected Poems, 112)

The freedom fighters, who had great dreams for India before the Independence, were all disappointed men.

In 'To the Mother' (1958), written on 15th August 1947, Menezes celebrates Mother India, who is the mother of peace and mother of strife. For the poet, as a Christian, she is also the Mother of God:

Mother of Worlds, Mother of God,
Crowned with the heavens and shod,
Great Mother India, Mother divine,
O Mother mine!

(The Ancestral Face, 69)

In 'Tashkent' a poem written much later, Menezes describes Shastriji's death as a dream:

An ocean of universal light
Was all around me, yet I was not,
... A void, fulfilled of peace, a What
That knew not When or Where.

(Selected Poems, 129)

The poem 'Nehru' attempts an analysis of Nehru's genius against the background of several knotty problems:

Wise in most things, you were wisest when you gave in
Resolving to adjourn...

(Selected Poems, 127)

The cold war, the gap between profession and act, fulfillment and intent, the problem of the enemy within and without, the serious question of law and order become a schoolboy jest.

'In Memoriam: Mahatma Gandhi' is another of those poems – a long and sustained effort - in which significant events in Indian history pass before our eyes as in a pageant. The poem is a long poem divided into eight sections. Irony plays an important role:

The land that saw them born

Is glad with water, gold with corn
For strangers' selling and buying...
While her own children die of starvation.

(Selected Poems, 19)

Elsewhere, the frustration and disillusionment of Gandhiji is expressed through the following lines:

About my fruitful garden, gay with streams...
Alas, the streams run blood, and the sweet bird
Is startled out of song...

(Selected Poems, 124)

The land praying and waiting for 'the grace of a saint', the birth of Gandhi, his assassination by a fellow Indian – reminiscent of Abel and Cain from the **Bible** – are portrayed in lines of deep-felt poetry.

The great difference between the poet's earlier idealism and his present feeling of despair in his recent poems is very marked. But the Ode on 'Tilak' is a return to the old mood. The poem venerates this great selfless freedom fighter, this 'father of unrest', with 'the ocean's wideness in his stormy heart' who 'let the waters of the Ganga loose over the thirsty land'. Elsewhere in the poem, Menezes says that Tilak:

Heard the wild Maratha cry, and saw

The beacons flash upon each guarded hill,
And Freedom crashing thorough an alien law –
A torrent bursting from a people's will-

(Selected Poems, 115)

Another poem, 'Hindoostan Hamara', speaks of the patriotism and love of Armando Menezes for his motherland. He praises the natural beauty of his country and compares it to the Biblical Garden of Eden, with its flowers, mountains and rivers. He is also proud of the different faiths existing side by side and says:

No creeds dictate unbrotherly hate;
Made one in thy heart, thy children we stand,
And nought shall us part, O Motherland!

(The Ancestral Face, 104)

Most of these poems with nationalistic themes were written either just before the Independence of India or soon after. They manifest Menezes' great patriotism and concern for his country and its people. As a poet and thinker he could not have remained unaffected by the events taking place around him and he gives vent to his feelings through his verse.

2.6. Religious Poetry

Menezes' poetry abounds with religious themes. For the poet, God's creation was a great mystery. He was concerned with the relationship of man and God and particularly his own relationship with the creator. As a deeply religious man, on account of his strict Catholic upbringing, many of his poems are Christian in character. He tells us in a speech delivered on his 65th Birthday Celebrations: "I have at times suspected myself of holding exceptional religious temper; and I firmly believe that to acknowledge a spiritual power pervading the world and transcending it is the main differential of man as man."

In 'To My Father, on the Centenary of His Birth', he tells us:

From childhood have I felt Divinity
In Man and nature, though I knew it not,
And followed with ecstatic peace or joy
Each seen and unseen motion of all things.

(Selected Poems, 39)

Many of his poems are inspired by religious feelings. His poem 'Christmas' comes as a new awakening to most people who fail to grasp the meaning of the true spirit of Christmas:

Every morn is Christmas morn,
Every day is Jesus born.

(The Ancestral Face, 6)

Only our joy at the birth of Jesus must be the joy experienced by the Virgin Mother. In 'The Intellectual's Prayer', he stresses the need for faith; the power of the intellect is not enough:

Grant me to reject
When tired with much cause and effect
This pride of intellect
Which often shoots too wide.

(The Ancestral Face, 7)

'Judas' symbolizes Jesus Christ as Beauty. It is the sins of men, which pierce him to death, which is a new way of interpreting the betrayal of Christ by man. The poem speaks about the final despair of Judas after the betrayal of Christ:

Judas is swaying in despair
Too Beauty drunk to bear
The Beauty's self betraying
Her Heavenly care.

(The Ancestral Face, 11)

'Divine Solitude' establishes a new link between God the creator and the creative artist. The creative urge is born not out of the 'poet's

joy' or the 'artist's pride' but the artist's loneliness. God would be miserable if the stars were 'unskied'. And therefore, the poet says:

Oh, could you know it – You who bless
The poet's joy, the artist's pride –
You'd know the very stars unskied,
And guess at God's own loneliness.

(The Ancestral Face, 18)

Talking of the relations between man and his Maker, how many of us think of God as a great servant, humbly dutiful, busy round the clock to keep the world in order. God has sown the sky with stars, set up the sunlight, spread green carpets for lawns. These lines echo the First Book of Moses, commonly called Genesis, which describes how God created the heavens and the earth.

The poem, 'The Great Servant', speaks of God as the greatest creator. Sunsets and dawns are His smiles. He combines in himself the sweeper, coolie, postman, soldier, shopkeeper and dreaming engineer. The poem speaks of God's infinite love for his creatures. He extends his helping hand and courage when men falter in the darkness of their lives. He suffers for the sins of men again and again as he did on the cross. And:

He sends us laughter like the sun
And tears like the cleansing rain;

And when His service seems all done,
He does it over again.

(The Ancestral Face, 28)

Manuel C. Rodrigues describes Armando as a fundamentally religious poet and a symbolist of profound depths.¹² He considers him as of the lineage of Shelley, Francis Thompson and other spiritual masters. For, his is not the cold, ascetic mysticism – all spirit and no flesh- but a radiant, emotional idealism. Living in a world of man and things, the poet cannot close his eyes, deaden his senses to the manifold pleasures Nature offers. But these must be sublimated. Even sensuality must be spiritualized. And it is here that the poet cooperates with God.

2.7. Poetry of exile

To know the reason why the Goan poets like Armando Menezes wrote poetry of exile we have to understand why they became exiles in the first place. The main cause of Goan Emigration is, no doubt, due to economic circumstances; a desire to live a larger life, which the limited resources of the country do not permit and its direction throughout has been, firstly, towards such centers of activities as are nearer home and then further afield to newly-opened settlements and young colonies that offered the best possible prospects for

employment. The best elements in a country's population do not always emigrate and similarly in the case of Goa, the bulk of its emigration in the early stages of its evolution, consisted mostly of untrained and ill-equipped lower classes of society. The first move in the migratory current was towards the neighboring British Colony of Bombay. The lack of English educational and technical knowledge was a serious handicap to them to being admitted to more lucrative careers. The Goan emigrants who were in reality unmarried males, took shelter in the village club or '*kudd*' as it was called in Konkani and this club played an important part in their lives.

But as the demand for educated men became insistent, the wonderful adaptability displayed by Goans stood them in good stead. The sons of emigrants who could afford to study English gradually drifted in the higher technical and professional careers available to competent men. There were those from better off families in Goa like Armando Menezes who came to Bombay in search of higher English education and became professors in the educational services and Bombay colleges.

The apparent success of the returned emigrant reflected in the higher standard of life, the regular flow of remittances in the country and gave rise to palatial structures in the Goan villages in place of the

old mud tenements. Emigration became the surest path to economic and financial freedom and the imagination, specially of the masses, was tickled to a dangerous degree. English education was very much in demand and English schools began to mushroom all over Goa. But the school that rendered the maximum service to educate the Goan emigrant was the famous Arpora school, founded by that saintly man, Williams Robert Lyons, alias Fr. Lyons. The history of this school is the history of the Goan emigration. Armando Menezes had been a pupil of this school before proceeding to Bombay for his Matriculation.

C.de Goveia Melo states that 'the Goan emigrant has always suffered from an acute megalomania and is obsessed with the idea that, as soon as he has succeeded in amassing only a small fortune, he must return to his homeland than to perpetuate his stay abroad, in brick and mortar'.¹³ He adds further that 'it is the peculiar characteristic of Goan emigrants that they are attached to the country of their birth and seldom, if ever, make up their minds to settle abroad in spite of the good many inducements that are offered to them to do so. They do not, therefore, evince more than a passing interest in the civic and economic life of the country of sojourn. Their great preoccupation is to be able to spend the evening of their life in the familiar surroundings of their early childhood'.¹⁴

The greater and more important part of the history of Goans during the past century has been a history of emigration', says Prof. Lucio Rodrigues.¹⁵

From the land that gave them birth they have gone forth into the wide world. But they have always looked back wistfully. The memories of home, the yearning to be back once more in the village where they spent the best part of their youth, have always remained with them in their wanderings.

This spiritual love of the home lies deep in the heart of every Goan, and it is nowhere seen more clearly than in Goan poetry. Literature has always expressed the soul of the people. Their thoughts, their feelings, their passions, their hopes, their achievements, their exultations have found an echo in their literature. The poet has invariably sung them in immortal verse. And Goan poets have given a voice to the secret yearning of their people abroad for Goa. Prof. Lucio Rodrigues further says that 'they have spent their youth, the most impressionable period of their lives in Goa'. "They have breathed", he continues, 'the pure air of the green countryside. They have romped about on the native cashew-hills, they have seen the simple life and labour of the people, they have heard the music of nature and felt the joy of living. They have seen, heard and felt – and

they have remembered. Their memory is a treasure of old sights, sounds and affections. And when they sing, reminiscences of what they have lived and remembered, mellowed and enriched by time, steal into their verse’.

The sentiment of exile in their poetry is expressed in several ways, and best expressed when it is spontaneous and almost unconscious. There are poems where the poets turn their eyes homeward and with a pathetic longing, sing of their exile from home. In these there is no mistaking the love of the poets for Mother Goa. Often ‘then and now’ is the theme, the glory of the past and the sad contrast of today. More often, it is seen in the choice of a typically Goan subject or in references to the beautiful forms of nature, the native life with its customs and superstitions in all its colour and joy. Such poems are full of local colour and the poet re-lives his early experience. But the best of all, the spirit of exile can be felt as a subtle presence invading the imagery of the poet so that he unconsciously betrays his spiritual yearning for home.

Menezes is a poet of exile and his ‘Commendia Goana’ is veritably a poem of exile. The first of the sonnets describe the scene of departure, the second wistfully recapitulates lost pleasures, weaves fancies about them and yearns for them:

How often, wearied with ungotten gold.
Have I, O Mother, dreamed, and dreaming, sighed
For the pure gold of thy sunsets and the tide
Of golden ricefields when the wind is bold!

(Chords and Discords, 43)

Undoubtedly, it is the exiled Goan dreaming of his native land. In fact, it is the quintessence of the poetry of exile.

In the third sonnet the 'emigrant' is back again, he is a sadder, wiser man; he is 'ambition's fool, toil-tossed, life-beaten wreck'. The ecstasy of the reunion galvanizes him for a moment and he:

Sees, as if waking from an anguished dream,
The thin, white-ribbon of the palm-girt shore;
Gray fortresses, white churches, hills of jade,
Mandovy rushing with his yellow stream,
And then, like Venus form the billows hoar,
Lo! Panjim rises – queen of masquerade.

(Chords and Discords, 44)

This is a sight visible to anyone approaching Goa by steamer from Bombay. The coastline first, then the forts and churches and green hills and finally Panjim, the capital of Goa comes into view.

'Night in Goa' is another typical poem of an exile. The Goan emigrant thinks of the simple folks, festivals and the pouring rains wistfully and of various things taking place in Goa at night and longs to be there. Menezes always remembered the beautiful sights in Goa, its monsoons. All these memories filled him with nostalgia and longing for his beloved land. Menezes not only reminisces on the Christmas festival but even the Hindu devotees walking through fire as in:

In Sirigaum, with flare of lights and clamour of men,
And fasting flesh purifying; and then
Feet walking over fire.

(Selected Poems, 182)

Armando Menezes is a more sophisticated poet than Joseph Furtado, an earlier poet, although both wrote poetry of exile. Furtado's poetry is noted for its simplicity of rhyme and diction like 'The Goan Fiddler':

A fiddler am I of seventy-three
I go fiddling up and down
Both countryside and town
No children nor kith nor kin have I,
Not even a home of my own
I roam in the world alone.

(The Goan Fiddler, 6)

Menezes' thought is more complex and lines in his poems are more painstakingly expressed. Furtado is basically a poet of exile as Manuel C. Rodrigues has described him whereas Menezes' poetry has a variety of themes.

Like a Herrick, Furtado pipes the same song over and over again. His heart is also in Goa though he may be living elsewhere:

And I cannot rise, I cannot pray,
For the feast of flowers is drawing near
And my heart is far away.

(The Goan Fiddler, 7)

Menezes' 'Old Goa', is his song offering to 'those ruins gray'. The poet's fancy takes wings, time revolves backwards and Old Goa re-lives for a glorious instant. Soon the enchantment fades away and the poet wakes to realize that he had but 'walked among the dead'. The poet tells us:

And there were hurryings of a million feet;
And million hands outstretched in hopeless prayer;
And lamentation in the echoing street,
Awe and astonishment, despair and dread.
Then, while the dust of ruin choked the air,
I woke to know I walked among the dead.

(Chords and Discords, 45)

2.8. Mystical Themes in Menezes' Poetry

The last volume of poetry to emerge from the poet's pen is *Songs from the Saranas and Other Poems*, published in 1971. By this time, Armando Menezes was an older and more matured poet. His poetry of this period has simple diction and rhythm but is of a deep kind. He has had mystical experiences and has at last found his true God. He was greatly influenced by the *Vacanas* in Kannada while collaborating in rendering them into English for almost a decade. This episode in his life has proved to be a pilgrimage as it has taken him through many collections: *Sunya Sampadane*, *Basavanna*, *Akkamahadevi* and *Siddharameshwara*. The experiences he has enjoyed while translating have been recorded here. In the Introduction to the above mentioned volume, he says that the mystic aspiration may take, among others, two distinct, though not separate, forms: a desire to know God, or whatever else He is called – The Ultimate, the Supreme, the Absolute, the Highest Perfection, and a desire to love Him. The quest – even at the level of knowledge – is not a purely intellectual one; rather a full outgoing towards the object. It is an act of perception but also an act of love, and perception for the sake of love, which in its turn implies union. The act of love, it is evident, itself involves an act of surrender, and so three separate activities of the self are involved: intellect, heart and will. There is also a corollary to this two-fold desire to know and

to love: a desire for transformation, which presupposes a process of instant or gradual self-purification.

These experiences of mystical life are shared by mystics of all times, races and creeds. The symbols may vary but sometimes only slightly. The mystic may be a wanderer, a seeker, a pilgrim. His journey is a paradox: it is – it has to be – voluntary, but it also fulfils a destiny. Here is the eternal pair of complementaries - aspiration and descent, merit and grace. Not only do we yearn towards God, God may actively, passionately, sometimes painfully call to us. The Absolute seems to exert a gravitation upon us. It would seem that man can sometimes resist, but not escape, its pull.

But the mystic may also be the lover: God is the perfect Mate. The soul is the bride; God is the bridegroom, who alone can slake the soul's craving for love. 'Let him kiss me, with the kisses of his mouth', says St. Bernard, using the bold imagery of the *Song of Songs*; and the imagery has, as will be seen, analogues in the Sarana poetry included in the volume. But the Bridegroom who is sought also seeks for man's love; he is dying, sometimes literally, to chase and capture us. This pursuing Divine love has been figured, in the West, as a mild dove or a fierce hound; or God has been conceived as a stranger knocking at your door at night, wanting to be admitted, his feet tired and travel

sore. In Francis Thompson, the Divine feet are untired and all conquering. Sometimes, too, as Teresa of Avila says in her 'Interior Castle', the door need not be opened. The God that seeks you from outside is already inside you.

The notion of the relation between God and Man as a sort of business, or legal relation of give and take, of merit and reward, failure and retribution, has vitiated all the religious concepts. It is through the intuition and the experience of the mystics and saints that we know it to be a relation of love. It is love that wipes out the difference between the infinite and the infinitesimal finite; between God's mercy and the 'merest worm'. The grace of God is as infinite as Himself.

The poet says that he has called the pieces collected in this volume, *Songs from the Saranas and Other Poems*. The 'other poems' are not a mere appendage or an after thought. These and the others together, and only together, express the book's clear purpose: which is to show that similar, nay, identical experiences, obtain everywhere and at all times, and often employ identical imagery for the expression of the inexpressible. It is the unity of religious experience that is the real intention of the book.

The Saranas, by their very name, suggest one of the primary conditions of holiness: surrender; and in the *Vacanas of Basava and Akkamahadevi* we have an ecstasy of surrender and acceptance, of tremulous expectance and thrilled consummation which constitutes the height of mystical experience and inevitably expresses itself in supreme poetry. According to Armando Menezes, the Great Secret is, not where scholars worry their glosses or scientists send rockets to the moon, but where the poor in spirit, the utterly surrendered, passionately seek after perfection with 'no other light/ Except for that which in my heart is burning.'

Francis A. Menezes comments: "It is no accident then that in recent years Armando Menezes has turned to the mystic poets, translating works from the East and the West in the knowledge that true communion with the Divine, after a point, knows no religious barriers. A truth that has been recently accepted by the new Church as the basis of ecumenism."¹⁸

Of the 66 poems included in this volume, majority of the poems have themes, which are influenced by Basava's *Vacanas*, Akkamahadevi's *Vacanas* and Siddharama's *Vacanas*. Rest of the poems manifest the knowledge of Christian scriptures and the lives of the saints. 'Thanks' is a poem that expresses the poet's gratitude to God because the poet:

'has thirsted and have found a spring'

'has been blind and seen the light'

(Songs from the Saranas and Other Poems, 1)

The poet feels self-sufficient in the fullness of God's love. Poems like 'Hypocrisy', 'Frustration', 'Without Love', 'Devotion', 'Grace' and 'Aspiration' express the poet's longing for the divine love and the emptiness within if the Lord is not present. God cannot live in the heart or the soul of a sinner, reiterates another poem: 'Absence of God'. In 'Look my way, O Lord!' the poet requests God to turn his eyes towards the poet

'So that the sea of joy

May Wave upon wave, swell in me.'

(Songs -, 34)

On the other hand, Menezes' Christian experience and knowledge of the lives of the saints is manifested in poems like 'Test', 'Toy', 'Aikya' 'Choice', 'Imitation of Christ', 'The Linnet and the Canary' and 'Theresa of Lisieux'. These poems deal with the life of the Christian saint, Theresa of the Child Jesus, also known as Theresa of Lisieux, who lived between 1873 and 1897. Theresa had surrendered herself totally to God's wish and she would speak to God and feel his presence everywhere. In 'Imitation of Christ', Theresa confesses:

' A humming
Come from afar I hear
That tells me that my Groom is coming'.

(*Songs* -, 44)

Armando's 'Pater Noster', consists of the variations on the 'Our Father', a popular Christian prayer. According to him, the word 'Our Father' actually means 'ours', not mine alone and though we seek Him in heaven, he actually dwells in the purest of hearts. The poem is divided into seven parts, each part has comments in verse on each line of the prayer, 'Our Father'. Every line of the poem expresses Menezes' deep faith in God the Father. For the poet every human being is his brother when he says:

Our Father. . . In this little phrase
I can embrace
The untold myriads of the human race.

(*Songs* -, 50)

Other poems have themes from other Christian saints and mystics like Theresa of Avila (1515 - 1582) and Saint Catherine of Sienna (1347- 1380). There is only one poem based on the life of St. Rose of Lima. Themes from St. John of the Cross appear in two poems: 'Butterfly' and 'Sitter'. Most of these poems have similarity in

thought and expression and appear to be the Christian equivalents of the *Vacanas*. In the poem, 'The Kitchen', Theresa of Avila says:

God can be found
Among the pots and pans.

(*Songs* -, 60)

She is convinced that God is everywhere even among the lowest and humblest of his creatures.

Another poem, 'Theresa of Liseux' describes the life of Saint Theresa in simple verse. For the saint:

The Lord was in her thoughts the live long day
But when she slept at night, her dreams were gay,
Not by God's glory and celestial powers,
But gay with woods and brooks and seas and flowers.

(*Songs* -, 63)

The poem 'Catherine of Sienna', relates how Catherine for the love of God, 'drank a leper's pus/ And took a convict in her arms'. The Saint loved the Lord greatly and had a strong will power to do anything for the sake of this great love. And hence,

She told the priests, and popes above,
They should behave and thus and thus.
She put her foot down and she prayed:
They fumed and fretted, but obeyed.

(Songs -, 64)

The last poem in this volume is 'Mirabai' and has two songs. Mirabai was a hindu devotee of Lord Krishna (15th century), who says to the Lord thus:

O mountain-mover, mighty Lord
Be not so distant, come to me!
Crush me, or stab me with Thy sword.

(Songs -, 65)

Thus we see that the volume, *Songs from the Saranas and Other Poems*, consists of the poet's deep religious commitment. As a Christian he had a strong faith in Christianity and its beliefs and traditions but as a scholar and poet he had imbibed the best of the hindu scriptures. All this is reflected in his poetry, specially his later poetry.

2.9.

Miss Tehmi Masalawala says that "almost every poem in Armando Menezes' *Chaos and Dancing Star* is a little gem; sometimes a glittering diamond, its facets reflecting the colour of life; sometimes a glowing pearl, less sparkling perhaps and less polished, but closer yet to pulsing, breathing life, and full of silent dynamism."¹⁶

In his introduction to *Selected Poems*, published in 1969, Armando Menezes declares that the poems included in the volume were written over a period of forty years and more. In this volume he has drawn heavily upon the published volumes – *Chords and Discords*, *Chaos and Dancing Star* and *The Ancestral Face*, but added a few new pieces. According to him this new volume was brought out mainly because hardly any copies of the earlier collections seemed to survive and there was a demand for them from various quarters to include them in anthologies and other selections and also for being translated into other languages. For him, these poems “happen to be a memorial of a certain kind of sensibility, certainly composite, perhaps complex, which, in its instinctive search for simplicity, for harmony, for survival, has stumbled upon some kind of beauty, and in that process, at heightened levels, a momentary peace.”¹⁷

In the words of K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar, “Armando Menezes has no use for blandishments and shock-tactics of “modernist” poets; he rightly feels that ‘poetry is modern enough if it is just poetry’; he lays down the wise dictum that ‘the pain of a pariah today does not differ, qualitatively, from the pain of Prometheus’; and hence the poetry of Menezes is severely traditional and is ‘new’ only because it comes with a new note. The rhythms and the words are the same but nonetheless the utterance is distinctively that of a twentieth-century

cultured Goan. Like his own 'Poet', Armando Menezes sings 'sitting alone upon the ruined heap' of this world, and we just overhear him and effect an intimate exchange of pulses that increases our awareness of him and ourselves as well."

We may thus conclude that the poetry of Armando Menezes passed through the various phases that marked the Indian English poetry of the pre-Independence and the post-Independence eras as mentioned in the earlier part of this chapter.

Beginning to write in the 20th century, Armando Menezes imitated the Romantic and Victorian manner of the Indian English poets. In the second quarter of the 20th century, some of the poets had changed over to modernistic techniques. However, Menezes continued writing romantic poetry although with a new choice of themes.

Armando Menezes, like other poets, also came under the influence of the Indian freedom movement. This led to an outburst of poetry on nationalistic themes voicing the aspirations, joys and sorrows of the Indian people.

Menezes was also a Nature poet. He loved Nature, Man and expressed his passionate love for all things of Nature. Although he explored Nature, Love and Man, and the human heritage, he also expressed metaphysical thoughts like the other Indian English poets of the age.

The post-Independence phase brought a new turn into the poems of Armando Menezes. He began writing poems of disillusionment and disappointment because the era of hope had ended with a new age of power games. He asserted his national identity through his poems.

Menezes, on account of his profession, had to live by compulsion in various states of India though he loved Goa and had his heart in Goa. He could not forget the happy memories of his childhood days. This love for Goa and the nostalgia for the peace and beauty of Goa, led him to indulge in poetry of exile, expressing his feelings of alienation and loss. His alienation was also because of his status as an educationist, which prompted his countrymen to keep aloof.

In the final phase of his life, Menezes turned to religious and mystical poetry. This was on account of his involvement in the translations of Kannada religious scriptures into English. His Christian faith and upbringing came face to face with the reality of a non-Christian faith. He came to realize that God is one, whether

Hindu or Christian. Most of his poems included in *The Songs from the Saranas and Other Poems*, are a testimony of this kind of poetry. Here we have a poet who faced no conflict of conscience in spite of his Judo-Christian tradition and the other traditions with which he came face to face in his life.

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CHAPTER III

Critical Writings

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3. Critical Writings

There was hardly any literary criticism in the forties and fifties when Armando Menezes and his contemporaries began writing literary pieces. According to K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, there is very little criticism by Indo-Anglians, because it is harder to be a critic of a foreign literature than to produce original work in a foreign language. Therefore, literary criticism produced by Indo-Anglians is almost inescapably derivative and imitative.¹ Hence, although there may be plenty of derivative criticism, there are very few writers who display direct, strong and personal thinking. Among these are a few Indian English professors like Armando Menezes who tried to express the Indian sensibility and have given us some interesting studies and essays on Criticism.

The first criticism to come from Armando Menezes was his appreciation of Indo-Portuguese and Indian English poetry in the essay entitled 'A Peep at Our Parnassus', published in *The Goan World* in the thirties. He says that Goan poetry has been written in four or five languages. Of these, Marathi and Konkani are native languages. Konkani poetry, especially in the form of the Mando, has been so far

the only extensively successful vehicle for the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings.

3.1. On Portuguese Writings

There are a number of poets who have expressed themselves in Portuguese and some of them of respectable stature. Some of the names he mentions are Soares Rebello, Leopoldo da Costa, Trajano da Costa, Leandro Pereira, J.J. Fragoso, J.F.Vaz, J.F. Soares, F. Aila, Barreto Miranda and Sanches Fernandes. The first two, although natives of Goa, their poetry like their souls belonged to Portugal and their work belongs no more to Goan Literature than Kipling's to Indian or Conrad's to Polish. But the poets he praises are Mariano Gracias, Floriano Barreto, Paulino Dias and Nascimento Mendonca.

Mariano Gracias, according to Menezes, though a Goan by blood as well as birth, carries within him a divided soul, as he carries also a broken heart. The land of his birth has to share his affections with the land of his adoption, and the better share is dedicated to the latter. In the early death of Floriano Barreto, Goan Literature, and specially Goan poetry, lost perhaps its greatest hope. For the poetry of Floriano Barreto accepts all that has set Goa apart from the rest of India – its mixed customs, its peaceful landscape, the heroic epos of its conquest, the splendor of its old capital and its Christianity.

Menezes says that he is a Goan first, then Indian. Yet, sometimes his eye travels over the vaster India, to mark the religious fanaticism of the Hindu mother before the car of Juggernath, or the Parsee bowed down in rapt adoration before the rising sun.²

According to Menezes, Floriano Barreto has sung of the coconut tree scratched against the blue heaven of his motherland, he has described the bucolic sights and sounds and the profound peace of the village; he has breathed a soft prayer to the Virgin, whose shrine crowns the hill of his native town. The Muse of Floriano Barreto responds to all the influences of his environment. His lyre strikes music from all the manifestations of life – science, art, religion. Three notes of his poetry must strike even the casual reader: its universality, its sense of moral values, and its melancholy. What he calls his pessimism is nothing worse than the sadness of a young sensitive poet, who has felt the dreams of his boyhood crumble into dust around him at the first touch of experience.³ The experience of the poet as an adult prompts him to write such poetry as he has written.

Menezes reserves special praise for poet Nascimento Mendonca. He says, for the poet, Life itself is an illusion – Maya. Beauty is the only reality – and Love. As he was sensible of the beauty of Pain, he realized also the tormenting pain of Beauty. Only true poets,

according to Menezes, know how imperious and relentless is the call of Beauty. Nascimento Mendonca has dreamed a Golden Dream and dares all Pain for its sake. The poetic harvest of Nascimento Mendonca is abundant and various. He has written many books. Yet, his work is one. His strong temperament and original outlook stamp themselves early in his writings. As poet of the Orient, the soul of the East broods over Nascimento Mendonca. He has described himself as a “happy bohemian”, and “twin-brother of the rivers.” There is in him the artlessness of bohemians and rivers, and also their freedom, and perhaps, their sensitiveness to colour.⁴

Most of his poems are on natural beauty of Goa, its countryside, its people and their culture. He expresses his love for Goa through his poems on the natural beauty of Goa.

3.2. Goan Poetry in English

After discussing the Goan poets in Portuguese, Menezes now turns to Goan poetry in English. The poet he picks up is Joseph Furtado, whom he calls the poet of Emigration. He finds the sentiment of exile in his poetry. According to Menezes, the substance of his poetry is such stuff as makes all that is most characteristic in the country he loves so well, all that is deepest and most abiding in the immortal heart of man. *The Lays of Goa* may be lays for Goa. But

The Goan Fiddler is the fiddler of humanity. And *The Exile* carries across the Ghats:

The pangs of all the partings gone,
And the partings yet to be.

(*The Exile*, 9)

According to Menezes, the simplicity of Furtado's poems is a marvel, and not the least of its charms. The poet of *The Desterrado* sings because he must sing, and sings of Goa because he must sing of Goa. There is no deliberate attempt to be local or representative. Yet, when he sings of our birds and trees, of the 'padre' and the 'beata', Menezes says, we recognize more than the power of evocation.

