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# IMAGERY IN INDIAN ENGLISH POETRY: A CRITICAL STUDY

- Nissim Ezekiel
- A. K. Ramanujan
- Kamala Das
- Keki N. Daruwala
- Jayanta Mahapatra

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**IMAGERY IN INDIAN ENGLISH POETRY: A CRITICAL STUDY 02**

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Dedicated to  
The most precious persons of my life  
My respected Parents  
Mr. Mukundrao Babarao More  
Sou. Suman Mukundrao More

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## PREFACE

Indian English literature plays a significant part in the curriculum structure of the English graduates and post graduates across Maharashtra and the students, teachers, researchers across the country. It is the core body of writers and poets in India who belong to Indian subcontinent and write in English. These writings have been globally accepted and named as IWE (Indian writings in English)

The book is an edited version of my Ph. D. thesis submitted for the award of doctor of philosophy in the subject of English to Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University Nanded under the guidance of my revered guide Prof. Dr. Niwargi sir, Associate Professor in English, Mahatma Gandhi Mahavidyalaya, Ahmadpur.

Literature is always linked with society, family, nation, gender, humanity, human consciousness etc. and Indian writings in English mirror Indian values, culture, persona etc. the poets discussed in this book are very crucial to study for

the students of English literature. The book consists of six significant chapters on the Indian poets in English, viz. Nissim Ezekiel, A.K. Ramanujan, kamala Das, Keki N. Daruwala, Jayanta Mahapatra etc.

The book is designed for the students of English literature and specialized study of five Indian English poets mentioned above. I am sure that the focus of analysis i.e. Imagery will definitely add a novel idea to the readers and researchers for their further understanding. The aspect of imagery discussed with reference to the above poets is an ultimate key to analyze these major Indian gems.

I hope all the readers, teachers and researches will definitely use the book as a valid and effective source of knowledge to study and understand these Indian English poets.

Author

## **CHAPTER-I**

### **IMAGERY AS AN ARTISTIC AND POETIC DEVICE**

A significant concept of the nature of the poetic art can be evoked by putting together 'Image' and the related noun 'Imagination'. Imagination combines the unhidden associations and illuminations from the poets mind into particular images on the page. The minds of the Indian people have a remarkable ability to shift gears smoothly from the literal to the fanciful, to enhance the possibility of wider implication. It would be really interesting to note in connection with this research that (Nietzsche 30) described truth as 'a mobile marching army of metaphors, metonymies and anthropomorphisms..... truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions.' In this regard, the following statement from *Poetic Imagery* asserts:

A poem may be considered as a manuscript sprinkled with phrases rapidly written in shorthand. These phrases represent the metaphors, which are moments in which the poet's imagination is working with the utmost speed. (Wells1)

One of the huge pleasures of poetry is, discovering a predominantly powerful image; the Imagists of the early 20th century felt it was the most important aspect, so were devoted to finding strong images and presenting them in the clearest language possible. Of course, not every poem is an Imagist poem, but making images is something that practically every poem in

the Archive does. An interesting contrast in imagery can be found by comparing Alison Croggon's 'The Elwood Organic Fruit and Vegetable Shop' with Allen Ginsberg's 'A Supermarket in California'; although both poets seem to like the shops they write about, Ginsberg's shop is full of hard, bright things, corralled into aisles, featuring neon, tins and freezers, while the organic shop is full of images of soft, natural things rubbing against one another in sunshine. Without it being said explicitly, the imagery makes it clear that the superstore is big, boxy, and tidy, unlike the cosy Elwood's. This is partly done with the visual images that are drawn, and in part with Croggon's images that mix the senses (this is called synaesthesia), such as the strawberries with their 'klaxons of sweetness or the gardens 'with 'well-groomed scents', having the way the imagery is made correspond with what the imagery shows. Imagery is the literary term used for language and explanation. It appeals to our five senses. When a writer attempts to describe something so that it appeals to our sense of smell, sight, taste, touch, or hearing; he she has used imagery. Imagery in verse creates similar snapshots in a reader's mind. Poets use images to draw readers into a sensory experience. Images will often provide us with rational snapshots that appeal to our senses of sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell. There is an old saying that "A picture is worth a thousand words." Imagery, when used well, proves this erroneous. The purpose of imagery is to take advantage of all of a reader's senses and assemble them into something vivid

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and real in the reader's imagination. Imagery is a way of describing something symbolically, using words to generate a picture in the reader's imagination.... It is used to increase the effect of language and is often an extension of word-choice. Normally an image will extend to a phrase or a few words but sometime it will be longer.

English in India has acquired unmistakable Indian aroma, reflecting essentially Indian image and echoing typical Indian tune. Reading Indian English poets now one observes a natural inflow of Indian words in English vocabulary, Indian anecdotes, Indian classical and mythological allusions, Indian social and political references and where necessary, denomination of words and phrases which have native Indian regional flavour and, at the same time, ease of understanding.

The bulkiness of Indian English Poetry is as varied as human life in the subcontinent itself. There are poems in different forms containing a large range of themes. The themes include patriotism, freedom, mythology and religion, God, man, nature and the depiction of events of consequence from the past, of present and future.

When it comes to the terms of imagery, it is the name given to the fundamentals in a poem that spark off the senses. Despite 'image' being a synonym for 'picture', images need not be only optical; any of the five senses (sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell etc.) can respond to what a poet writes. A poet could merely state, 'I see a tree', but it is possible to conjure up much more

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specific images using techniques such as simile 'a tree like a spiky rocket', metaphor 'a green cloud riding a pole' or synecdoche 'bare, black branches' each of these suggests a different kind of tree. Techniques, such as these, that can be used to create powerful images are called metaphorical language, and can also include onomatopoeia, metonymy and personification.

Poetic imagery is the artistic and operative use of language to help the reader get something of the feel and hallucination of the poet-artist at work. It helps to restore the experience of the poet in the reader for a superior appreciation of the poet's way of looking at a thing and presenting it. It may be defined as the attempt of the poet to compress into words - lively, vivid and expressive - the emotional state through which he passes while viewing an object, anticipating a scene or presenting and analysing a condition. It is the use of appropriate words or figures of speech that would express effectively just what the poet sees and feels at an exact moment of stimulation.

The scholars of criticism and literature have defined imagery as the representation, through language of sagacity experience. Fred B. Millet remarks: "Students of literature are indebted to modern psychology for its investigation of imagery, the element that produces the effect of vividness. Imagery is the result of the evocation, with varying degrees of clarity, of mental reproductions, representations, or imitations of sense perceptions." (Millet 47)

to the psychologists and many critics imagery in poetry

is the expression of sense experience, channelled through sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste, though these channels are impressed upon the mind and set forth in verse in such a fashion as to recall as vividly and faithfully as possible the original sensation. In these terms a poetic image is the record of a single sensation. (Fogle 3)

Imagery occurs when two things are brought together in order that their relationships may be seen, provided that in these relationships the component of similarity is present. "A simple image, then, is a verbal comparison, a figure of speech. A complex image may be a fusion of simple images, a poem, a scene from a play or even the play itself." Finally bringing out the essence of imagery, (Fogle 22) further asserts: Imagery is the living principle of language, ...our speech advances and is constantly revived by the discovery and expression of fresh analogies which increase our knowledge of ourselves and of the world...Good imagery is richly evocative, various in the implication of its meaning.

The word 'image' most often suggests a rational picture, something seen in the mind's eye. It is a word picture that portrays a sight, describes a feeling, and expresses a thought or rather a picture. 'In its simplest terms, it is a picture made out of words', "A word picture charged with emotion or passion." (Leavis 8)

A poetic image, while aiming at a reflection of reality, does not simply capture reality, it presents things from a definite

perspective, a definite angle of vision and experience. It does not give us the mere fact of the thing, but an aspect of the fact, not so much the fact as the sense of fact, not so much a picture as a emotion about the picture. It need not present the complete picture, but only the parts that catch the eye and the imagination of the poet. The poet may exaggerate a definite aspect for bringing out an effect. The poet, being a man of heightened sensibility and feeling can make much of a scene, can colour it with an explicit meaning, an atmosphere and a purpose that is beyond the reach of his more ordinary viewers.

Much of the aesthetic pleasure and literary consequence of a poem is primarily provided by its imagery. The significance of imagery, however, consists not only in investing words with symbolic meanings and ideas, but through them evoking the atmosphere and the background against which an idea is to be viewed and understood. Emphasizing the significance of imagery:

Poetry, whose concern is to make pictures no less than to embody thought, needs imagery as fundamentally as it needs sound and rhythm. And its need for imagery is a more urgent one than that of prose, in the exact proportion by which poetry is a more compact and economical and transcendent form of expression than prose. Poetry must use pictures to save words. (Williams 26)

As a principal constituent of poetry, imagery helps in the representation of feelings and the working of the mind through images that possess the power of

evoking sensations and acting instantly upon the emotions. (Drew 51) remarks 'Indeed poetry without images would be an inert mass, for figurative language is an essential part of its imagery'. Robert Frost considers imagery and metaphor as the most important constituents of poetry: 'There are many other things I have found myself saying about poetry, but the chiefest of these is that it is metaphor, saying one thing in terms of another.' (Ibid 51)

Imagery is significant in that it reveals the mind and heart of the poet, the place where images are conceived. Through imagery the complete personality of the poet is laid bare before us. Through it we know the way he looks at things, the way his mind functions as it grasps objects and ideas. Imagery is, thus, a precious aid to the understanding of the poet.

Like the man who under stress of emotions will show no sign of it in eye or face, but reveal it in same muscular tension, the poet unwillingly lays bare his own- innermost likes and dislikes, observations and interests, associations of thought, attitudes of mind and beliefs, in and through images, the verbal pictures to illuminate something quite different in the speech and thought of his characters. (Spurgeon 5)

The significance of imagery lies in sensitive experience and even imaginative experience. Dark areas in our minds are abruptly illumined as by a flash of lightning when the significance of a comparison dawns on us, especially when the comparison is uncommon and yet startlingly appropriate. A poet conceives

his images from dissimilar aspects of life and experiences. Since, imagery is the result of the evocations of mental, reproductions, representations, or imitations of sense perceptions, there are as several kinds of images as there are senses. In fact, there are more kinds than the ordinarily considered senses of sight, smell, taste, touch, and echo. For psychologists have demonstrated a sixth sense which they have named kinesthetic, a term which they apply to the sensations of apprehension or recreation. Such images are evoked by terms as 'dive', 'scrunch', 'rest', or 'dally'. More broadly, a kinesthetic copy may be that of any sensation arising from the tensed or relaxed muscles, joints, and tendons of the body. Thus sumptuous imagery includes visual(sight), auditory (sound), tactile (Touch), olfactory (smell), gustatory (taste), and kinesthetic (sensations of movement) qualities.

Visual images are more common than images pertaining to other senses, because former imagery was considered to be visual only. Though most images have faint visual associations adhering to them, there are images that are connected with other sense organs as well. If we analyse sight-images strongly we can distinguish a number of sight-images, namely, colour, size, shape, position and movement, illustrated by such words as 'blue', 'mountain', 'cat', 'near' and 'dive'. The word 'dive' makes it clear that definite words may evoke not merely sight images but also distinct kinds of other images. From the word 'dive', for example, certain readers will get a visual image, while others a kinesthetic image. Sometimes an image is not confined to a single sense. It



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may be a combination of several kinds of sensations. When Edith Sitwell wrote: 'The light is braying like an ass', or Swinburne said: 'The voice is an odour that fades in a flame', they were bringing in one kind of sense perception to express one of another kind. This mixing up of dissimilar sensations for better expression of thought and feeling is called 'Synesthesia.'

Although every image contributes to a sumptuous characteristic, it does not mean that any sensuous statement would automatically become an image. It must also have the qualities of feeling and passion. "Every image recreates not merely an object but an object in the context of that experience and thus an object is a part of relationship." (Leavis 17)

A difference can be found in the images evoked by a word and the images involved in the associations aroused by that word. According to psychologists 'association' is the capability to bring up from experience and memory circumstances that are relevant to some word that refers to a person, place, and object of Experience. "Free association" suggests the unrestrained evocation of relevant or irrelevant remembered circumstances. In the analysis of imagery one has to distinguish between the images instantaneously evoked by the words and the images involved in the personal associations those words have for the reader. To allow extreme weight to one's 'private' associations with the poet's words is to run the risk of creating a poem quite distinct from the one the poet intends us to experience. The students of literature and critics of poetry have

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to differentiate between the image suggested by a word when it stands alone and the image suggested by the word in a particular context. For instance, the image aroused by the word 'red', when it is alone, will not be the same image as that which is aroused by the word when it is connected with the word 'sunset'. We are concerned primarily with the images that arise from a word in a particular situation.

A specific pattern can be found in the choice and use of images by an imagery poet. Many impressions and associations clog the mind of a poet at any moment of time. He, however, screens the mass of images that accumulate in his mind and chooses one that conveys most his shade of meaning, the one mainly appropriate for the task in hand. He sees that it works into the texture of the poem, so that there is a concord between image and subject, the image lighting the way for the theme and helping to reveal it to the writer and more to the reader.

It is necessary that an image should not be allowed to become too independent of the verse. Since an image is only a means to an end, it should not be allowed to take on more consequence than can be given it in the context in which it is placed. It must not be permitted to pull away the mind of the reader from the chief theme or argument. It is to be seen that a specific pattern of the images is evolved and that the various images do not clash with one another. There should be sustained congruity and dependability of impression in them not only for the benefit of the reader but also for the purpose of the poet. An excess of

imagery is as hurtful as the lack of it makes a poem or even a prose composition dull and dull reading.

An important point to bear in mind in regard to the creation of an image is that while a poet can create an image from any given object provided his imaginative response to it is strong enough, the image so created must be intelligible to the large body of readers. It should not be too exclusive, too esoteric for its meaning and relevance to be wholly hid from the reader otherwise instead of illuminating, the image would do the work or making the meaning obscure, as is so often the case with the metaphysical poets.

The primary function of the image is to establish kind of sensitive bond between the poet and his reader. The image creates a kind of order out of emotional and intellectual mystification, since the world around us is a riot of objects and the world of thought not a little less so. Some sort of selection and arrangement of parts, of drawing associations and parallels, if even for purposes of illustration, is necessary. The image, in a way, does the work of the esemplastic imagination of Coleridge, accepting, rejecting, and moulding thoughts, feelings into cogently conceived design. It establishes an emotive link between the poet and the external world, the varied world of nature and the world of sensation, letting the poet give play to fancy, letting him draw numerous comparisons and equations. The poet plays with several types of images to celebrate and decorate his poetic genius.

### **The Decorative Image:**

The Decorative Image is characterized by the most restriction of imagination. This restriction appears in pastoral conceits, which are the cool extravagancies of ingenuity, and in conventional figures depreciated like a popular tune through familiarity and trivial organization. Manifest absurdities never appealing to the deeper imagination appear in pathetic fallacies, the decorative hyperbole and fantastic personifications. Diminutives artfully belittle the value of the substance of a poem, which declines still further when the interest passes from the major to the minor terms of the figures. The more such images are massed the slighter they become. The Decorative Image may indicate a frank trifling, or just fail to hide under artificial forms a real affection, skepticism or distress. One may not always know whether it is humor that speaks or sorrow in humor's language.

The Lower Image occurs where the metaphor is obscured. Although a metaphorical meaning is indicated, no definite picture is called to mind. Samuel Daniel excelled in the form. It may be equally congenial to a classical and a romantic taste. Much of the vigor and fascination of Shakespeare's language is due to his immense vocabulary of hinted metaphor.

### **Violent Imagery:**

Violent Imagery is a harsh and sensational form of metaphorical hyperbole that takes the mind by shock. It is without originality, subtlety or accuracy, and is unaccompanied

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by beauty, delicacy or meditation. This is the melodrama of metaphor, where less is meant than meets the ear. By the end of the sixteenth century the more naive and cruder forms of fustian, associated in particular with the early stage, were much on the decline. Somewhat similar imagery appears in the Heroic Drama of the Restoration, and is perennial in sensational story, journalism and speech making. This is an Elizabethan image of blood, thunder and thrill.

### Radical Imagery:

Radical imagery occurs where two terms of a metaphor meet on a limited ground, and are otherwise absolutely incongruent. It makes daring excursions into the apparently commonplace. The minor term promises small imaginative value. In coldness to apparently incongruent suggestion this figure approaches the impartial comparison, while in ingenuity it approaches the conceit. A solid strength and a powerful though narrow application, as well as its association with serious thought, lift it however to no mean rank on the scale of imaginative values. In the masterly hands of Donne it becomes a vehicle for introspection, passion and thoughts. One of his best known figures concerns love, deficiency and a pair of compasses.

### Intensive image:

The Intensive Image is associated with ritual and the pictorial arts, by dignity, conventionality, beauty and clarity, and affords

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intense though often intangible suggestions. In beauty, conformity and dignity it is distinguished from the Radical form. Restriction in scope especially distinguishes it from Expansive and Exuberant figures, the minor terms of which are drawn from wide excursions of the imagination. In this figure there is small or no emphasis upon magnitude. It appears in emblems, personifications, pageantry and ceremony. It is characteristic of the painters, priests and poets whose adorations have been more poignant and intense than glowing or sublime. The Intensive imagist finds something more heavenly than sublimity. Dante, Petrarch and Spenser express themselves more naturally in this form, Homer, Shakespere and Milton in the Expansive Image. The form culminates in chastened and refined figures of ritualistic religion and optimism. Expansive Imagery:

Expansive Imagery is characterized by the unloosing of a large range of suggestion, and the strong and mutual modification of its parts. It appears equally in emotional and thoughtful poetry. Its figures may evoke beauty or terror. It is the figure of liberal energy. Some of its similes are in full and eloquent language; others cram into a pregnant word a wealth of proposition. The physical picture passes beyond any restricted edge of time or space. Sometimes there is a association of imagination and fancy in which imagination still holds the ascendancy. The form culminates in those comprehensive similes of philosophy and religion represented in Burke, in *The Advancement of Learning* and in the *Religio Medici*. To this

category belong the superior number of the images cited from Shakespere. It is the imagery of Isaiah and the Iconoclasts, as the Intensive figure belongs rather to Dante and the Catholic intellect. These figures are representative of the liberal category.

