

A POETIC GLANCE OF K.R.SRINIVASA IYENGER

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K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar begins his literary career in a complex age, confused by the currents and cross-currents of various movements. As a historian of Indian English Literature, he has kept a close watch over the trends generated by Colonialism, Nationalism, Modernism and Post Modernism since 1943, when he published his book *Indo-Anglian Literature*. He records the twist and turns which go on to characterize the Indian English Literature. He watches with interest, the emergence of poets who make a persistent effort to give native English poetry an identity of its own and to make it as the chief vehicle of complete expression of contemporary consciousness. However, as we have seen in the first chapter, he is sore at the 'current self-tortured poignancy and vagabond eccentricity in theme, stance and expression' (Iyengar 729). He does not like the development of the satiric, the ironic, the trivial and the local poetry that Modernism and Post Modernism bring in their way to offset the national, the romantic and the spiritual poetry of the nationalistic era. He ensures that the exploration of the diseased mind, whether sub-conscious or unconscious, cannot produce good poetry to cater to the aesthetic and spiritual needs of the humanity.

With the aforesaid infirmities of Indian English Poetry in his mind, Iyengar assumes the self appointed task of overhauling it. He follows the poetic path developed by Sri Aurobindo, the spiritual or the Overhead Poetry which embodies the descent of divinity in man and the ascent of humanity to God. However, he knows that for doing this, the poetic fraternity should cultivate a new outlook. A poet has to look for, 'a new orientations, and openings of fresh channels of feelings in [his] response to the ancient classic' (Kantak 115). He has to do a lot more as 'he will first have to lay aside his preoccupations with Western literature and consciously seek re-alignment with main stream literary tradition of his own country, indeed an identification that could be uninhibited and total' (Kantak 115).

Iyengar agrees with Aurobindo's notion of the re-appraisal of the ancient myths in order to attune them to the contemporary mood. To quote him,

.....To take with a reverent hand the old myths and cleanse them of soiling accretions, till they shine with some of the antique strength, simplicity and solemn depth of beautiful meaning, in an ambition which Hindu poets of today may and do worthily cherish. To accomplish a similar duty in a foreign tongue is a more perilous endeavour.'

(NandaKumar 83)

According to Iyengar, myths are the great treasure house of poetic themes. They are still relevant to serve spiritual needs of a spiritually bankrupt age. They can provide the cultural vitamins and spiritual proteins to the ailing humanity. 'The primary myth', observes V.Y. Kantak 'has that vitality, is capable of putting on newness appropriate to the temper and psychic needs of a new epoch' (116). However the need of the hour, as Iyengar feels, is the acclimatization of the ancient myths to the modern times. Iyengar tries to transform myths but in his own way. He goes

on to invest his myths with philosophical wisdom especially that of the Upanishads. Moreover, he interprets these myths in terms of modern ideas, especially the ideas made current by the theory of evolution. However, the evolutionary process that he visualizes is purely Aurobindonian. Furthermore, he finds occasion to interfuse myths with the spirit of modern movements like Feminism and Existentialism.

With the mission of overhauling poetry in his mind Iyengar begins his eventful career. In the first phase of his literary career, he tries to give direction to Indian English Literature using modes other than poetry as a historian, biographer, essayist and lecturer. In turn, he tries to influence the course of literature in the earlier part of his life. However, in his later life he writes spiritual poems and epics. For example in his poem, *Tryst with the Divine*, he gives us an instance of the spiritual poetry that he wants to cultivate. Likewise in *Australia Helix*, he experiments with the spiral development of spiritual consciousness. In *Zero Hour*, he wedes spiritualism with social consciousness and finally, shedding all inhibitions, he comes out of his old poetic self to produce the epic of perennial importance. In the following pages, we will trace the development of Iyengar's creative self passing through different stages.

K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar was born on April 17, 1908 in a family of scholars (of Kodaganallur, a village on the banks of Tambraparni river in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu) at Sattur in Ramanathapuram district. He was the second son of B. Ramaswamy Iyengar and Lakshmi. He grew up in the beautiful village surrounded by green fields, the Kozhundu Naga Mountain within a short distance temple dedicated to Vishnu, Shiva and the local deity Nangeyaramman. They were an ideal setting to Iyengar for seeking and experiencing the variety and vastness of Nature.