Menezes compares Furtado to Wordsworth in his attitude to Nature and the simple things of life. But he is even more like him in his bitter sense of "what man has made of man." For there runs a little recognized strain of bitterness and of irony through his poetry: bitterness at the inhumanity of man; irony at the strange behaviour of the gods.⁵

Poet of nature, Furtado is also the poet of childhood. Sometimes one almost gets the feeling that *The Exile* is less the man who has gone out of his motherland, than the man who has grown out of his

childhood years. His poetic vision is so fresh because it is the vision of a child. If he attains simplicity in his poems, it is because he has reached the artlessness of his childhood.⁶ He has described himself in a marvelous poem as

An untaught poet
Of trees and birds,
Whom no man knoweth.
And, wanting words,
But dreams and sings
Of simple things.

Menezes' study of Goan poetry is confined only to the Poems of Joseph Furtado, who was the first Goan poet to write poetry in English in Bombay. Menezes must have found similiarity in thought and emotion in Furtado's poetry akin to his own though the style and technique differ. Both were Goans ad exiles living in British India, who had abundant love for their native land.

3.3. Menezes on *Os Brahamanes* of Francisco Luis Gomes

In May 1929, Armando Menezes wrote his famous treatise in *The Goan World* on the famous Goan economist, political thinker and novelist of the *Os Brahamanes* fame, Francisco Luis Gomes, entitled 'Francisco Luis Gomes: The Novelist'. According to Menezes,

Francisco Luis Gomes wrote *Os Brahamanes* at a time when the ethical romanticism of the nineteenth century was firmly established, though it had already suffered violent onsets from the aesthetic realism of Gautier and his school. Lamartine and Victor Hugo, to mention only the chief, still swayed the sensibilities of the budding litterateur of most Latin countries. Liberalism in various forms dominated Portuguese literature. But what is more important is to note that before 1866 (the year of the publication of *Os Brahamanes*) there had been no great Portuguese novel in Portugal with a clear liberal message, though the new poetry was seething with it, and the theatre was a mirror of the political preoccupations of the society, and nearly every drama an apologia of liberalism. It was a year later that Zola in France published his *Therese Roquin* and eight years later there appeared in Portugal, *O Crime do Padre Amaro*. The genius of Francisco Luis Gomes remained, in the midst of this welter, unswervingly loyal to the earlier masters. The author of *Os Brahamanes*, shares with Victor Hugo the propensity to hasty generalization and careless analogy, which are too often the nemesis of an epigrammatic style. But it is also from him chiefly that Francisco Luis Gomes inherited the hatred for tyranny in all shapes and places.⁷

According to Menezes it is liberalism in its broadest and most practical scope that is the inspiring motive of *Os Brahamanes*. To its creator it was confessedly its only *raison d' etre*. Gomes says in the novel that it is necessary that the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, eternal in their duration, be universal in their application; that being realized in institutions, laws and customs, they spread over the surface of the globe, and filter down to its lowest strata. Only then shall the regeneration of man be accomplished.⁸

Menezes reiterates that the novel was the work of a doctrinaire and reformer who seeks to make his gospel heard by masking it as a novel. *Os Brahamanes* was to Gomes journalism in gorgeous disguise, but still journalism. It is journalism exalted into literature and consecrated by art.

Menezes says that the thesis of the novel is the injustice of class distinctions and the triumph of charity over passion, the plot, the common plot of the *roman passionnel*. He then analyses the plot and the characters in the story in detail.

Menezes further emphasizes that the liberalism of Francisco Luis Gomes was the liberalism, which Europe and America had inherited from the precursors and apostles of the French Revolution.

But it was a great deal more. It was a liberalism profoundly permeated by Christianity. The author of *Os Brahamanes* saw in Christianity not the earnest dogmatism and world theocracy of De Maistre, but the religion, *par excellence*, of charity.

Natural curiosity makes Menezes to enquire why it was that Francisco Luis Gomes placed his novel in Oudh, Northern India. He was trying to expose the absurdity and cruelty of caste but he did not go to the land of his birth, Goa, but chose a Hindu Brahmin in conflict with Anglo-Indian society. Perhaps, it was because, he says, in the Portuguese colonies there was not that deep gulf between “the conquerors and the conquered, which existed in British territories with serious prejudice not only to civilization, but also to the British domination.”⁹

It thus became clear to Menezes that the central theme of the novel is not the conflict of castes in the specific Hindu sense, but the struggle between races and colours. According to Francisco Luis Gomes, all social tyranny and exclusiveness is Brahminism. Menezes concludes that all political oppression and exploitation is Brahminism, too. In pursuance of this plan to proclaim a universal social message, the author of *Os Brahamanes* weaves with unequal art into his novel a large number of themes which filled his mind at that time. We have

here an exposition of nearly the whole of the liberal programme: the liberal viewpoint on monasticism, the liberal theory of the relations that ought to exist between Church and State, the liberal protest against slavery and slave-trade, and, as his liberalism warms into humanitarian idealism, the indignant remonstrance against distinctions of caste and colour.

3.4. Menezes' views on poetry

Menezes' own views on poets and poetry are expressed in the Prefaces and Introduction to every volume of poetry that he published. These views sum up his own conception of poetry and what it must be. In a way, it can be concluded that he lets us know indirectly that he adheres to these ideas in the poetry that he wrote.

In the Proem to *Chords and Discords* (1939), he says that poetry is 'enchanted discovery'. There flow 'underneath the rippling movement of our lives', 'deep-sea rhythms'. These 'Bach-like chords' are discovered by poetry. He describes further what is modern poetry. According to him, it is 'ancient poetry written by moderns', yesterday and today are the shadows. It is poetry that is the substance and therefore, 'poetry is modern enough, if it is just poetry'. He defends the rhythms and metre as essential to it.

In his prelude to *Chaos and Dancing Star* (1940), Menezes speaks of his personal experiences in writing poetry. He says that the poet publishes his poems and his poems publish him. Publication is the poet's last act of humility, as creation is his first. The poet, according to him, in the first instance is concerned with his own thoughts and feelings. He has only his own experiences to go by. To be false to that is to be false to Truth and to the divine spirit of poetry in him. Therefore, he must earnestly endeavour to enlarge and deepen his experience. Experience is never simple, though the poet simplifies it for literary convenience.

Menezes further tells us that thought and emotion is ceaselessly, and often simultaneously, climbing up and down our consciousness. Passion and calm, faith and doubt, pride and humility, tears and laughter are ever counter pointing each other within us. It is necessary that poetry should be made of that too. The poet should not forsake his older function of seeing, in his lust for making. Before the image he moulds comes the image he reflects. For, to see clearly, is the beginning of all creation. The poet mirrors everything. Within the narrow frame of his glass he catches the multitudinous universe of sense. But through all this he catches his own reflection. Man is a mirror that mirrors itself. Poetry or rhetoric,

romantic or modernist, optimist or pessimist, East or West, nothing matters to the Mirror.¹⁰

In his 'Initiating Ceremony', which is an introduction to his *Ancestral Face* (1951), Menezes says that poetry is the golden pilgrimage. It is always romantic in that it is always an adventure, a series of enchanted discoveries. Poetry, even when it does not make a poem, makes the poet. Or unmakes him, when he is whoring after strange gods. The freedom of the poet is the freedom of a train. He must accept the prosody of the rails. As regards metre, he says that there is a metre deeper than the audible, to which the poet must submit. No 'vers-librist' can escape that metre, and the history of much free verse is a fearful warning. This could be regarded as Menezes' defense of the use of metre in poetry.

In his Introduction to *Selected Poems* (1969), Armando Menezes says that he has no personal theory of poetry, at any rate, none to fit – and justify – his own. Whatever he has written, was as the spirit moved him, without thought of school or fashion. His idea of tradition does not exclude change, nor does his idea of change exclude tradition. Other people's so called modern verse does not deter Menezes from publishing his own poetry because according to him he

is well-rooted in tradition and too well-read in literary history to be daunted by other people's experiments in free verse.¹¹

In his Introduction to *Songs from the Saranas and Other Poems* (1971), Menezes speaks about the problems of translation. He says that there are many approaches to the problem of translation. One is to fit words together in the order, or at least in the manner, of the original, and, having achieved the verbal structure, let the sense take care of itself. Another is for the translator to project himself, using the original as a springboard, with the least regard for the form or content of the original. Still another is to give a literal rendering, which may prove to be at once meaningless and unreadable. Many translators aim at the pure substance, the essential sense, of the thing and let the words look after themselves. But words in literature have symbolic as well as intrinsic value and if one reverently hugs and strokes the words, one has a better chance of unveiling the original.¹²

Poetry, therefore, for Menezes, is a product of his own experiences. The poet cannot be false to his own experiences, as it would mean he is false to truth. It is a romantic adventure, a journey the poet undertakes for his own pleasure and which finally enriches him. The poet looks as if through a mirror and sees his own reflection. His act of creation does not end with the poem but it also

makes the poet. The poet writes as the spirit moves him. He is not much in favour of free verse because poetry, according to him, must have a metre. Menezes is also not in favour of literal translations. For him a translator must aim at the pure substance.

3.5. Menezes' Critical Views expressed in *Lighter than Air* and *Airy Nothings*

Armando Menezes expressed his critical views for a number of years over A.I.R, Dharwar. All these talks and essays were compiled and then published into two volumes as *Lighter than Air* in 1959 and then as *Airy Nothings* in 1977. The talks deal with individual writers, literary forms and movements, and theories and principles of literary criticism. With his discerning critical acumen he brings a new point of view to everything. ¹³

These essays were milestones during the whole life journey of the poet of delightful explorations in the realm of literature. According to S.K.Dessai, the obvious things that strike you as you read through Prof. Menezes' critical essays are, among other things, (a) his profound (Arnoldian and Leavisian) faith in the supreme significance of literary culture in the context of our 'bad, sad, mad world', (b) his exceptional artistic sensibility, fully responsive to literature, particularly to poetry, (c) his wide-ranging scholarship which helps him to make quick and

surprising relationships in terms of parallels and contrasts, and (d) his delightful critical style full of scintillating wit, unexpected antithesis and telling imagery, without straying a bit from his essentially dialectical form of reasoning.¹⁴

3.5.1. Views expressed in *Lighter Than Air*

In a Foreword to *Lighter Than Air*, Menezes admits that the talks “represent a part of the mind which goes through many years of teaching, in contrast with books and in constant discussion with colleagues and students.”¹⁵ Hence the pieces written here are in the form of a classroom discussion.

Although Menezes’ views on poetry have been discussed earlier, these views are exclusively expressed in *Lighter Than Air*.

3.5.2. On Conventions in Poetry

Now, let us consider some of the views expressed by the poet on ‘Conventions in Poetry, Poetry as Prophecy and Poetry as Philosophy’. According to Menezes, poetry itself is a convention. Poetry is not natural. It does not flow as freely as the song of the linnet; it does not grow as spontaneously as leaves do on the trees. It is a carefully contrived artifact. Its emotions are the product of a highly unnatural state of mind. Its imagery roams all over the world

and beyond, to say the simplest thing. It looks at a thing, at a very plain and known thing, and behaves towards it as if it was something quite different. It looks at the merest flower and is reminded of the one-eyed Cyclops or a cloistered nun; and, of course, the other way round too. It listens to a common bird and, instead of carefully recording its notes, dreams of Italian vintages and heartsick gleaners, or of highborn maidens in palace towers.

He states further that Rhythm is another great accompaniment of poetry, and it follows from its emotional content. When the rhythm is deliberately ordered into metre, another convention in poetry is set up. Whatever the sources of the delight we get from metre, the thing itself is highly artificial. One falls rarely into metre in ordinary speech. Once, it was decided that rhyme was not an essential of poetry and might even be an impediment, the attack was opened on metre itself. First blank verse, and then free verse. In the last hundred years or so, poets have tried to strip poetry of its artifice. They have pulled out every one of its feathers until poetry has been left as simple, and as unattractive, as a plucked fowl in the hands of a chef. They have tried to lay it bone-bare and to make the bones sing; they merely rattle. They have put blank verse for rhyme and have put symbols for the old images. But they have not made poetry more natural or more simple.

A convention means that people have come together to agree to something: some common way of living or living together or just living and letting live. Convention in poetry is a conspiracy between the writer and the reader. The vitality of convention in poetry can be illustrated from the number of epic features which have survived in epic from the days of Homer; or from the persistence, say, of the pastoral convention in elegy.

He asserts further that the most popular convention in present times is the convention that must not appear conventional. The new writers think that they must break with tradition at all costs – even at the cost of poetry. They must strip, they think, poetry of all clothes except the invisible clothes of the credulous king. It would seem that a sort of nudism, in art as in life, is the newest fashion. Off with all clothes, the latest cry!

Right and wrong use of the conventions is, therefore, one measure of poetic talent. To the real poet, a convention is a natural language, and may actually lend wings to his message; to the poetaster, a convention is all there is to poetry: a ready-made decoration which, like wall-paper, may create an illusion of beauty, though the mind behind it is as blank and as insensitive as a wall.¹⁶

Hence, according to Menezes, convention is very important to every poet. He cannot break away from convention completely howsoever he may try just as he cannot break away from the tradition.

3.5.3. On Poetry as Prophecy

In his essay on 'Poetry as Prophecy', Menezes says that though the belief in the prophetic power of the poet was as simple as it was genuine, that is not the sense in which poetry is here claimed to be prophecy. The word inspiration itself has two distinct orthodox senses. A man is said to be inspired when he is the direct instrument of a divine message. The Hebrew prophets claimed to be inspired in this strict sense. It is God that is the supreme Poet, whose delight it is to see His creation through the human poet's eyes.

Poetry and prophecy, according to him, therefore, have this in common: that they abjure the claim to reason, that they are supposed to proceed from a non-rational source. The experience of poets would show that this is substantially true; that the composition of poetry proceeds by virtue of a force which literally possesses the poet and uses him, perhaps not as a passive, but certainly as a helpless, often an unwilling, instrument.

Both poetry and prophecy are alike symbolic: in the sense that neither is concerned primarily with the material aspect of existence, but with reality which is of these but also beyond these, concerned with their truth and not only with the facts that seem to constitute them. Poetry is the word made flesh and it could be said in the words of Francis Thompson, 'O world invisible, I view thee! O world intangible, I touch thee!' He adds that while picklock reason is still a-fumbling at the words, imagination is well inside the chamber of mystery, and is ready to body forth the form of things unknown.¹⁷

It is through this peculiar way of apprehending and communicating reality that poetry assumes the role of prophecy. Poetry fulfills the prophetic character in various ways. One is the way of *Song of Songs*, or of many of Blake's 'prophetic' poems. Another is the way of the great epic poets, who, while symbolizing some important aspect of the contemporary consciousness, chart out a spiritual map for the ages to come. Still, another way is the way of the Utopian visionary, who will see the redemption of fallen man in freedom or beauty or love, like the younger Romantics or in a complete surrender to Nature, like Rousseau or Wordsworth or D.H.Lawrence. The plays of Shakespeare abound in prophecy. Hamlet has meant more to succeeding generations than to the contemporaries of Shakespeare or to Shakespeare himself. T.S.Eliot is supposed to have

caught in his poetry the mood of Europe after the World War I. Menezes concludes by saying that poetry is indeed the best and rarest thoughts of the rarest and best minds.¹⁸

The poet has a peculiar way in which he understands what is reality and then attempts to communicate it. In this way the poet fulfills the prophetic character of poetry in various ways. The thought, which he conveys to us, creates ripples in our consciousness and spreads in all directions.

3.5.4. On Poetry and Philosophy

In another essay ‘Poetry and Philosophy’, Menezes compares poetry to philosophy. He says that the aim of poetry is the same as Philosophy’s, to understand and interpret the world and the life of man, here and beyond. But, while to Philosophy, this understanding comes from a carefully reasoned process of observation, analysis and synthesis, to Poetry it comes from a flash of exciting personal experience. While the philosopher gives us his conclusions, the poet tells us just what he has felt; for feeling is fundamental to Poetry, whatever else is or is not. And yet, there is much common ground, even substantial identity, between their aims.

Menezes tells us that Shelley begins with demarcating the several spheres of Poetry, Science and Philosophy; but the burden of his argument is based on the moral power of the imagination. The imagination is, to Shelley, the poet's differentia; but imagination, he affirms, is an organ of the moral faculty; and Poetry subserves the effect by acting upon the cause. By purifying imagination, Poetry strengthens the will, while at the same time placing before us worthy objects of desire.

The poet's prejudice against the philosopher is not so fundamental; and it could not be, for the poet feels a natural kinship with the philosopher. Wordsworth could never have meant the real philosopher; for, in one of his prefaces, he declares that a great poet must also be a philosopher. On the other hand, there have been philosophers who have used the medium of verse for the exposition of their doctrines. This is true of most ancient philosophers, of both East and West.

Philosophy, he continues, is evidently concerned with ideas. So is poetry. Hegel calls Poetry the realm of aesthetic ideas. The philosopher's quest is indeed for the forms of things unknown; but he cannot body them forth; they remain airy nothings, or almost that, without a local habitation and a name. While the philosopher isolates

the idea from the sum of his facts and sees the idea naked and pure, the poet merely sees it as underlying a concrete experience. Philosophy and Poetry are both concerned with universals. Philosophy rises to the universal while in poetry there is descent. Poetry is the incarnation; the avatar; the Word made flesh.¹⁹

Menezes further states that Philosophy has been described as the kingdom of ends. Poetry is not averse to ends; it is quite at home with the ultimate, which come to poetry without the poet going in search of them. To the poet, the end is in the here and now. Poetry would rather hold Infinity in the palm of her hand and Eternity in an hour.

Menezes mentions that there is a common misconception about the relative aims of Poetry and Philosophy. It is said that Philosophy aims at truth, while Poetry aims at beauty. This is not so. Both Poetry and Philosophy equally aim at truth, though they aim at different aspects, perhaps at different kinds of it. While Philosophy states value, the poet sees it, grasps it.

In conclusion, Menezes says that both the poet and philosopher see the real and the ideal through their own perspective. Both are

right, each in his own way, as both aim at different aspects of the truth.

3.5.5. On Harindranath Chattopadhyaya

In separate critical essays, Menezes discusses two Indian poets: Harindranath Chattopadhyaya and Sarojini Naidu. Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, whose poetic career lasted over forty years, wrote real Indian poetry in English. He wrote English with such fluency and yet without servility, with a power and mastery that showed India was conquering England. Opinion over the merit of his poetic achievement was sharply divided. There were people who regard him as a great poet and others who look upon him as a mere charlatan. His amazing versatility is not the aspect of Harin's genius. One is his extraordinary precocity. At nineteen or perhaps earlier, he was writing poetry of the order and quality which few born poets hope to achieve at forty. Another is, at fifty he was still writing the same sort of poetry.

Menezes further says that H.C. has had a restless temperament, ever breaking out into desperate efforts at discipline. Endowed with more than the normal share of the poet's sensibility, he was quick to respond to influences, emotional, mystical, political, which often confound and perplex him as man of integrity and a poet. His mind's

mirror is often a rippling river than a quiet lake; it blurs even as it reflects, and rushes on incessantly to no one knows what secret sea. What Francis Thompson called the predestined curse of verse was upon him.

Harin's work is voluminous as well as varied, Menezes adds. His earliest book, *The Feast of Youth*, marks him as a real poet, both in promise and performance. His second, *The Coloured Garden*, is, however, inferior in content as well as form. Then followed in quick succession, slim volumes of plays as well as poems, some of them with significant titles like *Perfume of Earth* and *The Magic Tree*.

There was a period in Harin's life, as Menezes continues, when all the movements of his spirit found a still center. In the poems included in his *Crossroads*, he is crossing out of pain and spiritual travail into a yet undefined repose. Upon reaching Pondicherry, Harin appeared to be pouring himself out into some of the most directly *seeing* poetry he has ever written. *Strange Journey* and *The Dark Wall*, which were published after the crucial experience, abound in the sort of paradox, which is the native idiom of the seer. Song and silence now blend in the poet's heart; he is at once crowded and alone; he is at once moving and still. Gone is the pride of creation; he has ceased to be the potter and learned to be the clay.²⁰

Menezes concludes by saying that for all his unequal performance and fatal facility, the voice of Harindranath was the voice of authentic poetry. He would have been a poet of considerable stature in any language but he chose to write in English over which he had a mastery.

Menezes casts Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Sarojini Naidu's younger brother in a romantic mould. He describes him as a prolific writer who wrote romantic poetry on a variety of themes like nostalgia, melancholy, passion for beauty, the changing moods of love, idealism and humanitarian compassion.

3.5.6. On Sarojini Naidu

Using antithetical and paradoxical statements, Menezes conveys the very essence of Sarojini Naidu's poetic personality. He calls her 'an apostle of peace'. Poet and patriot, her patriotism was part of her poetry, her poetry part of her patriotism. She made the sword of her spirit sing; she wielded her song like a sword. She asked the English to quit India, and entered forever the literature of England.

Menezes says her eloquence was singularly and unmistakably feminine. She did not speak, she chanted. She did not try to

convince, she was content to charm. One would fall under the spell of her voice, as she painted picture after picture for you, of people and places and events which her capacious memory had stored up and her poetic imagination had endowed with new meanings. Her voice had an orchestral range, and every tone and timbre of our country's music was at its command. No doubt, she was called the Nightingale of India.

For Sarojini, he says, there was always pain present and death was round the corner. Hence, the titanic joy that pulsates through her work was learnt at the stern fact of physical pain and passionate sorrow; her immense vitality and faith in life were snatched from the very jaws of death. Sarojini, therefore, could be called the poet of life. Each phase and season of life has its irresistible appeal for her. Her lullabies are some of the loveliest and haunting pieces. There is 'The Cradle Song', with its drowsy tune evoking the familiar landscape of our country. There is also 'The Slumber Song for Sunalini', a tiny miracle of song pattern, with its open and hidden rhymes. Her verse is perfumed with the vague longing and sweet anguish of brides. The delicious little creature that the palanquin-bearers carry along falls like a tear from the eyes of the bride. In 'The Bangle-Sellers', there are bangles of many colours and patterns; and some are like fields of sunlit corn, 'meet for a bride on her bridal morn'; some like the flame

of her marriage fire, or rich with the hue of her heart's desire, tinkling, luminous, tender and clear, like her bridal laughter and bridal tear.

Sarojini was a true nationalist. Her self-dedication to her country's cause is not a thing apart from her personality as a poet. She had won her personal freedom in many ways before she joined the movement for the freedom of her country. Her country was to her as a mother – but a mother young through her immemorial years; and she loved her ever-young beauty in grass and flower and bird and beast. Menezes says her verse is heavy with native scents and glitters with images struck in the native mint. Her song is ablaze with gulmohur and cassia, with the champak and the jasmine. We wander with her into pomegranate gardens of mellowing dawn or watch a June sunset, when a brown quail cries from the tamarisk bushes and a bulbul calls from the cassia plume.²¹

Menezes describes Sarojini as a poet of beauty and a poet of freedom; besides, she is also the poet of love. The love she expresses is passionate and uninhibited; love which itself without a stint or measure, love which dares pain and contempt and humiliation. It is love of many great women of history who have also been poets: Sappho, Mariana Alcoforado, Elizabeth Barrett, Alice Meynell. This Indian patriot, Menezes says, also wrote English poetry, which is

Indian to its fingertips. At the fall of the day, when the mystic hour calls for prayer, she hears in the same wind the voice of many creeds – of Hindu and Muslim, of Parsee and Christian.

Menezes summarizes the poetry of Sarojini Naidu as romantic and nationalistic. She loved her motherland very deeply and hence the charm of traditional Indian life and the splendours of the Indian scene became the themes on which she wrote much of her poetry. She was passionate and womanly and humanity was her religion.

3.5.7. Menezes on Blake

Interpreting Blake's works, Menezes discovers a message, which is of vital importance to the whole world now: 'all forces of our civilization have conspired against the empire of joy. We must organize a crusade; we must recover the holy land that we have lost'. Blake, many years ago raised the battle cry of that crusade. He was born into a time when reason ruled supreme in the temple of the Muses, and imagination was as a dead tree. Some of his early verses do echo the measures of the time; but only for a little while and in minor details. Blake was nothing if not himself, his own complete and undistracted self, untainted by schools of thought or style, untutored except by the spirit of Poesy, believing in nothing except his own pure

wisdom. But Blake himself would not admit that he was self-made. He was only a proud vehicle – a proud vehicle of the divine presence.

Menezes concludes that Blake has a message for us even today. We have to organize a crusade to recover the holy land that we have lost. Blake's thoughts may be for England, he says, but are they not applicable to India also?

Menezes says Blake had heard a heavenly voice, a divine childish voice, which bade him write whatever he saw and heard. His response to this world was one of pure and unalloyed joy.

3.5.8. On Bernard Shaw and *Back to Methuselah*

In Bernard Shaw and *Back to Methuselah*, Menezes attempts to establish Bernard Shaw as an important man of letters. Shaw's plays ranged over the world of adults – slum-landlordism, prostitution, militarism, marriage, history, current politics, Christianity, national and individual character, professional delusions and impostures, questions of conscience and paradoxes of convention. For him, Creative Evolution was already a religion, newly arisen from the ashes of pseudo-Christianity. But creative evolution, as a mere scientific hypothesis, in order to become a popular religion, must have its legends, its miracles, its parables. Shaw's dramatic presentation of

this new religion in *Back to Methuselah* was to be taken as a series of parables of the newest Testament. Shaw's first essay in the dramatization of this new religion had appeared in *Man and Superman*. The Life Force does not, indeed, despair of life; but Shaw despairs of Man. If the only hope for Man is that he should be surpassed, or be as something else; there is really no hope for Man.

Menezes describes *Back to Methuselah* as a landmark in literature. It asserts that man is a fallen creature and must evolve further to save himself.

3.5.9. On Poetic Justice

In his essay on 'Poetic Justice', Menezes tells us that poetic justice is natural justice modified by poetry. In other words, it is one of the greater poetic licences although this may sound like a falsification of reality by the poetic imagination. Actually, the very opposite is what happens. Poetic Justice is the fulfillment of reality by the imagination, though reality is perhaps the wrong word to be used; for in poetry we pierce through appearances to Reality.

Therefore, Menezes says that the true nature and function of the Imagination, we must seek in the highest poetry, as in the highest love. The great lover does not falsify; he disowns what is invisible to

the naked eye, as it were; for true love is not blind, but all-seeing. So too, the great poet. Before he is the maker, he is the seer; and what he sees are the latent forms of things, of which he instinctively knows all objects to be imperfect projections. For the poet, then, idealization does not mean falsification. It means restoring the objects of sense their own proper form or idea. Hence, when we say that Poetic Justice is natural justice modified by poetry, we certainly do not mean that there is here a falsification of natural values. All we mean is, poetry corrects the perspective of penetrating the phenomenal events with real values.²²

Menezes further states that Virtue does not always get its reward in this life; but it should, says the poet, or all life is a lie, and the universe not a moral but an immoral, order. In Shakespearean tragedy, as in most of the classical, poetic justice operates only partially. Macbeth, who had waded through blood to power, finds a bloody end. Iago is exposed and tortured in *Othello*. Even the King and Queen in *Hamlet*, come to a violent end. The penalty is disproportionate which overtakes the heroes, horribly wanton and irrelevant where it strikes the innocent or near innocent.

That is the reason, Menezes concedes, why pure tragedy is not popular with the Plain Man, who prefers melodrama and romance.

The Plain Man likes to see young lovers marry in the end. His sense of propriety prefers a wedding to funeral bells. He loves the thrill of danger and difficulty, but he also wants his delicious suspense to resolve itself into a happy ending.²³

For Menezes, there is need for poetic justice in Art. Therefore, many popular writers have used all their inventive resources to extricate their heroes from the most intricate knots they had tied themselves in. The common man is always yearning for a happy ending because he believes that the universe is just.

3.5.10. Menezes' views on Satire

Menezes' views on Satire begin with the definition in the words of Meredith that 'Comedy is the humour of the mind; humour, the comedy of the heart; and the effort to understand this antithesis leads us into the region of glorious nonsense where the pure humorist takes, like Falstaff, his ease at his inn.' Comedy is also the foundation of good sense, the genius of the thoughtful laughter. Satire is a blow in the back or the face. According to Menezes the satirist holds a place halfway between the preacher and the wit; he has the purpose of the first and the weapons of the second. He seeks to move you, not by the congruities of virtue, but by the incongruities of vice. But it is to the congruities of virtue that he owes his ultimate loyalty.

The satirist, therefore, is then a moral agent but with a difference. He is the laughing moralist. The quality of his laughter may vary. But laugh he must. This variation is responsible for the classification of Satire into the Juvenalian, or tragic satire; the Persian, or philosophic satire, and the Horatian or the humorous satire. But, he continues to win his credentials as a laughing moralist. The satirist must laugh only at what is corrigible. He may not laugh at humanity because it is just itself. The true satirist, therefore, according to Menezes, is an optimist, not a misanthrope. He is a lover before he is a critic. Menezes differentiates between the humorist and the satirist thus: The humorist is the realist, he takes things as they are, and reconciles himself to the status quo. The satirist, on the other hand, is the idealist – the devotee, call him fanatic, of Reason and Sanity. His is the laughter of Bergson – a social gesture. His is the laughter of Shaw, pulling people’s legs to pull crooked legs straight. His is the laughter commended by Nietzsche’s *Zarathustra*.

To Menezes, Satire is the young man’s weapon: the penknife he carries in his pocket. Humor is the middle-aged man’s drug; the pipe he sucks in his mouth to soothe himself. Menezes asks whether verse or prose is the better vehicle of satire. For him, it depends again as great satires are written in either medium. Like Humor, Satire is as old as the world. It was probably born with Adam. Its target has been

moral corruption, social folly, political tyranny and religious perplexity.²⁴

Menezes is of the opinion that the satiric spirit has been present in man since the beginning. It has manifested itself into the form of art at various periods of history. Different writers have expressed humour in different forms and different situations though the formal satire may have originated in Rome.

3.5.11. On Tragedy

Menezes' last essay in the volume *Lighter Than Air* is on Tragedy. There is, he says, pain in the world, horrible, inexorable pain. There is drawing of blood, often; death and destruction; but these are not one of the essences of tragedy. Only suffering is. Tragedy brings us face to face with the problem of pain, and the wider problem of evil. There are villains in the world, and they unchain spirits of mischief, and leave a trail of ruin in their wake.