### **The Exuberant Imagery:**

The Exuberant Image is characterized by energetic impressionism two forcefully imaginative terms influence one another strongly, while their relation remains vague and indefinite. A common attractiveness for example may alone associate the ideas. Here occur allegorical protestations of worth, and hyperbole of the highest imaginative value. The five senses are confused in invigorating imagery. The form readily passes into animism and the mystic. In Exuberant Imagery Homer likens the child of Andromache to an idol. To such imagery Drayton seems to have referred when he praised the previous of the great Elizabethan poets for "brave translunary things." Marlowe is its ideal representative. Variations of the form may be found in the poetry of religious enthusiasm, in The Song of Songs. There are plentiful Exuberant images in the poetry of Francis Thompson. It may be illustrated in another phase from the love songs of Burns. Some may condemn it as 'Asiatic,' others may praise it as sublime.

### **The Imagery of Wit and Humour:**

The imagery of wittiness and humor may be considered as

a supplement to these seven categories. Its figures are too diversified to admit a common definition. They may be observed as variations on the preceding forms. Images of wit suggest the Decorative and Radical figures, but are often more resonant in their imaginative worth. Images of humor suggest the Expansive category, but are generally far-fetched and excessive. A humorous fancy may animate what would otherwise be a conceit, or attenuate what might readily be an Expansive simile. The sharpened images of intellectual wit and sarcasm are comparatively rare in Elizabethan literature. Those drawn from fairylike fancy on the one hand and from the grotesque gothic humor of the tavern on the other are brought in writers like Day and Nash to a high degree of distinction. This humor is faster to poetry than to criticism and to song than to satire. Typical of gothic humor are Falstaff's almost Miltonic images on Bardolph's nose, now glowing in the darkness like the light of a man of war, in fog and storm, now like a memento of infernal fires.

No writer confines himself to but one of these types of simile, though only a few, supply illustrations of them all. Some authors however are eminent in a single form. A preliminary survey of the categories will be useful to judge the poetry of Indian writers. These categories do not represent a comprehensive view of Imagery. They do however represent the chief tendencies in the metaphorical imagination of the poets. The worth of such a study as the one here undertaken cannot lie in the definition of

a number of types of metaphor. Definition is a means to an end. The purpose of establishing a type of imagery is to illustrate the character of individuals, the culture of an age, and the potentialities of metaphorical thought. A study of poetic imagery is an unfrequented path that reveals from new angles the moral, intellectual and artistic life of a poet and his times.

### **The Decorative Image:**

The Decorative Image is one in which the two terms are as distinct as simile will allow, and so constituted and associated that the imaginative values are reduced to a minimum. The thought of incongruity suggests the Radical figure. In the case of the Radical image however one term in what is otherwise an ingenious relation has a strong poetic value, and the whole effect is to arouse and to direct the imagination, not to deaden and disperse it. The mainly important conception in Decorative imagery is incongruity. In a more sympathetic figure the negligible term is interpretative. Thus the whole metaphor resembles a Greek statue with formal drapery that makes the body itself more eloquent. The minor term in Decorative imagery might be compared to an ear-ring which hangs with dangling irrelevancy from its dedicated purpose. The art of this imagery is the exotic and unreasonable art of gingerbread ornamentation. For this conception of structural irrelevancy and weirdness there is no practicable exposition beyond the review of examples one by one. A considerably superior number of

figures in this Chapter than in succeeding ones will accordingly be examined from the somewhat dry standpoint of description. The test of incongruity is, to be sure, a simple one. It is that literal-minded test with which Samuel Johnson met each image. With the conception of imaginative values on the contrary there is room for much criticism and development, as well as for disagreement in the application of common conclusions. I shall illustrate how imaginative value is reduced in the Decorative figure by the indispensable incongruity of the form, by improbability, conventionality, particularization, confusion, or by use of the diminutive. Sometimes the minor term is reduced by the major, sometimes the major by the minor. In examining all figures one should inquire first why they are as distinct as metaphor will allow, and second why they fail to excite the superior imagination.

The characteristic of irrationality is not the only one which reduces the imaginative value of the Decorative image. The rustic poets not only oppose objects and abstractions which are in themselves far-fetched and strange but remake nature to their hearts' desire. The physical improbability of their images regularly compels one to take their verse lightly. Campion says of the teeth of his mistress, "They looked like rose-buds filled with snow." Traversing once more the ground of our definition we ask first, do teeth in a lady's mouth look anything like snow? Answering those they do we conclude the line a metaphor; and quickly adding that they do not look much like snow in a rose-

bud, we find that thus far the image is Decorative. There is the requisite absurdity. Contrasted with chiefly of the previous illustrations the depreciation in this figure is less marked. A new characteristic however gives assurance of the inconsequentiality of the poet's imagination. A rose-bud filled with snow is a palatable improbability.

Associated with figures decorative imagery is the type of the 'pathetic fallacy.' This is an animistic image in skeptical and sophisticated contemplation. When animism is powerful enough to force a suspension of disbelief, as in the instance of the rocks that sensitive to beauty let Othello's bride go by, there is, in my use of the word, no trace of the feeble fallacy. Neither is this Decorative imagery. There is no pathetic fallacy in a delusion of life in a humming dynamo. The pathetic fallacy occurs when animistic imagery is the free assumption of Decorative poetry, a conscious and highly artificial device, subverting the stronger imagination. If the idea of an animistic image is not only artificial, but if the animated object is made to act in an unnatural manner, a still further descent is taken on the scale of imaginative values. Personification and animism, it should be added, are not in themselves metaphor. They become metaphorical when the form or action of the personified figure is descriptive of the associated idea, or when the animated object is conceived to possess a spirit metaphorically corresponding to its resemblance.

Decorative imagery describes the throat, the cheeks, the hair, the splendor of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow. These

expressive images pass as a current but by no means precious coinage between lovers. Long established convention has worn them from the cleanness of flowers in the field to the polish of flowers in glass. There is a fine reason for the restriction of theme in such Decorative figures. The more a figure comprehends; the superior is as a rule the call upon the imagination. The Decorative image is the least comprehensive of all the forms of poetic simile. The type of imagination appears in Burns' recognizable song:

My love is like a red, red  
rose That's newly sprung in  
June! My love is like  
a melody That's  
sweetly played in  
tune!

A characteristic of Decorative imagery is to elaborate without interpretation or serious adornment passages of severity or imaginative pretension. It remains to illustrate its application and consequence. Topics that merit attention under these heads are its application to serious poetry, its relation to Decorative verse, its reliance on mass effect, and its tendency to what will be described as misaccent.

### **Hollow Image:**

A Sunken/hollow image is one which powerfully affects the imagination without conveying a specific picture. It is to be

distinguished from faded images. In the latter no specific picture is conveyed but neither is the imagination aroused. Thus, the word, platform, meaning a declaration of a political party, though potentially a metaphor, is generally used without metaphorical purpose. It is not a hollow image. The category is similarly distinguished from the fantastic incongruities of Decorative imagery and from the more elaborate and fully developed forms of poetic metaphor. The restraint of the figure commends it to writers of the traditional school. Citing a Sunken image from Corneille, Voltaire writes that happy use of such metaphorical expression bequeaths the work of a poet to posterity. Many Sunken images in Shakespeare approach but do not recognize personification. A prevalence of merely perfunctory personifications is one of the marks of an unimaginative age. This convention in much eighteenth century verse fails to stir the pictorial imagination from its listlessness. Capitalization more strongly affects the appearance of the page than the personified figures print themselves on the intellect. Shakespeare hints at a figure in personification without an insistence on a nondescript human form, and directs attention to some emblem or attribute which gives vivid existence to the conceptual idea. Sometimes his poetry strikes life into an inanimate object which may be idea to attach itself to a personified figure. Because these personifications are rather intimated than expressed they are associated with sunken images. Most of the eighteenth century personifications have on the contrary no metaphorical essentials

whatsoever.

Sunken images call up two or more conflicting pictures destroying a clear metaphorical conception have been compared to the blur of two or more pictures on the similar film of a camera. Sunken metaphor opens the imagination to a greater range of receptivity, arouses fear or expectation, gives poignancy, vigor and power, and is especially effectual in noble, elevated or contemplative passages. All these characteristics may finest be illustrated from Shakespeare. The Sunken metaphor comes readily to one who does not dare to express his hope or fear or who finds himself in a little respect mystified. Obscure images of terror are especially remarkable in the Shakespearian tragedy.

Sunken imagery is peculiarly adapted to an elevated and distinguished language. The contemplative mind frequently shuns the more developed allegorical forms. The stoical and tentative characters in the Roman plays often speak in subdued but seldom in Expansive or Exuberant imagery. Their metaphor is one phase of Shakespeare's conception of Stoic brutality. The Roman philosophy however is by no means confined to the Roman drama.

### **The Violent Imagery:**

In Violent images, or metaphorical fustian, imagination is restricted by sensationalism, which reduces to a minimum the intellectual elements of the figure, by impetuosity, which blurs the relation of the terms, and by a prevailing conventionality,

which hinders a close adjustment of the figure to a particular case. These statements may serve at once for a concise explanation and for an outline of a large part of the present chapter. No extended explanation is needed to convey the significance of the form. From the Cleon of Aristophanes to the modern campaign speech fustian has been a divinity in the affairs of men. It has elected candidates, brought armies to blows, frightened poetry from the admired stage, and has seemed to vanquish death itself as an instrument of the eulogist. Decorative imagery, or the pride, gave amusement to a handful of aristocratic Elizabethans. It was a vice of no more than a gambol pedantry. Sunken imagery is too fine and radical imagery too intricate to be fashionable. Intensive and Expansive imagery, for the most part descriptions of beauty and idealism, are intimations of an ideal world. Fustian is a monarch of this world. It is therefore of some significance to observe by what means it monarchizes over the opinions and emotions of men. Fustian may itself be broadly described as linguistic animation for its own sake. It is grounded in insensitivity. It flourishes in oratory because the situation of the orator, with crowd intent upon his words and gestures, is favorable to the egoist. The speaker cares more for his result than for his theme. While apparently rapt in his subject he is actually ensphered in his own magnificence. His language then is at bottom vulgar and bears no resemblance to poetry. The metaphor of fustian falls in point of form into two types, more practically allied than would at first appear. Its bolder

images are eccentric. Its milder figures strike the imagination with the same jar that platitudes give the reason. They are 'pat,' as in the slang use of 'lid' for hat. But though the image is pat it is anything but delicately adjusted. It shows in its own way the usual recklessness of violent speech.

In this figure less is meant than meets the ear. It attains a fine point of competence. There is only one probable interpretation. The author commands compliance. His language rings loud and clear, so that he who runs must understand. We are not induced to better thought or finer feeling but spurred to immediate and violent action or vanquished by a shamefully simple emotion. The appeal is instantaneous and sensational, never subtle or meditative. In figures of a grossly sensational character there will of necessity be less imaginative activity than in those which leave the door of philosophy ajar. Consider for example two figures alike in their ostensible subject but otherwise unlike. One is thrilling and marvelous. The other arouses an approximately illimitable play of fancy and of the reflective faculties. One is violent, the other expansive.

### **The Sunken Imagery:**

A Sunken image is one which powerfully affects the imagination without conveying a specific picture. It is to be distinguished from faded imagery. In the latter no specific picture is conveyed but neither is the imagination aroused. Thus, the word platform, meaning a declaration of a political party, though potentially an allegory, is generally used without metaphorical



intention. The category is similarly distinguished from the fantastic incongruities of Decorative imagery and from the more elaborate and fully developed forms of poetic allegory. The restraint of the figure commends it to writers of the classical school. Citing a Sunken image from Corneille, Voltaire writes that happy use of such metaphoric expression bequeaths the work of a poet to posterity.

The traditional poet may conceal a use of metaphor, but he cannot dispense with it. No speech of emotional value can dispense with images. There is at least one form of imagery which appears both in the poetry of Shakespeare and in the poetry of Corneille, Racine and Voltaire. An examination of the sunken figures in Indian literature affords a liberalizing view of the episode.

Sunken metaphor opens the imagination to a greater range of receptivity, arouses fear or expectation, gives poignancy, vigor and power, and is particularly effective in noble, elevated or contemplative passages. All these characteristics may top be illustrated from Shakespeare. The following figures are selected to illustrate a tendency to open the imagination to a greater range of openness. Although far removed from the Expansive category, they are a growth of the same soil. In each case hallucination even for sunken imagery is exceptionally vague. The Sunken metaphor comes readily to one whom does not dare to express his expect or fear or who finds himself in some respect mystified. Obscure images of terror are particularly

remarkable in the Shakespearian tragedy.

Sunken imagery is abnormally adapted to an elevated and dignified language. The contemplative mind repeatedly shuns the more developed metaphorical forms. The stoical and speculative characters in the Roman plays often speak in subdued but hardly ever in Expansive imagery.

### **Radical Imagery:**

In Radical imagery the minor term is itself of little imaginative value but the metaphorical relation is dominant. Many objects quite apart from metaphoric suggestiveness stimulate imagination. These are obviously objects of some artistic consequence. Such are the archetypal materials of poetic imagery. More especially the poets of the eighteenth century held that dignified matter alone is fit for similes in poetry. The language of an entire poem was placed upon a classic pedestal, lifted above the noise and dust of the road. A prescribed formality increased as motivation grew colder. Inconsistently enough with this practice in metaphor, it was often decreed that the subject of a poem should be proverbial to the daily life of the poet and his readers. A fit language was sought to elevate fundamentally undignified thoughts of persons and events. No simpler means than heroic metaphor or comparison was accessible. In Victorian stanza the formality of an Aaron Hill was largely dispensed with. Yet while imagery became easier and less conventional, it was still governed by a rigid respectability.

Few vulgar or unlovely or seemingly trivial objects were allowable. The sublimity of stars and the beauty of roses were the tests for allegory. A commonplace subject for an image in serious free verse would have disgusted and surprised the reader like grit in a smooth and delicate food. The Elizabethan style, to which more recent poetry seems increasingly to return, utilized in imagery the mainly familiar objects. The ugly can never be made in itself attractive or the trivial sublime, but the metaphorical mind may abstract from the unlovely and the trivial highly suggestive elements. The process inclines to creativity. It borders upon wit. Nevertheless Radical imagery has played an respectable part in reflective poetry generally and especially in English literature of the early seventeenth century.

Donne often uses imaginative conceptions in image, treating them in such a fashion that they become Radical. If the compass is to be regarded as a prosaic idea for the bulk of mankind, stars, an official trumpeter, an adventure to the vast and farthest shores and the general conceptions of dirt and good-morrow may be assumed to be imaginatively expectant. The Radical image might be expressed geometrically as a cone. On one end is a point of no imaginative value in it from which radiate lines of dominant suggestion. An Expansive or an Exuberant figure might be represented as a twice cone pinched in the center with widely radiating lines on each side. The essential fusion of the lines represents the metaphorical relation. Each term in an Expansive or Exuberant figure modifies the other. In the Radical

image in poetic metaphor the minor term is a tool used for a lofty purpose, but without intrinsic beauty or fascination.

The form has a recognized but not an important place in most contemporary poetry. It belongs indeed rather to prose than to poetry, for in poetry it requires skillful handling. Donne often accomplishes the transformation of the commonplace into the extremely imaginative.

Fineness of expression is as essential in the Intensive figure as in the execution of a low release. Within its narrow bounds the degree of finish must be tall. There is less impulsive strength in this than in the Expansive image, but more delicacy and more aware art. Some poets conceive the world of their imagination in huge proportions. Immensity is an indispensable part in Milton's conception of heaven and hell. The legends of God and Satan are untold and the height and strength of their abodes unbounded. Some poets on the contrary do not emphasize magnitude.

### **The Expansive Imagery:**

The Expansive image is one in which each term opens a wide vista to the imagination and one in which each term is powerfully modified by the other. Since both of its parts have a high imaginative value and mutually assist one another without depreciation, it is sharply distinguished from the Decorative picture. It differs from the sunken figure in that its terms are wholly visualized or realized. It differs from the violent simile in three respects; the intellectual and emotional elements are not

lost in the sensational; even if examined with fixed attention the relation is appropriate; and there is a delicate modification to particular instances. It differs from the Radical category since in that figure one term is of low creative value and while modifying its associate remains it unmodified. It is distinguished from the Intensive image chiefly in that its trivial term offers a wide scope to the imagination. The Intensive figure is seen in emblems and personifications, while the Expansive simile casts one extended experience against another, with a well-developed conception of time or action in the minor term. The minor terms of the Intensive picture are fixed, the imagination without radically modifying these terms receiving from them a powerful stream of suggestion. In the Expansive figure the trivial term itself is subject to profound modification.

Sir Francis Bacon presents one of the most incredible bodies of imagery attributable to any writer in the lifetime of Shakespeare. In his image he 'set the very wings of reason to his heels.' All critics of Bacon agree in emphasizing the poetic as well as the technological value of such writing as *The Advancement of Learning* or *The Filum Labyrinthi*. A part of the glory of Bacon is the success with which he discloses Science as an ideal worthy of affection.

He was her first poet in England and remains there perhaps to this day her greatest. But a huge measure of his eloquence lies in his figurative language. His images may be compared to the flying buttresses of a gothic cathedral which are a support

as well as an adornment. The gift which Taylor brought later to theology and Burke to political justice, Bacon brought to science: images at once ennobled by its theme and ennobling it. If it be true that the power of an image increases with the weight of its subject, the clever figures of Bacon may well be regarded as a summit in the record of the Expansive metaphors of philosophy. The following citations must be sufficient to represent them.

Therefore no hesitation the sovereignty of man lays hid in knowledge, wherein many things are reserved which kings with their treasure cannot buy nor with their force command; their spies and intelligencers can give no news of them.

### **The Energetic Imagery:**

The Exuberant/energetic image is characterized by the impressionistic relation of two broad and imaginatively important terms. These terms though in an entirely aesthetic relation parallel each other as the parts of a similarity. The Exuberant figure may be contrasted with the Expansive by supposing two broad and smooth surfaces in a face-to-face contact and two such surfaces not only in close contact but interlocking at some significant points. The Exuberant is also to be distinguished from the Intensive number. When the same object which contributes the trivial term to an intensive metaphor becomes dilated by enthusiasm to supernatural activity the figure becomes Exuberant, the remaining figures may be considered from the power of their imaginative effect. Some are of sublime proportions, filling the walls of space to the

outermost horizon. Others, though of almost equal imaginative value, are more restricted in illustration appeal.

### **Imagery of Wit and Humour:**

For the figure of wit and humour, I shall attempt no such classification as for the types previously discussed. Habits in serious imagery are much more plastic than those in the imagery of wit and humor and the use of solemn imagery invites more conscious art. Five types of imagery are obvious under this head.