Iyengar belongs to a family of scholars. A bright student himself, he graduated from Madras University in 1927. Afterwards, he takes up a job as a teacher of Mathematics and English in Chithamnara Vidyalaya, Valvettiturai in Jaffna, Ceylon (Sri Lanka). From the very beginning, Iyengar's scholarly outlook is reflected in his articles for the Times of Ceylon. He did his M.A. in 1932 and obtained a D. Litt Degree in the year 1939 from Madras University, while working as a Assistant Professor of English at Lingaraj college, Belgaum.

K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar is a prodigious scholar without an equal or even near equal anywhere in the country and his scholarship is available in print throughout the country. He is a truly committed man, right from the beginning of his long career. Iyengar as a writer is a renowned critic, biographer, reviewer, translator, transcreator, editor, letter-writer and a poet. His well known works are *Gerard Manley Hopkins* (1948), *The Mind and Heart of Britain* (1955), *The Adventure of Criticism* (1963), *Francis Mauriac: Novelist and Moralist* (1963) and *Shakespeare: His work and his Art* (1964). While the bulk of his writing deals with literary topics but apart from it he has also written with assurance on topics like Indian Administration, Politics, University Education, Fascism, Science and Humanism, Freedom and Culture and Science and National Development. Significantly, he has devoted his life, poetry, criticism and philosophy to Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. His monumental biography of Sri Aurobindo and of the Mother wins him fame not only among Aurobindo scholars, but among others as well. His biography *On the Mother: The Chronicle of a Manifestation and Ministry* (1978) is selected for the Sahitya Akademi Award for English in 1980.

Much of Iyengar's literary criticism deals with British writers from Shakespeare to T.S. Eliot. He writes frequently on many European writers such as Henrik Ibsen, Francis Mauriac, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Luigi Pirandello, Gerhart Hauptmann, James Joyce, Franz Kafka and American writers like Edgar Allan Poe, Herman Melville, Allan Tate and African writers like

Wole Soyinka. He even attempts things yet unattempted by others. His book on Lytton Strachey is the first on the author; so is his book on Gerard Manley Hopkins. However, the most outstanding part of Iyengar as a writer is that he is the pioneer in the study of Indian English Literature. He gives it a name and a place when it is not considered a respectable area for study and research. Iyengar opens up new areas in Indian English Literature for extensive study. He is not only a path-finder but also an acknowledged authority on it.

Though Iyengar scaled so many peaks of achievement, but still his soul is unquenched to contribute something truly Indian in spirit, matter and content. He writes on so many issues but his soul truly blends with spiritual poetry. He contributes some unique epics in Indian English Poetry. He elaborates, illustrates and improves the Spiritual Poetry. He uses Indian myths, Indian stories, Indian-consciousness, only the language remains foreign. He reinterprets Indian wisdom to make it relevant to our modern consciousness. In his late sixties, he contributes some fine Indian English poetry ranging from descriptive to narrative, reflective to dramatic, heroic to tragic and ironic to satiric.

He gives his tenets of poetry in his seminal work *Microcosmographia Poetica* in the year 1978. *Microcosmographia Poetica* is a critical testament on Aurobindonian lines about the name and nature of Poetry. As Purasa Bala Krishnan insightfully comments on the poem:

While the *Waste Land* embodies the barrenness and sterility of modern society, the drought and detritus of modern civilization, *Microcosmographia Poetica* is drawing on the evidence of history and mystic realizations of Sri Aurobindo, intimates the mellow land from which mankind may stretch its arms to the promised land of divine life.