He further states that the justice of the tragic world is not the poetic justice, only adjusting retribution to sin. It is a mystery. Tragedy enacts disaster, distils pain, and yet it gives pleasure. What in life would be intolerably painful, an outrageous assault upon our sensibilities, the tragic art transforms into a thing of beauty. Tragedy

does not spare our feelings; does not solicitously shield us from the shock of fact. On the contrary, it angles for our pity, harrows us with terror, canvasses our sympathy and awe. Yet, in doing this, it pleases us. This tragic experience, therefore, at once deepens our understanding of life and reconciles us to its darkest depths. It converts even pain and death into spiritual values. And one of the things tragedy teaches us is the duality of man. Man, says tragedy, is at once body and spirit; at once weakness and strength; at once angel and ape. He is caught between his reason and his passion. He is at once free and helplessly dependent. His will is at odds with itself. Man's freedom is hemmed in by circumstances: by the limitations of his own powers; by the presence of other wills; of forces, visible or invisible, too strong for him.

Menezes continues that where there is no dualism, there can be no tragedy. Where the spirit alone matters, death and pain are an illusion. But tragedy says: the body is real; man's passions are not only fatal but splendid; the human will is not only perverse but heroic. But tragedy also says: the spirit is paramount; death is no defeat; suffering is not only a crucible of regeneration, but a test of courage. Therefore, too, tragedy is a source of joy.²⁵

Menezes concludes in his essay that although tragedy enacts disaster and gives us pain, it also gives pleasure. It does not spare our feelings or shield us from the shock of fact. On the contrary, it angles for our pity, fills us with terror and evokes our sympathy. But in doing this, it also pleases us.

3.6. Views expressed in the volume: *Airy Nothings*

Menezes published his next collection of Essays on Literary Criticism, *Airy Nothings*, in 1977. Most of these essays, as he mentions in the Preface, were also radio talks broadcast from Dharwar A.I.R. Station. The author says that he has divided these collections of essays into four sections: Authors, English and American, topics on literary theory and criticism, Indian personalities and belles lettres.

From this volume on 'Authors – English and American', I have selected eleven essays for analysis and discussion. It would also be interesting to note what are Menezes' views on these eleven poets. Menezes evaluates each of these poets in his own way and explains why their poems appeal to the readers. Menezes expresses in a novel but bold manner his own ideas and interpretations of the poetry written by these English and American poets and their relevance at the time of writing.

Some of the other essays in this volume have been discussed in a later chapter that deals with Menezes' essays and prose writings.

3.6.1. On William Butler Yeats

The collection *Airy Nothings* carries an essay on William Butler Yeats. Menezes says that Yeats was never exactly, a popular poet. His poetry is not full of resonant commonplaces. The oratorical element is particularly absent in him. The early Yeats of 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree', was romantic, escapist, nostalgic; nothing new in poetry. But then, never has the escapist mind, the romantic nostalgia, found such exact words, such wistful music:

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made.

This is, according to Menezes, the city man's cry for the wide-open, lonely places. This is the feeling that is at the head of all pastoral poetry. But it is also the mood of one who has come to the end of the world, or is on the threshold of adolescence, which often means the same thing. But this, above all, is poetry. Adolescence does not always succeed in escaping its surroundings, and had there been a real escape, there would have been no poetry. Poetry of the order to which Yeats belongs is so often adolescent poetry, poetry that refuses to grow up. Even when the adolescent personality tries to

escape into love, all it wants is a temporary security, not fulfillment. And that is the kind of love we have in most of the early Yeats.

Troy and Usna, two themes and two symbols haunt Yeats for a longtime to come and perhaps never quite leave him. The sons of Usna are the heroes of that somber tragedy of legendary Ireland, which became for Yeats and other champions of Irish independence a symbol of their distressed and fretting Ireland. In a poem called '*The Secret Rose*', the symbol evokes for him the dim pagan and Christian past of Ireland. But the Greek symbol haunts him perhaps deeper still. In an exquisite poem called 'No Second Troy', where love is all its nobility and where the lover offers as his highest gifts, not his life, but a great understanding of the nature of his beloved, has the recurring epic of *la femme fatale*.

As old age creeps upon him, he says he would not like to be as 'a tattered coat upon a stick', but let his 'soul clap its hands and sing'. Old age is an absurdity, an irrelevancy, something tied up to one as to a dog's tail. His imagination is still lively, his heart still young.²⁶

The themes, which predominate Yeats' early poetry are longing for the open spaces of the countryside and an adolescent's love for his beloved. His later poetry echoes his approaching old age.

3.6.2. On T.S.Eliot

In twin essays, 'T.S.Eliot – A Tribute' and 'The Poetry of T.S.Eliot', Menezes says that the death of T.S.Eliot marked the end of a long and fruitful life, but not, perhaps, the end of the Eliot legend. Eliot had impressed himself upon the imagination of several successive generations ever since the publication of *The Waste Land* in 1922. He had created a school, which he repeatedly repudiated. His enormous prestige was based not only on what he did say but on what he seemed to say.

The one secret of Eliot's appeal was that he had not only put his finger in the causes of the modern *malaise*, but had taught himself to talk the patient's language. His thinking was direct and unequivocal. The poet that Eliot most looked back in respect of diction was Donne, who had healed what Eliot described as dissociation of sensibility, which had disabled the preceding generation of poets. Like Dante's, Eliot's poetry was of clearly articulated traditional beliefs.

Eliot's achievement has been no less as a critic. Here, he was that paradox: a bold adventurer in defence of tradition. As in the case of his poetry, his appeal as a critic derives from a deft combination of paradox and good sense: his good sense seemed to give authority to his paradoxes, and his paradoxes to give a fine edge to his good sense.

Discussing his poems, Menezes states that Eliot through his poem, *The Waste Land*, had fixed the center of modern poetry in the city. The City is all the cities – a symbol of modern civilization, but it is specifically London, for the brown fog is a powerful and pointed symbol – here and elsewhere in Eliot’s poetry. In *Ash Wednesday*, published as a single poem in 1930, Eliot has turned his back upon the wasteland of disillusionment and despair, although not resolutely as yet. He will not turn again to the desert; but he cannot yet turn positively to the garden from which he has so long been an exile. On this day of penance, when the ashes on the brow remind us we are dust, Eliot cannot yet finally turn away from time and place. So he prays God for mercy as, relieved of passion, even of thought, he climbs up the winding stair, struggling with temptation; he sees light and shrinks in his unworthiness. At this stage, the poem is suffused with an ecstatic adoration of Mary, mother of Christ, as in Dante’s poem.

The significance of the title, *Four Quartets*, is obvious. Eliot planned his last great poem on the musical principle with an architectonic analogous to Beethoven’s final and greatest utterance. The principle, however, goes beyond *the Quartets* and embraces the whole of Eliot’s poetic work. Eliot described himself as a classicist in Art and an Anglo-Catholic in religion. In his poetry he has placed his classicist art at the service of his faith.²⁷

Menezes in this essay comments on *The Wasteland*, *Ash Wednesday* and *Four Quartets*. Eliot believed in tradition and the traditional values. He was also a social thinker and a modern in temperament. Through his verse he propounded his philosophy of man and society.

3.6.3. Three Essays: Lewis, Pound and Frost

The next three essays of Menezes are on Cecil Day Lewis, Ezra Pound and Robert Frost. When Cecil Day Lewis emerged, says Menezes, it was the difficult period between the Wars, a period of disillusionment and bewilderment, with the collapse of the American economy and its repercussions in Europe, and the latter rapidly splitting up into Fascist and non-Fascist states. Eliot had reflected the earlier mood of the period. The modern poet at this time would have to be a man of exceptional sensibility if he was to have any relevance for his generation. There was to be no art for art's sake anymore; no more 'luxury poetry'. They were the New Signature citizens of what was known as New Country. They were determined to cope with the new complexity of the world, to grapple with the physical facts of existence as well as the new scientific theories. And because these poets felt that they were cut off from all moorings, they had to embrace contemporary movements of thought or become, as Lewis called them later, 'horizon-addicts and future-fans'.

3.6.4. On Lewis

Lewis himself, in his *Hope for Poetry*, mentions Eliot, Owen and Hopkins, among the immediate ancestors of the New Country poets. In spite of his long membership of the Oxford trio, it is possible to isolate the distinct personality of Lewis as a poet. His concern with personal problems was there from the first. *Transitional Poem* has for its central theme 'the single mind'. His resolution was to be poetic as well as social; and he was, first, to resolve his private chaos into new patterns of his own. Looking about him at the new world, he found it difficult to decide, as he says, between pylons and poplars, the aeroplane and the albatross. Here was a new reality, which was also a new kind of romance. However, the pull of tradition was strong in Lewis. His arms were stretched, as he says, to opposite poles, in a sort of crucifixion.

His Muse almost reverts, at times, to the outmoded Georgian mood. Briefly, Lewis is a poet who has evolved: his successive I's, who wrote his poems over many years, are, as he says, mostly strangers to him now. His was, anyway, not a demoniac Muse. His mind was too well trained and too critical. Problems of craftsmanship were as important to him as the travail of prophecy. He was also much concerned with the problems of identity. He was also extremely sensitive to influences and claimed many poets as his masters.

However, he sees in his work as a whole certain obsessive themes: admiration for the heroic is one of them; the others are a sense of life's transience, and the riddle of identity. He tried to be as lucid as he could, to make sense, if not always beauty, out of the chaotic mass of his ideas and impressions. In short, he was an evolving poet, even if he evolved, not outwards, but inwards towards his own identity.²⁸

3.6.5. On Ezra Pound

Menezes finds Ezra Pound one of the most potent forces and influences on the poetry of the English-speaking world at the beginning of this century. When Ezra Pound fled his country – the United States of America – for the first time, he was in his early twenties; yet he was responsible for giving a new turn to English poetry, and teasing it into a new idiom and a new voice. He was aware of the cultural continuity of the tradition, which was not confined to one country or to one language, but made of the whole of Europe a single country of the mind.

Pound is not a popular poet, Menezes says. He never was; although in his prime, he was a friend and patron of many poets and writers who are now more widely read, besides being a powerful critical influence for good on English poetry in general. Although Pound did great service to literature and the arts through other

people, he was himself, undoubtedly, a poet of considerable stature. Through his poetry, he forever sought his own identity. His first important collection of verse is called *Personae* meaning 'masks' in original Latin,

A great part of Pound's influence was on the technical side of poetry, for technique was to him something more than external to the poet's business. Because of his wide interests, his humanism, Pound was necessarily a student of languages. He began in his native country, with Romance literature, which included Provencal, and went on to Italian, French, German and Spanish. He also had a sound knowledge of Greek and Latin. But whatever he wrote, Pound's work is ever a pilgrimage to himself, towards the discovery of his own identity, but what is more important is that through all his quest and perplexity, he could write beautiful poetry.²⁹

3.6.6. On Robert Frost

Menezes considers Robert Frost a truly American poet, who spent twenty years in frustration and obscurity and was a gift of England to America. His first two books were published in London. He was a nature poet (the land and landscape of New England stand out in all his poetry) and predominantly the poet of Man. He does not suffer from that vague nature mysticism which so many nature poets

fall prey to. Although he began writing when the skies were filled with 'new poets', Frost preferred to plough his lonely furrow, unaffected by contemporary trends: he was to be a 'new' poet all right, but with a newness all his own. His roots were in the past, in the European tradition of culture. Although close to earth and interested in the local scene, Frost was no naïve country bard, but a learned, even sophisticated person. While poetry was his demon, it was also, as he named it, his cause. He had a clear idea of what he wanted out of poetry. While it was certainly an expression of experience, it was at the same time a careful construction. He did not trust a poem, which was a put-up job; whose end was already known. The good poem must be a surprise to the poet before it is a surprise to the reader. The poem begins as a lump in the throat, homesickness, loneliness, and grows as a tree grows, organically, unhampered by geometry.

According to Menezes, a typically Frostian poem is 'Mending Wall' because nobody else that we know could have written it. Frost has been called a metaphysical poet. In a sense, he is. Though he loves facts, he can see beyond the facts, and that is metaphysics. 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening', in spite of its unpretentious, not to say prosaic, title, is, deservedly one of the most popular of Frost's poems. The lines follow so effortlessly, the thought and words are so simple, not to say rustic, that one does not realize at first how

carefully the poem has been built up. There is something in this poem that is profoundly satisfying: the homely details, the sudden plunge into symbolism, the gentle sigh of nostalgia, the flash of manly responsibility, the sucking reminder of the end of everything. There is here what Frost calls the honest duplicity of poetry that says one thing and means another; something as restoring as sleep, something as irrevocable as death.³⁰

Menezes discusses in great detail these three poets, Lewis, Ezra Pound and Frost. He discusses each poet's literary achievement and their lives. In fact, we come to know a great deal about their lives and the forces that influenced them to write the kind of poetry, which they wrote. All three men were modern poets who wrote excellent poetry.

3.6.7. On Francis Thompson

In an essay on Francis Thompson, Menezes describes his poetry in the words of Chesterton that "in his poetry, as in the poetry of the universe, you can work infinitely out and out. Yet infinitely in and in." What he meant was that Thompson's work possesses the two essentials of great poetry: great beauty of expression and great depth of meaning. That Thompson's poetry possesses, at its best, both these qualities in a surpassing degree, is obvious to the most careful eye.

Menezes says further that Thompson's symbolism should be religious symbolism. It was expected from a poet who owned passionate and painful allegiance at once to the outer truth of the world, which is beauty and to the inner beauty of the world which is Truth. If he is a Catholic, we should expect him to be a greater for being a Catholic, not less. For a Catholic to say that he has given utterance in his verse to the profoundest truths is simply to admit that he was a Catholic and hence could see clearly and calmly what others see fitfully and, as in a glass, darkly. It is only when we realize the profound beauty of this utterance that we begin to recognize him not merely as a great Catholic, but as a great Catholic poet. Menezes admits that there is something about Francis Thompson's poetry, which gives one the assurance that he would have been a great poet even if he had not been a Catholic, though, certainly not the same kind of poet.³¹

Thompson's symbolism is therefore, the priest's symbolism because it is the symbolism of a poet but also because it is the symbolism of a Catholic and his diction becomes, in our minds, associated with liturgy in two different ways. He actually borrowed his phraseology from the actual liturgy of the Church.

Menezes believes that Thompson was not only a good Catholic but also a great Catholic poet. He tried his best to express the truth in terms of beauty and the higher the truth that he has to express, the greater is the beauty of his expression.

3.6.8. On Gerald Manley Hopkins

The next Catholic poet Menezes writes about is Gerald Manley Hopkins. Hopkins, he says, had accepted a dogmatic faith and had the temerity to be a priest of the Society of Jesus. The truth, however, is that, without this vocation and this discipline, Hopkins would not have been the kind of poet that he is; and the world would have missed a new experience in poetry.

In *The Wreck of the Deutschland*, Hopkins has a subject much after his heart: the manifestation of God's love as terror. God, for him, is the 'father and fondler' but He is also the 'martyr-master'. The experience of the Christian and the priest wrestling with God transpires through what has been described as Hopkins's 'terrible sonnets'. He longs for peace. But the price of peace is patience, which 'wants war, wants wounds'. And when peace does come at last, it comes with a creative purpose.³²

Menezes says that Hopkins was the first of the moderns. He rejected the common measure and the accepted tune in his verse. He claimed to have revived an old rhythm and called it Sprung Rhythm. He was a passionate lover of Nature and in his poetry he tried to reconcile God and Nature.

3.6.9. On D.H.Lawrence

Menezes describes D.H.Lawrence as a surrealist. His great religion, as he wrote, was a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong in our minds. But what our blood feels and says, is always true. The body of the man was a kind of flame, like a candle flame, forever upright and flaming, and the intellect was just the light that is shed on the things around. And Lawrence's own concern was not with the things around as with the mystery of the flame forever flowing. To him, it was not the Word that was made flesh, but the reverse: it was the Flesh that was made word. We know God truly in the Woman. She is the door of our incoming and out-going. In her we go back to the father. This was the answer that Lawrence thought the age wanted – a curious reversal of Christian values – a sort of Anti-Christianity using myths and phraseology of Christianity.³²

We can read further in the essay that Lawrence's chief claim to artistic, as apart from his prophetic, originality is that he made us aware of these levels of consciousness which lie below the surface or, being known, are rarely brought into the orbit of polite speech. It is in his repeated emphasis on this, no less than in his constant exaltation of the instincts that Lawrence comes very near the surrealists.

According to Menezes, the age was beginning to grow dissatisfied with naturalism when D. H. Lawrence came on the scene. Therefore he did not write poetry that attempted to state the obvious. His originality lies in that he made us aware of those levels of consciousness, which lie below the surface.

3.6.10. On G.K.Chesterton

Menezes brings out the true personality of G.K. Chesterton in two essays. For him, Chesterton was different from Bernard Shaw. While Shaw looked for Superman alone to save man, Chesterton on the other hand, took his stand on man as he is: the beer-drinking, fighting, law-making, law-breaking, sensual, respectable man – man who is beast and angel, spirit and flesh, fallen man, but capable of heroism and holiness, by the grace of God.

For Chesterton the secret of mysticism is that you understand all things with the help of that which you do not understand. The Christian virtues are rooted in conflict: they are irrational; for faith means that you are to believe in something which your reason sees as absurd; hope is a virtue when there is reason only for despair; charity means that you should love somebody who does not, in reason, deserve your love. This paradox is often used by Chesterton to prick the bubble of pretensions. Paradox is, with Chesterton, as we have seen, a means of discovery – it makes the world richer by discovering new truths or merely rediscovering the old.³³

Menezes says Chesterton's poetry makes you feel that all poetry is a form of paradox – a sort of discovery. He describes him also as a biographer and literary critic. As a critic his judgement is sure because he has an infallible test to apply in every case. But, above all, Menezes tells us, Chesterton was a born poet.

3.6.11. On Mathew Arnold

Mathew Arnold, for Menezes, lives not only by virtue of what is permanent in his writings, but also by virtue of what was contemporary. Arnold was a Victorian, but there is a sense in which Arnold was not a Victorian, was emphatically anti-Victorian; and this is where he touches us: he might have been the spokesman of our

age. Arnold was of those who were perplexed; but he did not stand still. Brought up in an intense religious environment, he fell upon an age where the most sacred dogmas were being challenged. At every point, he found himself hanging between a world that was dead and another refusing to be born. Irony never ceased to dog him. Proud of his love poems, he seemed ashamed of his love.

As a poet, Arnold is not in the first rank. Menezes says that he often had the singer's robe without the singer's voice. But, if poetry is to be a mirror of the age, Arnold's poetry, though not as impressive or as copious, is truer than either Tennyson's or Browning's.

As a critic, he not only criticized, says Menezes, but he taught others to criticize. He laid down laws and principles, not all original but 'hammered in with indefatigable iteration'. In practical criticism, he prescribed the touchstone method: to test new poetry by the best in the old. High seriousness is what he demanded in poetry; great actions; fidelity to life; interpretative power; moral profundity; even, sometimes, natural magic.³⁴

Menezes considers Arnold as a greater critic than a poet. His poetry has echoes of loneliness but it does not drive him to despair.

As a critic, he has carved a niche for himself in modern literary criticism.

3.6.12. On Shakespeare

In an essay on Shakespeare, Menezes declares Shakespeare to be a dramatist of all ages and for all times. He says that he is an excellent entertainer. The shrewd old playwright himself never lost sight of this vital fact; that his plays must play. And they did play to his own generation. The miracle is that they have gone on playing down to our own. This enduring quality of entertainment is, therefore, Shakespeare's first claim to modernity. We weep with him, and we laugh with him; we thrill to his ghosts and witches; we follow, worshipping or hating, the careers of his heroes and villains. But the lasting quality of Shakespeare's work is his perennial modernity than in treading the high road of normality, of sanity in ethics.³⁵

Menezes says further that Shakespeare appealed to a wide spectrum of London society. It is the people, and not the highbrow that demanded, not only comedy but history and poetry. It is this that kept Elizabethan drama generally sweet and sane and at the center of normality. Hence, their universal appeal.

Menezes basically refers to many qualities of Shakespeare in his essay on Shakespeare. He stresses on the enduring quality of Shakespeare's entertainment and his ability to please different kinds of audiences. He has the first claim to modernity. He does not belong only to the age in which he lived and wrote, but for all time.

3.6.13. On Baudelaire

In the middle section of the critical essays, Menezes describes Baudelaire's position in English literature. He says that it was Swinburne who introduced Baudelaire to Victorian England. Both of these poets had certain things in common: an abnormal sensibility, extravagant, even perverse, desires; an unusual gift for extracting beauty out of vice.

It was in the 1890's that Baudelaire's influence was felt most widely. This decade was particularly ready to receive the impact of his most distinctive poetry as a revolt against the prolonged domination of Tennyson and much that he stood for in Victorian England. Missing Christianity in the world around him, Baudelaire set out to discover for himself. He began at the beginning, in the Garden of Eden, after the Fall. In an age with its faith pinned to automatic progress on the wings of science and technology, he believed in Original Sin. Arthur Symonds was the first to popularize Baudelaire and the Symbolists in

England. Symons speaks of Baudelaire's poetry as 'passionate devotion to the passions', of the 'ecstasy of evil' in him.

The Baudelarian 'dandyism' has its reflection in the 1890's in Oscar Wilde, Aubrey Beardsley, James Whistler the painter, Max Beerbohm. Dandyism was more than a trick to catch the eye, or to protest against the dreary and drab monotony of Victorian costume. Dandyism, to Baudelaire, was a profound philosophy. The aspect of Baudelaire's dandyism was the repudiation of Nature. He rejects the purely natural, as he rejects the purely human. Crime, he writes, is natural. Virtue is artificial, supernatural.

Baudelaire, however, did not repudiate Nature altogether. He reconciled Nature and Man by the theory of Correspondences. Nature is an alien, an enemy, unless its appearances can correspond to our inner existence. Poetic knowledge is an ordering face to face, of the internal and external world for man. This is the philosophy of Symbolism. Baudelaire sees in Nature, a 'forest of symbols'.³⁶

In this long essay Menezes evaluates Baudelaire's stature as a poet in English Literature. He says that the influence of Baudelaire was felt most widely in the 1890's. He has influenced many poets like

Arthur Symons to imitate his kind of poetry. His philosophy and symbolism became very popular with his contemporaries.

Airy Nothings abounds in different other essays on topics as far apart as 'Keats and Tagore', 'The Vacanas of Basavanna', 'The Humanism of Mahatma Gandhi', 'The Imitation of Christ as Literature' and 'The Rare Art of Laughter without Tears' and many others. Some of these essays could not be called as criticism in the strict sense of the term and could be discussed in a later chapter as Essays.

All these essays on authors, both English and American, throw a great deal of light on the writings of various poets that Menezes has dealt with. He has delved deep into their lives and studied the environment in which they lived and the social forces that influenced their writings. Each of the poets he has studied belongs to a certain political period. They were products of the age and their writings denote this very clearly. They were also influenced by the literary movements of the past and many times they rebelled against the existing tradition and wished to strike a new chord. Menezes has evaluated the works of these different poets in his own personal and inimitable manner and his assessment provides us with a new outlook.

According to S.K.Dessai, "as a critic, Prof. Menezes is essentially *rasika*, 'tasting himself' as he says, in the works of kindred souls. His criticism, therefore, is more of a poet-*rasika* than of a philosopher-critic." ³⁷ Hence, each essay of his is a thing of beauty and has a permanent appeal for the readers because Menezes is himself a poet and his excitement and pleasure can be gleaned through his criticism of the poets that he has taken up for scrutiny. As a poet he relives the experiences of other poets and is thrilled with the style, imagery and diction that each poet manifests through his work. It is said that only a poet can be a judge of other poets and Menezes being a poet himself can understand the processes of thought that each poet experiences in the creation of a poem and the effort that it demands. He naturally enjoys reading poetry by other poets and the complex thoughts, which they try to convey by choosing the right word.

NOTES

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3. Ibid, 11.
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7. Armando Menezes, 'Francisco Luis Gomes: The Novelist',
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15. Armando Menezes, 'By Way of a Foreword' (Dharwar: *Lighter Than Air*, Samyukta Karnatak Press, 1959), 1.
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18. Ibid, 25
19. Armando Menezes, 'Poetry and Philosophy', *Lighter Than Air*, 31.
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23. Armando Menezes, 'Satire', *Lighter Than Air*, 82.
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26. Armando Menezes, 'The Poetry of T.S. Eliot', *Airy Nothings*, 85.
27. Armando Menezes, 'Cecil Day Lewis', *Airy Nothings*, 102.
28. Armando Menezes, 'Ezra Pound', *Airy Nothings*, 108.

29. Armando Menezes, 'Robert Frost', *Airy Nothings*, 116.
30. Armando Menezes, 'Francis Thompson', *Airy Nothings*,
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31. Armando Menezes, 'Gerald Manley Hopkins', *Airy Nothings*
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32. Armando Menezes, 'D.H. Lawrence', *Airy Nothings*,
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33. Armando Menezes, 'G.K. Chesterton', *Airy Nothings*,
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34. Armando Menezes, 'Mathew Arnold', *Airy Nothings*,
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35. Armando Menezes, 'Shakespeare The Dramatist', *Airy Nothings*
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36. Armando Menezes, 'Baudelaire in English Literature', *Airy*
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CHAPTER IV

Prose Writings: Essays

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4. Prose Writings: Essays

4.1.

Menezes appears to have been influenced by the Indian English prose of the nineteenth century. The Indian renaissance of the nineteenth century produced prose of many types of which, as in the earlier period, the two most prominent prose-forms were historical-political and religious-cultural prose. The prose was prompted by the two-fold impulse of the rediscovery of the Indian past and a strong awareness of the problems of the day.¹

Menezes' prose, which is represented by his broadcast talks *Lighter Than Air* and *Airy Nothings*, is no less remarkable than his poetry. Though he describes these works as not 'shatteringly original' or 'the result of long and penetrating research', there is in them nevertheless, much that is remarkable and new. To these may be added the hundreds of essays he wrote in Bombay magazines like *The Goan World*, *The Anglo-Lusitano*, *The Examiner* in the forties and much later in the magazine *Goa Today*, published from Goa.

These essays range from reflective to narrative themes and are written on a variety of themes and topics like education, religion, various personalities in the world and Goa and many humorous pieces on current affairs of the time. In his reflective essays, he expresses ideas that are out of the ordinary and individual viewpoints. As an educationist himself, he has many useful and interesting ideas to express on the state of education. His essays on various personalities present a true picture of the individuals and their contribution to the society or the state as the case may be. They contain most of his ideas, attitudes and insights; the living teacher is more capacious, wittier, more wide-ranging and more thought provoking.

It would be necessary to study some of his essays in order to understand the beauty of his expression and the depth of understanding in his essays on various personalities. I have therefore selected only the following essays for study: 'Tagore at Karwar', 'Tagore Centenary', 'Rabindranath Tagore: His Poetry', 'Yeats and Tagore', 'Rabindranath Tagore: His Philosophy', 'Basavanna: Mystic Poet', 'The Vacannas of Basavanna', 'The Humanism of Mahatma Gandhi', 'John Fitzgerald Kennedy', 'Francisco Luis Gomes,' 'Francisco Correia-Afonso', 'Menezes Braganca', 'Tristao de Braganza Cunha,' 'Basava and Christ', 'St.Francis Xavier, Critic of India,' 'D.C. Pavate', 'The Rare

Art of Laughter without Tears', 'Also an Art:Plagiarism', 'Literature and Psychoanalysis', 'Literary Utopias', 'The Imitation of Christ as Literature', 'Veerashaivism and Christianity', 'On Education and Democracy', 'The Generation Gap', 'Student Discipline', 'On Old Age', 'The Second Sex', 'The World', 'The Mother Tongue', 'The Lighter side of My Profession'. I have divided the above essays into Literary Writings, Political Writings, Religious Writings, Eminent Goan Personalities, humorous writings and serious reflections.

4.2. Literary Writings

4.2.1. Menezes On Tagore

In five essays on Tagore, entitled 'Tagore at Karwar', 'Tagore Centenary', 'Rabindranath Tagore: His Poetry', 'Yeats and Tagore', and 'Rabindranath Tagore: His Philosophy', Menezes gives us a complete picture of the man that was Tagore, his poetic genius and his philosophy. He describes Tagore's reaction on reaching Karwar, with 'this little harbour as it lay ringed round with hills, its crescent-shaped beach throwing out its arms towards the shoreless sea'. The sea-beach at Karwar, Tagore has written, is certainly a fit place to realize that the beauty of Nature is not a mirage of the imagination but a reflection of infinite delight, drawing us to seek the reality behind its shadow. ²

Describing his poetry, Menezes says that *The Gitanjali* might be described as the Religion of the Poet. It is primarily the book of the Singer, who tries, through manifold songs, to fathom the mystery of Song itself. The poet's voice, he says, is drowned and lost in the endless music of God, his master. But sometimes, the song does not come. The poet waits, like a woman for her lover, stringing and unstringing his instrument. ³

For Tagore, God is the divine lover. The soul is a woman. She might, in the dark night of love, beg her lover for the garland round his neck; and groping in the morning dusk, she might find a sword instead. But God's gift, however terrible, must be borne next to one's heart. Tagore continues that God is the playmate of our empty hours. We sing of him night and day; and yet, what is He? We know not. He is the infinite and the finite at once: the sky as well as the nest. ⁴

Menezes asks, if so much of Tagore's religious poetry is poetry of love, one might have expected that some of his love poetry would be poetry of God. But this is hardly the case. The pieces in *The Gardener* are described as poems of love and life. The poet is the gardener of the Queen's flower garden, and his is the service of her idle days. To the poet, love is the highest form of self-giving. The giving must be unreserved, unconditional. Love does not thrive beside

prudence. If you are too thrifty and careful, the lamp goes out, the flower fades, the stream dries up, and the harp-string breaks. The true lover, therefore, revolts against the conventional and the commonplace, the sobriety of the worldly-wise. ⁵

Menezes says that Tagore's poetry of childhood is at once poetry of love and poetry of God: it starts in love and reaches out to God. This is perhaps the profoundest, certainly the most unique, of Tagore's poetry. Here we have the mystery of childhood, its sudden and incalculable wisdom, and its humour. It is the end of all poetry, for all great things end where they began.⁶

For Menezes, both poets, Yeats and Tagore were playwrights as well as poets; and wrote the same type of symbolic plays. Of the two, Tagore was certainly the most versatile and copious. He is the only poet who is thought by some to be greater in prose.