These are the similes of wit, of irony, of gothic humor, of plain incongruity and of fancy. Of these types the first two are rare in Elizabethan literature and the remaining three plentifully represented. The figure of wit delights by hitting the heart of the intention. The figure of irony surprises by contradiction, by over-statement, by under-statement or even by an unlooked-for reunion. The figure of gothic humor by coarse, fine natured, powerful caricature appeals strongly to the eye. The figure of incongruity is a surprising comparison with one grain of similitude for ten of difference. The figure of fancy in humor is too considerate to be a Decorative conceit, not sympathetic enough to be an Expansive figure, delicate and airy enough to be fancy and audacious and surprising sufficient to be humor. Metaphors of wit and incongruity are related to the Radical reflection. The figure of gothic humor is often highly Expansive in imaginative worth. These types may be viewed more precisely as varieties of the preceding categories than as one or extra categories themselves. An opportunity is thus afforded to glance

backward over the completed discussion of the serious figures and to test to some degree the meaning of earlier distinctions.

The incisive, critical simile of wit and the figurative and pointed shafts of irony are relatively rare in Elizabethan authors. On the contrary the picture of gothic humor, sensuous, grotesque, pregnant and unlicked, is the staple of Indian English Literature. Under an uncouth exterior, however, these Rabelaisian conceptions may have a considerable degree of satirical supremacy. Radical antitheses are lavishly scattered among the images of absurdity. Finally fantastic figures of much delicacy cross and re-cross the homely pages like fairies playing on a homely hearth. The Indian literary simile of humor is not the keen weapon of satirical fence and thrust, nor the finely adjusted figure of wit and irony, but on low note and high, from the great masculine laughter of carters and drawers to the laughter of spirits like rain 'singing in the wind,' the laughter of India arises from innocent mirth.

The subject of poetic imagery affords tiny opportunity for tabular or mechanical treatment. Compilations are easily made but are not simply made illuminating. With the illustration and analysis of eight types of poetic metaphor behind us we may proceed to a fast summary and conclusion.

The Decorative image is one in which the two terms are as incongruent as metaphor will allow, and so constituted and associated that the imaginative values are reduced to a bare minimum. A Sunken figure is one which strongly affects the

imagination without conveying a definite picture. In Violent metaphor, or fustian, imagination is restricted by sensationalism, which reduces to a bare minimum the intellectual elements of the figure, by impetuosity, which blurs the relation of the terms, and by a prevailing conventionality, which hinders a close adjustment of the figure to a particular case. In Radical imagery the trivial term is itself of little imaginative value, but the metaphorical relation powerful. The Intensive metaphor is one of high imaginative value in which clarity and concentration associate the negligible term with pictorial art. The Expansive image is one in which each term opens a wide vista to the imagination and one in which each term is strongly modified by the other.

The Exuberant image is characterized by the impressionistic relation of two broad and imaginatively precious terms. Although no precise explanation of the metaphors of wit and humor is attempted, they have been observed in relation to the preceding categories. The Decorative figure is by classification one which plays on the confines of metaphor, dares its laws and courts defeat. It supplied the toys which beguiled a belated English culture through a half serious and half mischievous childhood. The naive pedantries of this imagery have lengthily fallen into disuse and were a mere passing vogue among courtiers and fashionable men of letters. The principal interest in a study of such imagination is the clear example which it offers of a fantastic eccentricity and a relatively harmless affectation. The form is also

of interest from the part which it played in the early writing of those who later developed the maximum powers of metaphorical language.

The Violent image like the conceit is far from the language of distinguished thought or emotion. It is however a democratic and perennial form, in contrast with that transient and aristocratic gesticulation. Because fustian is a vice which the world must ever guard against, though probably with ill success, The Radical image is like a sharp knife. In the hands of an unpracticed writer it may well do more harm than fine. Yet with such an instrument Donne transforms objects seemingly unable of imaginative value. The Sunken image is subdued in form but powerful and efficient. It is acceptable alike to traditional and romantic taste.

A study of Intensive imagery illustrates the kinship between literature and the excellent arts. Emblems and personifications are its main devices. The emblems of heraldry, of religion, and the traditional traditions in the secular ritual of poetry, figures which after two thousand years are still in the process of perfection at the

hands of the guild of poets, were handled by the Elizabethans with great delicacy and a right reverence. New flowers were woven into the perpetual garland of Meleager. Spenser shows the personification with fineness of emotion, delicacy of color, beauty, dignity and philosophical worth. The Intensive figure is particularly adapted to the expression of ideals thoroughly

established in the mind of the poet and his community. It is rather the simile of adoration than that of contemplation. The latter develops a plastic thought or molds the reader's mind to fresh conceptions. The poetry of adoration confers a official beauty upon the accepted premises of an ideal life.

Expansive imagery is similarly the language of emotion and of contemplation. The earlier tragedy adapted this simile in a somewhat naive but impressive philosophy, while the philosophy of Bacon is buttressed by figures almost as magnificent as those of his chief dramatic contemporaries. Beauty, terror and the sense of command expand the imagination. Above all in the metaphors of reflection we see the wonderful rapidity and comprehension and the revealing function of metaphorical thought. The magic of the poets is nowhere more in evidence than in those figures which make of the sum of recognizable experiences an image that carries us afar into the ways of poetry.

In Exuberant imagery terms are in an essential relation. The more normal distinctions of sophisticated art are often cast aside and two ideas related only, for example, by a common splendor. Exuberant also are the magnificent hyperboles of Marlowe, and those elusive images in which the arts of two or more senses are fused in vague metaphorical associations. Strong religious experiences record several such expressions. The metaphors, arising from music; yet indistinct promise to offer a new glory to poetic consideration. Images that look rather backward than forward are those recurrences of pagan animism in modern

poetry which leave the romanticist in a rapture and the traditionalist cold.

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## CHAPTER-II

### NISSIM EZEKIEL'S POETIC WORLD OF IMAGERY

Nissim Ezekiel is an Indian Jewish poet, actor, playwright, editor and art-critic. He was a foundational figure in postcolonial India's literary history, especially for Indian writing in English.

He was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1983 for his Poetry collection, 'Latter-Day Psalms', by the Sahitya Akademi, India's National Academy of Letters. Ezekiel has been applauded for his subtle, restrained and well-crafted diction, dealing with common and routine themes in a manner that manifests both cognitive profundity, as well as an unsentimental, realistic sensibility, that has been influential on the course of succeeding Indian English poetry. Ezekiel enriched and established Indian English language poetry through his modernist innovations and techniques, which enlarged Indian English literature, moving it beyond purely spiritual and oriental's themes, to include a wider range of concerns and interests, including mundane household events, individual angst and skeptical societal introspection.

The poetic image, in the opinion of C.D. Lewis is more sensuous picture in words, to some degree metaphorical, with an under-note of human emotion in its context, but also charged with and releasing onto the reader a special poetic emotion or passion' (Lewis 22). These word pictures 'illustrate, illuminate and embellish his thought' (Spurgeon 9.) This 'primary pigment' (Kermode 52) of poetry is found in plenty in the British and

American poets also. In the ancient Sanskrit mythologies there are lot of images. In the Greek myths the marriage of *Apollo* and *Theit* is expressed through the relation of the Sun-setting and the sea. There are a number of personified images here. In Kalidas, a cluster of epithets forms the basis of imagery. In *Meghdut* the mountains are the breasts of Mother Earth.

The modern Indian poets writing in English are mainly concerned with the complexities and hard realities in life. Self-introspection is a chief tool in their hands. Spurgeon feels that images reveal a poet's 'innermost likes and dislikes observations and interests, associations of thought, attitudes of mind and beliefs' (Spurgeon, 4) So, K. Naikaptly sums up, "The imagery of a poet is a true index to the quality of his sensibility, and the Indian poet's imagery should bear the hallmark of the individuality of his experience" (Naik 39)

The Indian writers writing in English, specially, in the post-Independence period set up a new convention of imagery. Nissim Ezekiel like A.K. Ramanujan is regarded as a meticulous artist in the field. The journey of Nissim Ezekiel in the domain of the Muse is really a poetic pilgrimage - a search for inner horizon of the poet, which has been adequately expressed in his abstract and concrete images. The poet is always torn between an existential riddle and moving perception resulting in a continuous conflict of soul. He has tried to knit a chord between art and existential enigma. His endeavor is not forever effective; but his sincere efforts are worthy of appreciation by an unbiased reader.

In the massive body of his poetry Nissim Ezekiel remains variable for a long time. The images employed by him show the contradictions of human life. He does not remain an inactive observer of the routine or ordinary human life but takes an emotional dive into life at random

He makes his imagery a classy tool to expose the internal recess of his mental make-up. The Ezekielian images are not merely decorative but extremely decorative and they express more than what one thinks about an image, "An epithet, a metaphor and a simile may create an image or an image may be presented to us in a phrase or a passage on the face of it purely evocative but conveying to our imagination something more than the accurate reflection of an external reality." (Lewis 4) some images in Ezekiel's poetry have overtones:

The darkness has its secrets

Which light does not know. (Ezekiel 223)

The images of Ezekiel are mostly multidimensional and their nature is akin to the view expressed in the following ornate language:

Images are like a series of mirrors set at different angles so that as the theme moves on, it is reflected in a number of different aspects. But they are magic mirrors; they do not merely reflect the theme, they give it life and form; it is their power to make a spirit visible. (Lewis 80)

Several influences shaped the observation of Ezekiel. Hence, the chief Ezekielian images crop up. Ezekiel did not ignore



the principles of the Imagist group flourished in America. A study on the images of Ezekiel made under this research displays that Ezekiel follows the following principle of the Imagist group.

- (a) A literary artist should use the language of ordinary speech and employ the accurate word.
- (b) He should create new rhythms in place of imitating previous rhythms.
- (c) A poet should be given complete autonomy in the choice of subject
- (d) A literary creator should present an image in order to avoid official procedure.
- (e) He should present simple poetry.
- (f) A poet should follow the maxim that concentration is the extremely essence of Poetry.

While dwelling on the diverse aspects of his imagery it is seen that the images in the poetry of Ezekiel are the direct result of the psychological crystallization of his poetic self. The poet can feel his poetic process in a note of confession, "I have written poems in dissimilar ways but I don't rely on any one method. In a particular case I could analyse the creative process whether it was quickly over or very prolonged but I have not decided that in advance. If a poem seems to take long in the writing, I give it all the time it requires unless I lose faith in it. If it comes quickly, I don't hesitate to let it come that way though I may refuse the poem later, when I judge it. What matters is all that I do to keep poetry in the centre of my life reading it, thinking

about it, and occasionally trying to write it. A blend of memory, observation and imagination finally make a poem what it wasn't and so it's unlikely to be successful. (Chindhade 155)

The passage of the images in the Indo-anglian poetry starts with a metaphysical concept and hinges on material plane at the moment. Nissim Ezekiel stands on the way to give an urge to the tradition of the images employed by the other Indo-Anglican poets. He laid more emphasis on the images of awareness as well as the images of perception. He revealed 'The Jekyll and Hyde of functioning of our cognitive machinery' (Alam 8.) Regarding the nature of Nissim Ezekiel's images, Qaiser Zoha Alam in his book, *The Dynamics of Imagery* states that, the images of Nissim Ezekiel are beautiful and actual and excel in familiar symbols like darkness ignorance and light information.

I ride the elephant of thought

A cezanne slung around my neck. (Ezekiel 131)

Anisur Rahaman in his renowned treatise *Form and value in the poetry of Nissim Ezekiel* discussed only three sets of images in Ezekiel's poetry relating to woman, city and nature. But it seems that Anisur's inspection is an incomplete survey of the nature of Ezekiel's images. His images are also based on man, surroundings and his poetic entity or self.

The wide spectrum of his imagery can be classified into three periods with a view to analyzing them suitably. The images spanning the period from 1952 to 1960 (poems including: A Time to Change, Sixty Poems, The Third etc.) dwell on man,

women, created creatures of the world. Doubt and perplexity reign supreme in the domain of images in the period. There are flashes of the autobiographical images during the opening phase of his elegiac career.

The images ranging between the period 1960 and 1980 (including the poems *The Unfinished Man*, *The Exact Name*, *Poems*, *Poems Written In 1974*, *Hymns In Darkness*) are Mumbai-oriented in meticulous and India-oriented in general. Farfetched images like the metaphysical poets are also observed in the poems included in 'Hymns in Darkness'. Suspicion, conflict, interrogation, sensory or extrasensory experiences reign highest in these images.

The images covering the period from 1982 to 1998 (*Latter Day Psalms*, *Poems 1983-1988* etc.) are partly experimental and partly inspiring. The poetic pilgrimage culminates in the Biblical as well as the *Upanishadic* images after a bit of modifications. His symbolic impressionist outlook fosters the representation of hostile forces of positive and negative elements in the absurd world around him. Nissim Ezekiel was intensely aware of the day-to-day episode going around him and fashioned images consequently. Absurdity and contrast are two common tools of decorating images. The following a small number of lines show the insightful power of Ezekiel as a poet and his image-making craft

When kisses called the blood,  
To act again the ritual of morality,

And variously remember. (Ezekiel 107)

Symbols and images are connected with terms and they recur in the poems of Nissim Ezekiel inviting a special conversation on them. Symbol is an object, animate or unconscious, which stands for something else. An image represents objects, actions, feelings, ideas, and thoughts beyond straight experience. A symbol directly represents the thought of the poet in an obvious cut way.

Corrupted by the things  
imagined through the  
winter nights alone

The *flesh* defiled by dreams of flesh. (Ezekiel 3)

The 'flesh' written in italics stands for human beings because a human being is created with flesh and blood. The word 'dreams of flesh' is an image correlating dissimilar thoughts on the flesh. Nissim Ezekiel's images in the first phase of his poetic occupation are primarily functional, suggestive and symbolic. On rare occasion, he uses them for ornamentation but his ornamentation is natural and disciplined. Everyday life, nature, flora and fauna, his proficient life are the chief sources of his images. In 1952 Ezekiel published his first book "A Time to Change". Images are found in plethoric abundance. But the influence of Rilke, Eliot, Auden, Donne, Yeats and Hughes are powerfully felt. Even Ezekiel acknowledged his debt to the literary giants without any uncertainty:

Rilke, Yeats, Lawrence, the English poets of the thirties

and forties (Auden, Spender, MacNeice, Day Lewis), the English movement poets of the fifties, the whole American poetic tradition from Pound and Eliot to Frost and William Carlos Williams etc. Many European poets in translations, Pasternak to Yevtushenko among the Russian ones for example, on the whole my weaker poems are those in which an influence can be traced, except the poems in the Exact Name which are under the influence of the movement but not bad because I feel my own voice is quite clear in them. (Chindhade 157)

What Ezekiel said about his thematic pattern of poetry; the same may be said about his imagery. The sensory imagery of Ezekiel strikes noteworthy impression as that of Donne to the fullest extent. Sensual images abound in 'The Great', 'To a Certain Lady', 'Preferences', 'A Time To Change'. They also abound in 'Two Nights of Love', 'Marriage poem', 'Song for spring', 'Nakedness', 'The Female Image', and 'Episode.' His sensuous images mostly centre on man and woman bond. Though his images are sensual in 'A Time to Change', but they are inspiring. They do not cross the frontier of politeness at any cost

Sucking like a leech upon the flesh,  
Crude acceptance of the need for one  
another, Tasteless encounters in the  
dark, daily Companionship with  
neither love nor hate

By an image are redeemed. (Ezekiel 29)

Sublimity in physical images got wings with the publication of 'Sixty Poems' and 'The Third'. Here the images are brutal and carry the fire of passion. The female images are expressed in terms of anatomical details. Morality or no morality Ezekiel projects woman images with their pornographic details. Larkin's observation that "Life is an affair of being spoilt in one way or another" (Larkin 65) left a everlasting impression on Ezekiel's psyche. So 'Sixty Poems' and 'The Third' project different images of female and the sensual description of the female body and love. The frequent images in these two volumes are 'bone', 'blood', 'thigh', 'marrow', 'lips'.

Ezekiel's presentation of woman as a seductress and man as a defiled creature found expression in *At the Hotel*:

On the dot she came and shook her breasts  
All over us and dropped  
The thin transparent skirt she wore.  
Was not this for which we came? (Ezekiel 112)

The insensitive slash on the fair sex by means of sensory imagery is not the ultimate aim of Ezekiel. Under such vulgar images there is a hint of sublime thought and pure motives.

The first three volumes offer diverse contrast images of woman. The pagan woman is the symbol of humiliation. Perhaps Ezekiel was deeply aware of "the flesh, its insistent urges, its stark ecstasies, it's disturbing with the mind". (Iyengar 657) To the present researcher the image of Ezekielian woman is an

indispensable unit of living world. She is a necessity of the real life. Woman's existential utility is the desired image of woman as projected by Ezekiel. So there is no uncertainty but bold confession:

That women, trees, tables, waves  
and birds, Buildings, stones, steam  
rollers,  
Cats and clocks  
Are here to be enjoyed. (Ezekiel 96)

Ezekiel discovers the viewpoint of life from the stark realities of life. But his philosophy of life does not adhere to a scrupulous philosophy. He has a philosophy of the hour. To him:

The true business of living is seeing, touching, kissing,  
The epic of walking in the street and loving on the bed.  
(Ezekiel 97)

In 'A Time to Change', 'Sixty Poems', 'The Third', Ezekiel presents a number of bio-images. They abound in 'The worm', 'The crows' and 'Squirrel'. Ezekiel is never consistent in bio-images. The created beings are the symbols of sparkling energy. They are harassed hard for their endurance in the hard world. The poet appreciates the worm's 'astounding strength', 'ingrained vitality' and looks suspiciously at man's 'the cunning subtleties'. (Ezekiel 10) In the field of biological enragements Ezekiel had drawn shocking images as seen in the poem 'The crows'. The black bird has been described as 'faints of heaven'. In such images dissociation of thoughts runs messy. The biological

images in Ted Hughes are violent and terrifying whereas Ezekiel's biological images at the initial stage remain inactive and sublime.

The extent of biological images is massive and diverse. They present and project the poet's consciousness in a variable degree. The bio-images in 'Squirrel' show vitality of the animal with several other images. The nimble animal is "an agile flick of grey and brown". (Ezekiel 62) It is a living representation of life, leaping and jumping in the open face of nature:

To sport with leaves and  
Sun, Indifferent to bait  
Fearing fingers of the watching child. (Ezekiel 62)

The crows, squirrel, owl, lizard, bird, insects run and rush in the poetry of Ezekiel. It is very hard to compare the bio-images of Ezekiel with that of Ted Hughes because of their difference in nature. Ezekiel's animals and insects attempt for life but regrettably fall prey to the needs and emotions of human beings. Ezekiel's bio-images do not portray only the agile activities of animals but carry a note of their primal activities:

Which is to fly and then to  
mate, Aroused to build with  
twig and leaf,  
A nest sufficient for the need. (Ezekiel 103)

The poet comes close to the metaphysical poets when he creates far-fetched images like 'worms' to signify the thoughts of philosophers. The bio-images, though fairly less in number,

are seen to be the integral parts in the basic instincts of life.