(NandaKumar 82)

In its content, *Microcosmographia Poetica* is a reverie in search of the roots of poesy and to explore the nature of the *Sahitya Purusha*-how great poetry is written with words, what is poetry and how some writers desecrate the poetry writing tradition. Iyengar says, Poetry is neither a copy, nor a xerox affair nor a leisure-class exercise. It is not a superior amusement, nor supreme fiction; neither politics, nor social engineering, nor surrogate religion, but poetry is *Sadhana* and it must be approached as *Yoga*:

Poetry means looking at the face of Truth
behind the golden cover.

.....
What's a 'character' in poem or play:
Savitri, Sakuntala?

.....
A spay out of heaving infinity
made real by magic of words.

.....
Yet not words alone, their sounds and fury
but silences also speak.

.....
Poetry thus uses sounds and silences,
realizing waves of meaning.

(*Microcosmographia Poetica* 15)

Such poetry helps in the evolution of a new man who is free from the chaos of contraries and is the God-Man of Tomorrow. To quote from the text:

This new man will betimes transform his world
 and charge it with pussiant light.

.....
 The future Arts will make instant contact
 with the self-illumines soul.

.....
 The future poet will indite the Epic
 of the soul's high sovereignty.

.....
 And the Word, crashing through space-time constraints,
 will then reign as Power and Grace.

.....
 That will be plenary Truth and Delight:
 verily, *Rasa vai sah!*

(*Microcosmographia Poetica* 32)

After the *Mahasamadhi* of Sri Aurobindo, Iyengar prefers to distil his experiences with the Mother Mirra into his verse. Some of these verses have been gathered into poetic sequence named as *Tryst with the Divine*, written during his three visits to Pondicherry in 1973. The verses were published in 1974 a year after the *Mahasamadhi* of the Mother and when Iyengar is engaged in revising his draft of *On the Mother*. The poetic work 'aim is not merely to get beyond our egoistic earth-nature and arrive at the Sachchidananda or Divine consciousness, but rather-through surrender to the Supreme shakti or consciousness-Force-to possess and dominate earth-nature and transform it into Supernature' (*Tryst with the Divine* 46).

Even Iyengar goes far beyond that as he makes us believe that the Mother and Sri Aurobindo 'are indeed one sovereign consciousness...As with Sri Aurobindo, with the Mother too, it was the Divine that put on an appearance of Humanity to make it easy for fallible human beings to tread the path of transformation' (*Tryst with the Divine* 46) As, the poetic work recalls, "the unique ministry of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother in the context of the current crisis of survival for man and the world" (NandaKumar 77).

Furthermore the current survival of man is possible,

First, through right aspiration, self-purification and surrender to the Divine, One has to undergo an outer and inner change, moving from the lower to the higher nature, second, this change will facilitate the descent and acceptance of the Supramental consciousness. The third stage would be transformation by the supramental or supramentalisation first of individual man's mental consciousness and ultimately of earth-nature itself into supernature. And ready, total surrender to the Divine Mother is alone the means of bringing about the change of transformation at any level-psyhic, spiritual and supramental'.

(*Tryst with the Divine* 46)

The brief epigraph captures the transformatory battle in which the Mother too is engaged in to usher the life divine on this flawed earth:

Fosterer of the cell's new consciousness,

Fosterer of life and mind:

.....
 Giver of the soul's freedom in knowledge,
 Giver of the highest Good:

.....
 Supreme solvent of inadequacies,
 Accept this flawed offering.

(*Tryst with the Divine 2*)

All these experiences gained by Iyengar in so many visits to the *Ashram* from 1943 onwards get compressed further in his description of Sri Aurobindo and his services to mankind.

The poem *Tryst with the Divine* ends with a firm faith in realizing the sovereignty of the Mother Mirra, a spiritual icon who has a unique power in the process of transformation of life. To quote:

The mist and opaqueness are touched with light,
 and matter feels Spirit's glow.

.....
 The promised transfiguration of life.
 starts its realizing phase.

.....
 The millions the Power had drawn to her
 feel filled by her and fulfilled,

.....
 A light is lit in everyone and these
 emblazon the Living Flame.