In the essay on 'Tagore's Philosophy', Menezes says that Rabindranath Tagore is first and last a poet, and like the poet that he is, he writes straight out of his personal experience. By being a very great poet, his personal experience naturally includes a great deal of thought. This thought is profoundly felt and is implicated in that universal vision of joy, which is Tagore's single source of poetic

inspiration. This joy is the core of Tagore's philosophic as well as poetic faith. Joy is everywhere, and is the surest sign that reality is one and indivisible, and that its fullest significance is love. Another name for love is beauty; it too is the manifestation of oneness. In it pleasure and pain become one, the breach between the finite and the infinite fills love and overflows and it is through love, through sympathy, that we really know nature.

Menezes describes Tagore's philosophic and poetic faith in this essay. For Tagore, joy and love are of great significance. For him, love is beauty. It is in experiencing both pleasure and pain that we really come to understand nature. It is this experience of universal joy in Nature that inspires Tagore to write poetry.

4.2.2. Basavanna: Mystic Poet

In the essay, 'Basavanna: Mystic Poet', Menezes says that a man's quest of God and his wrestling with the highest destiny, have found expression in great poetry. And not a few mystics of all times and lands and creeds have unburdened their hearts in song. There is indeed a close relationship between mysticism and poetry. The mystical experience, in its turn, has the quality of something undefinable yet poignantly real, something felt without mediation, like a sensation, like the warmth of a flame or the scent of a rose.

He adds that a poem is essentially a cry; and, inspite of the theoretical position that one who has realized himself cannot any longer speak of, a saint still remains a man – a man tasting the savour of his experience, bursting with a profound thankfulness for it, driven by a very human urge to sing of it, to utter it with the most perfect utterance within his power, within any man's power. ⁷

According to Menezes, Basavanna's command of metaphor is of astonishing quality and range. Sometimes the similes and metaphors are drawn from the less pleasing objects of nature, or the common occupations of life, and are perhaps all the more striking for it. Basavanna's mind is, sometimes like a lizard darting about a hedge, or like a dog riding a palanquin, which reverts to his natural bent, or it leaps and bounds among the branches of a tree, like a monkey. His bhakti is like an ox circling an oil-mill that has no sesamum. Natural images jostle images drawn from domestic life. Worship, without piety, is like a silk-cotton tree bearing flower and fruit. ⁸

In an identical essay on 'The Vacanas of Basavanna', Menezes tells us that though Basavanna was born in a Brahmin family, he strove always for social justice. The community was riddled with caste: Basavanna would have no difference between man and man,

between a pariah and Brahmin. Basavanna is ready to humble himself before the humblest of men, whatsoever their birth.

Menezes in this essay discusses the mystic faith of Basavanna, which prompted him to write beautiful verse. Although he has experienced mysticism he is still a man and would like to share his experiences. His sense of gratitude for these rich experiences inspires him to burst into song. Basavanna is a humble person and would never think of hurting or harming anyone.

4.3. Political Writings

4.3.1. On Mahatma Gandhi

In his essay on 'The Humanism of Mahatma Gandhi', Menezes brings out the true essence of Gandhiji's humanism. He says that one striking feature of Gandhiji's humanism is that his devotion to humanity is perfectly consistent with his faith in God; and his entire life is an object-lesson, showing that neither faith in God need withdraw us from our human obligations, nor a vague humanism screen from us the presence of God. You cannot divide social, economic, political and purely religious work into watertight compartments, and he adds: 'I do not know religion apart from human activity.' For Gandhiji, 'religion is something that grips one's whole personality and expresses itself in the way in which he lives.' God is

to him Truth, and this Truth must be realized in this world, in terms of service to man.

Menezes says that whoever first called Gandhiji Mahatma, had the true instinct of definition in him. He was, indeed, the Great Soul; a soul in whom all the virtues and values of humanism were so perfectly harmonized, that while still in this life, he transcended the limitations of life.

Menezes discusses in fine detail, Mahatma Gandhiji's biography by Romain Roland in his essay on 'Gandhiji and Romain Roland. He says, as a biography it is thin and discursive, and stops at Gandhiji's great Ahmedabad trial. Romain Roland, Menezes says, was a child of the European Enlightenment; an apostle of reason and as such he could not at first stomach what seemed to him as Gandhiji's medievalism like his belief in caste system, in cow and idol worship. His opposition to machinery seemed to him at first an even more heinous example of medieval and retrograde thinking. But, in all this, Roland was ready to understand. He let Gandhiji himself speak, to defend himself, or rather, to explain himself. That is why nearly half of Roland's biography of Gandhi is made up of quotations from Gandhi himself. Step by step, he unrolls before us the various phases of his hero's life; his 20 years of apprenticeship in South Africa; his meeting

with Dadabhai Naoroji and Gokale. Episode after episode of the nationalist movement follows. Roland assesses each of these in so far as it throws light on Gandhiji's methods and character. Roland's enthusiasm is firmly rooted in the faith that the Indian experiment had lessons for war-torn Europe.⁹ Menezes writes with admiration of the humanism of Gandhiji stating that his devotion to humanity is perfectly consistent with his faith in God.

Menezes had great admiration for Mahatma Gandhi. He says that all the virtues and values of humanism were ingrained in him. Although his comments are on Romain Roland's impressions of Gandhiji, in reality, they are Menezes' comments on the greatness of Gandhiji and his devotion to duty and love for mankind.

4.3.2. On John Fitzgerald Kennedy

Menezes provides us with a character sketch of John Fitzgerald Kennedy in the essay with that title. John Kennedy, writes Menezes, never lost the academic detachment, the power to see both sides of a question, in spite of the strong call of politics. Throughout Kennedy's political life, the persistent charge against him was that he was a sinner on the fence, that he was neither conservative nor liberal; not much to the right, but also not much to the left; a Catholic, yet not enough of a Catholic; an Irishman, who was American first, an

American who was a citizen of the world; an idealist who relied a good deal on organization; a true democrat who strongly believed in leadership.

Again and again, Menezes says, that in the course of his public career, Kennedy was confronted with an issue that would not brook non-committal, that would not push him off the fence; and in every case, this moderate, rational, unsentimental, dispassionate man had it in him to make what he called 'the hard and unpopular decision.' His courage had a moral, even a spiritual basis. None saw this courage in John Kennedy more clearly than his counterpart in the other camp – Nikita Khrushchev.

John Kennedy, he says, was built up, brick upon brick, by many things; by the tragic history of his race; by the early poverty of his family as much by its later enormous wealth. But underneath all, he was, in spite of his matinee-idol appearance, an intensely serious man and most serious when he smiled. In spite of his death, the world has inherited his dream, the experience of his large humanity, his sense of responsibility for world peace, which means the very continuance of the human race.¹⁰

For Menezes, John F. Kennedy was an ideal president who rose from poverty to riches. He was a very serious man who loved not

America but also the world. He was, according to him, a great democratic leader whose dreams the world has inherited.

4.4. Famous Eminent Goan Personalities

Writing on four eminent Goan personalities namely Francisco Luis Gomes, Francisco Correia-Afonso, Menezes Braganca and Tristao de Braganca Cunha, Menezes describes the mettle of which these men were made of and their contribution to the society and the world in which they lived. Menezes tells us that Francisco Luis Gomes took his seat in the Portuguese Parliament for the first time in 1861. Goa had been for three centuries and a half in search of her lost soul – of a way out of political tutelage and the consequences of a hybrid culture. The new climate seemed to permit a demand for the colonies of an equal status with (what used oddly to be called) the mother country. Goan representatives in Parliament had rushed into the fight with eloquence equal to their courage. Francisco Luis Gomes succeeded to this noble tradition and he enriched it by the prestige of a versatile talent and wide interest.

Though he was a sort of liberal conservative in politics, and an individualist in economics, his liberalism knew no bounds in the social sphere. His passionate faith in liberalism is very touching; for, in his time, the Liberal party was still the party of liberty. This

liberalism sought inspiration, not in Rousseau's return to Nature, but in the honest application of the highest and purest tenets of the Christian faith. Some of the most brilliant parliamentarians of Portugal, as well as its historians and men of letters, on a footing of equality, as one of themselves, accepted Gomes. Menezes says that Gomes was a good speaker and was ever throwing himself headlong into the attack upon Portuguese slave trade in Africa. He was no rebel. Political good sense had set bounds to his aspirations; and all he did was to press for a fair deal to the colonies. He was clearly aware of an India outside the Portuguese enclave – an India that was heir to ancient and noble traditions; which had, as he wrote to Lamartine, composed *The Mahabharata* and invented chess – two things which seem to have in them something of the eternal and the infinite.¹¹

As an economist, Gomes seems to have broken new ground, in relating economics to law and morality and was acknowledged by John Stuart Mill in England and Chevalier in France as their fellow and friend, and admitted as member to the very exclusive Political Economy Society of Paris.

Menezes describes Francisco Luis Gomes as a historian, man of letters and a great parliamentarian. He was a great patriot, who, although living in a Portuguese state, was proud of his Indian

ancestry and the great civilization to which he belonged. He was no less an economist than a politician who made Goa proud.

4.4.1. On Menezes Braganca

Writing about Menezes Braganca, Menezes says that he was a pioneer thinker in the whole of Goan history. He says further that before he could apply his thought to questions of liberty, he had earned freedom for his thought by shaking off all trammels and blinkers. He was a great emancipator; and the first thing he emancipated was his own mind. Coming on the scene, in the first decade of the century, he was a free man from the start. This rebel, was, in a severe sense, a traditionalist, staunchly loyal to the oldest and proudest of civilized tradition: Reason. He claimed the right to argue, to analyse, to explain, to prove, in a word, to think. His wide embracing and unswerving liberalism had that liberty at its source. He could admire Portugal to the point of cultivating its language to perfection, and yet condemn, its political and administrative errors. He detested any form of dictatorship: Napoleon or Mussolini, Sidonio Pais or Salazar.

Braganca taught a whole generation to see. It is not without significance that while the weekly he founded in 1911 was known as *O Debate*, the last two journals he filled without formally editing were

named *Prakasha* and *Pradeepa*. His style, always his own, combined clarity with density and power. He had a large gift for irony, and his rapier could crush like a bludgeon. He was never personal, never appealed to emotion, never deviated from the ethics of journalism. The joy of battle was in his Kshatriya blood, but he fought for a cause: the great cause of civilization, which has been defined as Reason Enthroned and a Sense of Values.¹²

For Menezes, Menezes Braganca was a great liberal thinker. In spite of his Portuguese education, he attacked its political administration. Through his two Portuguese journals, *Pradeepa* and *Prakasha*, and his earlier journal, *O Debate*, he strove for the freedom of thought and speech.

4.4.2. On Francisco Correia-Afonso

In the next essay, Menezes describes Francisco Correia-Afonso as a man, who, by the rousing quality of his rhetoric, by the gently solvent power of his wit and humour, as well as by the authority of his unimpeachable position as a member of the Church, undermined the complacent claim that the continuance of the Portuguese in India was necessary in the interests of the Catholic faith. He demonstrated, again and again that the very opposite was true. He untiringly pointed to the existence of a flourishing Christianity in India before

the arrival of the Portuguese. He reminded the Portuguese that India was Catholic and civilized long before Portugal was either. The last phase of his life was an impassioned dedication to the cause of Goa's freedom.

Menezes further elaborates on the personality of Correia-Afonso by saying that his personality was perhaps his trump suit. All prejudice, all hostility, melted in its presence. It was also in great measure the secret of his oratory. Correia-Afonso did not put the best of himself in his writings. Some of his most brilliant articles were delivered as speeches. As he grew older, the tendency to rhetoric increased. He wrote more and more speeches. Menezes calls him an immensely likeable man, one of the most brilliant academic men Goa ever produced, an astonishing debater, a master of sober and elegant prose.

Francisco Correia-Afonso is described by Menezes as an erudite and master orator. He was one of the great Goan academicians and devoted his life for the cause of Goa's freedom.

4.4.3. On Tristao de Braganca Cunha

The last essay on another Goan personality is Tristao de Braganca Cunha. Menezes says that he was moved to write a sonnet

in his honour, in which he compared him to someone, who, preferring to plan a play and prompt it from the wings, finds himself pushed into the glare of the footlights, to play the hero's role. He has also compared him to Moses, catching from the heights of Pisgah a distant view of the Promised Land. Menezes adds further that he was an unflinching realist, a very practical idealist. He had by rote the entire history of colonialism; he knew more than the mentality that creates it; he knew the mentality that it creates. He knew, through their disguise, the many subtle ways in which man is wolf to man; the many insidious forms in which man is despoiled of his human dignity.

Menezes says that forty or more years ago, when some of the younger men and women still dreamed of a Goa at long last united to Mother India, Tristao de Braganca Cunha had formulated his plan of action. He had joined the Indian National Congress as a Goan who was also an Indian. He had brought back from Europe a whole technique of political action. As a newspaper correspondent and newsagent for India in France, he had gained a detailed knowledge of every phase; of every turn and twist of India's struggle for independence. He commanded the moral support and perhaps the resources of a powerful international organization. He had also earned the gratitude of the masses by organizing relief measures after a destructive flood and exposed the white slave traffickers who

exported Goa labour to the tea plantations in Assam. He was a master strategist, and knew the necessity of losing many a battle in order to win the war. He remained the longest and most consistent in the service of Goa's freedom. There were other men, who spoke and wrote for Goa's freedom struggle but few names will be found of men who served the cause of Goa's freedom so well and so long as Tristao de Braganca Cunha.

4.5. Religious Writings: Christian and Non-Christian

Most of the Christian and non-Christian writings of Armando Menezes, which are available to me, are contained in the volumes of poetry like *Songs from the Saranas and Other Poems* that he published and his translations of the Kannada scriptures. Besides these he published a number of essays on Christianity and Veerashaivism, Basava and others in various periodicals from time to time. I have included in my forthcoming discussion some of these essays, which I came across in the family collection of Armando Menezes. I could not trace the history of their publication.

4.5.1. Basava and Christ

In a long essay, named 'Basava and Christ', Menezes says that similar circumstances seem to have prevailed about the time Christ and Basava were to appear. He says that it is not the purpose of his

article to establish a point-to-point parallel between Basava and Christ, but to indicate similarities where they exist, between the salient tenets of the two faiths. Just as Jesus is believed to be the Son of God, there is a Veerasaiva belief that Basava was an incarnation of Nandi and had already passed through six lives before he was born to Madarasa and Madalambike. Menezes quotes line after line from Basava's teachings to prove that both Christ and Basava had similar beliefs and hence taught similar truths. Ideas after ideas follow on truth, justice, wealth, perfection and love. The religion founded by Jesus Christ is essentially one of love. That is what the New Testament tells us. Love is also the essence of the Veerasaiva faith as Basava conceived it. As examples of similarity may be considered Basava's abhorrence of distinction of caste based on birth, wealth, trade or sex, which have found utterance in many of his *Vacanas*. Christ, on the other hand, according to Menezes, shocked his best disciples by mixing with Samaritans, Publicans, prostitutes and other sinners. There are many such instances and parallels in the essay which prove the similarities in the teaching of Christ and Basava. He, however, states that both the religions had their own separate tenets because they were two separate religions.¹³

4.5.2. On The Imitation of Christ as Literature

Menezes' 'The Imitation of Christ as Literature', is a superb critical essay establishing *The Imitation of Christ* as a great classic of literature because of its idealism. Only, the idealism here is of a transcendental quality. Its 'divine discontent' is not merely a godlike thirst: it is a thirst for God. It pursues along the narrow path, the Way. It aspires, beyond sublunar truths, the Truth. It loses life, in order to gain Life. Idealism here takes up the Cross and follows, seeking the splendours of Tabor through the agonies of Calvary, the Vision through the sacrifice. Yet, Menezes continues, it is something besides the vision that makes of this masterpiece of Christian devotion a literary classic. If the book is of supreme moment in its divine aspirations, it also presents, in a hardly lower degree, an interest purely human. It fulfills in boundless measure one of the primary functions of literature – to portray human experience, to unroll the heart's many-hued film of hopes and fears, exultations and dejections, to picture the battlings of the spirit with the world and with itself, its cries of victory and its groans of defeat. *The Imitation of Christ* thus realizes the common paradox that by aiming at the divine, one can truly understand the human. In this sense, he says, there is no human document of greater worth or more convincing than a treatise of spiritual exercise.

Menezes sees further in *The Imitation of Christ*, two elements of prime importance essential to a literary masterpiece: supra-sensual aspiration, seeking to model man by more-than-man; and profound knowledge of all the peaks and depths of the human heart. Menezes concludes that Religion alone teaches the negation of Self: destruction of Self, as in Buddhism, suspension of Self, as in Hinduism, Victory over Self, as in Christianity. Thus can the Buddhist attain Nirvana, the Hindu be one with Brahma, the Christian imitate Christ.¹⁴

4.5.3. On Veerashaivism and Christianity

In 'Veerashaivism and Christianity', Menezes tells us that it is at once easy and difficult to compare two religions. Easy, because in so far as they are religions, they must have many points of similarity. Difficult, because they are, despite their similarities, two religions. And yet, one can presume some strong resemblance between Veerashaivism and Christianity because the early Christian missionaries, who knew their Christianity better than most of us, wondered whether Christianity had not directly influenced Veerashaivism. He adds further that the founder of Christianity is believed by Christians to be God Himself, who became man in order to redeem mankind that, through pride and disobedience, had fallen from God's grace and willfully shut itself off from Heaven. Though it is claimed that Basava was an incarnation of Nandi, strange

circumstances are reported as having attended the birth of each. The coming of Christ was foretold by generation after generation of Jewish prophets, and there was a tense expectation of a Messiah to come, but most of the Jews would not accept him as such. Basava's birth has a tinge of the marvelous: he was born of aged parents, already hopeless of a son, and the passing Muni who blessed his parents made a prophecy of the yet unborn child's future greatness.

Basava, like Christ, also confounds the wise men in the temple. As in the case of Christ, we are not sure that it was Basava's intention to found a new religion. He was a Sarana, among many Saranas, all drawn by a common impulse and doubtlessly inspired and energized by Basava's example, so that it is not a historical fact whether Veerashaivism was founded by Basava or Prabhu.¹⁵

Basava believed that compassion should be not only towards other human beings, but also towards all living creatures, the absolute equality between man and man, between man and woman, and the simplification of all religious practices. Menezes believes that the idea of Prasada and what Christians generally call Communion are very close to each other. In both cases, we offer a gift to God and receive it back from Him transformed.

4.5.6. On St. Francis Xavier

Menezes writes a beautiful essay entitled, 'St. Francis Xavier, Critic of India'. He says that the history of the Portuguese in the East is offset by the history of St. Francis Xavier. The Portuguese came with war. He brought peace. They came to take away. He came to give; and what he gave us was far more precious than that which they took away. Trained in the school of penance and humility, he came with love in his heart and blessings in his hand. They hungered for gold. In his soul was a divine thirst. Sixteenth Century natives of India were to a large extent based on prejudice. There is in the letters of St. Francis Xavier abundant evidence of this attitude towards India. His own feeling toward its people was, as a rule, one of charity, not of pity. His capacity to understand was as boundless as his capacity for suffering. His humility was abysmal as it was sincere. He did not care for power, not for wealth, not even for comfort. In his own life he bore the living Christ across the countries of the East, filling the land with the fragrance of his holiness.

The Portuguese conquerors, demoralized by wealth and power, led lives in shameless defiance of Christian morality and sound European tradition. Not content with setting a bad example to the natives, they constantly hampered the good work of the missionaries, by rapine and violence and outrages of every description. St. Francis

Xavier deplored all this and his letter to Fr. Simao Rodrigues of Portugal could be called a cry of despair. Ideal missionary that he was, he looked not only after the spiritual, but also after the temporal welfare of his flock. He loved the people and was passionately loved by those among whom he lived. His character and his miracles gave him a powerful hold upon the lower classes, and consequently earned him a proportionate hatred of the Brahmin priests. In conclusion, Menezes says that before St. Francis left Goa, he had achieved great results. He had partly reformed the morals of the Portuguese and he had weaned the new converts from their superstitions.¹⁶

4.6. Writings on Miscellaneous themes:

Menezes has a number of writings on miscellaneous themes. Some of these appeared in his collection, *Airy Nothings*, while some were published in the magazine *Goa Today* from time to time. They consist mainly of character sketches, humorous pieces, literary writings and serious essays. They provide us a proof of the scholarly style of Menezes' writings. His humorous pieces in fact convey serious thoughts and his essays on topics like Education, U.N.O. and his own profession provoke us into serious discussion.

4.6.1. Character sketch: D.C.Pavate

Menezes worked for many years at Dharwad and had close contact with the officials at Karnatak University. He delineates the character of the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. D.C. Pavate, in one well-written essay. He says D.C. Pavate was a humanist. Whatever his achievements as educational administrator, and they were significant, his real interest was humanitarian. The sciences, he saw, were trying to do something for man; but the humanities were ignoring humanity. Though by no means a mystic, his faith in what he was doing had immediacy. Theoretical processes were alien to his temper, except perhaps in mathematics; and he rarely defended the processes that preceded his action, not because he would not, but simply because he couldn't. Yet, in his heart of hearts, he knew he was right. He was an existentialist if ever there was one; the given situation was more to him than mere abstract principles. He had seen a hierarchical form of society perpetuating itself by sheer force of inertia. He now saw a democracy assuming an equality where there was none, and realized, as if by instinct, the necessity of hammering a real equality out of the existing inequalities.¹⁷

Menezes, in this essay, provides us with a complete picture of D.C. Pavate, with whom he worked and had close contact. According

to Menezes D. C. Pavate was a humanist who strived hard to build the Karnatak University with his great vision and exuberant enthusiasm

4.6.2. The Rare Art of Laughter without Tears:

In another essay 'The Rare Art of Laughter without Tears', Menezes begins by saying humorously that we often laugh at what we love; as we often learn to love what we began by laughing at. In laughing at all lapses from perfection, laughter recognizes a standard. There would be no laughter without seriousness; man, as Chesterton says, is the most laughable creature of all, because he is so dignified.

Menezes further tells us that laughing at the proper time and the right thing is a valuable social virtue, even when not always exercised, and makes for a sane outlook while ensuring the graces of life. Provided, of course, that our laughter takes the form, not of satire but of humour. Laughter, according to Menezes, like poetry, is no doubt, a criticism of an incongruity, and a deviation from the norm. This incongruity may be between the norm and actual fact or the incongruity may be between the actual and the desired. Menezes concludes that it is a question whether there can be laughter without tears at all. Writers on laughter have maintained that laughter was ordained by nature for correction, and that Horace's 'to correct

manners by laughing' is laughter' s most legitimate function, which is negated in pure humour. ¹⁸

4.6.3. On Plagiarism:

In a different essay 'Also an Art: Plagiarism', Menezes says Plagiarism was, to ancient Greeks, just plain kidnapping – that is what the word meant to them. From this simple act of naked brutality it rose to be a respectable, even a necessary, art. From lifting the children of one's body it rose to lifting the offspring of one's mind. Not only was imitation the sincerest form of flattery, as somebody said later, but downright spoliation was the done thing. They did not protect their writings from pilferings – as was done in later, more possessive and degenerate days. For them, copyright, if they could have foreseen the word, would have meant the right copy; the highest originality, to them meant: to be the first to copy, or imitate.¹⁹

Menezes tells us further that in the tradition of the epic form, plagiarism was more than a right – it was a duty. The obligation to copy exercised the same compulsion on writers that fashions exercise upon women today. In modern times, he says, we have other modalities of plagiarism. A wit has made a comparison between plagiarism and research: to copy from one book, he has said, is plagiarism; to copy from many, is research. The researcher does not

approach his sources like a conqueror, more like a cat burglar, or a sneaking petty thief. He concludes by saying that not all plagiarists, however, are aware that plagiarism is an art.²⁰

In this humorous essay Menezes traces the history of the word 'plagiarism' and concludes that in modern times it no longer has a bad name when practiced according to certain well-laid norms. In fact, it can be considered a virtue.

4.6.4. On Literature and Psychoanalysis

Menezes discusses the connection between 'Literature and Psychoanalysis', in an essay with that title. He says that where literature is concerned with deeper human impulses, with inexplicable and apparently uncaused, or insufficiently motivated behaviour, it invites the attention of psychoanalysis; which tells us that, where motives are not apparent, there may be unapparent causes: in the subconscious, or deeper down in the unconscious.²¹

Psychoanalysis, says Menezes, explains the effect of tragedy – at the psychological level – as relief from psychological tensions, or from some form of nemesis to which all of us, specially the more sensitive of us, are liable. What probably happens in tragedy, he says, is that the purely personal and self-regarding drops away for a moment, and pain

is expelled when the taint of egoism in suffering is removed. There is a sort of escape from personal anxieties into the larger life. This is probably akin to what psychoanalysts call sublimation. Again, when we consider the cause of pleasure in tragedy, we are confronted with explanations, which borrow terms from psychoanalysis: sadism and masochism. In conclusion, Menezes says that while psychoanalysis does certainly stimulate a certain type of literary criticism, we must remember that psychoanalytic problems have been embodied in literature before Freud and the naming of Psychoanalysis.

4.6.5. On Literary Utopias

In the next essay, named 'Literary Utopias', Menezes explains Utopia as a literary genre, which imagines a world far better than our very imperfect world; one, which gives a local habitation and a name to our desires and hopes of what, a world should be. In this sense, he says, all imaginative literature is Utopian. The world of poetry is, essentially, a mental world, that is, its location is nowhere. It is a world of Ideas, of Forms, of eternal values; and the Utopian writer writes of such a world as already realized, in order to bring home to us, more strikingly, more achingly, a sense of our own floundering incompetence.

Menezes further elaborates that though he is speaking of Utopias, there is in fact no clear-cut difference between political and literary Utopias; though some of them are better written than others. Every Utopia, according to him, is more or less literary in as much as it is imaginative writing; and the most literary Utopia must be concerned with some sort of state or society. Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, for instance, is a literary work, a romance, and an ancestor of much English fiction. While More's stress is, among other things, on learning and culture, Bacon's emphasis is on science and scientific research.²²

Menezes discusses various works by authors to prove his point, like William Morris' *News from Nowhere*, Wells' *Men like Gods* and *A Modern Utopia*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Samuel Butler's *Erewhom*, and Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. He concludes that some kind of socialism prevails in most Utopias, fulfilling humanity's dream of complete freedom, equality and justice.

4.6.6. On Education and Democracy

In the essay on 'Education and Democracy', Menezes expresses his opinion on education. The first concern of a nation, he says, should be to educate itself. Education in the past, according to him, was the preserve of the few, which included the aristocratic

drove, for whom education was a necessary evil; the social fop with an unearned income, for whom education was neither for profit nor for knowledge but for ornament. But at present, education even higher education cannot be the prerogative of the chosen few; but still, the best end products of education, if education is rightly conceived, could not help being an elite, but it would be a classless elite. Democracy, according to him, does not mean that higher education should be brought to the level of everybody. It is the function of education to bring out the potential aristocrat.

Menezes further laments that there is no clear aim in education. We act as if all we want is to keep the largest number of our young men and women occupied for the longest possible time of the day. The conditions for admission are lowered, the rigor of examination relaxed, the compulsory element on the curricula minimized with the result that our institutions of higher learning have become degraded to waiting rooms.

He tells us further that education for a democracy is not a lower education, but only a more varied education. In a democracy, everyone has the right, and should have the choice, to get that education for which he is most fitted and which shall prepare him for his station in life. Remove the challenge, the resistance, and all we

are going to breed is a fauna of spiritless invertebrates, fit only for common fodder or adult suffrage.²³

In this essay Menezes asserts that every young man and woman in a democracy has a right to education. But educational standards must not be lowered. They must provide a challenge for an individual to rise to the level for which he or she is most suited.

4.6.7. On The Generation Gap

Menezes' 'The Generation Gap', is a very interesting essay. He says that gaps between generations have always been there but the social phenomenon called generation gap is of recent growth. The progress of science and technology has brought in fast changes in everything. Change was once slow; so slow that it was hardly noticed. As our bodies today move faster as well as more frequently from place to place, our minds too, move at great speed. The bug of change has bitten everybody. Mere faith has lost much of its former authority. With this skepticism in the air, the younger generation, rightful heirs to the scientific spirit, have learned to question everything. They want to know for themselves, instead of accepting what they are told. They want experience, not doctrine; they want to create their own values, and test them on their own pulses. The generation gap seems, largely, a conflict between essentialism and existentialism.

Menezes humorously says that the parents who work hard do not produce hard-working children. Rather, they produce children who want life to be a perennial picnic, full of excitement. The concept of equality, he says, has been misunderstood, and everybody thinks himself equal to everybody else, in everything, and not only in some things. Though parents and children are equal before God, and, given certain circumstances, equal before the law, they need not be equal in all things.

Menezes points out that the generation gap begins to yawn only when parents and adolescent children live together. Parents grow restless when their children begin thinking for themselves. There follow constant clashes between the attitudes of children and parents. The children fall into a chronic mood of protest and revolt and nurse a feeling of intolerable oppression. Menezes reminds the older generation that it has entirely forgotten it was once young. Therefore, the children find their parents to be so many stick-in-the-muds, lacking in understanding, irresponsible to new ideas. And hence a lack of faith in the older generation results. The older generation reacts by despairing of the young. A breach occurs.²⁴

In this essay Menezes brings out the essential difference in the thinking of the new generation and their parents, which complicates many situations. With the new ideas, education and freedom, the youth do not consider it necessary to obey their elders.