The facts-the mating and the nest Primeval  
root of all the rest (Ezekiel 104)

Sometimes Ezekiel presents biological images amidst a bunch of ther (idealistic) images shaking the progression of images. Here the biological images lose their entity. 'Birds' and 'Cats' lose their original identity in the following cluster:

Women, trees, tables, waves  
and birds, Buildings, stones,  
steam rollers,  
Cats and clocks  
are her to be enjoyed. (Ezekiel 96)

Kaa Naa Subramanyam says that the Indian mind thinks in terms of symbols and metaphors and he observes that the Indo-Anglican poets have a strange speech to express something in terms of number. The numerical assertions are not completely without value. They serve the purpose of extended exaggeration and an abnormal effect of tang in the poem. They lay dotted in the writings of Nissim Ezekiel, R. Parthasarathy and other contemporary Indian writers. The word 'Three' as a numerical image recurs in his poem. It recurs in 'Episode' with symbolic connotation:

God sent three beggars.  
We went back to our separate bonds. (Ezekiel 99)

These numerical images are sometimes used for the sake of emphasis. Sometimes as an exaggeration Strangely enough

these numerical images are used to indicate uncountable numbers indicated below:

Collected all our years and they were cold,  
Among the voiceless millions of the dead. (Ezekiel 7)

These numerical images are generally not the arithmetic record of any fixed number. They symbolize a good many numbers:

But secretly rejoice,  
When fifty thousand Chinese have been killed. (Ezekiel 8)  
Auden, Larkin, Eliot, Hughes employed such images as are akin to the images employed by Nissim Ezekiel. But they used numerical images infrequently. In Ezekiel such images are used in plenty. In most cases they are used to tone up the imaginative faculty of the poet:

A dozen unborn children  
wait For love to make them live,  
A score of voices are repressed,  
A hundred nightmares press upon his soul. (Ezekiel 16)

It is not accuracy but a poetic truth when the poet reconciles with 'Twenty thousand abysses' (Ezekiel 50)

When the politician boasted  
How he had made two hundred  
speeches, 'No, Tom' his wife declared,  
You made the same speech two  
hundred times. (Ezekiel 89)

In the first phase of his poetic career i.e. from 'A Time To

Change' to 'The Third' the numerical images "three", "thousand" and "millions" recur. Sometimes they stand for symbolic meanings and sometimes they stand for beautification. Apart from these chief images the poet dwells on abstract images in 'Prayer', 'A word for the wind', 'The Great' and autobiographical images in 'Advice', 'Commitment', 'A poem of Dedication'. It is true that the Eliotian hang over is present in his poetry but the poet's own voice is rightly distinct. The same thing is right about his imagery. From the very beginning the poet dwells on the frontier of imagery to widen its prospect. Love is traditionally expressed in terms of red rose but Ezekiel in 'Marriage Poem' uses 'White Rose' to symbolize quieter aspect of wedded love. The image of earth is conventionally round-shaped but Ezekiel compares the earth with a river in 'The Prophet' (Ezekiel 33). His innovativeness in the field of imagery shows the poet's creative skillfulness.

At this stage his images are typically easy though there are flashes of complex touches. The poet repetitively uses the consecrated images of 'Moon', 'Rose' and 'Hills'. Sometimes the poet is gay to combine *abstract* feeling and *sound* with a single stroke of an image, as it would be exposed in the word 'Whisper' of the following poem 'History':

The Image

With its freight of dreams is always near,

Whispers to the air a formless language. (Ezekiel 12)

Sound and sight are packed together in the image of

"hurricane" as the closing lines of the poem 'Episode' show:

And on my lips a hurricane  
of Helen's kisses. (Ezekiel 69)

Relocate of feeling to an object in an unlikely way is a special function of an image and this trait is known as synaesthesia. The image 'sky-sobbing' in 'Episode' (Ezekiel

68) is such an example. Sobbing is generally related with a child or a human being who is sad at heart. But the feeling of sorrow is transferred to the sky. The superiority of a living thing is transferred to a non-living one. The 'wailing wood' is that type of image. Images are also helpful to open up a new prospect in the field of grammar. Any parts of speech have magnificent potentiality to form an image. Similarly an image conveys the sense of any parts of speech or transfers the power of any parts of speech to other parts of speech. Verbs are frequently used metaphorically and accordingly they are regarded as image-making verbs. These image-makers have great connotative power:

To suck life from life leaving  
you and me Corrupted. b(Ezekiel 7)

At the first stage of development Ezekiel not only uses images in bulky quantity but also traces the growth and origin of images:

I have seen the mask  
And the secret behind the mask  
I have felt the mystery of the image

being born, Establishing it's dim  
but definite Identity. (Ezekiel 106)

Ezekiel makes a logical study on images in 'What frightens me', 'The Female image', 'Sonnet'. His contemporaries like Kamala Das, R. Parthasarathy, and A. K. Ramanujan remain surprisingly reticent in this regard. But Ezekiel is striving 'to shape one's inner image silently' (Ezekiel 100) and sets his goal at 'groupings of the inner light' (Ezekiel 97). In the poem 'Episode' (Ezekiel 98), the poet creates an impression of 'romantic restfulness' and at the same time presents whining howling beggars' who represents the unromantic form of life. Thus, dualistic approach and opposite divergence are found in the corpus of the poet's verse present. The image pageantry of Ezekiel is almost like a multi-storied pyramid. The further it gets stripped off; the superior would be the thematic depth of his image. The Ezekielian images at their childhood bring to mind graphic pictures of human life. Ezekiel invited the symbolic tradition of Mallarme, Valery, Lafarge and the Imagist tradition of Eliot, Pound. The texture of his imagery automatically gets hard. Ezekiel expresses the same idea with a symbol-cum-image oriented limerick:

The *spider* does not rest,  
Until the *web* is finished. (Ezekiel 17)

At the preliminary stage of his poetic development, Ezekiel lays importance on the sens organ to register the images. He paints objects characteristically with visual imagery and it is fundamental to Ezekiel's mode of communication. Both

Wordsworth and Shelley delineate Skylark with influential imagery. Shelley's 'Skylark' appears as a visual object and disappears:

Higher still and higher  
From the earth thou  
springest Like a cloud of  
fire;  
The blue deep thou wingest,  
And singing still dost soar and soaring ever singest

Even Keats studies the visual imagery with deep rational power and visionary outlook. Season of mist is such a visual image which is further enriched in:

Halfreap'd furrow sound sleep  
Drows'd with the fume of poppies. (Ezekiel 4)

Visual images in Ezekiel in the first stage do not go beyond the horizon of sense appeal. 'Voice-less millions' (Ezekiel 7), 'warlike faces' (Ezekiel 7), 'marshes- drained', 'wine-dark sea' (Ezekiel 21), 'funeral bird' (Ezekiel 41), 'Samson, blind' (Ezekiel 73) are copied from the rocky realities of modern age. Ezekiel uses colour to create visual images. In the tradition of Post-Independence poetry he is a master artist in the said field. This type of visual image is also found in Shakespeare. For example Pious Desdemona is a symbol of transparency and chastity:

Nor scare that whiter skin of her that snow,  
And smooth as monumental alabaster. (Ezekiel 52)

Ezekiel's colour imagery is more intellectualized than the

ordinary typical imagery:

An agile flick of grey and brown

And he is gone, like a thought. (Ezekiel 62)

Most of the Romantic poets prefer aural images. In Thomas Gray and P.B. Shelley auditory images are found in plenty. Gray records:

The curfew tolls the knell of parting

day The lowing hard wind slowly

over the lea. The cock's shrill clarion

or the echoing horn.

Likewise Ezekiel's auditory images are also numerous, 'creaking mud', (Ezekiel 63) 'dropping ranches' (Ezekiel 63), 'sky sobbing' (Ezekiel 68), "wailing wood" (Ezekiel 73), 'sunlight sprouting greenly' (Ezekiel 57).

These are partly traditional but mostly pioneer images. Like Donne, Ezekiel hardly obeys the theory of resemblance in the formation of auditory images. Ezekiel is mainly a sensuous poet. So he has to depend, to a large extent, on tactual imagery. He delineates Cameo-like pictures through such imagery:

The yellow blondes declare

Upon the screen, and even stroked my hair.

But hates me now because I did not kiss. (Ezekiel II)

The poet writes that a good poet waits for words. But it seems that Ezekiel waits for actual imagery, which is so invasive in the gamut of his poetry.

From the functional point of view, energy is one of the

features of a fine image. Ezekiel employs dynamic images frequently. Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao have already enriched Indo-Anglian fiction with such imagery. Mostly these energetic images combine different feelings of living beings. Perhaps Ezekiel intends to "find in motion the very essence of life" (Spurgeon 56). 'Movements of heart' (Ezekiel II), 'Weaving Shuttles' (Ezekiel 15), 'Winding wind' (Ezekiel 27), 'Putting Mist' (Ezekiel 57), 'Sleepy waters' (Ezekiel 69), 'fabric slyly plopping' (Ezekiel 98) not only encompass human feelings but also register the vast vista of nature. Ezekiel highlights the feeling of Wordsworth through such images as Wordsworth feels:

A motion and a spirit that impels

All thinking things, all objects of

all thought And rolls through all things. Ezekiel was at his best in the second phase of his poetic career both in terms of subject issue and imagery. The images of 'The Unfinished Man' and 'The Exact Name' are more full-grown and varied than the images of the earlier phase. Ezekiel is seen to utilize the Indian culture, inheritance, Indian milieu and exploit the same with a view to presenting them in their artistic and literary creation. The Eliotian obsession is perceptibly seen in the poems of Ezekiel in this period. Ezekiel's projection 'of Bombay as a fallen city, its stark certainty, spiritual bankruptcy is akin to be images of life presented by Eliot in 'The Cantons' and Larkin in the poem 'The Building'. In the second phase of his poetic career, Ezekiel excels in Indo- images, sex images, conceptual images and



philosophical images. Besides, there are organic, religious and autobiographical images in

Ezekiel's poetry. The most dominating image of the era is Indo-images. Ezekiel presents the sullen and speedily changing face of India by means of a number of imagery. The post-independence India is the very pedestal on which he knits the textile of his images. Ezekiel candidly confessed:

I am conscious of my very special situation in relation to India, as a poet, but as a person and citizen I identify myself completely with the country. Its politics, social life, civic problems, education, economic difficulties, cultural dilemmas are all part of my daily life. I would like that identification to be fully expressed in my poetry but it is perhaps only partially so. (Chindhade 156)

The poet wants to present India through Bombay and its associated metropolitan images. Ezekiel relies on whatever is offered by the inspection of common life and the business of daily survival. The "barbaric city" does not symbolise 'Bombay' only. It also presents the picture of city life in India which is full of 'sound and fury signifying nothing'

Ezekiel depicts the gloomy picture of his native city: Barbaric city sick with slums,  
Deprived of seasons, blessed with rains,  
Its hawkers, beggars,  
iron-lunged, Processions led  
by frantic drums, A million

purgatorial lanes,

And child like masses, many-tongued,  
Whose wages are in words and crumbs. (Ezekiel 119)

K.D. Verma thinks that Ezekiel's 'Barbaric city' shows 'an organized form of anarchy where the human will degenerates and finally succumbs to the collective will as a matter of social and psychological necessity'. (Verma 233) Verma's view seems to be on the right pathway. Nissim was deeply concerned with the human difficulty. His sensibility was like that of Spender:

The slums have their poetry, which makes people weep for them when they are bombed, factory yards, suburban. building estates and all dwelling places have associations capable of producing feelings of tenderness and joy and regret (Spender 81)

He looks at the poverty-stricken and problem-ridden modern India: Here among the beggars,

Hawkers, pavement sleepers, Hutment dwellers, slums,  
Dead souls of men and gods, Burnt out mother, frightened Virgins,  
wasted child.

And tortured animals, All in noisy silence  
Suffering the place and time. ( Ezekiel 131)

Indication of the peripheral reality of 'the beggar' is poverty; that of 'pavement sleepers' poverty-ridden people sleeping on footpath; 'frightened virgins' panic-stricken girls for preserving chastity; that of 'wasted child' stands for 'fondling'. These symbols are from an image of poverty-ridden India in the

post-Independence period.

The poet unexpectedly cuts the string of images when he presents an image through a clause 'A Cezanne slung around my neck' (Ezekiel 131). The poet suddenly

alienates his self from the Indian ethos and hinges on the western art figure. So the images of 'elephant' and 'Cezanne' stand inconsistent. The harmony of images is not maintained here. The 'bosom-semi bare' (Ezekiel 132) stands for the lightly dressed modern Indian women and 'men in grey or black' symbolises neatly dressed Indian men on the occasion of festival. The majestic torture on the Indians by the white boss is still present and has been adequately recorded in a number of images:

The struggle had been hard,  
Certainly the blouse Would not be used again.  
But with true British courtesy He lent her a safety pin  
Before she took the elevator down. (Ezekiel 134)

The Indo-images in the second phase of his poetic career are contemptuous. They are leaning criticism of social norms. No such hurtful criticism of social manners is found in the former images. Ezekiel prefers to compose poem in a mode of conflict and distinction. Perhaps he was aware of the view of William Empson, "A poet must always be concerned with some difference of opinion or habit between different parts of his community, different social classes, and ways of life or modes of thought that he must be several sorts of man at once and

reconcile his own person" (Empson 112)

The uncritical India is portrayed properly in the images of 'powder, mixture, herb and hybrid'; the fatalistic Indian society is portrayed in 'Your next birth', 'The sum of evil', 'buzzed the name of God', the social panorama of India has been projected in the images of 'swarms of flies', 'giant scorpion shadow', 'the holy man perform his rites'. The poem also records the conventional image of an Indian mother with her unique fondness. Ezekiel does not excel in metropolitan images but he epitomises 'rural India' by means of his unique Indo-images: 'diabolic tail', 'sun-baked wall', "groaning on the mat", 'the sum of good' etc. The netting of images does not suffer from disharmony. The scorpion-stung mother glorifies the image of woman, which has been repeatedly tarnished by Ezekiel. Ezekiel is guided by an interior urge to present the rural and urban images of India. In these images there are collocation clashes. These collocation clashes in terms of images portray the post-Independence Indian circumstances. Thus Ezekiel fulfills his description because:

India is simply my environment A man can do something for and in his environment by being fully what he is, by not withdrawing from it I have not withdrawn from India. (Shahane & Sivaramkrishna 88)

The post-colonial Indian milieu as well as traditional India gets complete projection in:

Three times the crow has cawed At the window.....

Filling the room with voice and presence.

Three times I got the message,

To cope with the visitor. (Ezekiel 137)

The cawing of a crow strongly suggests the Indian concept that a visitor is likely to visit home. The images as reflected here give this piece of poetic liveliness. The thought is at once local and entire. The Indian traditional faith is subtly blended with the rich imagery and the theme of the poem gets locked in the domain of numerical images. Such blending of theme and images is one of the very vital features of the structural outline of Nissim Ezekiel's images. Thus the Indo-images in 'The visitor' and 'Night of the scorpion' present credulous and traditional ethos of India.

Ezekielian sex imagery abounds in 'The Unfinished Man', 'The Exact Name' and 'Poems Written In 1974'. Ezekiel maintains dualistic approach even while going to demarcate the image of woman by means of his amorous images. These amorous images, structurally speaking, are kinetic also. The scope of sex-imagery in the poetic domain of Ezekiel is actually vast and it carries the faint echo of Philip Larkin's voice that "life is an affair of being spoilt in any way or another." (Larkin 65)

Prof Surya Nath Pandey in his scholarly paper "An Approach to Nissim Ezekiel's poetry" has the following study, 'Ezekiel's picture of woman as a seductress, a cheat and a defiled being has invited adverse criticism from the advocates of feminism. In quite a few poems he presents woman as an object of lust precipitately incapable of anything serious and significant

From maidservants and lowly woman as in 'Ganga' and 'The Truth About Dhanya' to those of high societies as in 'Love sonnet' he harps exclusively on the weak point of the fair sex. He presents them as mean, selfish and unrelenting for their misdeeds and their sexual action with male Partners has received an erotic and excessively pornographic treatment in Ezekiel's poetry.... There are Poems like "Description" which hinge on a single image of hair and achieve thematic excellence in Ezekiel's hands'. (Pandey 78) The sex- images in 'Love Sonnet', 'Marriage', 'A Woman Observed' and 'Three Women' support the view of the scholar. This paper aims at showing that the image of woman revealed through images is not mono-centric but polycentric. This polycentric image of woman is in general neglected. Woman is not always a 'defiled' being. Ezekielian images show realistic image of woman-either highly charged idolising or biased debasement of the pale sex. Sometimes the sex images transcend the boundary of visual appeal. It is a unique innovation of Nissim Ezekiel-a step towards widening the horizon of the dynamics of imagery. 'Swelling her erotic lines' (Ezekiel 140) is such an image. Apart from being inventive sex imagery, it is also a kinetic image.

In Nissim Ezekiel's sex images organic images are found in a lot. They give vitality and living spirit to such passionate images. The images in the first stage were mainly sensuous but at the second stage they are mostly complex. At this stage the sex-images present a search for the root of life, 'the seed and source' (Ezekiel 140) and 'sensual movement bursting through

the dress' (Ezekiel 140). Far-fetched sex- images are found also in this period: 'Ebb-flow of sex' (Ezekiel 138), 'storms of love' (Ezekiel 142).