(*Tryst with the Divine 42*)

Apart from his spiritual jottings, he also notes down his reactions to contemporary affairs. Some of these were collected in his work *Leaves from a Log: Fragments of a Journey* (1979). Unlike the records of his spiritual journey in *Tryst with the Divine*, this poetic work scalds with dark laughter at times, without forgetting the glory and the good in our heritage. The text is divided into Nine Book and especially the Book VII, VIII and IX were written during the 'Emergency'. In these verses the, 'satiric, farcical and the ironic co-exist with the somber, serious and the tragic. These are admittedly leaves from a spasmodic travel-log; and exposed on the pages are sundry fragments of an inconspicuous and intermittent journey through space and time' (*Preface Leaves from a Log*) 'Freedom at Midnight' on the partition makes us 'shiver in shame' even today and the series on the emergency still send a shock down our spine. He has faced immense hurdles in his personal life and lived through Two World Wars, but Iyengar has hope for the future. As he states:

After the wearisome age on this earth
 Humanity has travailed.

.....
 Varities of rulers have come and gone,
 Perhaps soon the reverberating Scream-
 new birth and the piercing cry

.....
 Is the call of New Consciousness.....

Only the Union of Power and Grace
 can condition Next Future.

.....
 (*Leaves from a Log: Fragments of a Journey* 123)

But being an expounder of Sri Aurobindo's ideas, Iyengar's book *Leaves from a Log: Fragments of a Journey* concludes with a ray of hope. He even says that in our Indian culture there are no tragedies but only divine comedies. We must look forward to a greater dawn as emergency has shown power at its worst. But the presence of the Divine Mother on earth restores life on earth and once again life becomes divine.

Australia Helix: A Spiral of Verse sequence, (1983) is mainly about his journey to Australia. The one hundred and one poems speak about Australian men and their distinctive nature. The poem takes into account subjects such as consumerism and they are indeed thought-provoking and even endearingly naïve, wherein something as simple as shopping in a mall astounds Iyengar who has spent his life in simplicity:

In and out of the swinging doors, viewing,
 fingering the vanities,

.....
 Up and down the restless escalators
 with vistas of floor-display;

.....
 And some gaze as if they might seize the stalls
 and carry everything home.

.....
 But where's the appetite for such excess?
 only dull cerebration

.....
 As the eyes watched the speed of pressure-sales
 by sun-tanned sweet-seventeen.

.....
 And next door-or sideways or in basement-
 crowd the permissive parlours;

.....
 Melbowges in their strategic niches
 weaving spider-webs for flies.

(NandaKumar 109)

Yet Iyengar wants to affirm the fact that good people are good everywhere and sincere devotion does exist in all parts of the globe. In this poem he warns about nuclear power. Even his long poem "Zero hour" depicts moments of terror. However, Iyengar reiterates on the Aurobindonian call for coming out of one's egoistic shells of individual consciousness and think with a higher mind for the betterment of the earth. The concluding line of the poem, 'Zero Hour', ends with a note of hope that if we come out of our ego then we can transform our mind and ascend towards peace, fulfillment and delight. To quote:

Acquire the key to transformation,

Achieve retrieval from the brink,

.....
 And activate the serried ascent

Of this knot of matter, life and mind

.....
Up the stairs of ancient askesis
Forward to the sunlit summit-realm

.....
Of peace, fulfillment and delight.

(NandaKumar 82)

Afterwards, in the later part of his life Iyengar's major concern is constantly with the nuclear terror unleashed upon the world by the big powers. He writes tirelessly against the nuclear adventure, be it for war or peace.

Apart from writing on spiritual and contemporary topics like partition, emergency Iyengar's mind now turns towards Indian myths. He plunged deeper into the different versions of *Ramayana*, while translating the *Sundara Kanda*, he is convinced by the fact that the *Sunder Kanda* is an epic in itself and he writes exclusively *The Epic Beautiful: An English verse Rendering of the Sundara Kanda of the Ramayana of Valmiki*. He describes the Sundara Kanda as an epic, 'in its own sovereign right, with the necessary concord of parts, and the appurtenances appropriate to a heroic tale and the feel of unity in its massive strength and completeness in its variegated richness' (*The Epic Beautiful* 19).