4.6.8. On Student Discipline

The essay 'Student Discipline', discusses the various causes of student indiscipline. Menezes says that the behaviour of students outside the class room and the campus must depend largely upon far more complex and deep-rooted causes, to which people who govern the country and surely have the moral health of the nation at heart, must turn their urgent and serene attention. He says that there is no evading the fact that there is among us a general decline in civilized values and civic sense. This general decline is naturally reflected in our colleges and other institutions of learning. Parents, forsaken by the traditional aids, like religious practices and social taboos, transfer their responsibility for discipline to the school, and the school in its turn shifts the burden on to the college. Discipline is, obviously enough, lax at the top. Whatever happens, the immediate 'authorities' are invariably blamed for being tactless if they are firm, for being weak if they are tactful. Even student organizations, Menezes says, draw their strength from an assumption that the interests of the students and teachers are by nature conflicting and that the students must,

therefore, organize their own defense. The teacher's responsibility therefore is paramount. But the teacher himself has problems of his own. With most of them, the struggle for mere existence is acute to the point of humiliation. Most of the teachers themselves out of the college have not had the time to solve their personal problems or to achieve that measure of integration, which they must try to inculcate in their pupils.

Another reason for indiscipline, according to Menezes, is the student is all along hag-ridden by the thought that the sort of education he is undergoing, often at incredible cost to his people, is not really necessary for the type of job he is likely to get; that there is the least possible relation between one's qualifications and one's chances of securing employment and that employment itself goes, much too often, rather by favour and 'luck' than by merit as also the results of examinations are not always fair.

In conclusion, Menezes tells us that it is all the more imperative for us teachers and leaders of youth, to restore in ourselves our own lost faith in youth and begin once more to trust their native generosity, their sense of humour – which is another word for a sense of proportion.²⁵

Menezes is of the opinion that the students are not wholly responsible for their unruly behaviour. There is a general decline of values in the society and that is reflected in the behaviour of the students. The education we impart to them does not actually make them fit for the jobs they are likely to get. They are aware of all this and they give vent to their feelings through their behaviour.

4.6.9. On Old Age

In an essay 'On Old Age', Menezes tells us that old men often sound depressing. Yet old age has its consolations, its moments of pride, even its moments of cheerfulness. It depends much on how our youth and manhood have been lived. If you have not, through the robust years, fawned upon base power and crooked the hinges of your knees, you can still stand upon your 'shrunk shanks' as if you were a youth of twenty. Being left 'sans everything', you still have your self-respect. It is a gift of old age that one understands even the rebellion of youth, this perky insolence which generations of senile failures have taught it. This is, perhaps, the most precious gift of old age: that one sincerely desires, even lives for, the complete happiness of the young, even when this happiness takes forms unknown to one's youth.²⁶

Writing on 'Old Age'. Menezes emphasizes that self-respect is all that is left when everything else seems to have disappeared. It greatly

matters how one has lived one's youth and manhood. It is the gift of old age to understand the rebellion of the youth.

4.6.10. On The Second Sex

Menezes' 'The Second Sex', is no doubt an essay in a lighter vein. He says that even to think of describing the second sex as the second sex gives him the horrors. He says that votes have been made available to women but it has not made any difference to politics or even the women themselves. Politics continues to be the same old shady game. Women continue to be, in their own opinion, the same old slaves, grubby or gorgeous. Menezes tells us further that it must be some sort of curse, what the Greeks called *hybris*, that woman, who so far had succeeded in turning her weakness into strength, should now want to reduce her very strength to weakness. If woman is just the same as man, who will want a woman, he asks. It is true, he says, that man has, all through human history, taken unfair advantage of this difference to keep woman in an inferior state. The Greek woman dared not enter a theatre even with a mask. The Roman woman was, all her life, a dependent first of her father, then of her husband, and at last of her son. Never could she call her soul her own. The medieval woman, he says, was the devil's snare and a sink of iniquity. In our own country, where the religious imagination has flowered into sublime concepts, in which the eternal feminine

symbolizes the highest energy, fortune and even learning, woman has had a raw deal from man-made social codes. And yet we have had women who could vie with the best in any country like the Rani of Jhansi and the Rajput women who shut the gates against their men who had run away from battle. Even the bad women of history have had a dash and mettle of greatness in them: Semiramis of Babylon, the Egyptian Cleopatra and Catherine of Russia. And there is Helen, whose face launched a thousand ships.

Menezes wonders why must the women shrink and dwindle to mediocrity after such a record. He concludes saying that in fact, there are few things that a woman cannot do as well as a man. Send her to school or college, and she runs away with all the prizes.²⁷

In this essay Menezes praises the ability of the woman to compete with man in any field. He deplores the way the woman has been treated by man and speaks about the great women of history who have proved their greatness.

4.6.11. On The U.N.O

'The World' is a brilliant essay by Menezes on the United Nations Organization. He says the UNO is making a valiant effort to save Peace. We cannot afford another World War. For, the next World

War is going to mean widespread destruction and misery than any other war has ever meant. It is going to be a setback to our boasted progress. It is going to put back the clock of civilization by several centuries, so that what mankind had patiently and laboriously won during many centuries, will have to be won again. Peace, therefore must be saved for the world. And the UNO is trying to save it.

According to Menezes it is not the tool that will save the world, but the hand that wields that tool, and the heart that guides the hand, then the peace of the world – and the future of civilization will depend upon that heart, i.e. upon the goodness of men. St. Augustine had, between the days of Plato and the days of Bacon, the great dream of a world saved by the grace of Christ – the city of Man redeemed by Christ from the Devil – gradually evolving into the City of God. Shri Aurobindo had a similar dream: the establishment of a new heaven on a new earth, by bringing down the highest level of consciousness into the mental and physical planes, so that humanity might achieve, by a leap as it were, a new stage in its evolution.

He concludes that the UNO was conceived in the very center of a devastating worldwide struggle, out of a cool determination to make another world war impossible. It was born at a time when a large wave of freedom and independence was rolling over the countries of the

world; when ancient or new imperialisms were cracking under the impact of this wave; when more countries were genuinely anxious for the preservation of world peace, knowing that a war would mean a fatal setback to their progress – perhaps a blow not only to their posterity but to their independence.²⁸

According to Menezes, the U.N.O. therefore, is a necessary instrument in order to prevent world wars in future. Peace is very important for mankind and the U.N.O. is trying its level best to safeguard peace.

4.6.12. On The Mother Tongue

His essay on 'The Mother Tongue' has a direct reference to Goa and Konkani. Konkani, at the time Menezes was writing this essay, enjoyed an unenviable position as only a spoken language and that too of the masses. Menezes says that with political freedom, a self-consciousness was growing among all the people. Among the Goans, self-consciousness has coincided with a growing interest in the mother tongue. Menezes recounts how at one time the ability to speak Portuguese was a hallmark of social advancement, and every aspiring child struggled upwards on weary wings to that sufficient heaven. The linguistic barrier, he says, was then more estranging than any 'brazen wall' of caste. The Portuguese-speaking families

were called the Rich, irrespective of their financial condition. Every social event, wedding, *benzimento or ladainha*, was graced with a toast in Portuguese even though not a soul present understood what was said, except, perhaps, the speaker. Such a toast would be punctuated with understanding nods at every fresh recurrence of a familiar phrase, till the glasses raised and the *Viva* resounded. Thus, he continues, brainless scions of the Rich got ample oratorical opportunities by this simple linguistic advantage of theirs over the Solomons of the village. Also a sermon in Portuguese would make the splendor of a feast more splendid, even though the Portuguese spoken was Greek to nine-tenths of the pious congregation. This led to a kind of snobbery in Goa. Even if you addressed one of these people in Konkani, he would each time reply in Portuguese; till sheer good manners forced you to humour him and follow suit.

Menezes is happy that this kind of taste was fast outgrowing. It would be worthwhile to inquire into the precise cause or causes of this change. It was not wholly because of the English-teaching schools or expansion of the Portuguese primary and secondary education in Goa. Menezes firmly believes that it was because of emigration. The rank and file of the emigrants, cut off from home and its peculiar snobberies, and unable to wield any other tongue, must perforce fall back on their own. Hence, the emigrant, seeking an outlet and

knowing only Konkani, found in Konkani journalism a means of self-expression. Menezes concludes by saying that while earlier attempts to encourage the cultivation of Konkani were doomed to partial success or total failure, there was no such encouragement needed now. Nothing in the world could stop what had started. There was more and more demand for public speeches in Konkani and the leaders gave in to them. There were toasts in Konkani in Bombay as well as in Goa, which was a noble feature, rather a gesture of emancipation. To add to these, dozens of newspapers had sprung up everywhere, which used only the mother tongue.²⁹

In this essay Menezes expresses his happiness that Konkani, his mother tongue is gaining social acceptance. It was being spoken at various social occasions and even journalism had begun to flourish in this language. He recollects painfully that there was a time when Goans were compelled to learn Portuguese and the knowledge of this language was a hallmark of social advancement.

4.6.13. Menezes On His Profession

The essay 'The Lighter Side of My Profession' provides an opportunity to Menezes to narrate his experiences of the profession of a teacher. Menezes begins by saying that a profession is a

tremendously serious thing and that can be the reason why people insist in knowing whether it has a humorous side.

According to Menezes, we have to put ourselves outside ourselves to be able to laugh at ourselves, or even to see the point of a joke about ourselves. Our own profession is always most painfully serious to us. For that matter, even the profession of a clown is a serious business to the clown. He confesses that he did not enter the teaching profession by a clear, conscious, deliberate act of choice. He only slipped into it. He says, as a teacher, at first, he was in such dead earnest, so serious, that he was dull. His learning was only pedantry; his explanations were laconic and explained nothing; there was nothing in them to relieve the monotony of his lectures. When he learned to amuse the class as part of the technique of teaching, it was the hard way. It took him some time to weave humour into his lectures and yet keep the serious business going.

Menezes laments that the status of the teacher has diminished to an astounding, and to the teacher, humiliating, extent. Speaking about the past, he says, the Guru in ancient India, was father as well as the teacher, a sage and a saint. The disciple was glad to slave for him and to touch his feet in reverence. He was a mine of learning and a paragon of wisdom. The relationship between him and his disciple

was a sacred relationship. His students paid him directly and his earnings depended upon the extent of his learning and his didactic and inspirational power. If he was a bad teacher, he simply starved. There was no middle way. His only recourse was to pack up and move elsewhere. He could not, unlike teachers today, perpetuate himself in his job and go on drawing his salary and perquisites without adding anything to his own or his student's knowledge or mental training. He concludes saying that the teacher's status has naturally diminished through the ages, because teaching has, in the course of time, dwindled into a poor alternative to any other job. It has become the refuge of people who have tried and failed elsewhere.³⁰

In this essay Menezes laments that the status of the teacher had diminished. He speaks of the ancient Gurukul system where the teacher and his disciple had a sacred relationship. Menezes is sad that the quality of teachers is not being maintained anymore.

4.7.

Menezes' literary writings prove to us that he belonged to the great English intellectual tradition, which he both lived and taught. His keen interest and love for Indian English poets like Tagore, Sarojini Naidu and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya can be seen in the

essays in which he appreciated their poetry and seemed excited by their imagery and diction as well as their nationalism.

His religious writings like Basava and Christ and Veerashaivism and Christianity bring to us the similarity in Hinduism and Christianity. Menezes is convinced that God incarnates as Man from time to time to bring to us the Truth in order to bring us closer to Heaven. All religions preach Truth and Love of God. His essay on St. Francis Xavier for the first time tells us that Francis was concerned not only with the spiritual welfare of the people but their temporal welfare as well. St. Francis complained against the Portuguese rulers in Goa for their immorality which hampered the work of the missionaries. The essay 'Imitation of Christ as Literature' focuses on the negation of self which is the supreme fiat of all religions, whether Christianity, Hinduism or Buddhism.

His essays on the four eminent Goan personalities, Francisco Luis Gomes, Francisco Correia-Afonso, Menezes Braganca and Tristao de Braganza Cunha, throw light on the social and political climate prevalent in Portuguese Goa of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and the efforts of some of these stalwarts like Menezes Braganza to kindle the fire of freedom through their journalism. Coming to modern times, in his brilliant essay on John Fitzgerald

Kennedy, Menezes tells us that President Kennedy had the power to see both sides of a question, in spite of the strong call of politics.

Menezes establishes that the striking feature of Gandhiji's humanism was his devotion to humanity, which was perfectly consistent with his faith in God. The great French writer Romain Rolland had discovered that the west had a lot to learn from Gandhiji's methods and character.

Menezes writes humorous essays like 'The Rare Art of Laughter', where he says that there would be no laughter if there was no seriousness. In another humorous piece on 'Plagiarism', Menezes comments on how much is plagiarism and how much is considered as research nowadays. The essay on 'The Lighter side of My Profession', narrates humorously his own experiences as a teacher.

Menezes makes serious reflections on various subjects in his essays, 'Literary Utopias', 'Education and Democracy', 'The Generation Gap' and the U.N.O. The ideas he expresses in these essays are very thought-provoking and are a result of his long experience as a teacher and administrator.

Menezes loved Goa and its language Konkani. This can be noted in his essay, 'The Mother Tongue'. Menezes tells us how Konkani came to be suppressed on account of the Portuguese and expresses happiness that it is being revived again.

In conclusion, we can say that Menezes' writings introduce us to an interesting personality, rich and varied because it is steeped in complex experiences of life. They shock us out of feeling of complacency by their startling, original points of view and a stimulating new way of expressing them whether in prose or verse.³¹

Menezes' prose is indeed marked by his strong personal style and his views are expressed frankly and freely on any subject that he may choose to write on. He also has the ability to look at the subject objectively and to grasp the crux of the problem. Every subject is highlighted through his rich and varied experience and erudite scholarship.

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CHAPTER V

Contribution to Goan Freedom

Struggle

CHAPTER V

5. Contribution to Goan Freedom Struggle

5.1.

Armando Menezes was not only a poet, critic and writer; he was also a nationalist to the core. As a young lecturer in Bombay and later at various other places, he came under the influence of the Indian freedom struggle. He was greatly influenced by speeches and writings of Mahatma Gandhi and his non-violent movement. Just as Menezes' students were acutely aware and participated in the various political movements like Swadeshi and Quit India Movement, he was whole-heartedly with them and they knew this. Their movements found sympathetic support from Menezes whose heart responded to the call of the newly awakened generation. They also noticed that there was a sudden change in his attitude and mode of dressing. From the well-pressed westernized suits he always wore, he changed over to the khaddar kurta-pyjamas. During these troubled days, he spent most of his time meeting groups of students and discussing with them, and directing their energies towards effective programmes and activities in the cause of India's freedom. He understood and appreciated their patriotic feelings and their anxiety to participate in the fight for freedom of the motherland and was himself prepared to

play his part in the national struggle.¹ In case of any misunderstanding between the students and the authorities, he attempted to be the link to restore goodwill and amity by explaining the students' point of view to the authorities.

Menezes expressed his patriotism and love for freedom in many poems on national leaders and nationalistic themes like 'Gandhi ki Jai', 'Vande Mataram', 'Rabindranath Tagore', 'Thirtieth January' and 'Republic Day'. Most of these poems have themes on freedom and the emotions of a true Indian patriot.

While Menezes was deeply conscious of the freedom struggle for India's independence from British rule, he was also reminded that the land of his birth was under foreign yoke. A number of articles and essays illustrate his strong concern for Goa and Goans who lived under Portuguese rule. These articles, written before the independence of India and after, express Menezes' feelings and emotions for Goa, its language and its people. He was anxious about the future of Goa and its freedom from foreign rule, which eventually had to come one day. He was also concerned with the problem of Goan emigrants in Bombay and other Indian cities. Goans were leaving Goa in hordes in search of greener pastures. Their social, economic and psychological problems were the themes on which he

wrote again and again in the form of poems, dialogues and essays. After the liberation of Goa, Menezes took active interest in the political life of Goa. He was against the merger of Goa with the neighbouring Maharashtra and the imposition of Marathi language on Goans. In many of his post-liberation writings he makes virulent attacks on the policies of the local government and other leaders in India, who were bent on Goa's merger either directly or indirectly by adding other territories to Goa in the name of Vishal Gomantak.

In his pre-liberation writings he uses every argument against the idea that the Goan is happy under the Portuguese rule and that Christianity needed the support of the Portuguese.

Menezes loved Goa very much and in spite of his domicile and employment in British India, his heart was always in Goa, where he had spent his childhood and the most impressionable years of his life. He was a great protagonist of the Konkani language though, as he admits, his drawback was that he could not speak in the language fluently because of his studies in English and speaking of Portuguese at home. He appreciated in no simple words the stalwarts of the Konkani movement like Vaman Varde Valauliker or Xenoi Goembab and the poets like Bakibab Borkar and Manoharai Sardessai.²

Menezes was equally proud of the great Goan writers and thinkers of the pre-liberation Goa, who made Goa proud all over the world. In a number of essays, he eulogizes their mighty thoughts and deeds and the fame they brought for Goa.

With this brief introduction it would be worthwhile to study in detail some of his writings, which prove his love for Goa and speak of his great nationalism.

5.2. On The Future Of Goa

In an article, 'The Future of Goa', Menezes expresses his anxiety of what political status Goa would have when the rest of India attains independence. He says that there is an obvious geographical sense in which Goa cannot help being part and parcel of India. He asserts that Goa has never been actually separated from the rest of India. Her most cherished traditions have been India's traditions. Her poets, the soul's truest interpreters, have all leaped across her narrow boundaries, and sought their highest and purest inspiration in the deathless symbols which were once common to both. They have felt the continuity of her history was interrupted at her last conquest. There is still a third sense, not so obvious, in which Goa has been one with India. There are no boundaries in the moral empire of dependence. Subjection, he says, is all of one colour, or no colour,

whether you paint it red or green on the map. There is an unseen bond, which joins souls in humiliation and defeat, far stronger than the sympathy, which clashes wing-to-wing, bright spirits of liberty.³

Menezes further expresses a fear whether independent Goa will remain a part of India or exist as a separate identity in India. He consoles himself saying that the blood of the Great Mother will throb in our pulses once more, that the heritage of her splendid traditions will come flooding in again into the precious corner, which the seven rishis chose for their abode, and where the gods fought in unremembered days. Menezes has bright visions of a united India. He sees one soul warming up this vast beautiful India, from end to end. He sees her as a giant lotus afloat on her seas, with its white bloom turned up heavenward in prayer. And, in the blaze of that dream, the interests and fanaticisms of men, and all their pettiness, shrivel up to ashes like a leaf in fire.⁴

Menezes predicts that it is not far off when British India will gain her independence. Then, what will be the political status of Goa, he asks. According to him, the young blood of Goa is already inoculated with the new virus of freedom. The names of India's heroes are bywords on the lips of the new generation there. Young Goan enthusiasts in Portugal as well as in the motherland, show their warm

sympathy with the cause of India. Their outlook is decidedly and frankly supra-Goan. The older generation, indifferent to all but their own material interests, are incapable of looking beyond the low fence of their territorial limits. The Hindus, he says, represent in Goa the party, which follows with breathless interest each act in the drama of India's battle for freedom. It is they who are administering to the Goan public the political education of the future. Many of the Catholics, young and old, affect a certain indifference to the religion in which they were cradled. They write to the Hindu papers, adopt Hindu noms-de-plume, and grow rapturous over the traditions, good and bad of Hindu civilization. Menezes says we wrong the Catholic religion in identifying our political passiveness with a faith, which has always stood for the self-respect of man.

Speaking about India, he says that there is nothing to show that India will lapse back to barbarism after Independence. On the contrary, India, after achieving her Independence, will naturally step forth on an equal footing into the Commonwealth of Nations. He concludes that Independence is not worth having, unless you have fought for it, or shown yourself in any other way worthy of so invaluable a possession. And that is the reason why a new political outlook must be impressed on every section of Goa. An intense and

more direct political education must spread among Goans a more active spirit of self-determination.⁵

5.3. Goan Religious Figures

In 'Some Great Goans', Menezes defends Goa's Catholic culture and education, which has produced so many personalities that make Goa proud. He begins by saying that the Goan culture, like Goa itself, is a very mixed and peculiar affair; and in this lies its highly distinctive quality. The Goan culture is a distinct culture; impoverished, may be, by cutting off, in varying measure, from the parent culture, but evolving into a different species under the shock of western occupation. There should not be a charge against Goan culture that it is the result of an alien culture upon the native. There is, he says, much virtue in grafting.⁶

So intensely Catholic was that culture, he says, that the clergy held for a long time almost the monopoly of learning in Goa and produced some of her most eminent sons. The clergy gave Goa, two eminent Oratorians – Father Joseph Vaz, now venerated as Saint in Sri Lanka, even more than in Goa and Father Jacome Gonsalves, who has an enduring place in the history of Tamil and Singhalese literatures. L'Abbe Faria could not be described as a saint; he was a man of science. He was a pioneer in the field of hypnotism; and his

name lives all over the world in the particular doctrine and method which is known as Fariism. He was undoubtedly a man of genius; and if he was a revolutionary in science, he was a revolutionary also in politics. He took an active part in the French Revolution as a partisan of the Jacobins; and like his father, also a priest, was a link, in Portugal, of a revolutionary party, which nearly overthrew the Portuguese administration in Goa, in 1787. ⁷

It needs recording, Menezes says, that two other priests, Father Couto and Father Gonsalves, participated in this all but successful coup known as the 'Conspiracy of the Pintos'. While the secular members of this conspiracy were hanged, the clergy were merely deported to Portugal as an example for the rest. Thus, during the Portuguese monarchy, the clergy in Goa were actively interested in politics. And of all the classes of the Goan people, the clergy have been, by and large, the most discontented against the Portuguese policy, for they have always had to look to India for the fulfillment of their legitimate ambitions. Between the 17th and the 18th centuries, there were as many as eight Goan bishops – all outside Goa, and outside the areas where Portugal ruled jointly with the Church. Many of these bishops were men of learning, as well as politicians and diplomats.

Menezes writes further in his essay that the clerical regime received successive setbacks in the days of the Marquis of Pombal, with the onset of Liberalism in 1824 and with the passing of the monarchy in 1910. With the advent of Liberalism, politics took a secular turn, and a memorable symbol of this change is the personality of Bernard Peres da Silva, a Goan, who became Prefect of Portuguese India. However, he was soon ousted by the intrigues of the Portuguese diehards whose sense of racial superiority could not accept the idea of a Goan at the head of the administration in Goa. It was at this time that Salazar, whom Menezes describes as a monster named the Hydra of Nativism, came into the picture. He gradually stifled all freedom of speech and association in Goa as in Portugal, and exalted racialism into a basic principle of a belated imperialism.

Menezes mentions further in his essay, the successive revolts of the Ranes against the Portuguese. He places the leaders of these revolts among the eminent, even among the great Goans, because they displayed a sense of human dignity and the great principle that 'even a worm will turn'.⁸

5.4. Goan political figures

Menezes also lists the outstanding Goan political figures of the three-quarters of the century. They are men like Jose Inacio de

Loyola, Constancio Roque da Costa and Roque Correia-Afonso. Loyola, besides being the leader of a party, was an eminent doctor, noted as much for his charity as for his medical skill. Constancio Roque, after disabling an insulting Portuguese officer on the streets of Lisbon with a revolver shot, ended up as Portugal's Minister Plenipotentiary at Buenos Aires. Roque Correia-Afonso, besides wielding with great power both pen and tongue, was an unflagging champion of the village communities and local self-government. Political journalism produced giants in the land. Luis de Menezes Braganca was the last of the free men. The last journals, which he maintained with his potent pen, were significantly named *Pracasha* and *Pradipa*, and when they were successively snuffed out by the rigorous censorship, the light almost literally went out of Goa. Menezes remarks that Menezes Braganca was not only the last hero of the Liberalism, but the first martyr of the then Portuguese regime. Another Goan, Leopoldo da Gama, was perhaps the greatest name in Goan journalism. To these eminent personalities can be added the names of Luis da Cunha Gonsalves, one of the most eminent professors of Law in Portugal; Philip Neri Xavier, the indefatigable historian, whose book on the Village Communities is a classic in the subject and Gerson da Cunha, a polyglot and historian. The last personality Menezes mentions is that of D. Kosambi, sage and saint in

one, who devoted his life to the study of the Pali language and the literature of Buddhism.

Menezes says that Goa seems to be the last place to breed a warrior; and yet it has produced much-sought officers for the armies of the Deccan. General Jose Antonio Pinto fought with distinction in the wars of the Peshwas; and it is with his bright name that the famous conspiracy for the overthrow of the Portuguese is associated.

Menezes concludes that the Goan, with few exceptions, found Goa too small for his many gifts. He is, therefore, an emigrant not so much by economic compulsions as by an inner impulsion which drives his genius out to expend and flower in a wider environment. Today, he says, he is the son of the soil – an Indian among Indians. Menezes anticipates the Indian government issuing orders to the Indian Army to enter Goa and there shall at that time, certainly be Goans ready and able to lead.⁹

5.5. Francisco Luis Gomes

In his article, 'Francisco Luis Gomes, Centenary of a Great Indian', Menezes bestows lavish praise on Francisco Luis Gomes, a true nationalist and a Goan. The Portuguese conquistadors, he says, tried by methods more robust than wise to pull an ancient civilization

up by its secular roots, and plant a new culture in its place. The Portuguese, with far better intentions, left Goa witless. And the history of Goa ever since has been the history of a people in search of its lost heritage. The conquistadors made a wilderness – an intellectual wilderness and called it not peace, but civilization. The birth of Francisco Luis Gomes was like the desert blooming with a rare genius. He was one of those Goans who won international reputation for himself and distinguished honour for the land of his birth. The land was, not Goa, but India. This is only one example, Menezes tells us, of the tendency of sincere, earnest Goans to fall back upon India as their common Mother. Our most inspired and original poets, he says, have shown an instinctive readiness to plunge with all their hearts into the past of that immense India of the tiger and the lotus – a past rich with memories, half ascetic, half voluptuous, of Sanyasis and Apsaras. Francisco Luis Gomes, in a letter to Lamartine, whose familiar friend he subsequently became, vaunted himself on being a son of India. “I belong to the race”, Gomes wrote, “which composed *The Mahabharata* and invented chess –two conceptions which have in them something of the eternal and the infinite.”¹⁰

Menezes says that Gomes was a true son of India, and proud of his lineage. He had assimilated all the culture of the West. He had mastered science and literature and his brilliant pen was matched by

a persuasive tongue. Economist, statesman, orator, publicist, historian and novelist, there was hardly any activity of the human mind which he did not touch, and touching, did not adorn. Elected Deputy to the Portuguese Parliament at the age of 31, he astounded a cultured audience by the largeness and wisdom of his views on all sorts of subjects and the daring with which he expressed them no less than by the distinction of his phrase and the arresting fluency of his oratory. No Indian but must feel proud, Menezes says, of a fellow-countryman who had the pluck to say before a wholly European audience that he had 'come to teach Arithmetic to the Portuguese Parliament'.¹¹

Francisco Luis Gomes, he continues, wrote what lay closest to his heart on every subject under the sun in his only novel, '*Os Brahamanes*'. It is a novel of passion, of considerable merit and power and unique in the choice of its subject as well as in the description of Indian life and nature. It is here that the eminent writer has lavished the most precious gifts of his heart and preached a noble gospel of universal brotherhood. It is here that he protests, with indignation kindled to eloquence, against all distinctions of race, caste and colour. The Brahminism he holds up to execration is the proud spirit of exclusiveness and untouchability wherever it is found. Writing only a few years after the Sepoy Mutiny, Gomes believed with

fond simplicity that the transfer of India from the Company to the Crown would mean a change from commercial exploitation to paternal rule.¹²

5.6. The Grand Illusion

Menezes' true feelings of a nationalist can be noticed in his vituperative attack on the Portuguese government in his article, 'The Grand Illusion'. He begins by saying that the continued existence of Portuguese colonialism concerns not Portugal or its colonies alone; it concerns the entire civilized world. It is one aspect of the Grand Illusion that Portugal should think it is nobody's business but its own. Portugal, however, seems to believe firmly that it is living in a world of its very own, with no moral responsibility to any country or recognized international authority.¹³

Writings like these earned the author special attention from the Portuguese who had declared him *persona non grata*. Menezes further tells us that Portugal had fortified itself inside a fresh illusion, pulling it hastily over its head like a night-prowler's hood. This fiction consisted in proclaiming the Portuguese possessions to be, not colonies, but provinces. Portugal, he says, is no longer a European nation; it is an Afro-European power. The Portuguese empire has, after 450 years, vanished like a mist.

Menezes' sarcasm is the finest when he attacks the lie that all the people of the colonies are Portuguese without a difference. Therefore, he continues, when a native of India is kicked in the groin, or an African Negro sold into virtual slavery, he must understand it is a fraternal gesture, between perfect equals under the benign Portuguese law. It is this monstrous travesty of equality that gives Portugal the immoral courage to repeatedly declare before the United Nations Organization that it has nothing to report on its non-existent colonies. What happens in Portugal – Indian Portugal, Chinese Portugal, African Portugal – is its business; if not, what price sovereignty? And yet, Menezes continues, only a few years ago, the so-called provinces were colonies plain and unashamed, and were administered, under the Colonial Act by the Minister for Colonies, now deftly, by an act of judicial prestidigitation, Minister for Overseas Provinces. But legal fiction cannot hide the truth, anymore than the ostrich can save itself by burying its head in the sand.¹⁴

Menezes finally concludes with examples how the Portuguese exploited the Africans with such illusions and pretence of assimilation.

5.7. Nationalists Galore

In 'Nationalists Galore', Menezes describes a dream sequence in which different Goan nationalists appeared to be discussing their

different ideas on Goa and expressing varied viewpoints. There was one who was clad in immaculate homespun with an equally immaculate cap on his head. He had worn that cap when to wear it was a crime against Portuguese sovereignty. There was another who had sharpened his love for his mother tongue into a spearhead of his attack upon Portuguese imperialism, and yet another who had spoken elegantly of the young India and intoned devout hymns to Mother India. There were other nationalists who thought the independence of India would sound the knell of the Portuguese empire in India. And there were still others who had hoped India would march in, in the wake of the peaceful satyagrahas any day. There was one group that wondered what would be the fate of Christianity if the Portuguese quit India. Another group was worried about the taxes that they would have to pay in free Goa. A lone voice expressed his anguish that if Goa merges, all the Indians would flood their dear little homeland. Another group a little away in a complacency wanted to know why they should worry about Goa. According to them it was the people inside Goa who should fight if they wished. They were the best judges of what was good for them. But though all these voices spoke in different tunes, everyone wanted a merger of the numerous Goa freedom parties. Only every other party must merge in his own. They all cried for better leadership; only each one assumed he would be the only leader. As the poet awakes, the babel of tongues vanishes and he

sees the splash and chatter of Dudhsagar Falls.¹⁵ This dream sequence illustrates the disunity and confusion among the different Goan nationalists.