Ezekiel employs heavily sex images as core-images. His sex images are so dominant that they cast their shadow over other images. Other images lay recessive in the insecurity of sex images. Man is equally responsible for the debasement of woman; man seems to be more submerged in the ocean of evils in this observe. Symmetrical the images in Nissim Ezekiel in general and the sex-images in particular stand completely interlinked. Barring a few poems this feature is found all invasive in the Ezekielian images. Different feelings, passions of heart get appropriate expression by means of several images. In the Poem 'Motives' the feelings of sight and touch (tactical) are mightily combined. Here stands the image while combining two feelings, the feeling of vision as well as touch (visionary and tactile imagery:

My motives are sexual,  
To bed with you your skin is white But black or grey  
Would do just as well. (Ezekiel 154)

A Poet who projects images from perception is obviously a poet with philosophical outlook. C.E.M. Joad and others liberal Ezekiel's mental horizon at Birbeck College where he studied philosophy. It is striking to note that the philosophical images pervade the poetry of Nissim Ezekiel. The poet presents individual philosophy as well as worldwide philosophy through such images. Not so prominent in 'A Time to Change', 'Sixty

Poems', the philosophical images are highly evocative in 'The Unfinished Man' and 'The Exact Name'. The Words may be repetitive but they convey philosophical ideas-'wrong place', 'wrong sense' as reflected in 'The Poet Contemplates his in action.' (Ezekiel 173)

The images echoing the philosophy of the poet show that the philosophy of Nissim Ezekiel is in a state of fluctuation and it has kaleidoscopic changes. Rabindranath Tagore presents theology in his images. Wordsworth preaches pantheism with his images; Shelley knocks at the frontier of injustice and social brutality. Therefore while the traditional poets like Wordsworth, Shelly, even Indian poet Rabindranath present images in a centripetal way to convey a single philosophy, Nissim Ezekiel, being a neo-mode mist poet, presents the images in a centrifugal way to convey his changing philosophy like a fickle-minded artist. The poet seems to be under the influence of such conception that no single philosophy is the decisive expression of life. That is why the poet's philosophical images are so diverse and multidimensional. They pick up the flux of life and register them in his poems Life changes; poetry changes and the images too.

There are philosophical images as 'Home is where we have to earn our grace' in 'Enterprise(Ezekiel 117), 'primal fall', 'Mark of Cain' in 'Marriage' (Ezekiel 124) 'The mills of God', 'The Sad eye of Time', 'final formula of light', in 'Philosophy' (Ezekiel 129), "The sad illusion of perpetual light" in 'Perspective' (Ezekiel 134) "The dead is buried in his mind" in 'Paradise Flycatcher' (Ezekiel

40). 'Transcending Consciousness falling like rain' in 'the Theater' (Ezekiel 152), 'Stripped off a hundred Veils in 'Theological'(Ezekiel 156).

These philosophical images hinge on the riddle of existence; 'Practical wisdom of the world, the ways of God; 'his business of the daily life:' In some cases the Ezekielian philosophical images centre on the traditional religious tenets. The title of the poem "Theological" stands for philosophical image and a number of images are in the form of ambiguity, dogma, God's existence and the Gita-philosophy:

Your truth Is too momentous for  
man And not always usefull have  
stripped off a hundred veils, why  
are you so elusive (Ezekiel 156)

Standing face to face on the corridor of this mysterious world the poet feels delighted to bask in the rays of this long-drawn riddle of life. The images nicely present the conflicting essentials. The confusing condition of life is unveiled through the philosophical images:

Of doctrine and dogma Of pure sensibility  
consuming The world with tire  
And leaving it ashes.  
Of categories and labels  
of the divisible and the indivisible (Ezekiel 157)

The poem 'Philosophy' is full of philosophical images and mostly phrases carry them. 'Not by planning', 'but by flow', 'mills

of God' suggest that human beings are puppets at the hands of God. All trial in this world is just like a passing phase:

A million stars are blotted out ...  
Historic passion as a blink... the sad eye of Time.

(CP: 129) Everything slowly runs at the target:

As darkest myths meander through the pain  
towards a final formula of light. (Ezekiel 129)

The closing quatrain suggests the sacrifice of small abstract ideas for the sake of greater ones with the help of a few discriminating image-making clauses:

Common things become an argument  
against the nakedness That dies of cold to  
find the truth it brings (Ezekiel 129)

The philosophical images, sometimes, associated with other images, form a sort of association. At the initial stage of 'Enterprise', there are a number of imaginative images but the poem is finished with the philosophical image:

When, finally, we reached the place,  
We hardly knew why we were there.  
The trip had darkened every face, Our  
deeds were neither great nor rare  
Home is where we have to earn our grace. (Ezekiel 118)

In the earlier segment Ezekiel presents physical and platonic aspects of love with the help of such images as 'fantastic dreams', 'whisper love', 'regions far beyond our eyes', 'Beauty of a distant world'. (Ezekiel 83)

The same thought is echoed in 'platonic', 'drab exchange of tongues', 'repeating parables of hell' and 'perennial dawn on your face'. (Ezekiel 145) Technically speaking the images in the middle period is more complex. There are recurring images in the beginning like 'basement room', 'marrow' having symbolic connotation. The image of Bombay is expressed with the help of 'Barbaric city' in *morning walk* (Ezekiel 119) and 'the barren city' in 'Notes' (Ezekiel 172) without any change of meaning. Both the images present the bleak picture of Bombay. Ezekiel widens the horizon of images in the middle period. Accordingly "our love has formed like dew on summer nights" (Ezekiel 120).

The comparison of 'love' with 'dew' is not conventional. Though unconventional the image is not beyond the scope of perception. Ezekielian images in the middle period are subtler than the images of his earlier phase. The poet tries to assimilate multiple feelings in contrasting images. "Saints their martyrdom and press the accelerator" is such an example. (Ezekiel 121)

The images scattering over two periods show the journey of the poetic self of Ezekiel. So the autobiographical element recurs frequently. A.K. Ramanujam cannot forget to present his life in India in 'The Striders'. 'Relations'. R. Parthasarau'y shares his experiences in 'Home Coming'. Only among the contemporary Indo-Anglian Poets, Arun Kolatkar does not beautify his poems with autobiographical images. The tradition of employing autobiographical image was present among the Indian writers in English in the pre-Independence period and it exists in the

post-independence period. Ezekiel contributes to the tradition only. In this context he is a convention bound performer.

The Ezekielian images stand on diverse poles and this polarization of his images is partly responsible for his deracinated feeling and the pressure of the western writers like Rilke, Auden, Yeats and Eliot on him. During the early phase of his poetic career Ezekiel was under the influence of the impressionist cult and so the Eliotian hangover is all pervasive. His images, to a definite amount, are mimetic-veiled mimetic. He grapples with the atmosphere around him and feels intensely for the quantification and objectification of life.

I am corrupted by the world, continually Reduced  
to something less than human by the crowd (Ezekiel 7)

The character looks at India through scattered and disturbing images - 'the beggars', 'Hawkers', 'Pavement sleepers', 'Hutment dwellers' and 'Frightened virgins' The western art form alienates him from the cultural ethos and public milie of India. Here his images stand on contrast and juxtaposition. It seems that Nissim Ezekiel suffers from the anxiety of influence. Though he categorically refuses the romantic images of Sarojini Naidu and Tagore, their influence is discernable in his poem. *Nissim* categorically refuses any influence of Sarojini Naidu on him. Rather he satirises her aesthetic imagery. Perhaps what American critic Harold Bloom has to say about 'anxiety of influence' is true in the present context. Nissim is Bloom's 'belated poet' who wants to castrate Sarojini Naidu 'the precursor poet'

to get an entry into the fictitious arena of Indo-Anglian poets. As the days roll Ezekiel's sensitive power becomes keener. He registers his images accordingly. That's why in the finishing part of his poetic career the imagery of Nissim Ezekiel hinges on extra-sensory Perception.

Pure sensibility  
consuming The world  
with fire  
and leaving it ashes. (Ezekiel 57)

Ezekiel experiments with his image and his individuality is powerfully projected in his imagery. Adil Jussawalla makes a thoughtful analysis on the images of Parthasarathy, "The power of his poetry lies almost entirely in its visual juxtapositions and the startling image. His lines don't sing. He cultivates the intentionally common style, an undertone of rhythm itself so at their best, his Poems become memorable individual images themselves". (Jussawalla 83)

The comment is equally appropriate for the images of Nissim Ezekiel. On a comparative study of the Ezekielian images in the phases it is observed that her images are partly original and partly unoriginal. The images of unit I, unit II, unit III and unit IV in 'Hymns in Darkness' are fashioned in the model of T.S. Eliot's 'East Coker'. Besides, unit no. XVI suggests that the influence of "Rock choruses" and 'Four Quarters' was deep on it. Philip Larkin uses the image of 'hired box' to suggest death; 'fusty bed' to suggest isolation and 'frigid wind' to denote

barrenness. There lurks a temperamental similarity between Larkin and Ezekiel in the field of suggestive imagery.

Larkin hinges on social surrounding, general observation and humdrum affairs of life. He uses images sparingly but in most cases they are essential. Similarly Ezekiel registers his milieu and the changing world around him. He fashions his images with contemporary outlook. Under the images lie deep, multidimensional strings:

Scattered with my  
kisses All over the  
barren city The pity  
of dissipation  
Sprouts in my moods. (Ezekiel 173)

The Indo- Anglian writers present sentiment through the movement of body. The Indo- Anglian novelists heavily employed such images showing bodily association as in "The vast sheet of water, which swished like a snake and spilled the white foam of its poison" (Narayan 276) and 'She picked up the cat and waltzed him round the room'. (Malgonkar 124) Ezekiel gives touches on such motor images. He made them flexible and compresses different view in such imagery:

Of transparent existence  
Which has its own  
Absolute and innocent movement  
Like the flight of a migrating bird. (Ezekiel 151)  
In this stage the poet draws similarity between different

dissimilar objects, 'Chestnut nut Thoughts' (Ezekiel 144), 'Storms of love' (Ezekiel 142), 'Chestnut wings' (Ezekiel 140), 'Craned like a nagging woman' (Ezekiel 137) and 'an image fell/like silver coin upon the floor'. These are, no doubt, startling images but 'his images and cadences at first puzzle the reader and suppose meaning only gradually' (Verghese 69). Compared to the images used in the first phase, images in the second phase are deeply connotative and abstract. A few images like 'angelic wings', (Ezekiel 136) 'restless flight' (Ezekiel 135) recur but with dissimilar connotations. Pre-modified images are also discerned- 'actor- bridegroom' (Ezekiel 137), 'Sleep-walking' (Ezekiel 137), 'middle-aged ... rigmarole' (Ezekiel 153) and 'beggars ... iron lunged' (Ezekiel 119).

Lewis says, "An image may be accessible to us in a phrase or passage on the face of it purely descriptive but conveying to our imagination something more than the accurate reflection of an external reality" (Lewis 18). As a perfect imagist Ezekiel grows mature, as the quatrain is not his admission but the meta-text of imagery:

God grant me certainty In kinship  
with the sky, Air, earth, fire, sea-  
And the fresh Inward eye.  
(Ezekiel 122) The images he  
cannot find  
Haunt his unrevealed sub consciousness,  
A plain language lets him down. ( Ezekiel 233)

It is evidently very hard to present the images of Ezekiel in the third stage consisting of 'Hymns in Darkness', 'Latter-Day Psalms' and 'Poems.' Though Ramanujan's imagery shows a sort of centripetal growth in the higher stages, the Ezekielian images show a multi-forked linear growth. At this stage his image hinges on religious conviction, philosophy, sex, Indian milieu, autobiography and God.

J. Middleton Murray observes that the exceptionality of imagery does not lie in the use, however, beautiful and revealing, of isolated images but in the harmonious total impression produced by a sequence of consistent images. Ezekiel is sometimes consistent in his approach to 'subtly related images' and sometimes he is not. Regarding his images of sex, city, woman, nature, basement room he is consistent. Otherwise he is to some extent bohemian - a flux of change is a remarkable feature in terms of the structural harmony of a poem.

The opening poem 'Subject to Change' is studded with a number of figures of speech, simile and metaphor. There are theoretical images like: 'Shore of memory', 'fevers of a future night', 'like nightmare graves' (Ezekiel 177).

While going to clarify the concluding quatrain of the poem a researcher writes that Ezekiel appears to be searching for the objects and their exact description. To a common reader the last line may appear to be hyperbolic but it is definitely a very apt description of the geography of Bombay which is so obviously surrounded by the sea water.



The poet's journey was down the memory lane. 'I was on the move, foresaw the fury of my inner law', 'a new lace' (Ezekiel 177) show that the poet is not fretful with the geography of Bombay. The falling and rising waves symbolise two phases of life- life visible, life invisible. The deep connotative meaning is further developed with: 'The sky is lesser than this open eye'. (Ezekiel 177) The phase of sensory awareness is over and the phases of 'Hymns in Darkness' and 'Latter Day Psalms' begin. At this higher stage of Ezekielian image, the inspection of Middleton Murray is very significant. He feels that all metaphor and simile can be described in the form of organization by which the human mind explores the universe of reality and charts the non-measurable world of these indefinite qualities. Many are capable of direct comfortable apprehension while only a faculty of sensuous anxiety can grasp other. It is of the qualities of the visible, audible, tangible world. It is also of the spiritual qualities of the more ambiguous world of human character. The images denote a number of meanings. Here are a few multidimensional images in India:

Unsuitable for song as well as  
sense The island flowers into  
slums

And sky scrapers, reflecting

Precisely the growth of my mind. (Ezekiel 182)

The barren image of Mumbai and the flowering of the poetic self are contrasted here. The "slums and sky-scrapers"

stands for the spiritual ruin of Mumbai life. The image-making verb "flowering" defines the protagonist's virtues like blossom and at the same time it is a delicate image of poetic growth. A cluster of images is let loose here and all of them don't have the same association. They hang in the poem like multi-coloured flowers in a garland. The images project "The Island" in different directions. This is also present in later poems.

Ezekiel is not a religious poet in the traditional term but religion leaves a deep pressure on the mind of the poet. His religious attitude is formed on the basis of Judaic power, Biblical allusions, predominating Hindu culture and holy rites admits:

I am not a religious or a moral person in the predictable sense. Yet I have always felt myself religious and moral in some sense. I always veer the Hindu view of life which I consider mystically, religiously and metaphorically right though I do not accept its ethics and social code. ( Ezekiel 125)

Ezekiel's spiritual images do not represent God as per conventional Hindu God. Actually Ezekiel's God has a much more common, non-aristocratic denomination to Him in His attendance as a kill-all, cure-all pop God, a urban Mumbai God, an metropolitan modern without hang-ups about origin. He may be addressed with rational familiarity. Ezekiel's deity is a humanized divinity. The dominating Ezekielian, sacred images at this stage are found in 'Guru', 'Sai Baba', 'Gita Classes' and 'Meditation'. They portray the post-independence socio-religious life of the Indians:

Time is ripe for Sai Baba.

Time is ripe for

Muktananda.

Let father go to Rajneesh

Ashram. Let mother go to Gita

classes.

What we need is

medication. Need to

find our root, Sir.

All of us are sick, Sir. (Ezekiel 243)

The images are guru-oriented here. Rajneesh typifies a modern cult of religion; so also Sai Baba and Muktananda. Formal images of sacred associations are exposed with the help of the 'Gita classes'. Dismal aspects of Guru-cult are reflected in the lacerating lines of the poem 'Guru' (Ezekiel 192). 'The Saint' directly asserts the image of purity, theology. But the poet jostles with the common concept as he places the contrasting image - 'life of sin' (Ezekiel 191). So this dualistic nature of image has been pleasingly created by the poet. This notion has been, later on, extended by the images, which are not religious at all. The religious images of 'the life of sin' have been set up with the image of "dropping our follies like old cloths or creeds" (Ezekiel 191). So Nissim Ezekiel like an iconoclast breaks with the traditional concept of images and makes newer ones. He presents a eagerly receptive inventory to pick up the pragmatic episodes from the universal drama of life.

The sages are spiritually outdated but materially conscious. The money- consuming sages have bidden farewell to the conventional concept of God-worship or devotion to mysticism. Standing on the ivory tower of imagination, the poet does not knit his images but of course he knits them with the help of realistic fibre, with the growth and development of Ezekiel's poetic vocation; his images are complex both thematically and structurally. The web of Nissim Ezekiel's images is definitely complex- whatever may be the type of image. His images are poly-chromatically contrasted with passionate origins and ordinary problems. All the religious images are not cynical. Some of the images are candid images reflecting Indian attitude:

The vices I've always

had the virtues I've

never had From this

human way of life. Who

can rescue man

If not his maker? (Ezekiel 212)

The sacred images at the initial stage remain disposed to material level. On the advanced stage they become finer and more. They tend to be specific rather than being general. There is plethora of images in 'Latter Day psalms', 'Kundalini's', 'Immature self', 'Nada' (Dhani), 'Meditation' (Dhana), 'Mouna' (Silence) are some of the religious images scattered in the various poems of 'Latter Day psalms'. Really speaking these images are transcendental by nature. Such images occupy a large

part in the vast domain of Ezekiel's religious images:

And you grasp your  
self What you have  
eaten.

Is merely unripe fruit. So, now, learn to fast, Do without,  
be absent, *Keep* the eyes closed. *Keep* the mind steady What you  
will see

You will also understand. (Ezekiel 229)

All the means and ways noted above are the means of  
self-realisation. An extrasensory awareness is essential to  
perceive these images fully. The 'Unripe fruit' 'eyes closed',  
'mind steady' is the constituent parts of Ezekiel's  
transcendentalism in the field of images.

As the poet dwells on further with religious images, he  
directly refers to the religious terms and phrases, which are  
typically Hindu religious ideology and evoke images accordingly.  
The poem 'Healers' highlights the same in a typical way. Here  
the images are more overt:

Know your *mantra*,  
meditate Release your  
*kundalini*,  
Get your *Shakti*  
awaking, And float  
with the spirit

to your destination. (Ezekiel 232)

The doctrine of the Vedas and the Upanishads has been

expressed in the images of 'mantra'; 'kundalini' and 'shakti'. India  
is a land of a variety of religions and cultures. The poet has  
presented a number of images of Jewish origin scattered all  
through in 'Background, Casually', 'Jewish wedding in Bombay'.  
The words 'Synagogue', 'Mosaic Law', 'The Sabbath' are the direct  
reflections of a Jew in an over whelming non-Jewish environment.  
In India diverse religious sects are deeply religious. There is  
religious tension in the post-Independence India: I went to  
Roman Catholic School,

A mugging\_ Jew among the  
wolves, A Muslim sportsman  
boxed my ears. I grew in  
terror of the strong  
But under nourished Hindu lads,  
One noisy day I used a knife. (Ezekiel 179)

The religious images presented earlier are in accord with  
the images in the phase of maturation. They present the diverse  
religious fabric of India and the relationship of different sacred  
sects:

The Roman Catholic Goan boys  
The white washed Anglo-  
Indian boys. The muscle bound  
Islamic boys.