Various reasons have been given in justification of the epithet 'Sundara'. It is claimed again that

'all the nine 'rasas' find splendid expression in the course of the Sundara Kanda. First 'soka' (sorrow) leading to 'karuna' (pity), which is of course the dominant Rasa, incarnated in the figure of Sita under the Simsupa tree in the Ashoka Grove; but the other Rasas also reign in their respective areas: 'sringara' (love), since Ravana's insane love or infatuation for Sita is part of the theme of the poem; 'vira,' (the heroic), exemplified in Hanuman as also in Aksha and Indrajit; 'bibhatsa' (the odious), 'hasya', (the comic), 'raudra' (the ferocious), 'bhayankara' (the terrible), 'adbhuta' (the marvelous), and 'shanta' (the ineffably tranquil)

(*The Epic Beautiful* 20)

The *Rasas* in turn give life and glow to the *Katha* and add to the beauty of the story, the brilliant symmetry of the organization of the dramatic action complete in itself. However, the Sundara Kanda highlights Hanuman's inner beauty, the beauty of his soul, the beauty of his total consecration of the Divine as Rama inseparable from Sita. He acts as the 'intercessor, the paraclete, between the Divine and the separated soul, between Rama and Sita' (*The Epic Beautiful* 21). The Sundara Kanda may also be read as the discovery of a lost treasure, the redemption of the soul lost among the ogresses that are but the fearful engines of Ravana's egoistic desire.

The *Epic Beautiful* comprises of sixty eight cantos of varying length. The Epic may be thematically divided into Seven Books: 'Passage to Lanka', 'The Search of Sita', 'Sita and Ravana', 'Sita's Darkest Night-and Dawn', 'Havoc in Lanka', and 'Return to Rama'. The Three middle books concern Sita directly: she is there all the time, visibly present, holding the centre of the stage. She sits in the Ashoka Grove, regal in her sadness and loneliness and cumulative self-deprivation. Ever since her coming here ten months ago, she as neither bathed, nor slept, nor feasted, nor thought about her appearance, yet in this melancholy, veiled her spiritual beauty. In

her wound, captivity, endurance, patient suffering, she becomes, ‘immaculately and transcendently beautiful, rich in her purity, royal in her poise, noble in her transparent humanity, and worshipful in her humanity’ (*The Epic Beautiful* 24). His own tradition asserts that the *Ramayana* speaks of the greatness of the lady who is imprisoned by social norms.

However, even Sri Aurobindo’s call to Indian poets in English (written at the close of the last century but published for the first time in Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library in 1972) may also have had something to do with Iyengar’s waking up the pen for a sustained narrative on an epic heroine. Sri Aurobindo defends the secular legends of the ancient India and he pleads sincerely for a reappraisal and retelling of these legends:

And yet very simple and beautiful, in their peculiar Hindi type, were these old legends with infinite possibilities of sweetness and feeling and in the hands of great artists have blossomed into dramas and epics of the most delicate tenderness or the most noble sublimity....To take with a reverent hand the old myths and cleanse them of soiling accretions till they shine with some of the antique strength, simplicity and solemn depth of beautiful meaning is an ambition which the Hindu poets of today may and do worthily cherish. To accomplish a similar duty in a foreign tongue is a more perilous endeavour.

(Aurobindo Volume27: 150-151)

Hence, Iyengar uses Indian myths and interfuses his own ideas in it. Thus, *Sitayana* (1987) readily strikes Iyengar’s mind because of his immersion in the *Ramayana*. In Valmiki’s *Ramayana* the focus is on Rama, the prince of Ayodhya. In contrast to this, *Sitayana* is a Sita centric poem. It deals with Sita’s girlhood, her marriage, her tribulations and sufferings. In *Sitayana*, Sita acts as a representative of womanhood and at the same time an incarnation of a new woman who is equally aware of her rights and duties.