5.8. On Goan Education

Menezes relates to us the kind of education that existed in Goa in his article 'Goan Education – A Retrospect'. He says that there was only one primary school to three villages and the Portuguese education for as many as five years enabled one to read a letter in Konkani. The people had long begun to realize that this sort of education did not lead anywhere. Still, they sent their children helplessly to these primary or parish schools. But such was the need, that English schools soon began to spread, first in a humble way, and then on a full fledged scale. The Portuguese schools were in imminent danger of being emptied, when a shrewd decree made the first primary certificate (Primeiro Grau) a pre requisite of English Education.

This steady decline of Portuguese education in Goa, Menezes tells us, was a barometer of the flight abroad. All classes of the people rubbed shoulders in this stampede out of the country. Even highly placed officials of the government sent their children to English schools or schools in neighbouring India. Soon emigration changed the whole character and, even more, the extension of Goan culture.

Where there was a solitary landlord, a new middle class arose, to scale, in each successive generation the social scarp. Emigration had another, and a more far-reaching consequence. It established a closer link between the two Indias. Freed from the Portuguese domination, a Goan could breathe more freely.

The Portuguese at this time curbed civil liberties altogether. *The Pracasha* was the last free paper and when it was snuffed; the light finally went out. The Goan revolution was smothered until the Independence of India provoked a major crisis. The Goan revolution, Menezes says, went underground in Goa itself and existed openly outside it. The English-speaking or English-knowing middle class was in the forefront; the ex-officials of the Portuguese in Goa or in Portugal were also in the fight.

When the English schools began to be suspect as possible nurseries of anti-Portuguese feeling or Indian nationalism, the ecclesiastical authorities of Goa took over. They encouraged or started English schools, in the hope of countering a denationalizing influence, which they dared not remove. This is an indirect tribute to the vitality of English education in Goa. With the desire of emigration being so powerful, the Portuguese could not tamper with the English education.¹⁶

Menezes tells us that while the Catholic clergy, trained to look upon the world as their country and Rome as their capital, have long looked towards India as a land where a Goan priest can become a bishop, the Hindus of Goa have been in touch with India through Marathi literature and periodicals. The sense of unity of India must have lived on in the thousands of children who learned their three R's through Marathi. Though the percentage of literacy in Goa was deplorably low, the educated minority, has, from the earliest times, never lacked for opportunities. When the limited resources of their native land drove Goans out in search of better prospects, the versatile and adaptable Goan soon began to make his presence felt in various parts of India, and particularly in Bombay. Such names as Gerson da Cunha, Dr. Viegas, Dr. Lisboa, Telang belong to the history of India rather than of Goa.

Speaking about the past, Menezes tells us that the Goan's versatility and gift for adaptation have never forsaken him. The Goans have been, as far as memory can carry us, either migrants or a subject people. Their country's very natural advantages have, like a woman's beauty, been her undoing. She has been wooed and wooed again. From the Kadambas to Adil Shah, she has known an unbroken succession of overlords, until the Portuguese came and held her in lasting concubinage.¹⁷

In this essay Menezes traces the history of Goan Education. He tells us that it is English education that was primarily responsible for the emigration of Goans to British India in search of employment. Goans are very adaptable by nature and have adapted to very difficult situations in the past. Goa has always been under the rule of people outside Goa and the Portuguese rule was the worst.

5.9. On Vishal Gomantak

In 'Vishal Gomantak', Menezes' love for Goa comes to the fore. He is a strong protagonist for the existence of Goa as a separate entity among the other states of India. He vehemently attacks Y.B.Chawan, who, according to him, was attempting a backdoor entry of Goa into Maharashtra after the Opinion Poll had proved Goa's unity and will to remain separate. On the contrary he lavishes great praise on late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, whom he calls a true statesman if there was one. He supports Nehru's view on the 'uniqueness' of Goa and his desire to conserve and develop that uniqueness as a unit in the great India, which prides itself on its unity in diversity and diversity in unity.¹⁸

5.10. On Goa and the Goans

The article 'Goa and the Goans' is written much after Goa's Liberation. Here the author discusses what makes a Goan so proud of

his Goaness and so fond of Goa. Menezes tells us that there is more artistic talent in Goa per square inch than will be found in a square mile in the rest of India. The Goan is gifted in music and dance and in poetry and the plastic arts. There has been hardly any exhibition of painting in Bombay where more than half of the best artists have not been either Goans or Goan descendants.

Menezes reiterates that the Goans' love of his little homeland is, more pronounced among the emigrants. One finds one's home, he says, best by going away from it; and there is a thrill in the spine, a lift of the heart, in the emigrant, which cannot possibly be experienced by the home-keeping Goan.

Menezes tells us further that the sociological map of Goa had changed. In the past, the middle-class emigrant, ill-endowed with letters and with no inclination to acquire them, would bring home his savings, invest them in a plot, where he would, on his next leave, build a little home; still later, perhaps, he would marry and perhaps celebrate the parish feast with more pomp than he could really afford. At a later period, the Goan emigrant has ceased to be a compulsive homecomer. He chose to become, if he could afford it, a settler and acquire a home, and perhaps other property abroad. When two enterprising Goans started the monthly, *The Goan World*, in Bombay,

in the 20's, they were really thinking of the 'Goan world', which existed outside Goa. *The Goan World* kept, among Goans dispersed all over the world, the memory of their homeland alive; it was a precious link. It kept the emigrant in contact with his home, which he, though a voluntary exile, still cherished. *The Goan World* was then, as *Goa Today* is now, an infallible cure for homesickness.¹⁹

Menezes cites the reasons for the Goan to settle abroad further in his essay. The Goan wanted for himself and for his family the best comforts and conveniences he could afford, including the best possible education for his children. The situation, he says, has changed now. Goa now provided all the standard amenities, including education, electricity, transport and medical services in rural areas.

Menezes finally confides that a co-efficient of the Goan's love for Goa is his pride in being a Goan, not for any particular reason but just the pride in being Goan. Much of this love is due to the natural beauty of Goa. The beauty of the surroundings is known to be an element in the make up of the artistic temperament, and the Goan's love of beauty naturally includes the love for the natural beauty of his homeland. One must love a thing in order to make it beautiful. The Goan loves Goa and it becomes beautiful in his eyes.²⁰

Armando Menezes loved Goa very much. Its natural beauty and the scenes of the Goan countryside where he spent most of his childhood haunted him wherever he went. He could never forget the golden ricefields, the placid river Mandovi, the white-coated churches and the sunsets. All these made up for him the Goa of his dreams and he spoke of these dreams constantly in his poetry and prose writings. This beauty of Goa was a source of strength to his pride of being a Goan and he loved it immensely.

5.11. On Indo-Portuguese Relations

Menezes' 'Indo-Portuguese Relations' is written many years after Goa's liberation, at a time when the relations between India and Portugal continued to be strained. In the essay, Menezes welcomes the visit to Delhi and Goa of Dr. Mario Soares, Portugal's foreign minister. He says it is a happy augury of the resumption of friendly relations between India and what the Prime Minister of India described as the new Portugal. This development should be welcomed by the inhabitants of Goa and, indeed by the rest of the former Portuguese India, who have mostly assimilated in large measure the kind of culture Portugal represented in the modern world.

Menezes declaims the recent hostility in Goa and calls it irrational. This new development was the logical result of Portugal's

change of attitude towards its colonies resulting from the retrograde and anti-liberal policies of the Salazar dictatorship. The benefits of this new overture made by the new, free Portugal – a liberal, democratic, anti-imperialistic, socialist and truly Christian, is that there shall be no more any pro-Portuguese among the Goans, or rather, they shall all be, from now on, all pro-Portuguese and friends of Portugal.

He says that this simple gesture that Dr. Mario Soares has called one of reconciliation, opens up mutual doors of communication between Portugal and India, in the economic and commercial sphere and perhaps, chiefly, on the level of culture and the exchange of civilized values. Now, at last, he continues that we will gladly and gratefully acknowledge that it was a Portuguese that opened the communication between Europe and India. It is also a matter of pride for us to know that without India, there would be no *Lusiads*, that is, without India, world literature would be poorer by one great poem.²¹

During the Portuguese regime, the Indian government had offered Menezes an appointment to a diplomatic post in Goa but after protracted negotiations with Portugal, was withdrawn. The Portuguese were of the contention that as a Goan born and bred in Goa, he couldn't represent another country in Goa. But Menezes tells us: “

The objection, ostensibly legal, was at bottom political. I had been, for some time, for my views on the Salazar dictatorship and on the oneness of India, a persona non grata with the Portuguese government, and my movements –innocent, as they were – had been watched by the police for many years. The very virtues that recommended me to the Indian government disqualified me in the eyes of the Portuguese. And yet, it was not till many years later that I was ‘advised’ not to go to Goa for my holidays. It meant an exile of nine years, until I caught the first available train to Goa a week after the military action of 19th December, 1961.”²²

5.12.

Though Menezes was a worthy son of the soil and a proud Goan nationalist, he was not to occupy any important post or position in Goa, which he loved so much. Soon after the Liberation of Goa, the Congress Party in Goa proposed his name as a candidate for the Lok Sabha. But Menezes lost the election because as he says, his community was divided and besides he was a novice in Politics.²³

Menezes could not have played any direct role in the freedom of Goa. He did not participate in the Satyagraha movement conducted on the borders of Goa. Neither was he a member of the Azad Gomantak Dal, a militant organization that was working for the

freedom of Goa through armed struggle. Menezes fought Goa's battles for freedom through his pen. He evinced great interest in the future of Goa once India obtained independence. There was a general talk of the idea of Goa seeking a separate existence from the rest of India. Menezes was against this idea and wrote relentlessly against it. According to him, Goa had always been a part and parcel of India and it was pure logic that it should join the Indian Union after its Liberation or freedom from Portuguese rule.

5.13.

Menezes was equally proud of belonging to the Catholic community. In well-written essays on 'Some Great Goans', he eulogizes the contribution to Goa and Goan Christian society of stalwarts from the clergy like Fr. Joseph Vaz and Fr. Jacome Gonsalves who are mentioned in the Tamil and Sinhalese literature of Sri Lanka. He mentions that two Catholic priests, Fr. Couto and Fr. Gonsalves participated in the famous Revolt known as the 'Conspiracy of the Pintos', which was brutally put down by the Portuguese. This revolt was equal to the successive revolts of the Ranes against the Portuguese at a later date in history.

Menezes delves deeply into the political history of Goa and lists the Goan political figures of the early 19th century, who made Goa

proud both in Goa and Portugal. They are men like Jose Inacio de Loyola, Constancio Roque da Costa and Roque Correia-Afonso. Among them Luis de Menezes was a great journalist who held the banner of freedom high through his two Portuguese language newspapers, *Pradipa* and *Pracasha* until banned by censorship. Menezes also mentions the names of a galaxy of Goans of the great period like Leopoldo da Gama, Gerson da Cunha and Dr. Kossambe.

Menezes has a special word of praise for Francisco Luis Gomes, who is the author of the famous novel, *Os Brahamanes*. Economist, statesman and historian, he was elected to the Portuguese Parliament at an early age of 31, and astounded a cultured audience with his wisdom and fluency of his oratory.

Menezes finds the Goan nationalists on the eve of the liberation of Goa, disunited and speaking in different voices although their dream is the same. Menezes has described at length the reasons for the migration of Goans and the English education, which facilitated this process.

His articles written after the Liberation of Goa continue to express his concern for the future of Goa, whether Goa should continue to

remain a separate identity or be merged in one of the states and consequently lose its uniqueness.

Thus we see that Menezes was a true nationalist. He was proud of being an Indian and contributed his own mite for freedom of the motherland. But living in British India, his concern was for his beloved Goa, which was under the Portuguese rule. Even after the Liberation of Goa, his writings on the events taking place in Goa prove that he wished the best for Goa and the Goans. He was filled with great pride to mention the names of the famous Goan thinkers and scholars of the Portuguese era.

In his essays here, he writes on a variety of subjects that concern Goa and its people like education, language and a political entity. In the essays written before Independence of India, he predicts the consequences of India's freedom on Goa. He visualizes a great future for India and hopes that Goa will be a part of this great country soon.

NOTES

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3. Armando Menezes, 'The Future of Goa'. N.p, n.d, n. pag.
4. Ibid, 3.
5. Ibid, 6.
6. Armando Menezes, 'Some Great Goans'. N.p, n.d, 2.
7. Ibid, 4.
8. Ibid, 6.
9. Ibid, 14.
10. Armando Menezes, 'Francisco Luis Gomes: The Novelist'
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12. Ibid, 5.
13. Armando Menezes, 'The Grand Illusion: an article on the
continued existence of Portuguese Colonialism'. N.p.
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15. Armando Menezes, 'Nationalists Galore'. N.p, n.d. 6.

16. Armando Menezes, 'Goan Education – A Retrospect'. N.p, n.d, 6.
 17. Ibid, 8.
 18. Armando Menezes, 'Vishal Gomantak'. N.p, n.d. 5.
 19. Armando Menezes, 'Goa and the Goans'. N.p, n.d. 4.
 20. Ibid, 6.
 21. Armando Menezes, 'Indo-Portuguese Relations'. N.p, n.d, n. pag.
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 23. Ibid, 227-228.
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CHAPTER VI

Miscellaneous Writings

CHAPTER VI

6. Miscellaneous Writings

Menezes is known as a poet and critic because of the volumes of poetry and critical essays that he published. But he did not stop at that. He tried his hand at different forms like drama, short stories and journalistic writings and translations. Although he did not earn laurels for his only play and the short stories that he wrote, it may be useful to study them in order to understand the nature and character of the man behind them. That Menezes loved Goa and its village life can be seen through his stories. The village characters we come across the Goa of the 40's and its setting are intensely Goan. Although Menezes lived in various cities of India for most of his life, his early experiences of childhood and boyhood were deeply embedded in his consciousness. Never could he forget the rich families, the middle classes and the labourers who were dependent on one another in their day to day life. Besides, the life of the country gentleman, his foibles and the shadow of the Catholic Church behind every family is the atmosphere for most of his stories.

His journalistic writings are a proof of his erudite scholarship, his logical mind and his commitment to the society to which he

belonged. His speeches bear witness to the fluency of language and continuous flow of thoughts, which only a scholar and teacher of his repute could have delivered to the various audiences. And his stories are intensely Goan in their setting and characterization.

During his later life, Menezes was involved in the translations of the Kannada *Sunya Sampadane*, Volumes I, II, III, IV and V, *Vacanas of Basavanna and Akkamahadevi*, which brought him mystical experiences. He has his own views on translations and translators. Early in his life, he had translated from the Portuguese, the novel: *Os Brahamanes* of Francisco Luis Gomes and his translation was acclaimed by the educated world.

Therefore, in order to understand the complex personality of this man it would be interesting to study also some of the minor works which we may safely classify as Miscellaneous writings.

6.1. Menezes' Drama:

6.1.1. *Caste, a Social Comedy*

The only play written by Menezes is *Caste*, a social comedy consisting of four acts. The play dwells on the problem of caste in Goan Catholic society. Although the Catholic Church regards all as equals, the Goan society is caste-ridden and the problem comes to the

fore, particularly, at the time of marriage. The parents of the groom and the bride check and recheck the caste of the parents of the prospect before any proposal is made. In the play, Freddie, the son of Dr. De Souza, is in love with Helen, the daughter of Dr. Ferreira, a judge. Freddie is a dandy who is not interested in the legal studies, which he is supposed to pursue. The matter comes to a head when it is discovered that Helen is also madly in love with Freddie. Dr. Ferreira imposes an impossible condition on Freddie: he should complete his law studies and become a professional if he intends to marry his daughter. There is an altercation between Dr. Ferreira and Dr. De Souza on the status of each other's families, but Fr. Afonso, the parish priest acts as the pacifier. Dr. Ferreira, who regards himself as a liberal man, would not like to refuse Freddie's marriage to his daughter on account of caste. As a Christian, he says, he does not believe in caste. At the same time he does not accept Freddie. It is Fr. Afonso who discovers that it is caste and nothing else that prevents Dr. Ferreira from giving his daughter in marriage to Freddie. The play ends on this note.

Menezes is superb at characterization. The two gentlemen, Dr. De Souza and Dr. Ferreira, are typical Goan landlords and specimens of the gentry of pre-liberation days and so are their sons, Freddie, the happy go lucky and Ernest, the studious and serious one. The old

vicar, Fr. Afonso, is the typical Goan clergyman, who is a regular visitor to the homes of the rich and participates freely in their social life. The play is centered on Caste. Menezes opines, "In our Goan society, apart from the cancer of caste among Catholics, the velleity of 'family', has often, no other goodness than that it is 'good'. As well as caste, it is a serious impediment to marriage. These are the families that expect spontaneous and unconditional respect from the hoi polloi. Whatever their moral standards and their service to the community."¹

6.2. Menezes' Short Stories

Menezes has at least five short stories to his credit, which were published in various magazines of the time. They are *Pingoo*, *The Sensational Case of the Stolen Ciborium*, *Christmas Tide*, *Mother's Birthday*, and *Marianna Goes Home*.

6.2.1. Pingoo

Pingoo dwells upon the popular superstitions of the Catholic masses of the appearance of the devil in various shapes. Menezes introduces authenticity in the story by declaring at the outset that the story he is going to tell is a true story because it was his father who had told it to him and his father had it from his father. 'Pingoo' is a devil who comes to the house of an old woman in the disguise of 'a

young, short, plump, boy with a bronze complexion and an amiable face'. The boy said his name was Pingoo. Although the name sounded like a Hindu name, the old lady does not mind and keeps him in her household. There are a few hints in the story that the boy is supernatural. He could split firewood in no time and if asked to bring fish from the trap-doors, he never failed. The old lady became quite fond of him. She didn't mind him stretching himself on the *balcaum* and puffing at *viddis*. Only every evening, when it was time for the family rosary, Pingoo would escape through the back door. No one seemed to notice. The matter was exposed when the old lady's daughter came to visit her with the children in May. The daughter suspected his antics and his pranks with the children from the beginning. She finally goes and speaks to the village priest. The priest soon arrives with the holy water one evening and at the first sprinkle of the water, Pingoo shrinks and sags and wilts and with a shriek and a flash of flame vanishes into the air. Menezes keeps the surprising twist to the story till the end. In fact, it is a story told by an elder to the children.²

Pingoo is a story that is based on the common superstition among the Christians in Goan villages of the existence of a mischievous devil that appears in human form. The Sunday sermons of the parson that the devil comes to tempt the faithful to sin has

preyed upon the minds of the people to such an extent that they all believe that they should beware of this creature. Although the devil seems to be harmless, yet he is the devil and the only remedy lies in sprinkling him with holy water by the priest, who alone can dispel him.

The form of the story is simple as it is centered around Pingoo, the devil. The narration gathers authenticity as the storyteller says it is a true story told by his father, who had in turn heard it from his father. The story dwells on the simple life style of the Goan Christian villagers who work throughout the day, relax in their *balcaum*, smoking their *viddis* and pray the rosary every evening soon after sunset. The life described here is the life in the villages of the thirties and forties when there was no electricity and life was simple.

6.2.2. The Sensational Case of the Stolen Ciborium

The story, *The Sensational Case of the Stolen Ciborium*, is told by Epis Mae, an old woman, to the children. It is the story of a Ciborium, a golden vessel in which the Catholic priests place the blessed hosts. The story goes hundreds of years back when the Church of Malar was being built. At that time, there were many aristocratic families in the village and their houses were around the church. The Ferreiras were one of these. They had given a lot of

money for building the church. As usual with the rich families of the time, they had built a side chapel, with its alter, entirely with their own money for St. Anthony. The story goes that while the vault of the church was being completed, the Blessed Sacrament in the Ciborium was kept in this chapel. And when the main altar was at last ready, the Ferreiras would not let the Tabernacle be shifted. The story takes a serious turn, when one day, the people find that the Ciborium has disappeared. The Ferreiras deny having taken it away and go about their business as usual. But a village barber admits that he had overheard Ferreira giving instructions to his Negro servant. This brings in the Inquisition, the religious court from Old Goa into the picture. Both Ferreira and his pregnant wife are arrested by the Inquisition and taken to Old Goa for interrogation. Senhor Ferreira and his wife are kept in a dungeon and questioned day after day but they are able to get nothing from them. At last, when they are about to be burnt at the stake, news arrives that the Ciborium had been sold to a goldsmith in Mapusa by one Menezes. This was immediately reported to the police. He was arrested and rushed to Old Goa just in time to save the poor innocent pair.³

Menezes recounts through the story the terrible power of the Inquisition, which would torture and burn even innocent people on accusation. These so called religious courts wrought havoc on the

new Christians and were an institution to be hated and feared the most. The story is based on happenings at Malar or St.Mathias, from which village the author hails and hence the description of the church, its surroundings and nearby village of Narvem, adds further authenticity to the old story of the stolen Ciborium.

6.2.3. Christmas Tide

The story, *Christmas Tide*, is narrated by an unknown, garrulous, old Goan, gentleman. He describes with nostalgia all the wonderful days of his childhood and the fun that he had in the village and school. He reminiscences his school days and remembers his classmates one by one and relates what has happened to each one of them. The narration goes on at the Professor's house while he sips his liquor.

He begins by telling us that he loves Bombay as he has spent most of his life there. He remembers his classmate Pascoo, who did well in business and died young. Another classmate Aleixo who had become a drunkard and begged for money to drink is the next. Manuel, another classmate, got married at 18 and was drowned in a well at the first San Joao feast. And his brother who married the widow, played the coronet in the village band, and died of consumption. He remembers Anton Philip, who got a clerk's job

somewhere and built a fine cottage and then disappeared. And there was Camilo, who took a job on board the ship, went round the world a dozen times, made pots of money and was finally deserted by his wife, who, they said, ran away with a tailor. He then remembers Paulu, whose father had been in jail and his mother was an ayah. He cannot forget his teacher, the village priest, whom he called padre-mest. He would hammer this Paulu as if to drive away the devil in him and would devise all kinds of tortures.⁴

The old man talks of almost everything that occurred in a Goan village. The life of a seaman, particularly of a boy who went to sea, rose to second engineer's rank and then vanished. They say he was thrown aboard by his enemies who were jealous of his abilities. The story finally concludes with a tale of the washerwoman's son who was possessed by a demon while going to fetch a doctor to the end of the village.

The story is strictly a tale of Goan emigrants who think nostalgically of their home and their schoolmates scattered all over the country in the evening of their lives. The storyteller lives in the past, the memories of his childhood come flooding back to him as he sips from his glass of liquor. Probably, the storyteller had only his Goan memories to share with the Professor, who was above him in status

and he somehow tried to bridge the social gap, which existed between them.

6.2.4. Mother's Birthday

Mother's Birthday is a humorous story of a Goan family consisting of five children – three girls and two boys. The five children decide to celebrate their mother Mrs. Hilda Noronha's 75th birthday. They began by planning a church service followed by a dinner. But they are unable to go further in their plans because they realize they cannot plan anything without consulting their mother. They come to the conclusion that it would be better if they leave it to mother herself to prepare the dinner. The story humorously conveys to us the inability of the children to decide anything without their parents and are completely dependent on them.

6.2.5. Marianna Goes Home

Marianna Goes Home is a Christmas story. It is the story of Marianna, a Goan girl working in Bombay who intends to leave for Goa after her dreams turn sour. She counts whatever money she has collected but it is not sufficient to pay the rent, buy a sari for her mother and gifts for her relatives and neighbours in Goa. As she packs her items, she keeps on thinking of her life in Bombay. She realizes that a brute of a man had duped her. When she settled down

eventually, she would be with a man who could look after her; an honest, hard-working man, a real man, not just a parasitic male. One thing, which worried her, was that she had to face her mother. Her mother knew all but would not say anything. She wished her father were alive. He had seen life abroad and would understand. But her mother sacrificed everything for 'respect'. She liked keeping appearances. She had been married at fourteen and for thirty years of married life, had kept appearances. The thought of her mother's goodness hurt Marianna. She had once thought of marrying Anton, a poor ineffectual boy but he was jobless.

The thought that she could never forgive her mother comforted Marianna. She needed this comfort badly. She wished her mother would scold her, beat her, call her a whore. She could bear that. But her mother wouldn't. But even if her mother forgave her, she would not forgive herself for the great folly. She wished she could have met that man again. She could have plucked his eyes out. He had taken advantage of a poor stranded girl's plight. She had sold her gold chain and her bangles to give him money and he had gambled it away. She wished she could explain all this to her mother. But she couldn't face her mother. It would be better for her to stay in Bombay. But then her mother wanted her to come back. Her asthma always became worse about Christmas and her heart had never been strong. Her son

Fanchu, on whom she had doted, had broken her heart. And the shrew of his wife with her pretty face wanted to live apart and was always wishing to take possession of the house when Mother died. She knew she had no share in the house anymore and this thought maddened Marianna.

Somehow, she boarded the T.S.Champavati, for her journey to Goa and seems to be in a pleasant mood while the steamer takes her nearer home. After arriving in the village, she realizes it is Christmas eve and before every house there is star of coloured paper, *cunswar* (Christmas sweets) sizzling in hot pans, and the smell of coconut oil and jagaree everywhere. She is in all anticipation of meeting her mother when the porter who lifted her box, conveys to her the sad news – the news of her mother's death and burial the previous day. Marianna's heart almost stops beating at his words. Her world comes crashing down. She had now no one to turn to. Nine days later, she takes the next steamer, T.S. Prabhavati back to Bombay. She realizes that there is no escape for her.⁶

Marianna Goes Home is a poignant story of a poor girl who has nowhere to go to find peace and solace in her life. She is forced by circumstances to return to her humdrum life in Bombay from where she has no escape. In fact, Marianna's plight is more painful because

on Christmas day every home is filled with joy and festivities and it is the day to be home but for Marianna there is only sadness and no comfort of any kind.

Menezes' short stories appeared first in *The Goan World* and then later in *Goa Today*. The stories were written in a simple style and the narratives deal with the emigrant Goans in Bombay and the simple middle class Goan families living in the villages of Goa. They are the tales of the Goan emigrants' struggle for survival in an alien world in Bombay as well as the stories of the simple God-fearing folks living in Goa. The stories may not possess high literary merit but as stories they sustain the reader's interest.

6.3. Menezes' Speeches

Armando Menezes was an excellent orator and was invited by various organizations to deliver speeches at inaugurations, seminars and valedictories. His ability to speak well and his fluency in English impressed everyone. His rhetoric and clear thinking on various subjects, bold statements and razor-sharp arguments attracted everyone's attention. No study would be complete without discussing some of the important speeches delivered by him and which are available. I have selected only a few of the hundreds of speeches he made at public gatherings, which could be worthy of study. I will

consider only some of the speeches out of the numerous speeches he delivered to exemplify his ability as a speaker. I am not aware if any of the speeches were published. I found them as typewritten sheets in the Menezes' family collection without any indication of the dates when these speeches were delivered.

6.3.1.

The first speech is '**International Cooperation**', an address to medical students on International Cooperation Day.

Menezes begins the above speech with the quotation: 'The healthy, says the Physician, know not of their health, but only the sick', and he goes on to say that the aphorism applied to all spheres – the moral, intellectual, political and even the poetical, no less than to the physical. Health is unity; harmony; a healthy man is also a whole man. The proper functioning of an organism is silent and unnoticed; we begin to hear of it when it is out of order. That is the time when we go to the doctor. That is the time also when we begin to talk of cooperation.

He continues that the healthy, according to a Physician, know not of their health, but only the sick. Only in a sick world, in a world subjected to tensions and hypertensions, in a world torn apart by

dissensions and conflicts, would we be ready to talk and to hear of cooperation at such great length.

At first, Menezes says, the law of the jungle prevailed. But human nature had it in itself to rise above this seemingly 'natural' law. Men organized themselves into a human society, a community, even though they had to surrender some of their personal freedom. Force, which had been an instrument of struggle, now became an instrument of peace and progress; for the maintenance of that balance between the individual wants and urges and impulses which is the basis, the very meaning, of a civilized society as distinguished from a herd. And, therefore, he says, the need for international cooperation is clear, and every day gives a sense of urgency to that need. But it is not enough to pass resolutions or resort to other ways of paying it our lip service. It is even not enough to wish for it; we must will it. Menezes humorously comments that it is a fact of common observation that the man who talks most loudly of international cooperation is often the man who has failed to achieve cooperation in his house or neighbourhood; just as parents who complain of lack of discipline in the school or college are those who have not been able to enforce it at home.

In this speech Menezes stresses on the need for international cooperation if there is to be peace and prosperity in the world. But cooperation, he says, must first begin at home or in the neighbourhood among individuals in order that it may spread everywhere.

6.3.2.

The second speech is '**International Relations**' – A speech delivered at a Rotary conference on International Relations, Panjim:

Menezes commences his speech by declaring that if the problem of International Relations is not resolved at an early date, there will soon be no problems to solve it at all, and the world will be reduced to a heap of rubble in which not even dogs will prowl, for not even dogs will have survived. There will be no longer any culture, any civilization, any science, any Rotary. He pleads with the audience to follow what St. John said nearly 2000 years ago: "Brethren, love one another'. That is the beginning, the middle, and the end of any talk.

He draws the attention of the audience to the fact that they have international conferences on the growing menace of pollution. And no wonder. The growth of industry, which is the symbol of our prosperity, also poisons the air we breathe, the water we drink, the fish we eat. International pollution is not what we have desired. It

has happened – it is a by product. There are other forces, which bring home to us the interdependence and, indeed, the oneness of mankind, and work in spite of ourselves. One need not be an economist, he says, to know how close is this interdependence.

Menezes describes two kinds of internationalism. There is the internationalism that rushes to the ends of the earth and expends its sympathy upon the poor victims of hunger, disease or oppression in far-off lands, and yet cannot live at peace with the next door neighbour. Internationalism is a circumference, which must have its center, and this center is the home. Or rather, to go still further inwards, the center is the mind of the individual man.