Were earnest in their prayers. (Ezekiel 132)

The art of division in the field of images goes on as usual  
as agreeably shown in 'Cleaving up' (Ezekiel 283) and 'Death of

Hen' (Ezekiel 288). The images 'instrument of fate', 'Prince of Darkness', 'God of inscrutable purposes' pave the way for doom for the innocent creatures. The dismal picture of life is further elaborate in the images of a lifeless lizard. But this is not the end of all. The poet presents a bright aspect of life amidst ruins. These dead creatures herald good news for a vulture. The picture of cheerfulness is found later on. The image 'funeral magic' suggests so:

Outside crows, pigeons,  
sparrows, And a single  
unexpected vulture

Provide the *funeral music*. (Ezekiel 284)

This type of departure of imagery gives an unequal hint to the thematic affair of a poem. In 'Death of Hen' (Ezekiel 288) there is a depressing picture of a hen, which is unfortunately run over by a passing car. In the second stage the image of joy comes out in a pleasant way. The visionary images are very dominant and explicit here:

A lot of crows  
Came upon the corpse.  
And cawed to celebrate the event

Chance had offered them an early gift (Ezekiel 288)

The crows, squirrel, owl, birds, flowers, insects run and rush in the poetry of Nissim Ezekiel. Ezekiel's bio-images are not vicious like the bio-images of Ted Hughes. His animals and insects struggle for life but unhappily fall victim to the wants

and sentiment of human beings. Ezekiel presents plain, simple and direct images of normal plants and wildlife. The tree-imagery in Ezekiel though metaphysical is highly fortified. It is not exposed like Ramanujan:

The root is the mouth  
Of the tree: pour water  
there At the  
bottom And, look, it  
sprouts green At the top' (Ezekiel 10)

Even in the fifteenth chapter of the *Gita* an upturn Peepul tree stands for a superior awareness. This tree of *Samsar* branches down into the more mediocre forms of survival that operate with the *body-mind-intellect-equipment* in a world of *perception-emotion-thought*. The leaves comprise knowledge that vitalises all physical existence and the secondary roots are the *vasanas* or individual tendencies that entrap man in the world of physical reality". (Chinmayananda 67) Ezekiel ensnares even the creator in the tree-imagery:

God grant you  
trees To live  
among, trees of  
such variety  
and beauty  
that you cannot  
help loving  
yourself

among the trees. (Ezekiel 282)

Ezekiel's tree imagery is not always moral but tastes of erotica also, 'buttocks seen as fruit' (Ezekiel 249) and 'things as tree-trunks' (Ezekiel 249). No higher worship for soul! Ezekiel discovers the brilliance of soul in the debris of senses. The Ezekielian images are reasonable. They are used to express deep perception with the help of a single stroke of an image or a number of images: 'I wax old as a garment as a vesture I am changed'. (Ezekiel 259) The poet is deeply associated by way of the creatures of the world. Here are the wonderful knocks of imagery:

I am like a pelican of the  
wilderness, like an owl of  
the desert,  
like a sparrow alone  
Upon the house top. (Ezekiel 259)

At this point he has used a number of far-fetched images like John Donne, 'Wine of astonishment' (Ezekiel 256) and 'the bread of sorrow' (Ezekiel 268). The evocative power of Ezekielian images is shown in 'Two Sonnets', 'Furies', and 'Nudes 1978'. Here the images are accessible in a confessional behaviour. Abstract and concrete images run similar though most of them have some jostling sentiment:

I love  
Your body too,  
though you're

hardly

My cup of tea. (Ezekiel 247)

The poet was realistically at home in decorating landscape images. The American poet Walt Whitman presents mostly Eastern images and spiritualist symbols. He is also a perfect artist in scenery images. Like Whitman, Ezekiel presents:

Hills, valley s, swelling river  
-banks, All those *landscape images*;  
Praise of breasts and buttocks  
Seen as fruit, thighs as tree- trunks;  
Flower, moon, fire,  
bird of desire, fish of sex Remotely tell a small  
Fragmented part of the story. (Ezekiel 249)

The scope of Ezekielian images is mainly intricate. That's why besides landscape images aesthetic and common images are seen here. Technically speaking these images are remarkable for the short precision. The images in 'Monkey Show' register the ordinary people's attitude to the performer of a monkey show. Similarly" The 'Truth about The Floods' registers the present circumstances of India with flood- stricken rural men and corrupted officials. Even the students do not render any service to the flood fatalities. Here the images serve the principle of bitter satire:

I arrived at Arad  
But the village wouldn't talk to me  
till I told them *I wasn't a government official*. (Ezekiel 187)

Ezekiel uses colour images but sparingly. 'On Bellasis Road' (Ezekiel 188-89) is a wonderful creation in this regard. Here biased images, 'purple sari', 'yellow blouse', 'green bangles', 'orange flowers' form a total image of a woman. The image of a woman is the vital image and the associating images spin round it and the total harmony of the images is also delightfully regular.

At first the woman-images exist in a concrete form – 'I sense her as a woman I bare as her feet'. (Ezekiel 189) Later on the image develops into an indefinable shape and gets cabined and confined' to the heart of the poet:

I see her image  
now As through a  
telescope, Without  
a single Desperate moral  
To keep it in focus,  
Remote and close-up. (Ezekiel 189)

Such type of metamorphosis (abstract to concrete or vice-versa) is a tremendous feature in the dynamics of Ezekielian images. In the domain of Indo- anglian imagery Ezekiel has brought wonderful tempo and vigour. There are a number of kinetic images in his poems. They unite different feelings:

An image fell  
Like silver coin upon the floor. (Ezekiel 136)

This type of clear image gets equivalent treatment by Ramanujan. 'Their Hisses' (Snakes), 'a clock work clinking in the silence' (Snakes), 'to croak out a prostitute song' (small scale

reflection on a great scale) are some of the auditory images. Technically speaking Ezekiel adopts the Eliotian method of condensing images. His treatment to sensory sensitivity through images is vast and varied. In a synesthetic imagery, Ezekiel transforms one kind of feeling to another one. 'I listen to the buzzing air' (Ezekiel 231) Here the textile feeling is converted into an acoustic emotion. Ezekiel employs simple colour-images like 'white', 'red', and 'black' and makes them complex by fascinating different feelings 'gleaming white', 'glistening white' and 'bloody red'. Freud has opened up a new landscape in the field of psychology. By imbibing Freudian psychology James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Richardson have enriched the realms of English novel. Similarly by employing psycho-images of Eliot, Ezekiel has made his poetry finer and finer. That's why his poetry abounds in intangible images:

of poetry direct and oblique  
of statement plain and symbolic of doctrine  
and dogma of categories and tables.  
And of that which is beyond  
Of the divisible and the  
indivisible of the many  
And even, yes, of the  
one. ( Ezekiel 157)

There are Ezekielian images which reoccur a number of times in his verse. There are the images of poetic self, the woman, and the city, marrow, swinging thigh, basement rooms and the

number 'three'. In the usual images there are minor differences in their meaning but no major changes.

It is admittedly true that Ezekiel expresses his self through 'metaphors and images'. He also admits in an opening to 'Sixty Poems' that scores of his poetry are written for individual beneficial purposes. In 'Enterprise' he 'smelt the sea' and showing "Home is where we have to earn our grace" (Ezekiel 118). This image of the journey of self is repeated in 'an English cargo-ship' and 'learned to laugh again at home' (Ezekiel 180).

The poet has a deep sense of severance. That's why his 'home' symbol at the first stage symbolises ideal homeland for the Jew. In "Background, Casually" he finds his home in Bombay, the place of his living. Thus the same image has different connotations in the Ezekielian world of poetry.

In the area of Ezekiel's poetry the image of woman is repeatedly referred to. In most cases the image of woman is full of sensuality. In 'Ganga', 'Night of the scorpion' he presents the images of an superlative woman but the image of woman as sex doll dominates other images of woman. 'The couple' (Ezekiel 183), 'Poem of the Separation' (Ezekiel 95), 'Tone Poem' (Ezekiel 203), 'A woman observed' (Ezekiel 140), 'Passion poems' (Ezekiel 214), 'Hymns in Darkness' (Ezekiel 217), 'Nudes' (Ezekiel 245), 'Poverty poem' (Ezekiel 230), 'Poet, Lover', 'Bird watcher' (Ezekiel 135), 'Description' (Ezekiel 48), 'Delighted by Love' (Ezekiel 82), 'At the party' (Ezekiel 98), 'Progress' (Ezekiel 141) record the seductress images of woman. Ezekiel repeats Donne

in his sensory poems.

The physical organs of woman such as hair, breasts, bums, and thighs are recorded in his poems. The recurring images of, 'thighs are full', 'swinging breasts', 'buttocks', and 'stripped bodies' are the various dimensions of erotic female image. Like Shiv Kumar and Kamala Das, Ezekiel presents the spirit of Indian sexual manual 'Kamasutra' in free verse. He has changed the dynamics of imagery by adding unrelated adjectives to the same image-making words as in 'plopping breasts' (Ezekiel 98), 'swinging breasts' (Ezekiel 220) and 'breasts small' (Ezekiel 203).

The fallen city of Mumbai and its related images are given fullest awareness by Ezekiel. Ezekiel is at his best to present the recurring images of the fallen city Bombay. To the poet Bombay is his *spirits mundi* and at the same time it is a banal city "unsuitable for song" as well as sense (Ezekiel 182). The poems 'Urban', 'A morning walk', 'Case Study' record the image of Bombay as a spiritually banal and tarnished city.

The image of *basement room* is another frequent image in the world of Ezekielian world of imagery. He makes an anatomical scrutiny of basement image in 'Background, Casually' and 'London'. His *basement room* becomes a part of his existence as an artist. The image recurs in 'First Theme and Variations' (Ezekiel 76) also. Finally it becomes a metaphor of the poet's impatient fight of his poetic pilgrimage. It is a sort of home where he can create without any problem of

distractions. The poetic subsistence of the poet is deeply linked with basement room *as* the poet confesses:

Harlots, basement poets, and fools, At first

I merely looked at them and wondered. (Ezekiel 18-19)

Thus, the inveterate image of basement room is in accord with different phases of images. Besides, the images of “marrow” “three” “God” “dream” “light” recur in his poetry with symbolical implications. From the functional point of view, it must be said that the Ezekielian images stand for economy of word and they vivify a great object or sense in an expressive way. He delineates the image of a ladylove with the help of the following images: “a shower of letters”, “a photograph” and “a smell at night”. The images convey more ideas depending on the sensitive power of the readers. The poet duly acknowledges this curiousness of an image:

The image

with its freight of dreams is always near,

whispers to the air a formless language. (Ezekiel 12)

Yeats used to say that a poem must have some sort of organizational unity. Eliot maintains secretarial unity in his poems. Ezekiel employs major images to maintain directorial unity in a poem. ‘On Beltasis Road’ is a typical example in which Ezekiel maintains organisational unity with the help of a cluster of images. The optical images of phase no. I match well with the last unit of the poem. The images of ‘yellow blouse’ are harmonizing to:

I see her image now

As through a telescope. (Ezekiel 189)

In this way Ezekiel maintains ‘some sort of continuity’ in his poems. Ezekielian images combine various feelings in a compact way. No amount of description is sufficient to combine different feelings at a time. In this circumstance Ezekiel is a perfect artist:

Change is permanent and real,

But the dancing moments

of a kiss Are real too. (Ezekiel 27)

The single image of ‘dancing moments of a kiss’ combines the feelings of joy, union, touch, and dynamism at a time. A stroke of image stands for multiple feelings. Ezekiel compresses visionary, auditory, gustatory and colour images with a single stroke:

Yellow green crinkly-skin oranges. (Ezekiel 266) In the Ezekielian world of imagery transformation of images is markedly perceptible. The imagery at the initial stage gets altered in the concluding part of the poem. Such transformation of imagery helps to develop the topic of a poem. ‘Water, wind and season’s breath’ (Ezekiel 56) gets transmuted with ‘sense-explosions, agitations of the mind and marrow’ (Ezekiel 56).

Ezekiel has done a very commendable job in the field of imagery by widening the horizon of the dynamics of imagery. Following the footsteps of Donne, he employs a number of eccentric images. They are astonishing images but not out of



the context. 'White Rose' (Ezekiel 46) is such an example. Rose is traditionally associated with 'red'. But Ezekiel Portrays 'quieter passion' of wedded love that is better expressed with 'a white rose'. Another alternative image is 'the sky sobbing' (Ezekiel 68).

The transfer of human feeling to the sky is the most appropriate one and it matches with the context. The imagery gets finer shape here. Of course the Ezekielian world of imagery suffers from stern setback when the poet employs strange images:

Stem questions to your feelings, facts

Which ossify the spirit's bones. (Ezekiel 53)

Here, thoughts expressed in the poem are not related. The classification of 'spirit's bones' is a misguided venture into the field of imagery. Symmetrical or unsymmetrical images in Nissim Ezekiel in general and the sex images in exacting stand totally interlinked. Barring a few poems, this feature is found all pervasive in Nissim Ezekiel. A close look at the imagery throughout Ezekiel's poetry reveals the structural pattern of juxtaposition and contrast. On an advanced stage they are replaced by multiplication.

In the poem 'Episode' (Ezekiel 89) the poet creates an atmosphere of 'romantic restfulness' and at the same time presents "whining, howling beggars" who represents the unromantic replica of life. Thus dualistic approach and opposite polarisation are found in the corpus of the poet's images. The

image-pageantry of Ezekiel is almost like a multi-storeyed pyramid. The further it gets stripped off; the better would be the thematic profundity of his images. 'Cleaning up' (Ezekiel 283) poses at the initial stage the feeling of revulsion on the part of the protagonist and ill luck for the insects as they are being cleaned up. In the second stage a sort of fatalistic image is pictured by means of 'Instrument of Fate, 'Prince of Darkness', 'God of inscrutable purposes'. (Ezekiel 283) In the third stage a tragic gloom pervades following the death of a lizard and really it is not a attractive sight. The chord is well set and then comes the bang. Most unexpectedly the poet blows bugles amidst ruins! The depressing image gets glittering with sunny images. At last the departed lizard becomes a source of joy to the unexpected culture. This twist and turn of the tempo of images match well with the preceding images.

Middleton Murray repeatedly lays importance on the melodious total impression of images. Though there are polarizations and deconstruction of images, Ezekiel tries his best to maintain harmony with the help of correlated images. The images of 'marrow', 'pagan woman', 'nature', 'basement room', 'poetic self', 'God' are finely blended. Ezekiel does not pay heed to Pound's advice to present one image in a lifetime (Lewis 25) but presents plethora of images as Ezekiel confesses:

There is in each line, a phrase, an idea or image which helps to maintain some sort of continuity in my life. (Kurup 35)

The creativity of the poet is suddenly stopped following

Alzheimer's disease in 1994. The vibration of 'unvarnished verses' is nicely recorded in the symbols and images. He concludes 'Concluding Latter-Day Psalm' (Ezekiel 261) not with an anatomical search for imagery but with a final version of the origin of Ezekielian imagery:

The images are beautiful birds And colourful  
fish: they fly, They swim in my Jewish Consciousness.  
God is a presence here And his people are real I see  
their sins. I hear His anger. Now I am through  
with The psalms; they are  
part of my flesh. (Ezekiel 261)

Hence the vivid visual pictures become the very stuff of Ezekiel's poetry with varied thematic relations the image remains seminal elementary unit of Ezekiel's poems. Sometimes it is a small rhetorical device in a larger argument; sometimes it is the prime device that dominates the poem and the whole poetry of Ezekiel. Thus it would be suitable to assert that Ezekiel's poetry cannot be studied in detail without the study of imagery. It's the most important part of her poetry.

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## **CHAPTER-III**

### **RAMANUJAN'S POETIC WORLD**

### **OF IMAGERY**

Poet, translator, folklorist, and philologist A.K. Ramanujan was born in Mysore, India. He earned degrees at the University of Mysore and Deccan College in Pune and a Ph D from Indiana University. Ramanujan wrote in both English and Kannada, and his poetry is known for its thematic and official engagement with modernist transnationalism. Issues such as hybridity and transculturation figure prominently in such collections as *The Striders* (1966), *Selected Poems* (1976), and *Second Sight* (1986). *The Collected Poems of A.K. Ramanujan* (1995) received a Sahitya Akademi Award after the author's death.

Ramanujan worked as a lecturer of English at Quilon and Belgaum; he later taught at The Maharaja Sayajirao University in Baroda for about eight years. In 1962, he joined the University of Chicago as an assistant professor. He was allied with the university throughout his career, teaching in numerous departments. He skilled at other US universities as well, including Harvard University, University of Wisconsin, University of Michigan, University of California at Berkeley, and Carleton College. At the University of Chicago, Ramanujan was instrumental in shaping the South Asian Studies program. He worked in the departments of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, Linguistics, and with the Committee on Social Thought.

In 1976, the Government of India awarded him the Padma

Shri, and in 1983, he was given the MacArthur Prize Fellowship and he was selected the William E. Colvin Professor in the Departments of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, of Linguistics, and in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago, and the same year, he received a MacArthur Fellowship. As an Indo-American writer Ramanujan had the experience of the native as well as of the foreign milieu. His poems such as the 'Conventions of Despair' reflected his views on the cultures and conventions of the east and the west. A. K. Ramanujan died in Chicago, on 13 July 1993 as result of unpleasant reaction to an aesthesia during preparation for surgery. As a scholar, Ramanujan contributed to a range of disciplines, including linguistics and cultural studies. His essay "Is There an Indian Way of Thinking?" proposed a notion of "context-sensitive" thinking based in complex situational understandings of identity that differed significantly from Western thought and its emphasis on universal concepts and structures. Context-sensitive thinking predisposed Ramanujan as a folklorist as well. His works of scholarship include *The Interior Landscape: Love Poems from a Classical Tamil Anthology* (1967), *Folktales from India: A Selection of Oral Tales from Twenty-Two Languages* (1991), and *A Flowering Tree and Other Oral Tales from India* (1997).

Ramanujan's world of imagery is an motivating subject of study. His world evolves from his close explanation of the universe around, from the everyday scenes and sights and the

facts of routine life. As his poetry is chiefly poetry of sensitivity, the imagery in his poetry records sense experience and thus evokes various sensations' sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste. Images are not merely made of words but are 'naked sense-stimulus' (Fogle 5). He completely identifies himself with the objects, which appeal to his senses and an image in his poetry 'is a copy or revival of a sense, perception of some sort' (Richards 98).