Coming to Valmiki’s *Ramayana*, which is divided into Seven Books: Bala (or Adi), Ayodhya, Aranya, Kishkindha, Sundara, Yuddha (or Lanka) and Uttara, *Sitayana* too is divided into Seven Books but with a difference. Instead of Bala Kand, it begins with Mithila, followed by Ayodhya, Aranya, then in place of Kishkindha and Sundara Kand, Iyengar introduces Ashoka Kanda; then Yuddha, adding two more inventive Kand of his own Rajya and Ashrama.

However, *Ramayana* is not merely a simple tale of human interest in general and of racial or national interest in particular. Certainly, the *Ramayana* is the Epic of India and appeals to us for its narratives and also as memorable poetry,

.....[it] is written with a sense of [to act] as architects and sculptors of life....fashioners of significant forms of national thought and religion and ethics and culture. A profound stress of thought on life, a large and vital view of religion and society, a certain strain of philosophic idea....

(Sri Aurobindo 1998: 285)

In contrast to this Iyengar’s *Sitayana* is,

Sita’s Saga Sublime, the story of her birth, childhood, and girlhood....and of the vicissitudes of her human relationship with Rama...

(*Sitayana* xiii-xii)

As V.Y. Kantak says this ‘new saga will bear the stamp of the modern Indian elite’s psychological make-up and needs’ (Kantak116). Although, the original idealistic foundation is maintained, ‘nevertheless a certain modern philosophic susceptibility would find expression in tune with the spirit of the times’ (116).

In effect, the epic is a legend dedicated to good and great women. There is an attempt to minimize physical novelties (the ten heads of Ravana, for instance), and the supernatural is in a low key. *Sitayana* has been reinterpreted in the light of modern consciousness. Sita is a symbol of Divine Mother's image. She seeks for equality- neither condescension nor negligence. She represents the Indian Feminist who holds on to the time tested heritage of womanhood, who is aware of her rights as well as her duties. But unfortunately she is often misjudged:

This, my lord, this popular assumption
 that we're but Doll's House creatures

.....
 foolishly engrossed in colourful clothes
 and glittering jewellery.

.....
 happily contained by domestic chores,
 the securities of home

.....
 and boudoir, and the throes of child-bearing
 and rearing, is mere fancy.

(*Sitayana* 141)

After all it is a tale of the entire womankind and their woes.

Along with Sita, the heroines of the *Mahabharata* too deeply affect Iyengar's psyche. While using these myths, he writes another poetic work *SatiSaptakam* (1991). He takes seven emanations of the Female and represents them as *shakti*. He represents them in the form of divine flowers for the epic. To quote from the text:

Sati-Saptakam (1991) is shaped as seven of Adya Shakti's narrative distinctive in their tints and colours. Iyengar admired every one of the classical women characters as a images of Indian woman. *Sati-Saptakam* covers 'a time-sweep covering a whole cycle of four yugas (Satya, Treta, Dwarpara and Kali) represented by seven exemplars of the feminine psyche and their terrestrial histories'.

(*Satisaptakam* xx)

As he says in his introduction to the epic, the *adesh* came to him one-day: After *Sitayana*, look for a constellation of Saptamatrika, seven mothers, amidst the breath-taking munificence of the *Mahabharata*, the *Bhagavata* and similar seminal classics.

(*Satisaptakam* xi)

In *Satisaptakam*, Iyengar decides that there will be a strong connecting link for the seven stories and the connection will be strong and inviolable:

Thus it was that eventually I made a choice Devahuti, Sukanya, Devayani, Damyanti, Renuka, Draupadi, Kannaki. Like the seven swaras in music, like the seven colours of the rainbow, couldn't they be visioned as the music of maidenhood, the rainbow arc of womanhood, the golden glory of motherhood? Seven of Adya shakti's emanations, seven choice petals of the Rose of God? And so my choice was made, and I felt committed to telling the stories of the elected seven as *Satisaptakam* or *Saga of Seven Mothers*.

(*Satisaptakam xi*)

and how even these female archetypes from Devahuti, Sukanya, Devayani, Damyanti, Draupadi and Kannaki, has suffered and overcome, a whole range of their nobility, endurance, fire and love. Its, a *mandala* of unfading light that sustains with hope and faith to all confused wanderers in the Dark.