Menezes further describes different types of nationalism. There is the nationalism based on one's common culture, one's common language, one's common history – even if it be a history of common suffering, as Gandhiji said, and there is the nationalism of hatred and suspicion, an aggressive nationalism that will not be happy until it conquers and destroys other nations. It is against this latter brand of nationalism that true internationalism must be built up, firmly, in the minds of modern man. He concludes by saying that if we want peace in the world through a sense of oneness of brotherhood, we must accept every man and woman as a person.

Menezes is against all selfish nationalism, which breeds hatred and suspicion among nations. A true nationalism, he says, is one, which leads to brotherhood of all men and hence results in true internationalism.

6.3.3.

We can take the **Speech delivered on the 10th Anniversary of Goa Youth Union** for consideration. Menezes tells the youth in this speech that there has appeared in our time a dangerous trend, which is known as the Generation Gap, which seems to mean that the young have lost complete faith, not only in the values of their elders, but even in their good faith. He says the causes of the Generation Gap are: the democracy, which stresses the value of liberty and equality. The young feel that they should have a full share of that liberty and sometimes mistake it to mean power to do what they like. The other cause of this Generation Gap is the phenomenal advancement of science, which underplays authority and emphasizes the role of reason in human behaviour. The young people, therefore, want to think, and think for themselves; and they suspect all authority even what used to be called legitimate authority.

Menezes advises the Youth not to make their Youth union a platform for the Generation Gap, but on the contrary, to have certain

constructive, even creative objectives and programmes for the intellectual advancement, for the social and economic amelioration, for the moral formation of Goan Youth, and, through them, of the entire Goan society.

Menezes in this speech appeals to the youth to make their union an ideal one, which will seek intellectual advancement and fight for social justice. He wishes that the Goa Youth Union may become an ideal union of the entire Goan society.

6.3.4.

We will now take the **Presidential Address – 3rd Konkani Conference, Bombay** (1945?) for discussion. Menezes apologizes right at the outset that his fluency in Konkani being poor, he is obliged by circumstances to address in English. But he says he always had an interest in the cause of Konkani. He admits that Konkani is not his only mother-tongue, because as far as he can remember he spoke Portuguese at home. This was because there was a certain class of families in Goa where Portuguese is all but the only medium of intercourse among its members. But he was lucky to be born in a family, where it was possible for a child to absorb a minimum of Konkani.

Menezes says further that inspite of his writings in English, everything drove him to the same conclusion: the need of a return to the mother tongue. Marathi, according to the speaker, is not Goa's mother tongue although quite a few people speak and write in that language.

He says that when he worked with Mr. V.V. Valaulikar, the father of the Konkani Movement in Bombay, he was most responsible for compromising on the Roman script for Konkani in the hope of weaning his Christian countrymen back to their mother tongue. He was convinced even then that the chief stumbling block to the unification and systematization of Konkani was the script, and that Devanagiri was, logically, the only script for Konkani. Another problem, which faced Konkani, was whether it was a language or dialect. For him it did not matter whether it was a language or dialect, Konkani was our mother-tongue. But it was also sufficiently removed from its nearest kin Marathi. According to him, a dialect is the natural stage from which we pass on to a language; that is the way all the so-called languages have come to be. English was once the Midland dialect and Italian began by being a Latin dialect, even Marathi began as a dialect of Prakrit.

Menezes concludes that it suffices for him that Konkani is our mother tongue, and that no other will do for us as a mother-tongue, however much we may learn other languages for culture's sake or for business' sake. He says that there are several varieties of Konkani, which need to be unified and that all Konkani-speakers must learn as many languages as possible.

Menezes expresses his wish that Konkani, his mother tongue, may become the language of culture and business for all Goans. Whatever may be its weaknesses, he wishes that they should be sorted out so that the language can become a unified speech of all Konkani speakers.

6.3.5.

We will now refer to his **Inaugural Speech at the Department of History, Karnatak University:**

In this inaugural speech, Menezes states that in our study of literature, history is one of these things one keeps bumping into at every step: not only in the form of histories of literature, but also in the shape of history which is literature in its own right. For history, he says, whatever else it may be, is literature; and many histories can be studied as literature: it can be just literature in addition to being good history.

But since, he continues, the word history has evolved into our story, it may be assumed that history came, at some time, to be understood primarily as an account, a narrative, a tale. Only in history, the facts of the tale had to have actually happened. A historian may write in glorification of his country, or the historian's allegiance may be, not to his country as a whole, but to a king or a party or a historian may be carried away by a romantic enthusiasm for a hero – for a Napoleon, for example, and white wash all his faults. History as science can do one of the two things: it can either use facts for the sake of generalization, extracting laws out of them, or it can confine itself to the mere recording of facts, whose authenticity has been established beyond doubt, and shrink from all inference, generalization or speculation.

Menezes concludes that history is to him, at once an art and a science. As science, it must be factual, a record of what has actually happened.

6.3.6.

His ideas on education are expressed in a **Speech at the laying of the foundation stone of Sharada Mandir High School, Panjim.**

Menezes admits at the outset that it was a very happy idea that the ceremony is held on the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

Few days in the year would be more auspicious. Although it is the hands that laid the foundation stone, it is the spirit of the great patriot and great saint that has blessed it. Unless the Lord builds a house, it is said, he says, in vain do they labour that build it.

Speaking on Gandhiji's education, he says, it was natural that Gandhi should think that the existing system of education was not only wasteful but also positively harmful. The existing system of education was unreal and artificial. There was no coordination among the various subjects taught, learning was not related to concrete life situations. There was no scope for experiment and discovery. It was, at best, a passive absorption of what was, too often, useless and unassimilated information. 'The true education of a child,' as Gandhiji says, 'begins from the very moment of its birth. The child learns even in play.' And next to play, he says, it learns not from books, but from the living teacher.

Menezes ends on a note that the management of the Sharada Mandir school, will make serious efforts to approximate to the ideal of education advocated by Mahatma Gandhi, and staff itself with what he called 'living' teachers, who have not only mastered the tools of their vocation, but are fully dedicated to teaching as a creative art, conscious of their enormous responsibilities towards their little

charges. He hopes the soul of Mahatma will inspire them and bless their efforts.

Menezes, in this speech, asserts that it is the teacher who is responsible for the proper guidance of the young. He advises the school management to follow Gandhiji's principles and to provide devoted teachers at the Sharada Mandir School.

6.3.7. A Speech on "Committees and Sub-Committees":

The humorous opening sentence of Menezes' speech is that the ideal committee consists of three members of which two remain absent, and the question has been seriously debated whether the third member need be present.

Menezes tells the audience that there are, among many, two overmastering reasons for appointing a committee: one, whenever a correct decision is wanted; the other, whenever a quick decision is not wanted. In the first case, the committee has to deal with an overwhelming mass of data, sort out details, judiciously weigh the pros and cons, and make recommendations. These recommendations, however, must reverently stop short of any appearance of a final judgment, for the discretion of the appointing authority must not be either cramped or forestalled. In the second case, if you are fit to be

the chairman of a committee, you know exactly what is expected of you. You have a great number of meetings, or have them at long intervals as some of your members, anyway, have other meetings to attend. You may even convene a meeting at a hill-station if it is summer, or, at any rate, at some place, which is good for shopping or a sight seeing center in all weathers. And there must come a day when your report is to be submitted at last. As already understood, the executive shelve the report, and, perhaps, after a reasonable interval, appoint another committee with a slightly changed, or perhaps the same, terms of reference. And the new committee, after many sittings, makes the same recommendations as the first.

6.3.8.

Now, let us turn to a **Speech on 'Goa University', delivered at Institute Menezes Braganca, Panjim.**

Menezes here enumerates the reasons why Goa should have a University. He says the idea of a university does not come within the perspective of the common man, anywhere in the world; certainly not of the common man in Goa, who is still trying to see what Liberation means to him personally in terms of hard facts or what he thinks to be hard facts. It is even a question whether the idea of a university for Goa has engaged the continuous attention of the bulk of our

intelligentsia; for if it had, there would have been at least occasional signs of it in our press.

Menezes then discusses the case for a university in Goa. One simple reason, he says, is that other Union Territories are to have Universities. This is, philosophically speaking, a very poor reason, but to those who only understand the language of politics, a very sound one indeed. Another reason is that the Jha Commission Report has recommended it, that a great and influential educationist like Dr. Radhakrishnan is interested in it and that the Education Ministry has considered it formally to the extent of sending it down to the University Grants Commission. A third reason would be that many of the States of India have more than one University.

Menezes further tells the audience that a new conception of the University has evolved. Culture is to be no longer the badge of aristocracy. The ideal of democracy is not a leveling down, but a leveling up, of every man or woman being a potential aristocrat. In the olden days, the scholar was a rare phenomenon, a pilgrim of the spirit prepared to go to the end of the world in quest of knowledge. Today, that knowledge, enormously increased, must come to our doors. A university must be open to all, rich or poor, who are able to benefit by what it has to give. It is no longer a privilege but a right.

Menezes expresses his own ideas on the need for University education in Goa and enumerates the different viewpoints. He is of the strong opinion that University education in free Goa was the need of the hour and it was a fundamental right, which could not be denied. The rich as well as the poor had an equal right for University education and culture, which was no longer the prerogative of the aristocracy.

Menezes' ideas on Goa University are important because they come in the early days of Goa's Liberation when the idea of a university was being mooted for the first time. In this public speech at Institute Menezes Braganca, Panjim, Menezes speaks strongly in favour of a university for Goa.

Menezes' speeches prove that he was an excellent speaker and whatever the subject or the occasion, he always delivered something worthwhile and his advice to those he addressed was the result of deep thought and deliberation on the subject. It could be said that he was a well-read man and had personal knowledge of whatever he chose to speak on. He was humorous but serious at the same time and his speeches are really worth reading.

6.4. Menezes' Journalistic Writings and Belles Lettres

Menezes tried his hand at journalism and in the thirties and forties in Bombay, he contributed to various magazines like *Catholic Action*, *The Goan World* and *The Goan Tribune*. He expressed his points of view on a variety of subjects under the sun, which make interesting reading, even today. Although these magazines have ceased to exist, a few copies can still be procured from private and public libraries. In a later period, Menezes contributed regularly to *Goa Today*, a magazine published from Panjim, on a variety of topics and day-to-day affairs of the society and state under the title; 'Generally Speaking' and 'Figuratively Speaking'.

From 1936 to 1939 Menezes wrote in *The Goan World*, under the title, 'Letters to Granny'. Some of the themes on which he wrote under this title were: 'the Congress and the ideals of Christianity', 'Fashions', 'On Love Marriages', 'On Poets and Poetry', 'On success in life', 'On Journalism', and 'On Short Stories'. Most of these letters begin with 'Dear Granny' or 'Granny Dear' and continue discussion on a variety of serious and not so serious topics.

Another feature of Menezes' journalistic writings, under the title, 'My Friend', are his character-sketches of different individuals. They were, in fact, caricatures of the kinds of people he came across in his

profession or met socially in Bombay. 'My Friend, Boniface the Poet', describes Boniface Verdes in Bombay and his attempts at writing poetry. In 'My Friend, Sophronius, the Journalist', he writes about a character called Sophronius Novais, a journalist, who always dreamed of starting his own paper. Menezes composes a long poem on 'My Friend Bombastus, the Professor'. The poem is a humorous narrative on the professor who speaks always in verse and is filled with literary references and allusions. 'My Friend Somehow, the Social Worker', is similarly a narrative poem in verse on his friend, whom, for a better name, he calls Somehow.

Menezes' writings under the title, 'Generally Speaking', are on a variety of themes, some seriously discussed while others are humorous and witty. Some of the topics on which he writes under the above title are: 'Goa, the Beautiful', 'On Democracy', 'Konkani Once More', 'Colonialism and Language', 'On Culture', 'Modern Trends in Indo-Anglian Poetry', 'On Being called Names', 'On Humanism', 'On Plagiarism', 'My Journalistic Career', 'Labels', 'On Schizophrenia', 'Two Cultures', 'The Mystery of Teaching', 'Meditations on Time', 'Christian Democracy', 'The Cat and Mother Theresa', 'The Calendar', 'Goa Revisited', and the like.

In an article entitled, 'My Journalistic Career', Menezes narrates his experiences as a journalist. He says that he is not a journalist in the real sense, he is only a writer of sorts, writing for journals. He tells us that his so called career in journalism began with *The Goan World*, published by Justin de Souza and Jose Dores da Silva in Bombay in the thirties and it was about to end at the age of 74 with *Goa Today*. In between, he says, he wrote for *The Goan Tribune*, as his modest contribution to the Goa Freedom Movement. A sharp eye, he says, will detect the common factor in these three titles. Its nothing less than three little mystic letters that make up the magical name of a great little territory. He has wandered to many places, has laboured at many trades, and has, like Dante, climbed many stony stairs and eaten the bitter bread of exile; but he has been, all this time, the prisoner of his Goanity. Friends had begged him not to waste his talents on local papers, but to aim at wider readership. But he has remained solidly impenitent.

He concludes that his primary impulse was always to talk to his countrymen, as one might chat within one's family circle, rather than mount a platform to address a crowd. He liked to converse, even in print, never to orate.

Menezes chose a variety of subjects to write upon and contributed to various English magazines in Bombay and Goa. Although his writings were meant for English readers, he was aware that a chunk of these were Goan emigrants in Bombay and elsewhere, and therefore he made it his mission to write on matters particularly concerning Goa and the Goans. Even after his retirement *Goa Today* published an article by Menezes every month until his death.

6.5. Menezes' Translations:

Among the earliest translations of Menezes, was the translation of the novel, *Os Brahmanes* by Francisco Luis Gomes. This translation was published by the Centenary Committee, Bombay in 1931 under the title: *Selected Works of Francisco Luis Gomes*. Although the author says in the Foreword that there had been at least two translations before his, the translation by Menezes was acclaimed as the truest to the original and widely read in Bombay.

On Francisco Luis Gomes, whose novel he translated, Menezes says that appreciation of the writer's novel was not wanting in either century. Its manifold worth and significance had been duly noted and justly admired; and it had also been studied in the context of the age in which it was written.

Menezes tells us that when Francisco Luis Gomes wrote *Os Brahmanes*, the romantic mode still prevailed in most Latin countries; and in spite of inroads from realism of one kind or other, Lamartine and Victor Hugo still swayed the sensibilities of the younger generations. It is with this background that Francisco Luis Gomes wrote his novel.

The central theme of the novel is a Hindu Brahmin in conflict with Anglo-Indian society. The word Caste now widens its connotation, to embrace the struggle between races and cultures. The book is a satire on the Brahmins of all times and places. Robert Davis, the tea-planter is Anglo-Indian as much a Brahmin as Magnod, the Hindu Brahmin. Besides the Indian Brahmin whose shadow no pariah may cross, we have the European Brahmin whose shadow must not be crossed by an Indian.

Not content with this message built into the very structure of the plot, Francisco Luis Gomes frankly converts the novel into a platform, and we have an exposition of nearly the whole of the liberal programme: the liberal attitude to monasticism; the liberal theory of the relations that ought to subsist between the Church and State; the liberal protest against slavery; and, as the novelist's liberalism warms

up into humanitarian idealism, the indignant remonstrance against all social and political tyranny.

With the translation of *Os Brahamanes*, Menezes proved his ability to render Portuguese prose into English without losing its essential sense and replacing the Portuguese idiom into its English equivalent. This he could accomplish on account of his mastery over both the languages and the western liberal education that he had acquired along with his study of Latin and the western classics. The English version of *Os Brahamanes* brought to the English readers the humanitarian message of Francisco Luis Gomes. He had expressed his innermost thoughts on every subject under the sun and Menezes through his translation presented this interesting personality to all English readers.

6.5.1.

During the later part of his life, Menezes, in collaboration with others, translated the following books from the Kannada scriptures:

1. *Sunya Sampadane, Vol. I, 1965*
2. *Sunya Sampadane, Vol. II, III and IV, 1968, 1969, 1970.*
3. *Sunya Sampadane, Vol. V, 1972.*
4. *Essence of Satsthala, 1978.*

5. *Vacanas of Siddharama, 1978.*
6. *Vacanas of Basavanna, 1967*
7. *Vacanas of Akkamahadevi, 1978.*

Menezes tells us: ‘ I must own that to collaborate in rendering *Vacanas* from Kannada into English has been, over nearly a decade, both a joy and a test; and the pilgrimage has taken me through many collections: *Sunya Sampadane, Basavanna, Akkamahadevi, Siddharamesvara*’.⁷

Menezes underwent mystical experiences as he studied and translated these Kannada scriptures. He adds further: ‘the mystical experiences may take, among others, two distinct though not separate, forms: a desire to know God, or whatever else He is called: The Ultimate, the Supreme, the Absolute, the Highest Perfection; and a desire to love Him. The quest – even at the level of knowledge – is not a purely intellectual one; rather a full outgoing towards the object. It is an act of perception, but also an act of love, and perception for the sake of love, which in its turn implies union. The act of love, it is evident, itself involves an act of surrender, and so three separate activities of the Self are involved: intellect, heart and will. There is also a corollary to this two-fold desire to know and to love: a desire for transformation, which presupposes a process of instant or gradual self-purification.’⁸

In an editorial note to *Sunya Sampadane*, Menezes tells us about the difficulties involved in the editing of a text of that nature and magnitude. He says they had to collate the readings in the numerous available manuscripts and fix the one that seems to give the best sense in the particular context. They had to interpret each *vacana*, not only in the light of the entire corpus of Virasaiva literature and, when parallel ideas were discovered, with the aid of Sanskrit and other texts.⁹

As Menezes was involved in so many translations, he has described his many approaches to the problem of translation. One is to fit words together in the order, or at least in the manner, of the original, and, having achieved the verbal structure, let the sense take care of itself. Another is for the translator to project himself, using the original as a springboard, with the least regard for the form or content of the original. Still another is to give a literal rendering, which may prove to be at once meaningless and unreadable.

Writing an essay, entitled, 'Are translators traitors?' Menezes defines the various snags of translation. That translation is, often, more difficult than original writing, particularly when it involves transposition of culture. That when you are translating a personality, a style, a voice, the feel of a language with all its undertones and

overtones, your problem grows manifold. You may have put a dress on a skeleton; and the skeleton may rattle at every joint. The true virtue of a translation, Menezes concludes, is that it does not read as a translation, but as an original; not as the original, but as an original – an original in another tongue.

Menezes worked with other Kannada scholars on the translation of *Sunyasampadane* and other texts. The *Sunyasampadane* is the quintessence of the Verasaiva philosophy and the presentation is mainly in the form of discussions between various saints, somewhat as in Plato's dialogues. The central figure of *Sunyasampadane* is Allama Prabhu (popularly known as Prabhudeva) who brought about a synthesis between the various paths leading to God.

In the 12th century there was a great movement in Karnatak, which led to the revitalization and reformation of the Saiva cult of the Hindu religion. There was much decadence in the Hindu way of thinking and living at that time, particularly on account of the invasion of India by Muslims from the North. Hence there was a need for greater cohesion and unity among the Hindus. All these causes prepared the ground for starting of a new Hindu sect, known as Virasaivas or Lingayats.

6.5.2.

The *Sunyasampadane* is in successive five volumes, with text, transliteration, English translation and criticism. The editors say that care has been taken, above all, to be faithful to the original, in most part to the extent of being quite literal and retaining something of the old-world diction. The Vacanas are translated in the original form as pieces of rhythmical prose or free verse and notes provided at the end for better understanding. The same method is followed in translating the various vacanas of Basavanna, Siddharama and Akkamahadevi.

The other volume of *Essence of Satsthala* consists of the translations of the Vacanas of Tontada Siddhalingeswara, a great mystic philosopher of the 15th century, who gave the final touch to the Satsthala philosophy. The translation of this volume in English by Armando Menezes and S.M. Angadi fulfills the great need to reveal to the world of philosophers that Virasaivism has a definite and distinct philosophy of its own. They have brought the treasures of the Kannada literature to the rest of the world. The translation in English has an introduction, notes and comments, which are very valuable and helpful in the understanding of the Virasaiva philosophy.

Menezes admits in the *Songs from the Saranas and Other Poems* that his deep involvement and commitment to the translations of the

Kannada Scriptures into English brought to him a profound mystical experience.

In conclusion, we may say that Menezes was an accomplished writer, who attempted various forms of literature beginning with a play and short stories followed by journalistic writings of all kinds. Though his play and short stories may not be such as may attract high intrinsic values, it is in his journalistic writings and speeches that he excelled. It is in these that we can observe the sharpness of his intellect and the spontaneity of his expression. They are full of thought-provoking ideas, which, though he expressed some forty years ago, are still relevant in the modern world. In fact, they hold our attention and make us ponder over the various facts that he addressed and which dominated the social, economic or educational scenario at that time. His translations, no doubt, are a testimony of his scholarship and his spiritual bent of mind. Although they mostly deal with the Kannada scriptures, he was greatly influenced by them as is proved by his later poetry. They are also a proof of his mastery over many languages like Latin, Portuguese, and Spanish besides English and even Indian languages like Kannad. I have discussed this ability at different languages in an earlier chapter but what is important to note was his ability to bring to us the essence of the

original in his translations without any loss to its original style and meaning.

NOTES

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CHAPTER VII

Conclusion

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7.1. Menezes: The Poet

Armando Menezes, an eminent scholar and educationist, served as Professor of English in several colleges in different centers in Western India. He was no less a poet, critic and a true patriot. The volumes of poetry published by him right from the forties to the eighties are a testimony of his abilities as a good poet. His earliest collections, *Chords and Discords* and *Chaos and the Dancing Star* “were trailing clouds of glory in the firmament of Romantic poets, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, studied in imagery, restrained in gesture and tone, reflective but not philosophical as are Tagore’s lyrics”.¹

Later, he published a third volume of poetry, *The Ancestral Face*, which was divided into six different sections on six different themes. Although critics have categorized him as a minor romantic poet within the legacy of Indian English poetry on account of his early poems, Menezes has experimented in a diversity of poetic forms as is evident from *The Emigrant*, a satire and *The Fund*, a mock-epic.

During India's freedom struggle, Menezes tried his hand at nationalistic themes in poetry with eight lyrical poems: 'Gandhi Jayanthi', 'Soul of the People', 'To thee Mother', 'Thirtieth January' and 'Vande Mataram', which contain an unmistakable authenticity of patriotic utterances. The true nationalist in Menezes comes to the fore in these poems. Menezes was one with the Indian English poets of that period, who were concerned with the freedom of the country influenced by Gandhiji's non-violent movement and the enthusiasm of the Indian masses to rise unitedly against the British rule. Indian English poetry came forth like a torrent full of nationalistic themes.

Manuel C. Rodrigues has described Armando Menezes as a religious poet and a symbolist of profound depths. In his later life, Menezes had experienced Mysticism. The experience had come to him while he was involved in the English translations of the Kannada vacanas. Menezes had come to a realization that God was one to the believer, whether he was a Christian or a Hindu. The main thesis of a person's belief in God was the same everywhere. This is manifested in his poems, entitled *Songs from the Saranas and Other Poems*, published in 1971. The involvement of the poet in the translations of the Kannada vacanas had changed the complete outlook of the poet. It had also been a time of personal reproachment, a home-coming to the Catholic Church from which he had separated for almost three

decades. His religious experiences are common. He is convinced that it is through the intuition and the experience of a mystic and saint that we learn to love God. It is this love that wipes out the difference between God's mercy and the sins of the penitent creature. *The Songs from the Saranas and Other Poems*, also contain many poems on Christian themes like the 'Imitation of Christ', 'Theresa of Lisieux', and 'Pater Noster'. The Christian poems possess similarity of thought and expression and are actually the Christian equivalents of the *Vacanas*.

Menezes' poetry has also been classified by M.C.Rodrigues as poetry of exile. The theme of exile also fits into the romantic norm, as essentially Menezes was a romantic poet. Menezes, though born and brought up in Goa, had to live the life of an exile most of his life in western India, which was at first under the British rule and then independent. Menezes was a nationalist and his numerous essays on Goa's freedom from the Portuguese antagonized the Portuguese in Goa who had declared him persona non grata. Although away from Goa, Menezes could never forget his beloved land, which in an essay, he described as 'The Cradle of My Dreams'. He longed for the beauty and peace of Goa and these feelings goaded him to produce poems of longing and nostalgia.

7.2. Menezes' views on Poetry:

Menezes tells us: “ My poetry, as one critic said, was a poetry of exile, as so much of Goan poetry is; another, more perceptive perhaps, would have said it was the poetry of the island of Divar. Both were right, though one thought only of the mood, the other of the imagery. I have written a good deal about Goa; though I have written a great deal more as a Goan. I have been stirred by its humours as well as by its tragedies, including the long tragedy of its language. I never failed to salute the memory of its eminent sons – such as had thought or dreamt or sung, or raised against its alien rulers the standard of revolt. For its sake I have courted arrest and exile – and the chagrin of an electoral defeat. For its sake, I have earned admiration abroad and enemies at home.” ²

According to Santan Rodrigues: “Menezes’ poems are well rhymed, metrically precise and the words chosen with care. They are intellectual in tone, questioning, philosophical and less earthy than Joseph Furtado, another Goan poet who was his contemporary.” ³

Like Santan Rodrigues, other critics have also compared Menezes to Furtado, an earlier poet. Though both were Goan poets, Furtado’s verse is simpler in form and diction whereas Menezes’

poetry appears more meticulously written and more intellectual in tone.

7.3. Menezes The Critic:

Menezes' broadcast talks on literary criticism were no less remarkable than his poetry. These were later published in book form as *Lighter than Air* in 1959 and as *Airy Nothings* in 1977. Both these volumes contain talks and essays on individual writers, literary forms and movements and dwell at length on principles of Literary criticism. These were supposed to be milestones during the life journey of the poet, of delightful explorations in the realm of literature. S.K.Desai has said that these critical essays display Menezes' artistic sensibility, fully responsible to literature, particularly to poetry. The essays endorse Menezes' wide-ranging scholarship, which help him to make quick and surprising relationships in terms of parallels and contrasts. They are also full of his delightful critical style full of witticisms and surprising antithesis.⁴

According to Menezes, poetry itself is a convention. It does not flow freely like a song nor does it grow spontaneously as leaves do on trees. It has to be carefully contrived and moulded according to the emotions and state of mind of the poet. He calls poetry, 'enchanted discovery'.

Menezes tells us in his Prelude to *Chaos and the Dancing Star*, that the poet publishes his poems and his poems publish him. The poet, at the first instance, is concerned with his own thoughts and feelings. He has his own experiences to go by. He cannot be false to his own thoughts and feelings because it would be false to truth and the divine spirit of poetry. He says that thought and emotion are ceaselessly and often simultaneously climbing up and down our consciousness. Therefore, before the image he moulds, comes the image he reflects. And to see this clearly, is, according to him, the beginning of creation. ⁵

7.4. Menezes' Prose Writings:

Menezes' prose writings published in various magazines and journals prove him to be a gifted essayist. His essays range from the reflective to the narrative and deal with a multiplicity of subjects like literature, politics, education, religion and even philosophy. There are also humorous pieces on the current social and political affairs of the time, which make interesting reading besides giving us a great deal of information of the past. His early prose, like a large part of the Indian English prose of the pre-independence period, was inevitably political in character. With the attainment of Independence, a new outlook had come in the political thinking. However, most of the earlier type of prose, which he had written, continued even vigorously. These also

included autobiographical sketches, historical and religious writing and prose of social criticism.

Menezes' prose writings are an excellent example of that overworked dictum, 'Style is the man.' His learning, a mark of his insatiable intellectual curiosity, is almost encyclopaedic. He seems to take 'all knowledge' for his province and the breadth of his interests is overwhelming. The largeness of his interests naturally makes for a largeness of utterance and his periodic style is punctuated with quotations from several languages like Latin, Italian and Portuguese. It also has an amazingly wide range of reference. He has an eye for lively anecdote and homely parallel and his use of irony and satire add a punch to his style.

7.5. Menezes' Personality:

Menezes says: "The 'me' I was driven to express was, as I see it now, a very definite and yet plastic me, bristling with unresolved tensions: Goan-Indian; nationalist-internationalist; aristocrat-democratic; mystic-secular; radical-conservative; critical-creative; classical-romantic; ethical-aesthetic; alienated yet centripetal...⁶ I think this reveals to us in his own words the kind of personality that he possessed and the thoughts and ideas that went into all his writings both creative and critical.

Menezes, an ardent nationalist, was stirred up during the freedom struggle for India and this can be noted in his poems and other writings on freedom of India and Goa. As Vivek Menezes writes: “ He wrote in an era when it was unpopular to describe and voice singularly Goan aspirations, but he did so fearlessly, without the slightest hesitation. In a period when Konkani was unfashionable, not even recognized in its own right as a national language, he championed its cause unceasingly. Unflinchingly, he attacked the persistent iniquity of caste in his own community even when urged to hold his tongue. He eschewed diplomacy, finding in it a taint of the dishonest; in these essays you find no false pieties, or closeted skeletons, or mundane blandishments.”⁷

Menezes, says Santan Rodrigues, can get into polemics, as he does when he is arguing for his Goa against its merger with Maharashtra, or when he sings praises of his mother tongue, Konkani. He has a sense of history and hence writes well-informed articles on some eminent Goans, who were not only freedom fighters but also great thinkers.⁸

Poet, critic, nationalist and journalist, Menezes’ contribution to Indian English literature is not negligible. His contribution can truly be defined as the Goan contribution to Indian English literature. He

was a poet in English whose work was praised by Sarojini Naidu, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya and Aurobindo Ghosh among many others. Sadly these admirers of his verse too passed out of fashion and his verse, which was so finely chiselled, effortlessly written was also losing out as modern Indian verse began to be popular.⁹

As modern Indian verse came into fashion the works of Sarojini Naidu and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya also lost some of the glamour they had at the time of their first appearance. This is because the idiom of poetry and critical thought underwent a major change at the mid-century point. Poets like Nissim Ezekiel and others contributed a lot for the sharp turn in the affairs of Indian poetry in English.