What strikes one most about Ramanujan's poetry is the prosperity of his imagery, which forms the very core of his poetic art. His poetry is a material woven from threads of concept, emotion and sense. It is the senses, which help him observe his environment critically and objectively. Poetry as Hulme said, "It is not a counter language, but a visual concrete one. It is a compromise, for a language of intuition which would hand over sensations bodily." (Fogle 56). Ramanujan's poetry offers a perfect balance and equilibrium between general notion and sensation. Every image, he employs, relates to a kind of sense stimulation. So, while expressing general ideas, he constructs images with which his memory and imagination are steeped. As he has developed a potent sensory system, his poetry, besides inciting visual impression, stirs up diverse physical sensations. Hence, it is my Endeavour to analyse his images in terms of various sensory experiences.

Ramanujan's sharp eyes look at a particular situation or an object minutely and communicate it through efficient visual

images. He, like Keats is critical in observation with an eye to the particulars of each object. His telescopic dream is focused on the simplest everyday things often seen and encountered. His descriptions of the water bugs:

thin-stemmed,  
bubble-eyed water bugs (Ramanujan 3)

Besides, the ants bean-eyed young, hung perhaps with tiger heads of red wild ants' (Ramanujan 69) are not only picturesque but also vivid, sharp and tangible which affirm that he has an eye for the specific appearance of an object or situation which he then reveals with telling detail.

Visual imagery is principal to Ramanujan's mode of communication. Shelley's visual imagery is the product of an eye usually directed either up or down and irradiates the distance. So, his skylark soars vertically into the heaven until it disappears:

Higher still and higher  
From the earth thou springest Like a cloud of fire;  
The blue deep thou wingest,

And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.  
(Ramanujan 30)

But Keats's nightingale dwells on earth and does not venture far above the ground. He is concerned himself with describing the specific of things close at hand. Ramanujan is not always satisfied by describing merely the external features of an object. He, Unlike Shelley, has a voracious eye, which punctures to go

beyond the physical world. So, he finds a resemblance between a water-bug and a prophet - both having an extraordinary power to walk on water:

No, not only prophets  
walk on water.

This bug sits on a  
landslide of lights  
and drowns eye- deep  
into its tiny strip of sky. (Ramanujan 3)

Ramanujan pictures, objects that are almost reachable to the senses of the average man. His visual imagery has an analytical quality, which enlightens some fundamental truths of the phenomenal world. Shelley's eye can see through the objects of its gaze and can anatomize it. The cloud passes through a series of dissolutions and rebirths, which he visualizes separately in his poem 'The Cloud'. These swift transformations have been delineated in the images of solid, simple and structural forms:

From cape to cape, with a bridge  
like shape, Over a torrent sea,  
Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof,  
The mountains its columns be (Shelley 5)

Ramanujan's central vision can resolve the complexities of life. Birth and death, the two poles of human life, make up the life on earth. The pain suffered by the human beings on the eve of birth and death has been visualized by the poet in a simple,

sharp image:

Birth takes a long instance  
though death can be sudden,  
and multiple, like pregnant  
deer shot down on the run.  
yet one would like to  
think, one kicks and  
grabs the air in death  
throes as a baby does in its mother's womb  
months before the event (Ramanujan 206)

Ramanujan normally uses colour images in order to create some visual pictures. Kamala Das uses yellow colour to describe an aged man: And so,

with every interesting man I  
meet, belated curious editor,  
or a poet with a skin  
]yellowed like antique paper;"  
Sometimes yellow symbolizes paleness and  
melancholy: It's goodbye, goodbye, goodbye  
To slender shapes behind window panes  
Shut against indiscriminate desire  
And rain; to yellow moons  
Yellow sometimes stands for the diseased:  
I yellowed, sickened like the leaves on trees,  
Gained a freedom I never once had asked for. (Ramanujan

206)

Kolatkar uses blue and yellow, which stand for the divine and the red for the physical love. Parthasarathy's predominating colour is gray. Yellow is a frequent colour in Ramanujan's poetry with symbolic significance. It is almost an obsession with him, which has been employed with different connotations. Sometimes, it connotes anxiety:

dwelling on the yellower vein in the yellow amber  
or touching a book that has gold on its spine;  
I think of snakes. ((Ramanujan 206)

The 'yellow vein' in amber or gold lettering on the needle of a book induces fear, which projects the picture of a snake into his mind. At times yellow stands for the colour of the sun and indicates brightness:

Siamese cats with black on  
their paws tiptoe from the  
sulphur mines of the sun  
into the shadow of our house. ((Ramanujan 14)  
'Yellow' symbolizes spiritual maturity possessed by the  
intuitive witty father:

Father sits with the sunflower at the window  
deep in the yellow of a revolving chair, ((Ramanujan 14)

'Yellowed underwear' (Ramanujan 71) gives rise to awe and dismay whereas 'yellow moustache' (Ramanujan 161) of the wrestler in the poem 'At Forty' is an expression of his fury. Again it indicates dullness:

but all my furniture looked bilious yellow

in its gorgeous light (Ramanujan 232)

Yellow is a symbol of gloom as we see in the poem "It does not follow, but "When in the Street". The "walls of Central Jail/ drip with spring's laburnum/yellows, yellow on yellow" (Ramanujan 57), where the personae is imprisoned, is not made of bricks and cement but of sadness, melancholy and pessimism.

Ramanujan, like Shakespeare has immense awareness in colour contrast particularly of black and white. Shakespeare's sense of colour contrast is often connected with the theme. The purity of Desdemona and the opposition of her colour and that of the Moor is symbolised in black and white all through 'Othello'. The chasteness and fairness of Desdemona is manifested by the colour white:

Nor scar that whiter skin of hers  
that snow, And smooth as  
monumental alabaster.

The black Moor, Othello stands  
as a contrasting figure and is a  
symbol of devil as Emilia says:

O, the more angel she,  
And you the blacker devil! (Shakespeare 5)

Ramanujan is sensible to the colour and the contrasts of the various shades. His use of colour contrasts adds to the beauty of his poems. The abnormal numbers of bright colours that we find in his poems are freely contrasted while describing an insect, an animal, a flower and a human being. This enhances the beauty

as does the flash of light on jewels:

mating white and black lizards

in schoolbook Sanskrit. (Ramanujan 76)

.....white

hair in a red turban. (Ramanujan 80) black white kitten

yawn, mew, make water on a living room

(Ramanujan 101) when will orange banners

burn among blue trumpet flowers and the

shade of trees (Ramanujan 113)

Ramanujan is glowing acquainted with the ethnic prejudice that prevails in the western world. 'Black' and 'white' in the poem 'Take care' suggest this ethnic discrimination:

In Chicago, do not walk slow.

Find no time to stand and stare.

Down there, blacks look black.

And whites, they look blacker. (Ramanujan 104)

The acoustic images employed by Ramanujan are straightforward, often sharp and harsh. Soft humming and buzzing noises, which are frequent in Keats are rarely heard in his poems. But like Shelley his auditory images are frequent — 'One day hear her skeleton crack beginning /with the backbone' (Ramanujan 236), 'tinkling in glass/bead curtains'(Ramanujan 180), 'rattles my chains' (Ramanujan 235) strike a sharp note; whereas "A beggar once come with a violin/to croak out a prostitute song" (Ramanujan 98), "the jangle/of medals on the breast of your happy/unhappy widow" (Ramanujan 72), 'a

peanut seller's/raucous cry' (Ramanujan 76) register a harsh sound. Gentle, low-toned sound is audible in some of his poems—"the papers/rustle" (Ramanujan 190), "leaky taps upstairs and downstairs,/purring at my side like the kitchen fridge" (Ramanujan 215), "cats being cats will purr/-at all sorts of occult things" (Ramanujan 73), "no one will hear me for/the noise of rustling nails." (Ramanujan 86).

Sometimes alliteration produces an auditory effect "I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore" (Ramanujan 16)—the repeated 'l' sound echoes the sense of the water of the lake striking at the shore producing a harmonious music. Similarly, "The twirls of their hisses / rise like tiny dust-cones on slow-noon roads" (Ramanujan 4) in the poem 'Snakes', the repeated sound echoes the hissing sound of a snake. The slithering of the snake, and 'a sibilant alphabet' (Ramanujan 4) suggest that the snake possesses a language which is full of 'sibilant' speech sound. Again, in the lines "The snake man wreathes their writhing /round his neck" (Ramanujan 5)

In the poem "A Leaky Tap after a Sister's Wedding" the sound of water leaking "drop after drop" (Ramanujan 9) from a tap is envisaged through images. The sound of the leaky tap sounds like 'mallet touches/of silversmiths' (Ramanujan 9) working for the personae's sister's marriage. As Ramanujan's imagination soars higher, he more visualizes the sound with the 'pecking' sound of a summer woodpecker at a tree, which acquires symbolic implication. It reminds the poet of the



husband's perpetual pecking at his helpless wife.

The tactual imagery of Ramanujan like Keats is natural. It reckons with the sense of handle as well as with sight. The description of Cupid and Psyche in each other's arms in the poem 'Ode to Psyche' is achieved by a concentration of tactual image, which strengthens the central visual impression:

They lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass; Their arms embraced, and their pinions too; Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu, As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber..."

The tactual image Ramanujan manipulates in describing a primate named Subbu in the prose poem 'Zoo Gardens Revisited,' who is paralysed neck down, creates a visual picture:

He couldn't lift his chipped blue enamel mug to his lips and slurp his tea

.... any more nor pout his lips to puff at his cigar.  
(Ramanujan 154)

Sometimes sight is enhanced by touch as in 'A Minor Sacrifice' where the poet describes how the children, in keeping with the advice of Shivanna, catch scorpions, return home and retire to their bathroom to clear their hands of the sins committed:

sneak by the backdoor to the bath house  
to scrub and scour with coconut fibre  
till the skins of our palms come off. (Ramanujan 148)

The words 'scrub' and 'scour' help in establishing the achieve of vivid visual images. Ramanujan like Shakespeare and

Keats is very sensitive and delicate in the matter of touch. He has drawn metaphors from the texture of substances silk, velvet, satin and so on. Shakespeare, susceptible to the smoothness of the skin, describes Perdita's hands "as soft as dove's down", Venus's "smooth moist hand" and 'flower

soft hands' of Cleopatra's maidens. Keats, with a view to produce an effect of sensuous luxuriance, makes use of soft silky surfaces. The couch on which Adonis lies is silken; his coverlids are like the peach:

... on a silken couch of rosy pride,

In midst of all, there lay a sleeping youth And coverlids gold-tinted like the peach,

Or ripe October's faded marigolds, (Ramanujan 15)

Ramanujan is extremely conscious of and responsive to the feelings and the quality of various stuff. So, the fresh born salamanders soft and glossy are described as 'naked earthlings, poor yet satin/to the eye, velvet to the touch' (Ramanujan 202), and the 'tumbled hair' (Ramanujan 45) of his lady love is as soft as silk. The ripe oranges are so soft and light which can be felt in the finger-tips:

some so ripe, there was a hint of fungi-ash

on a slightly hollowed cheek; some flushed and saffron,  
some gamboge, some tangerine;

some pulpy, velvet-skinned, (Ramanujan 53)

He articulates the eternal sticky nature of anxiety by a tactual image. Anxiety is in wakeful and drowsy by temperament but it

is 'viscous and fibered as pitch' (Ramanujan 29). Images such as, 'father bathed/slapping soap on his back'(Ramanujan 65), "the calico cat laps water/from the white well," (Ramanujan 215), "his dog would wake me/with licks' on my sleepy face" (Ramanujan 253), "I wipe myself dry/with an unwashed/Sears Turkish towel" (Ramanujan 169), " I'd watch in a bazaar lens/houseflies rub legs or kiss" (Ramanujan 79) convey some kinds of tangible sensations.

Ramanujan's olfactory images like Keats's are heavy and invasive. Incense and its massive fumes over cloud the banquet-scene in 'Lamia':

Before each lucid pannel fuming stood  
A censer fed with myrrh and spiced wood,  
.... ... fifty wreaths of smoke  
From fifty censers their light voyage took  
To the high roof, still mimick'd  
as they rose Along the mirror'd walls  
by twin-clouds odorous (Ramanujan 10)

Anger, used in rituals has strongly appealed to him, which is soft and agreeable. The olfactory imageries of Ramanujan are both pleasant and horrid. The strong odour of 'street-long heavy-hung yellow pollen fog of a fragrance' of 'Red Champak trees' (Ramanujan 124) permeates the atmosphere which causes migraine to his mother. So, a pungent fragrance often causes sickness. The reek of garlic cloves, a cure for cancer, is for the poet awfully redolent. Hence, "the breath of garlic as we enter/

the elevator suffocates me" (Ramanujan 265). The poem "Eyes, Ears, Noses and a 'Thing about Touch', dealing with the various sagacity perceptions states that noses possess a unique sense of smell which can smell everything that pervades in the atmosphere:

Urine on lily, women's odours  
in the theatre, a musk cat's  
erection in the centre of a zoo, (Ramanujan 77)

Ramanujan like Shakespeare has a very acute sense of smell and is particularly sensitive to bad smell. Shakespeare's Coriolanus expresses his contempt for the common people through the image of a foul smell:

You common cry of curs! Whose breath I hate As reek o'  
the rotten fens, whose loves I prize  
As the dead carcasses of unburied  
men That do corrupt my air. (Ramanujan 07)

His Henry V, while giving a sensible picture of the dead bodies fears 'The smell whereof shall breed a plague in France. Ramanujan's disdain for stink is evident in his explanation of the "fertile shabby pair" who smell of 'unwashed hair' (Ramanujan 13). The smell of a breaded fish 'thrust a blunt-headed smell' (Ramanujan 7) into his month as it revives the memory of the reek of a dead body of a woman.

Ramanujan is evenly fond of fragrance. So, the smell of 'twisted, black bone tree' (Ramanujan 61) reminds him of the youth of his mother when she was as delicate and beautiful as

'silk' and 'white petal'. Shakespeare connects the sweet smell of spring with sparkling youth who 'smells April and May'. Ramanujan's passion for perfumes is evident in 'Love 5' where he says that the intense passion of a personae for his lady is abated only after enjoying the odour of her body and, therefore, he wants to "catch the waft/of odours transcending all perfume" (Ramanujan 229). The fresh groom in the poem, 'Mythologies 3', in spite of the strong warning of his bride, touches her as he is tempted by her perfumes:

... all he could think of was her round  
breast, her musk, her darling navel and the rest  
So he hovered and touched her .....  
(Ramanujan 228)

The 'smell of a woman's perfumes' is so stimulating that it will help an amnesiac to recover 'all pasts and circulation of sap' (Ramanujan 76). Closely related to olfactory images are gustatory images. It is not only the act of tasting, which arouses this sense but also the things meant to be tasted. The gustatory images of Ramanujan show that he possesses a tender, discriminating and touchy palate which can simply distinguish the different tastes—sweet, sour, salty, oily etc.

A few examples of such images are—'a whiskey sour' (Ramanujan 15), 'garden of sweet limes' (Ramanujan 107), 'salt,/ coriander,/ and jaggery' (Ramanujan 112), 'Water-layers salt' (Ramanujan 100), 'greasy sweets' (Ramanujan 96) etc. A breaded fish, a food to be tasted, stirs up a sense of taste. The

image of a dead snake in the poem 'Snakes': 'Now frogs can hop upon this sausage rope' (Ramanujan 5) evokes a gustatory sense which is dreadful and disagreeable.

An intimate study of the imagery of Ramanujan reveals the fact that there is one characteristic which attracts him most throughout, that is the quality of movement both in the animal and the human worlds. The wide use of kinesthetic imagery throws light on his poetic technique and creates some visual impressions on the mind. Shelley has many images of swift movement in the poem 'Ode to the West Wind' where the west wind, with all its activities is marvelously portrayed:

Thou, from whose unseen presence the  
leaves dead Are driven, like ghosts from  
an enchanter fleeing, O  
thou.....  
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed  
The winged seeds, where they lie  
cold and low, Each like a corpse  
within its grave, until  
Thine azure sister of the Spring  
shall blow Her clarion o'er the  
dreaming earth, and fill Driving  
sweet buds like flocks to feed in  
air. (Shelley 15)

The mechanical images engaged by Ramanujan are both immediate and slow, drawn from two worlds, the human and

the animal. The pictures drawn from the body and bodily actions constitute a large section of his imagery. A number of images of quick dexterous bodily actions are visible in many poems such as, 'pacing/to and fro as you came to the gate' (Ramanujan 66), 'Leaping and hopping all over the lawa' (Ramanujan 146). The grasshoppers are described as 'little writhing objects' (Ramanujan 147) and when the wings are pulled off they 'shiver a bit/as we put away/those wriggles in our bottles' (Ramanujan 147) comes almost vivid to the eyes. We witness similar swift movement in the verbs 'herons fly round and round/in his eyes' (Ramanujan 230), "his steed, with a neem leaf mark/upon his brow, will prance/again to splash his noonday image" (Ramanujan 17), "Even leaping Beast shall wait to be bidden" (Ramanujan 11), adjutant storks *'flap themselves into air'* and *circles/on motionless wing* (Ramanujan 128).

Ramanujan's love for movement is to be seen not only in his direct images but also in the use of certain words like 'peep', 'peek', 'blink' expressing quick, darting action 'peeking in and out/of the black box'(Ramanujan 58), "not yet fully recovered from birth, blinking black white kitten yawn" (Ramanujan 01), "suppress that itch to take a peek at the dead street dog before the scavengers come" (Ramanujan 90) and "I walk through the holy place,/one eye wincing" (Ramanujan 246). Ramanujan's keen and sharp vision can even examine the minute movement and can convey it through an image. A few images of slow and smooth movement are 'a thin old snake vacillating' (Ramanujan

176) "Brown eyes, family faces, maculate giraffes jiggle and disappear" (Ramanujan 205) and "twigs and twig like insects that turn slowly round the twigs" (Ramanujan 146-147).

Sometimes some human feelings or actions are set in motion to create a sense of activity. Shakespeare uses verbs of movement about things, which are immobile or abstractions, which cannot have physical movement. He even endows inorganic and motionless object with a sense of life:

that pale, that white-fac'd shore,  
whose foot spurns back the ocean's  
roaring tides, (Shakespeare 2.1)

He often attributes to them human feelings and infuses a sense of activity:

Where the Norweyan banners  
flout the sky And fan our people  
cold' (Shakespeare 1.2)

Ramanujan gives existence to a human feeling, invests life into a lifeless thing.