(*Satisaptakam xxiii*)

Satisaptakam covers the cycle of four yugas (*Satya, Treta, Dwapara* and *Kali*) represented by seven exemplars of the feminine psyche. These seven ‘*sati*’, is ‘thus the holy, fair, and chaste woman, the guardian and savior-strength of her spouse, and the bearer, fosterer, humanizer, and diviniser of the coming generation’ (*Satisaptakam xxii-xxiii*)

These seven are individualized for convenience and are among the innumerable manifestations of *Adya Shakti*; who are ready again to multiply themselves endlessly:

A Mother Might brooded upon the world:

A Consciousness revealed its marvelous front

Transcending all that is, denying more...

The Mother of all godheads and all strengths

Who, mediatrix, binds earth to the supreme

(Aurobindo Volume 28: 313)

Even the Prologue states one should never surrender to the denial of light caused by the frustrations of the past and look forward to go in search of the power that sustain humanity and it is only in India that power of a female is recognized.

From Devahuti to Kannaki then, is a Rainbow Arc, an arching movement, an essaying of evolutionary growth in the person, psyche and personality and thus continuing human adventure hoping towards the new humanity, the Supramental New Woman and New Man as prophesied in *Savitri*:

The Mighty Mother shall take birth in Time

And God be born into the human clay

In forms made ready by your human lives.....

All then shall change, a magic order come

Overtopping the mechanical universe.....

Thus shall the earth open to divinity

And common natures feel the wide uplift,

Illumine common acts with the spirit ray

And meet the deity in common things.

(Aurobindo Volume 29: 705)

Thus, for Iyengar the transformation of Humanity is the call of the future beyond the despairs of the advanced Kali Age, there is, not very far away the New Dawn and the New Humanity.

Iyengar deliberately leaves *Savitri*, as Sri Aurobindo had written an epic on *Savitri*. These seven heroines become role models for Indian feminism. In the West, frailty is the mark of women but in our Indian culture women are marked by their outstanding strength and innate *shakti* which can be easily depicted by these classical heroines.

As Sri Aurobindo advises the poet:

Other countries, my son, see her branded
with the birthmark of frailty,
pity her for her weakness or succumb.
to her sheer beauty of form.

.....
But sufferance in most situations
is frozen *shakti*, unlike
the spendthrift and vagabond dispersal
in which the male oft excels

.....
Thus with their uncanny inner vision
our seer-poets and rishis
saw woman as embodiment of strength
and as mother of the Race.

(*Satisaptakam xxxvi*)

There are even variations in retelling of these legends to produce enlightened visions of the classical human heroine. These stories tell us that there is always a constant need to search for glory and goodness in our culture and to look forward for simplicity in human life. In the end, these tales restore cardinal lesson to achieve a divine life.

After writing these two epics, Iyengar yet goes on contribute to the enchanting notes of the Flute-Player of Brindavan. In *Krishna-Geetam: Delight of Existence* (1994), Iyengar presents the role of a woman as *adya shakti*. In the poem, Radha is at the forefront. She is *Prakriti* and the Nature Soul. Without Radha, Krishna's flute melody would have ever remained unmanifest. An insightful preface precedes the retelling of Krishna's tale as found in the tenth book of the *Bhagavat*. The Krishna theme is truly ageless for it has inspired wondrous spiritual personalities who have helped man achieve self-liberation like Mahavira, Buddha, Goda Devi, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Meera and the Mother. The 'Envoi', takes us towards the conclusion and is titled 'Ananda Yoga', which draws us into the folds of *bhakti* which is beyond the *Karma* and *Jnana*:

Watch a small child at play, seemingly so
Self-absorbed, and wholly pleased

With herself, and the enviring world:
that's Delight of Existence.
The gifted hero-archer Arjuna,
and Yogeshwara Krishna:

aren't they the two-in-one Power and Grace
of our Ananda Yoga?