From the thirties to the eighties, he wrote relentlessly until the final call came to him on June 2, 1983 in Bombay. On his retirement and return to Bombay, he stood alone, unassimilated and unacknowledged by the new wave of younger, perhaps freer, Indian contemporary urban poets. He had no literary circle and little support. Armando Menezes remained without connections with the changing literary world, and was essentially misplaced, marginalized and uprooted.¹⁰

As the new trend in modern Indian English poetry became popular and new anthologies were being published, the poetry of Armando Menezes did not seem to fit into these anthologies. This new poetry had a different diction and appeared to be mostly experimental. Menezes, who belonged to an older generation of poets and was on the verge of retirement in service, had no literary circle to which he belonged or which could provide him support. This is probably what Victor Coelho means in the above statement.

For almost forty years, Armando Menezes wrote continuously. His lyrical and romantic poetry place him among the romantic Indian English poets of the early twentieth century. Although his contemporaries turned away from the romantic trend and commenced writing poetry, which began to be acclaimed as the new Indian English poetry and the poets made their presence felt as new voices in the realm of Indian poetry, Menezes continued his lonely path and was not deterred by the transformation taking place around him.

Although acknowledged as a poet in his own right, he tried his hand at various other forms like a Drama, short stories and travelogue. His essays on criticism were not less remarkable than his poetry although they were originally broadcast talks and were later published in separate volumes. His study on individual writers,

literary forms and movements, themes and principles of literary criticism, is a noteworthy contribution to Indian English criticism, which was a rare thing at the time when he was writing. His essays on other subjects whether serious or humorous express a different viewpoint as he looks at things from a different angle.

Menezes was a great orator and was often invited to address gatherings on important occasions. Some of the speeches delivered by him were published while a bulk remained as typewritten sheets in the family collection of his writings and no information is available if at all they were published. The speeches are a proof of his ability to understand and grasp any matter quickly as also that he was well informed and well read and hence could speak on any subject. They reveal to us that he was a nationalist at heart, truly secular and cosmopolitan in temperament. He also loved Goa very much and any matter that had a bearing on Goa, always touched him to the maximum. The speeches also manifest his extraordinary intelligence and his soaring vision besides the facility to mould the English language to his thoughts.

Above all, he was a conscientious professor and administrator, who has over long years exemplified the best traditions in the teaching profession. His creative writings as well as his critical writings which

he began in the mid-twentieth century and continued long afterwards, establish him as an important figure in the history of Indian English literature.

A study of the history of Indian English literature I feel could not be said to be complete without taking into consideration the copious contribution of this professor-poet who lived from 1902 to 1983 and who during the best years of his life produced volumes of verse, critical writings and prose essays. In his miscellaneous writings like short stories and journalistic essays and the numerous speeches he delivered to different audiences, he has left a mark of his personality as a man of letters, who was first and foremost a devoted teacher, a patriotic Indian and a Goan to the core.

NOTES

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A P P E N D I X

APPENDIX A

On Menezes' collection of Sonnets titled *Indian Summer*

In 1983, while browsing through the family collection of Armando Menezes' writings at the house of Mr. George Menezes, his son, in Bombay, I came across 43 typewritten sheets pinned together, which consisted of a preface and 41 sonnets entitled *Indian Summer*. I have no doubt Prof. Armando Menezes intended to publish them as he declares in the Preface, but for some reasons could not do so.

In the Preface, titled 'PROEM', which actually means a preface or preamble to a book or a prelude, Menezes tells us that 'this collection of sonnets was inspired by someone dearer to me, in fact, dear to the entire family and whoever else has known her at close quarters.' I strongly believe that this reference is made to Mrs. Matilde Menezes, his beloved wife, who was his faithful companion for so many years and the woman, who inspired him to write these sonnets.

The collection of sonnets has an epigraph selected from a poem by John Donne, a metaphysical poet. Out of the 41 sonnets included in this volume, 39 sonnets are untitled, sonnet number 32 is titled 'No

Beauty?’ and sonnet number 38 is titled ‘Stepmother’. Thirty-three of the sonnets are fourteen line Spenserian sonnets while sonnets 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39 and 41 are divided into eight and six lines. The rhyme schemes vary from sonnet to sonnet.

The theme of the sonnets is love, human and pure, of a lovely creature whom the poet describes as sent from heaven and unrestricted praise for whatever she does for everyone. She possesses goodness in abundance and also the desire to heal each wound and soothe each hurt. For the poet, she is at once ‘a scarlet vision rising from the sea’ as also ‘a dancing shape composed of ecstasy.’ The poet is overwhelmed by the gentleness and largeness of her ‘mother-heart’ that ‘goes out to the orphaned and the blind.’

The poet recollects beautiful memories in her company in the days gone by. He describes her youthfulness through lovely images, calling her ‘an old man’s boy-companion’ and ‘a village maiden, bold and fair’, who is unaware of anything like sin. The poet desires to be near her as it brings him peace and contentment.

In one of the sonnets, the poet asserts that God is surely love or otherwise he could not have created such a lovely creature. As he watches her every movement, he becomes more and more convinced of

the existence of God. Poem after poem is full of the poet's rhetoric on the creation of such a wonderful woman by God. It is the same God that has created the sun and the moon, the beautiful nature like 'the tiger's stripes and the leopard's spots.'

Elsewhere the poet tells his beloved that he would like to communicate with her in perfect silence, because language is a curse that is 'made of random fragments that disperse the meaning that is only one if true.' To the poet, the beloved's beauty is 'that no glass can show.' The poet wonders why he writes these poems when his inspiration had been dead for years. There is no reason except his great wish to present his beloved with something that is endearing and permanent when life is no more.

The sonnets are full of allusions and references to death, Art and religious experiences and the seasons like the spring, summer, autumn and winter. The sonnet number 30, appears to be the last sonnet of the collection: *Indian Summer*. The poet seems alarmed with the passing away of summer and the fast approaching winter of old age when 'the old body is oppressed with the lard/ And learns to breathe in pain, to walk in fear.'

The remaining 11 sonnets are mere additions to the *Indian Summer* and appear to have been added at a later date as even the typewritten script is of a smaller size than the previous 30 sonnets. Only two of these sonnets have titles, 'No Beauty?' and 'Stepmother'. The poem 'No Beauty' celebrates the beauty of his beloved, which according to the poet is immortal. The poem has echoes of Shakespeare's sonnets and Wordsworth's Lucy Gray poems. The poem, 'Stepmother' has a different theme and speaks about the joys of motherhood. In sonnet 39, the poet chides his beloved for not willing to wear glasses. He tells her that she does not know what she misses. In sonnet 41, the poet wishes he could lift and play with his beloved, as would a father with his child.

The sonnets were probably the last poems that Armando Menezes wrote between the publication of his *Songs from the Saranas and Other Poems* in 1971 and his death in June 1983. There is no doubt that he intended to publish this volume as he mentions in the Preface. Since I consider this unpublished collection of sonnets important to understand the achievement of Menezes as poet, I have added them to the thesis as Appendix B.

Edward J. D'Lima

APPENDIX B

Menezes' Preface to the book of unpublished sonnets

PROEM

The title of this little book should leave no room for conjecture or speculation. I have to say this, because I have not always had much luck with my titles. When I sent a copy of my first collection of lyrics – *Chords and Discords* – to an exalted ecclesiastical dignitary, he wrote to say he had liked the Chords – as if the book had been neatly divided into *Chords and Discords* – whereas what the title suggested was that, in the poem, the discords had been resolved into chords. My second collection of lyrics, *Chaos and The Dancing Star*, was received by no less personage than the Vice-Chancellor of a University, who remarked that he had liked the poems but not the title. Thank God, he did not say that he had liked the title but not the poems! When I put together some of my broadcasts to make a volume, I entitled it *Lighter than Air*, with a pun on AIR, but also with an allusion to an aeronautical term. And I had it! For, a friendly critic insisted that, on the contrary, the broadcasts were quite heavy! And when I, quite recently, brought out a sequel and named it *Airy Nothings*, a sage member of the committee that approved it for publication by the

University said, generously, that the matter was all right, indeed quite good, but the title was frivolous and gave no hint of the seriousness of the content.

So, I keep my fingers crossed. Will they find in *Indian Summer* some recondite, esoteric meaning, or, on the other hand, sneer at it as too trivial and detracting from the universality of poetry (Why Indian?)

This collection of sonnets was inspired by someone dearer to me, in fact dear to the entire family and whoever else has known her at close quarters. Eliot has a theory that the man who writes is not the man who feels. Right or wrong, this theory is a comfort to me: it places a discreet distance between the author and the theme of the poem. I wish they were better than they actually are. But what can one reasonably expect from an *Indian Summer*?

Armando Menezes

Sonnets: Indian Summer

Epigraph

In buying things perfumed, we aske: if there
Be muske and amber in it, but not where.
Though all her parts be not in th'usual place,
She hath an Anagram of a good face.
.....
Things simply good, can never be unfit.
She's faire as any, if all be like her,
And if none bee, then she is singular.
All love is wonder; if wee justly doe
Account her wonderfull, why not lovely too?

- John Donne

I tease imagination with the thought
That you had never been; or, having been,
Had passed us by... Who could, not having seen,
Guess the perfection that you are, inwrought
With all that is on earth and what is not,
Between the green globe and the blue serene?
A sullen grayness o'erspread the scene,
And a blight trampled o'er our garden-plot.
Tell me, dear heart, by what circuitous way
You glided down across the luminous night,
A ministering angel sent to heal and bless?
All future ages shall record the day
When someone came to us, and how delight
Returned to earth, and Love, and Loveliness.

I keep recalling all the little things
You do, and do, and do, and never tire,
Weaving with kindness, like a magic fire,
A girdle round our weaknesses. Your wings
Ne'er rest; and yet your valiant spirit sings,
Soaring into the heavens, higher and higher,
Beyond the selfish frontiers of desire,
Too busy with its own ministrings.
How is it Nature, chary of her gifts,
Gave you so much of goodness, filled your heart
With joy that cheers, with wisdom that uplifts,
Letting the rest be selfish? Far, apart,
Above our poesy, amidst the drifts
O angel feathers, is your simple art.

There is a Joy abides in all that is;
That moves and animates each nerve and vein.
Through this all things are born; by this
All things subsist; and all that makes us fain
Is as a foam upon that sea of bliss.
Through it all loss becomes a glorious gain;
It achemises into peace all pain
Like the hurt infant by his mother's kiss.
At what suspicious moment were you girt
With such abundant goodness that you should
Desire to heal each wound, to soothe each hurt
By the sheer power of the eternal Good?
To make white blossoms burgeon from the dirt
By the mere presence of your womanhood?

I saw you once, upon the foamy beach.
A scarlet vision rising from the sea,
A dancing shape composed of ecstasy
Beyond imagination's utmost reach.
What is this beauty, that is made of good
And yet is more than good? Transcending form,
And yet a lovely form? How can the storm
Conceive of its own essence? Does the wood
Know of the wind that shakes its leaves again?
As when June riots and the raging blast
Bashes all Nature with its whip of rain,
The good earth heaves and travails – and, at last,
Laugh through the murky weather overcast
The green and golden prophecies of grain.

How gentle and how large your mother-heart,
That goes out to the orphaned and the blind,
The offal of the worst of humankind,
The dying old, the children dead in part!
How well, how well you understand the smart
Of solitary souls who seek to find
A refuge for the lacerated mind,
A distant rat-hole where to die apart!
How shall it be when your seed shall vibrate
To the creative fiat, and your womb
Shall be a temple of a vestal rite;
When you shall, languid, wait the fateful date
Till the dear promise stirring in the gloom
Shall burst, in beauty, to the astonished Light?

With you conversing I have missed a day:
All distance vanished; and all time stood still.
Right from the moment of departure till
We had arrived some thirty miles away,
Was but an instant. Nothing was: you were?
No scene passed by; no station I recall.
Nothing at all. Nothing, nothing at all.
(I vaguely seemed to know that you were there).
Was it a day lost, or youth renewed?
Was it a gap in time, or was it time
Finding itself in all its plentitude?
A foretaste of eternity, a chime
Of the great silence of Infinitude –
Experience far beyond the poet's rhyme?

Well I remember how you jogged along,
Swinging your arms, flinging your legs about,
And old man's boy-companion, primed to shout,
Ready to laugh or break out into song.
Across the railyard's iron parallels
You tripped: a village maiden, unaware
Of sin; like a village maiden, bold and fair.
Our mutual silence was like silver bells!
It seemed a chain was broken with all life
That named you daughter, healer, mother, wife,
And you a child once more – too innocent
Of all the world knows and the world has sown.
Thus, through the endless afternoon we went,
Two fellow-travellers to a land unknown.

Why do I want to be with you so much?
Is it to contemplate your looks and find
Some peace of heart? Maybe, to probe your mind?
To prove affection with a grin or touch?
One at my years has hardly need of such...
I like to sit within the atmosphere
Of your great goodness, and to feel so near
That brave heart pulsing—oh, how much, how much!
For all that suffers, all who are not well:
The crippled who can never run for joy;
The eyeballs shut off from the blue above;
The leper who endures a living hell;
The dying destitute, the orphaned boy—
All that should make us doubt if God is Love.

But then, if God is not Love, who made you?
If God is not Love, tell me what is meant
By all the goodness that you represent?
I watch you moving and I know it true
That God exists, although beyond man's view,
All-permeating and omniscient,
Who, sorrowing for men's predicament,
Sent the All-goodness that the Apostle knew.
For Love is patient, Love is kind and just;
It never gives offence or takes offence;
Endures what comes and ever lives in trust;
Full of delight yet strong in continence.
Love does not function only when it must,
But dares all hell with Love's magnificence.

I know why you were born a month too soon...
Did you not, hearing in that dark recess
Some cry of pain, some stabbing of distress,
Resolve to jump one dilatory moon
And burst into October's blinding light—
You, lonely, calling to that loneliness,
Impatient to be there to soothe and bless,
Like summer sun emerging from the night?
Beware! the jealous gods do not approve
Of too much generosity of love:
They want us to be prudent, sober, wise;
They punish all excess; they cannot bear
To see someone too loving or too fair...
Beware! the gods appear in dangerous guise!

What is this beauty that defies all sense?

What is this goodness that disdains all measure?

What this delight transcending all base pleasure?

What is this daring so like innocence?

She can be naughty, yet give no offence;

Can be solicitous in the midst of leisure;

Can be so coy, and yet bestride a treasure

Of inexhaustible self-confidence.

What makes both old and young towards her yearn?

Is it to seek a warmth that will not burn?

The providence of Nature has decreed

Fulfillment of each lawful human need:

The self-same that will make blind people turn

To the maternal bosom, there to feed.

Who made the tiger's stripes, the leopard's spots?
Who made the stars in heaven, the flowers on earth?
Who made the mysteries of death and birth,
Or the sublimity of poet's thoughts?
There is a science of our Whys and Whats;
Yet, all our principles are nothing worth:
What law can regulate a baby's mirth,
The moral absolutes or Shoulds and Oughts?
Is it not strange that, miserly so oft,
Nature may make one creature of such splendour
And hoist it like a glorious flag aloft,
Until brave hearts are vanquished and surrender?
O splendid creature, noble yet so soft,
Whom God has made so lovely yet so tender!

There is a poetry of Spring. I know
That Autumn has it too; a generous bard
Has sung of Winter. Why is Summer barred,
Through whom seeds burgeon and the harvests grow?
To sing of goodness must be very hard!
It is the province of philosophers
And moralists that never penned a verse,
Who talk of it like a librarian's card.
Though goodness is God's foremost attribute,
To them it is pedestrian: the show
Of Beauty is not hers; she has no lute
To set them dancing till their faces glow.
She sits and watches, modestly and mute,
To run where Truth and Beauty will not go.

The Good knows not itself; and should it do,
It's as if glimpsed in action's looking-glass.
It would undo itself if once it knew
Its own pure essence. Actions come and pass...
How can the birds know why they mate and build?
They only know nests have their uses too
When they are built; and nestlings, that they shield,
Were very sweet and hungry till they flew.
Goodness knows not itself, nor why it be;
It feels no tension, though it longs to serve;
Waits, happy in its own Reality;
It holds its wealth in trust, not to conserve
But give in godlike generosity –
As when a spring will dart out from its curve.

I wish I could communicate with you
In perfect silence: language is a curse
And made of random fragments that disperse
The meaning that is only one if true.
What is this traffic of words old and new,
What is this maundering in prose or verse,
When heart with heart could wordlessly rehearse
An endless dialogue, as angels do?
Alas! our words, intended to express
Our inmost feelings, too oft let us down!
They tar with shame both love and loveliness,
That people look at innocence and frown;
They view delight with something like distress.
And see but thorns when they behold a crown.

To love is laughable; to admire and praise,
Highly suspicious! The right technique
Is carrying through society the face
You made up in the morning. Never pick
A friend out of the motley crowd; but stick
To the anonymous and faceless days
Until the glaring daylight makes you sick
And evening spreads around its veil of grace.
There shall be empty laughter and no joy;
Curiosity without a true concern;
Food without hunger and without thirst drink.
There shall be stacks and stacks of snacks that cloy,
And stacks of words that, circling round, return,
And narcotize the appetite to think.

What have I done now that you doubt me so?

I have proclaimed your beauty: can't a man

See what he sees? and hymn it if he can?

Is this some secret that I may not know?

Yours is the beauty that no glass can show:

It is something eyes can never scan;

A loveliness conforming to no plan;

Undoomed by Nature to decay and go.

It is a beauty that lights up the face

From dim recesses of the inmost self;

No vacant beauty of a heartless elf;

But one that leaps up in a thousand ways

From kindness that makes bright a single word—

The unexpected warbling of a bird!

Why do I write these poems, I who thought
My inspiration had been dead for years?
But what else can I give you that endears
A dying frame that presently shall rot?
You have heard of the tumbler who so loved
Our Lady, that he stood upon his head
Before her altar. This was how he prayed,
In desperate hope that he would be approved.
One offers what one has and thinks his best:
A tumbler, his quaint skill; and gardeners,
The flowers they woo forth from the niggard soil;
The lonely seeker dedicates his quest;
The poet prays and tumbles in his verse,
As the poor farmer worships in his toil.

Ash Wednesday: the grey dust cross is drawn
Upon my brow with a *memento mori*.
I smile as on this penitential dawn
I glimpse a flash of sunset, and feel sorry.
What if we are of dust and must return
To dust again? Must we at once deny
The wonder of all glorious things that burn
With beauty in and out, and weakly sigh
That all things perish on this mortal earth,
Where sickness festers and the sick men moan,
Where sorrow strikes an unsuspecting mirth,
And children born for comfort die alone?
What, then? Does not the immortal spirit flash –
A rose of beauty—on this mound of ash?

When he is born, each man begins to die;
Whichever way he goes, they always point
To Calvary. Betrayed to mockery,
He suffers scourges in his every joint,
And spittings of the rabble; e'en his crown
Is woven of pain; he bears his heavy load
And, stumbling, falling down, and falling down,
He travails, sweating, all along the road,
Towards the mount of skulls. He sees the skull,
His own skull grinning through his glossy hair;
And sees it and he panics; seeks to dull
That fiend with frequent drugs: he is still there!
Each man begins to die the day he's born;
And in his glory weaves a crown of thorn.

Art is a death before it can create:
Brute facts melt in the crucible of Art,
Which turns to pulp each individual part
To issue into joy to contemplate.
Art has a magic that can liberate
A senseless object and give it a soul;
Each fraction dies into the saving whole,
Each lonely fragment finds its destined mate:
The stone is resonant with silences;
Trees talk, and horses sprout with wings;
Birds sing our hearts aloud; and swarms of bees
Issue from rotting bulls, like thoughts from things;
The commonplace is wrapped in mysteries,
And Mystery lifts up its voice and sings.

Yet, Art does not make beauty—only shows
The beauty that to staled eyes is no feast,
Or, being seen, not understood. She knows
The ancient tale of beauty and the Beast—
How one loves not the beautiful, but things
Turn beautiful when loved; and never lies
Or overstates; she lends them eyes and wings,
To see with, and, having seen, to rise
Up to a plane where miracles are true.
Few men or women, spite of vanity,
Know what they really are. The mirror's view,
The flatterer's bluff, their love of vanity,
Fail to detect the mystery that is You—
The essence of your own humanity.

Do not say that again: 'This is not me!'
What profit do I have in flattering you?
Poetry is not cosmetic toiletry!
Her business is to tell us what is true
In spite of blindness, and the coy disguise
Misnamed humility: that longs to be
Assured and reassured by loving eyes
And praise packed up in subtle artistry.
Imagination is the seeing eye
That penetrates thick walls of ignorance,
The poison of indifference, the lie
Of maudlin sentiment or false romance,
And draws the heavy veil aside to show
What only poets, saints and lovers know.

Have I not wandered through the musty maze
Of theories, and left you, limp, behind,
Unheeded, with no stumbling word of praise
That, known as false, yet comforts and is kind?
But there are words at parting of the ways:
Imaginary is not imaginative!
One fancies things; invents, makes up, betrays;
The other probes to you where you most live.
Is this too much for you? Why do you think
That poetry is falsehood, or too good?
That all this writing is such waste of ink,
And the bard is poor victim of a mood,
Or a grey owl that only knows to blink?...
I must be silent, or must seem too rude!

Like Moses' bush, I blaze but do not burn.
Why waste emotion when the brains avail?...
Behind the blazing bush, thin voices yearn:
'I'm who I am'; and all their voices fail!
The world reeks with cast-iron identities,
Each little ego in itself cocooned;
Distraught with this and that, with that and this,
On its own insularity marooned.
The poet blazes but he never burns;
He glows with the world's splendour and its dark;
He bids the ungodly mob take off its shoes
Before the Vision that, unhurried, turns
The whole creation to a Noah's ark,
Where God herds all the animals in twos.

The great Saint said that God is to be met
Mid pots and pans; and not because He is
In every place, involved in mysteries,
But that for souls He made he also set
A body needing food. We know He fed
His people in the desert; gave them drink
Out of a rock; and lest they starve and sink,
He gave them His body for their living bread.
And many years ago, in Nazareth,
A virgin, clad in blue and white, demure,
So maidenly, unconscious of her charms,
Mused on an Angel and the cruel death
That her maternal heart must soon endure,
And stirred the fire, her baby in her arms.

She said my silence was an empty sound.
How wonderful it beats upon the ears
Like tape-recorded music of the spheres
That hum their pop-songs as they circle round.
Is't crackling thorns where is no charity?
Or empty vessel that makes too much noise?
Or sudden silence of a baby's toys
That stabs his mother's bosom like a cry?
Yet, silence is the fruitful womb of song;
No two have loved unless they've sat together
Without a word: for words on more words wait.
Words are the baser coinage that ere long
Is spent; the homely, faithful dog you tether
To bark out silence at Love's jewelled gate.

What is this portent for whom men will die?
Or, thwarted, cross in haste the desperate seas?
Why should compassionate heart refuse to please?
Why should such generosity deny?
Goodness is prodigal, it knows now why;
But Beauty sleeps until the magic keys
Of her heart's chamber rattle, and on knees,
The master of the keys is heard to cry.
Then there is a great awakening, and the walls
Of the heart's chamber crumble all at once,
And a great sweetness blows across the light.
Now every screen of separation falls
From heart and eyes and limbs; and faery suns
Illuminate the no-more-lonely night.

I never was on the Damascus road;
I never felt the sharp electric Grace,
Nor fell to rise. I 've missed innumerable ways;
My pachyderm has never known the goad,
I never went to Emmaus, nor felt
The third that walked beside me, seen, unknown;
I never knew the gush of tears that melt
The wicked heart's inveterate granite-stone.
Paul or Augustine, they knew what Love is:
For Love is fire and water; air that blows
Hither and thither, reckless of men's lives.
Love is a mystery of mysteries;
The wandering perfume of a summer rose,
The bitter honey of Sardinian hives.

This Indian Summer! And the winter near,
When the sap slows and arteries grow hard;
When the old body is oppressed with lard;
And learns to breathe in pain, to walk in fear;
When the old Spectre with his eyeless leer
Keeps night and day an unremitting guard
Upon you, may you bumpkin be or bard,
And poisons everything you hold most dear.
But why should one who filled each hour with joy
Lament the unavoidable destiny;
One who disdained to choose, e'en as a boy,
And always let what had to happen, be,
And drew from the tempest bolts as from a toy,
The same big thrill, and never bent his knee?

“Next time you have to decorate my cake,
Set but one candle: that is just to say
I’m one year older. That is for your sake!
The truth will cheat you. I must always stay
As young as you and both our children make
Me be. What profit is in looking grey
And wan? Not yet is my heart fit to ache!
Why should it when its pulse is youthful, pray?
Not for my sake but yours I shall remain
Just one year older, and escort your days,
With my ripe heart beside your tender youth.
The years, impatient, rush along in vain.
As in the ocean billows billows chase:
I’ll lie about my years and know it truth”.

No Beauty?

There is a loveliness that never wanes:
The bloom of amaranth - - immortal flower.
Not moth nor rust nor wrinkled age has power
To breach with losses her enduring gains.
She has a hidden witness nothing stains;
She grows on, year by year, nor her rich dower
Is frittered on the play of sun and shower,
Diminished not by pleasures or by pains.
What means this fallacy of single traits,
Of what attracts - - and what deceives - - the eye,
Each line, each limb, and the successive dates,
Torn from the calendar, that each day die!
For you possess the beauty that frustrates
The insidious onset of mortality.

A place is what we make of it, they say:
A person, too, is what we make of it.
We build ourselves by piling bit on bit;
We are not born what we should be one day.
Civilization is a long array
Of all that Art can make or Science fit;
We mould our finite from the Infinite;
Our soaring wings are woven of common clay.
The nature of a thing is how it ends,
The Grecian sage hath said. The mango root
Into the dungy depths of earth descends,
Yet what lush sweetness permeates its fruit!
Great Nature breaks us, and great Nature mends;
Not wood and strings, but music, is the lute.

The true, the beautiful, the good – these three;
 And of the three the good is most divine.
 For God is beautiful and true; but He
 Is good above all things: Love is His sign.

When man is good, he's beautiful and true:
 His goodness radiates through eye and word;
 The generous heart is manifest to view,
 And the large music of the soul is heard

The good is true and beautiful: it flowers
 As a globe with a candle lit within;
 As the sky blossoms when the sun-god shows
 His rose-gold grace upon a --- of sin.
 How wondrous when a noble spirit dowers
 The entire earth with what she harbours in!

Which of your virtues do I like the best?
 That your concern can be so easily stirred
 By distant pain and weeping yet unheard,
 Or dim-seen cloudlets yet unmanifest. —

I wonder if folks fall ill just to test
 Your splendid healing power? To be conferred
 Your mother comfort? – as a little bird
 Will flutter wildly be when it news its nest?

You may disclaim all beauty: don't gainray
 That glory issuing from the generous heart
 That makes your frame transparent as the day.
 We do not measure beauty part by part:
 True beauty ever knows to find the way
 Through all that prisons it, alone, apart.

Nature has crowned you with her greatest gifts;
Then taken back a little here and there,
Lest goodness be all lost within the fair,
And sense draw downwards what the soul uplifts.

Nature, notorious for ambiguous shifts,
Plays fast and loose; even as a girl might tear
A gorgeous fabric, bought for her to wear,
To streamers waving with the wind that drifts.

But beauty, driven inwards, yet appears
As light and love upon the visage marred,
By cares that furrow and by ruinous tears,
And leaves the outer feature worn and scarred:
The while the Spirit grows with growing years,
And breathes soft accents though the mouth is hard.

I know your husband understands you well,
And trades affection for your tenderness,
And watches as you go about to bless,
From wires a-tinkling to the outer bell;

About the little duties none can tell,
Between the washing tub and kitchen mess;
To wipe the grubby face, to teach, to dress,
To tread the stairs up hill and down the dell.

In all this traffic of the day is lost
The silver laughter and the golden bowl;
While the limbs, weary, and as tempest – tost,
And tasks, fragmented, hide the crystal Whole.
God only knows what is the plumbless cost
That slowly wears away the godlike soul.

Stepmother

What needs this boring prowess: swelling girth,
The morning sickness, and the aching head,
The fits of temper and the lonely bed,
The nagging worry ere the painful birth?

Those natural stages that are nothing worth,
That weight a woman hates when all is said,
The absent eye and the encumbered tread,
That freeze the moment of a creature's mirth?

If to be mother is to own a heart
That floods with tenderness when something weak
Stammers or aches or feels a sudden smart?
Why all this heaviness for a loved squak?
The great event grows never part by part:
One step, and here the motherhood you seek!

Why all this phobia for spectacles?
Do you not train your hair to waves? Or paint
Your lips red till you look a martyred saint?
I think I know of many graver ills
Than wearing glasses in a dainty frame
And look at all the world and see it right.
Why make the daylight an untimely night
Because to see with glasses seems a shame?

Look, what a lot you miss of nice and fair:
The tint of roses in your garden glowing;
Your father-in-law, blind, groping for his way;
Your love's waist, or receding line of hair;
Your younger friends now growing old and blowing,
Are thinking that this is the end of day!

Art is a challenge to dame Nature: Art
Is something that this self-same Nature made.
The Loveliest things of Nature bloom and fade:
They come and breathe awhile and then depart.
Art can transmute to pleasure Nature's smart,
To loveliness the simple country maid,
To poetry the farmer's sweaty spade
And crown with gold what Nature underpaid.

Art make perpetual Nature's daying works,
And renders perfect Nature's fumbling sketches;
Through Art we see how lovely Nature is:
Art turns to beauty what is Nature irks;
Where Nature stagnates, Art, high-daring, fetches
From her own spirit new-born mysteries.

Why should I feel I lifted you at birth,
And played with you, a father with his child;
And you, wide-eyed, looked up at me and smiled.
And kicked and gurgled with angelic mirth?
I would have given all there is – the earth,
The music in my heart, light of my eyes,
The present prize, the promised paradise,
All my mind's harvest, all my spirit's worth.

If I could only manage to persuade
My memory to back thirty years,
And see a blossom, budded, yet unblown,
A wingless seraph in our cradle laid,
A rainbow interwoven of joy and tears,
Star-eyed, milk-smelly, but our among our own!