(*Krishna-Geetam 286*)

In *Krishna-Geetam*, Iyengar gives a message of hope to humanity while preparing for his own withdrawal and bidding goodbye forever:

Brindavan on Yamuna's western bank
is the amphitheatre
where all the worlds meet on earth to distil

immortal felicity

.....
The foam-crested ocean afar churns out
the intermediate products
oft disconcerting, yet the race is on
for the chalice of Nectar
.....

But hark! The loud peel of the temple Bells!
It's now time to part and go
our ways and awaits, however delayed
the decreed ambrosial Dawn.

(Krishna-Geetam 311)

In summation, we can say, that in an age marked by Modernist and Post Modernist tendencies in Indian English Poetry, Iyengar goes on to produce a different kind of poetry proving that spiritual poetry in an epic mode can be written in the spiritually bankrupt age of materialism. First of all, he begins with *Tryst with the Divine* (1974) which is a spiritual poem of its unique kind. It states that to achieve divine consciousness, one should submit to supreme *shakti* and then eventually there will be regeneration of right aspiration and self-purification. In *Microcosmographia Poetica* (1978), Iyengar extends the dimension of spiritual poetry, while stating and expanding his master Sri Aurobindo's ideas of the *Future Poetry*. *Microcosmographia Poetica* explores the concept of poetry, poet and all the essential elements related to it. Iyengar even states that poetry must be approached as *yoga* or *sadhana* for the betterment of Human race.

Apart from these spiritual jottings, Iyengar ruminates on contemporary subjects and it gets collected in his next verse *Leaves from a Log: Fragments of a Journey* (1979). The poem touches upon subjects such as Emergency, Partition which can baffle one's mind, but in spite of this the book ends with a note of hope that apart from facing greatest national troubles, mankind must look forward towards Divine Mother (that is Mother Mirra who is a symbol of *Prakriti*, Grace and *Shakti*) to restore on earth the Life Divine as visualized by Sri Aurobindo.

Australia Helix: A Spiral of Verse Sequence (1983) is mainly about Australia. It focuses on men and manners, nature and continents and highlight subjects like consumerism and nuclear terror. In spite of writing on these aspects of the contemporary world, Iyengar through his works, wants to restore the lost simplicity of human life. While translating Sundara Kanda and reading different versions of Ramayana, Iyengar has a firm conviction that Sundara Kanda is an epic in itself and thus comes *The Epic Beautiful: An English verse Rendering of the Sundara Kanda of the Ramayana of Valmiki*. He traces the nine *rasas* in Sundara Kanda of sorrow, pity, love, heroic, the odious, the comic, the ferocious, the terrible, the marvelous and the ineffable tranquil elements. Nevertheless, Sundara Kanda primarily recovers the discovery of the lost treasure of the divine *shakti* of a female where Sita in spite of facing so many hurdles appears noble, graceful and represents a vivid picture of divinity.

Thereafter, Iyengar interpreted Valmiki's *Ramayana* not from Rama's perspective but from Sita's point of view and hence comes forth *Sitayana* (1987). It is a Sita-centric poem, where the story is from antiquity but the character of Sita undergoes a complete transformation in the psychological, mental, and social arenas. She is a representative of primordial *shakti* of womanhood and their time-tested heritage.

In the *Saga of Seven Mothers* (1991), Iyengar chooses the best seven female protagonists from Indian myths who are distinctive in their attitude towards life. They are inhabitant of the different spots on earth and covers a time-sweep of four *yugas* : *Satya*, *Treta*, *Dwarpara* and *Kali*, continuing their human adventure to achieve Supramental Consciousness. These tales restore and sustain the note of hope and faith to all the confused wanderers of the world. Furthermore, these tales tell that divine life can be attained even in Kali age.

Coming to *Krishna-Geetam* (1994), Iyengar recalls in verse the universally cherished Krishna story set in the cosmic perspective of Vishnu's Ten Incarnations. Here, Radha is indeed *adya shakti*. Her willed descent on Earth is to collaborate in Krishna's *avatar* mission. She is the heart and soul of Krishna's Flute. *Krishna-Geetam* ends with a message of hope for humanity where Krishna's Consciousness is a semblance of human and divine and it will shower delight, hope, peace and love upon mankind.