Panic, a human feeling, is set in motion in an image:

... Yet panic rushes  
my body to my feet, my spasms wring (CP:5)  
Anxiety, a troubled state of mind, is drowsy by temperament:  
Not wakeful in its white-snake  
glassy ways like the eloping gaiety  
of waters, it drowns,  
(Shakespeare 29)

Ramanujan's love for movement as is visible in the images proves that it is the life of things that appeals to him. He, like Shakespeare, seems "to find in motion the very essence of life" (Spurgeon 56). His view of motion corresponds to that of William Wordsworth who says:

A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of  
all thought, And rolls through all  
things. (Ramanujan 12)

The diversity, sharpness and immediacy with which Ramanujan constructs his images make him the most aware craftsman and conscientious Indian poet in English. What is more profoundly absorbing in Ramanujan's patterning of imagery is its functional aspect because of which the integration between the formal parts of the poems and the thematic or emotional parts. This can also be the reason accountable for the complexity of apparently simple-looking poems of Ramanujan.

Ramanujan's artistry rests mainly on his deft use of imagery, which is inseparable from the theme of his poetry. The sensible, fresh, exact, startling and polished images play a 'key role' (Mizra 157) in his poetry, which clarify a picture and express an idea with more concentration. The objects he contemplates stir in his imagination a portrait which gives rise to the imagery he creates. His response to an experience is not only better but is more refined than an average man. Hence, his language is not only elegant but also different. He finds the imagery the only

tool on which he can bank on for a total poetic outcome. It is said, 'Wisdom first speaks in images' (Singh 135). A study of images and symbols in the poetry of Ramanujan throws light on the peculiar ways the poet's mind functions in order to design the theme of his poetry.

An image in Ramanujan's poetry is a 'constituent of a unified expression' (Srivastava 50) which imports his vision of life, reveals his critical outlook and methodical mind. As his poetry is "Born out of the dialectical interplay between his Indian and American experiences" (Dulai 10), he has presented us two sets of images: one, of rural India, which serves as 'the backdrop', the other, the sophisticated urban life of 'America serving as the frontier' (Mohanty 167). The image of a shepherd driving home a flock of sheep represents the simple Indian landscape:

turning around I see a  
flock of sheep in a tree- filtered  
slant of sunlight gilding a cloud  
of dust coming towards me, black,  
white, walking clouds of wool with  
downcast faces behind them a  
man in a dirty red turban and a  
brown rough blanket  
wielding a stick ... (Ramanujan 224)

The imagery draws a portrait of the rustic life: a life that is humble, devoid of ornamentation and revolves in harmony with nature. As he is born and brought up in India, scenes and images

peculiar to Indian life abound in his poems:

his [shepherd's] father now blind  
and sitting in the sun outside his hut  
smoking bid is all day (Ibid)

I return from the wide open spaces.

Temple employees have whiskered nipples.

The street cows have trapezium faces. Buffaloes

shake off flies with a twitch of ripples. (Ramanujan 100)

Ramanujan is not persistently gripped with India, he "sees reality of existence in the immediate environments and cultural atmosphere in America, the country where he has been living for the last thirty years" (Sharma 181). So, he has decorated the shallow, urban life of Chicago: a city of racial violence and vulgarity, where 'dry chlorine water' replaces the holy Ganges and 'the naked Chicago bulb' becomes 'a cousin of the Vedic sun' (Ramanujan 169). In "One More after Reading Homer" Ramanujan tells us how in Chicago "dehumanizing and stupefying elements dangle in the air (Mohanty 39.)

..... I come upon a half-burned shoulder blade  
greening in a lake of dead alewives

among leftovers paper cups and condoms.

I wonder if in Chicago too love indifference  
and hate in some devious way relate  
at all to deaths by fire. (Ramanujan 73)

The poem, 'Take Care', begins with a usual description of the city. The poet, then, through a series of images depicts how

danger and calamities lark in the city threatening the security of the people:

In Chicago it blows hot and cold. Trees play fast and loose.  
... Enemies have guns. Friends have doubts. Wives have

lawyers.

All tall buildings use telescopes.

Give daughters pills, learn karate.

Prepare to get raped

bending for a book (Ramanujan 103)

Ramanujan, often compares the images drawn from two dissimilar worlds: the Indian and the western. In 'Death and the Good Citizen' he has presented two sets of images to show the "ritualistic ubiquitous way of handling the dead body" (Mohanty Things as they are... 170). The typical Indian method of cremation is conveyed to us through an existing image: .....they'll

cremate me in Sanskrit and sandalwood,

.....have me sterilized to a scatter

of ash. (Ramanujan 136)

This technique of cremation is contrasted with that in the west; Or abroad, they'll lay me out in a funeral

parlour, embalm me in pesticide,

bury me in a steel trap, lock me out of nature

till I'm oxidized by leftover air, withered by my own

vapours into grin and bone. (Ramanujan 136)

The leading images deployed by Ramanujan are tree, water, insects, animals, birds, widow which gradually evolve into

symbols. He employs these images with a reason to link poem with poem. The images knit the poems together giving them coherence and order and, thus, revealing the pattern of the poet's mind. The richness and fullness of his imagery instills life into his poetry and his poetry develops an immense potentiality to 'evoke the multi-dimensional experience of life' (Talwar 41).

Ramanujan is intensely influenced by the medieval Kannada Vachana poets Basavanna, Mahadeviyakka and Allama Prabhu who have made an extensive use of tree image. Basavanna, a devotee to Siva, compares the relationship between Siva and his devotees with the 'roots' and 'shoot' of the tree:

The root is the mouth  
of the tree: pour water there  
... at the bottom  
and, look, it sprouts green at the top.

Allama Prabhu, on the other hand, identifies tree with consciousness which arises after the clearing of the physical nature, yields eight kinds of subtle bodies (flowers) and finally reaches the basic knowledge:

A tree born  
in a land without soil, and look!  
eight flowers thunderbolt-coloured.  
Fruit on the branch ripen at the root

'The tree' for Ramanujan represents an ever-growing ramification of the family' (Rao 61). The tree image used in dissimilar contexts acquires multiple connotations. The image

of a fig tree in the poem "Looking for a Cousin on a Swing" indicates the growth and change that take place as a girl moves from childhood to adulthood. The poet's cousin, as she grows up, develops a flabby body with a bulging belly like the fork of a fig tree and it seems that she will burst out with "a brood of scarlet figs" ((Ramanujan 19) Again the tree symbol in "I Could Have Rested" "treeless island youth" ((Ramanujan 20) "represents enlightenment for the calm and peace that accompanies enlightenment bringing about a total relaxation and rest" (Raghuwand 189) which has been denied to the poet-lover as he is brave, young and hot-blooded.

The tree is used as a sign of life and death as 'contemporaneous forms of existence' (Raghuwandan 186). The 'dynasties/of the mountain-pine' (Ramanujan 27) represents the royal dynasties that ruled the kingdom but whose banners are 'tattered 'and 'harped at the drizzling strings of rain' (Ramanujan 27. The dying empire is represented by the living ex-maharajah who loses his kingdom in politics. The continuous nature of anxiety is presented through the image of a tree which like a tree branches out on all sides: 'it has naked roots and secret twigs' (Ramanujan 29) A leafless tree in the poem 'Despair' is symbolic of despair which denotes that a man should get relief of his own despair because he is not alone in his predicament. Tree image in this poem and in the poem 'Anxiety' too signifies *avidya* or ignorance which is common to all minds.

The contradiction of birth and death is symbolized in the

tree in the poem 'Christmas'. Christmas, the birthday of Jesus Christ comes in December. Again, this month heralds the death of the year. The nude branches, which look skinny and root like in winter become emerald with a shock of leaf (Ramanujan 32) and throb with life with the approach of summer. Like the two-headed Janus, who is the patron of beginning and end, the tree is also 'two in one' (Ramanujan 32) as it is dead and alive at the same time. The tree is like an angle both 'open and shut' (Ramanujan 32). It is like Euclid, the first Alexandrian geometrician, who though dead is still alive and lives again through his books. Euclid's ghost arrests life for the poet and he wholly identifies him with the tree and realises that one Life Force pervades all forms of life. The tree as a symbol of all creations occurs again in 'One Reads' where the shadow of a tree is merged into the shadow of a beggar: "his shadow, clotting, and the antlers of bare April's trees" (Ramanujan 49).

Ramanujan's imagery frequently derives from his childhood memory. As T.S. Eliot says "only a part of an author's imagery comes from his reading. It comes from the whole of his receptive life since early childhood". In the poem "Of Mothers, among other things" a tree with its white flowers and the twisted branches revives his memory of his deformed mother clad in silk. Here the mother and the tree are identified in one metaphor. The tree in "Man and Woman in Camera and out" is a symbol of love in full moon which concurrently hints at man's close association with nature. The images of man, tree and shadow

find their individual places 'by a tiny act/of grace' (Ramanujan 58) inside the black box of the camera. The cherry tree in frill bloom, symbolic of the love of man and woman, foresees the flowers dropping. The lovers in real life encounter a comparable situation and are always afraid lest their love wanes in near future. The image of the tree in the poem 'That tree' upholds the Hindu view of the universe:

The legendary tree is upside down.

Roots in the air, branches in the ground. (Ramanujan 234)

The universe is like an inverted tree with its branches in the human world and its roots in the divine. But the image of the tree steadily acquires a new dimension and emerges as a symbol of family tree. "It is symbolic of the ever widening family relations and stands for '*Vamsa Vriksha*' The branching off of the tree is symbolic of the ever growing family tree" (Rao 62). Though inaccessible in his exile, Ramanujan has tied himself up to the family tree and just as the tree gets nourishment from its roots, he too thrives with life as he thinks of his family. The parents and the relatives who are extend like "the inverse/ branching under the earth" (Ramanujan 76) give him back his normal life.

The likeness of water is manipulated in the poems 'The Striders', 'A River' and 'No Amnesiac King'. In the poem 'The Striders' the stream image is associated with an insect image. Yeast's living stream in 'Easter 1916' symbolizes change and growth of life. The hearts of the martyrs concentrated on a single



purpose: to liberate the country- are like stones and the living stream of life, which flows is disturbed by them:

Hearts with one purpose alone

Through summer and winter seem Enchanted to a stone  
to trouble the living stream. (Ramanujan 94)

In 'West-Running Brook', Frost's brook symbolizes the whole thing in life and human experience amidst the world of flux:

It flows beside us in this water brook, But it flows over us;  
It flows between us To separate us for a panic moment It flows  
between us, over us, and with us.

In the poem 'The Striders' Ramanujan combines the image of a flow with fixity. 'The swell skin of a stream' (Ramanujan 3) denotes *samsara* or life in a state of flux. The bug stands for the "liberated- in- life" (Kumar 13) and it's resting on the stream or sitting on a 'landslide of lights' (Ramanujan 3) suggests a fixity within the flux. Life is like a flowing river and so when we step into it, the river will have changed from what it was before. So, a man longs for the past cheerfulness. The poem 'No Amnesiac King' reviews man's nostalgia for an idealised world in terms of a stream image. A human being always wishes for excellence but he is aware that his desire to catch and cling to the ideal world is, in fact, only the "inverse images in the water of a stream" (Ramanujan 127) of the actual life he leads. But man tries in vain to retire to the ideal past, which is only an image or reflection of the actual he experiences.

The river 'Vaikai' in Ramanujan poem '*A River*' which flows through Madurai is emblematic along whose bank grows up the rich Tamil culture. For him, a river is holy and so death rites are performed near it. The ashes of his father were thrown according to the instructions of the priest at a place 'where three rivers met' (Ramanujan 111). K.N. Daruwalla's river '*Ghaghra*' is a symbol of the fury of a river in flood. In the afternoon she is "a grey smudge/exploring a grey canvas" and there is no symbol of flood. But this deceptive calmness is destroyed as the river swells into flood:

When dusk reaches her through  
an overhang of cloud she is over stewed coffee.

And suddenly at night

Twenty minutes of a nightmare spin .....

and fear turns

phantasmal as half a street goes

churning in the river-belly. (Ramanujan 101)

Ramanujan's river, calm and quiet in summer, becomes destructive and violent in the rainy season. The rise of the water level is described with precise accuracy, which not only tolls human life but also causes heavy material loss:

People everywhere talked of the inches rising,  
of the precise number of cobbled steps run  
over by the water, rising  
on the bathing places, and the way it carried  
off three village houses. (Ramanujan 38)

The archetypal image of flood, destroying all life upon the earth, is a very familiar image used by the poets and dramatists in all ages. Sometimes flood is symbolic of world devastation as we find in Yeats's 'The Gyres':

Irrational streams of blood are staining  
earth; Empedocles has thrown all things  
about; Hector is dead and there's a light in Troy;

We that look on but, laugh in tragic joy. (Ramanujan 180)

The image of the 'flooded stream' (Ramanujan 100) in 'A Prayer for my Daughter' is an irrational force symbolizing the 'irrational stream' of violence that would flood the world. Shakespeare sees in the image of "a river overbearing its boundaries a perfect analogy to the result of stress or rush of emotion in men" (Spurgeon 93). When Desdemona has left Brabantio for Othello, he expresses his grief in a flood image:

..... my particular grief  
Is of so flood-gate and overbearing nature  
That it engulfs and swallows other sorrows,  
And it is still itself. (Shakespeare 1.3)

Indian culture and civilization evolve and prosper along the river bank and so, the river forms the very hub of local culture. Both Parthasarathy and Ramanujan draw the vignettes of rivers that run through the native landscapes. In the eye of Parthasarathy river 'Vaikai', is no better than 'a sewer' (Ramanujan 56) which is just a plaything for the children, and for men it is a place for washing dirt and cleaning their arise:

With paper boats boy tickle her ribs,  
and buffaloes have turned her to a  
pond a man on the steps  
clean his arise. ( Ramanujan 56).

Ramanujan presents the image of a dry river which in summer "dries to a trickle, in the sand, baring sand-ribs" (Ramanujan 38). In Parthasarathy's river "There's eaglewood inher- Kair/ and stale flowers" (Ramanujan 56). Ramanujan's river too is clogged by "straw and women's hair... at the rusty bars" (Ramanujan 38). The river in Parthasarathy's poetry represents decadence, whereas in Ramanujan's poetry it is an evil strength destroying both animal and human lives on earth:

... it carried off three village houses, one  
pregnant woman and a couple of cows  
named Gopi and Brinda, as usual. (Ramanujan 38).

"River as a troupe of nativity and nation does no longer sustain life; during summers, it stinks, and during rainy season it overflows ominously to swallow the whole range of life on and around its shores" (Kumar 202)

Ramanujan has collected a large numbers of poems whose central or controlling image is an animal—may be an insect or a bird. In the 'Preface' of *The Collected Poems* Krittika observes:

Animals appear everywhere in the poems, but the poems are not about animals. They have a double *vision*. The poems are about life, death, cycles of birth, pain and love. They are also about poetry. They are full of irony, humour, paradox and sudden

reversals. (Ramanujan XVI)

There are some poems in which animal imagery is used to criticize man's conduct his moral and ethical behaviour. Human nature in social context is explored in the poem 'Lac into Seal', where the crow, a symbol of evil and crookedness is compared to a politician who enjoys all the privileges in the society. The poor, timid ample areas innocent as crows:

When summer months branch backward  
day after day after day you'll only see now a  
nd then a crow or two stopping  
its beak on the back of a cow. (Ramanujan 50)  
Again, the image of "a couple of cows:  
named Gopi and Brinda"( Ramanujan39)

carried away by the flood is very suggestive. Simplicity, innocence and purity are the qualities which are credited to this animal. The death of these cows deviously signifies that these qualities are being disappeared from our society.

Very frequently Ramanujan uses animal imagery to evaluate men in relation to animals. The "sheep mouth look in a sepia wedding/picture of father in a turban" (Ramanujan 65) brings out the inherent quality of the poet's father who is innocent, gentle and simple like a sheep. The proud and learned uncle; having an extensive acquaintance about animals and insects, have been compared with a monkey." he says, shaking his marmoset head" (Ramanujan 145). "Black-faced monkeys of grave lowbrow" (Ramanujan 153) at once reminds the poet

of his uncles with "movable scalps and wrinkled long back hands" (Ramanujan 153). The 'later centurions' walking in a pompous manner is attributed to a cat who as it watches a stranger "walk close/ to his knee to arch the fur on their backs and mimic/the strut of later centurions" (Ramanujan 73). The frog, an amphibian, and an enemy of a serpent symbolizes fertility and evolution which "moves from egg to tadpole/to adult, to grow/ from water to land and back" (Ramanujan 198).The various stages of development that a frog passes through refer to the act of creation: a transition from water to the element of earth. As a cold-blooded creature it anticipates man and in this respect it represents the main stages of evolution.

The salamander, a lizard like reptile lives in fire, quenches it with the tremendous coldness of its body. Ramanujan finds a link between a man and a salamander. The salamanders eat fire but are born in the sludge in the woods after the rain. Man is no diverse from these salamanders because

.....we, we burn  
and eat fire no less than salamanders but live  
in the wet, crawl in the slush, five-toed  
lizards eating dragonflies;  
waiting no less than the three-toed for a turn  
of the body's season to copulate (Ramanujan 202)

A man is extremely much like this lizard who keeps himself cool amid the fire of passion. Ramanujan adopts a variety of methods to explore the animal world and his "animal poems

symbolize inner aspects of human experience" (Pandey 74). Often he uses animal imagery to identify his instinctive self; to explain the human predicament. The poet's daughter's turtle "carrying a daily cross" (Ramanujan 101) reflects the poet's plight as an expatriate trying to live in an alien culture. There is an affinity between the poet and the animal. The turtle's precarious exile 'very far from the ocean.' (Ramanujan 101) confuses it and it tries to hibernate in ajar. The turtle, an image of the poetic self, is as alienated in Chicago as the poet. The snake 'on slow- noon roads' (Ramanujan 4) is an 'alien' which hints at the alienation of the poet.

Ramanujan's approach to the metaphysical question of death is exhibited in terms of animal metaphor. The praying mantis sitting on a can, at the Madurai temple continues its act of praying being unaware that it is especially near to death. The poet like the praying mantis 'disregards the proximity of death or institutionalized religion and continues to pray' (Raghunandan 175). Again, he visualises a close association between a man and an animal and identifies each generation with a cold-blooded creature: his ancestors with crocodiles and tortoises, his grand-daughter with a praying mantis and himself with a lizard.

Ramanujan, in some of his poems draws analogy between men and animals. He surveys both the worlds - the world of his relations and the world of animals. With apt attention he explores similitudes between them. He identifies his aunt with the snake

whose black lorgnettes are etched on its hoods like his aunt. He is afraid and aggressive towards this creature like D.H. Lawrence, who in his poem 'Snake', says The voice of my education said to me, He must be killed Ramanujan too heaves a sign of relief when the snake is killed:

.....Now

Frogs can hop upon this sausage rope,  
flies in the sun will mob the look in his eyes,  
and I can walk through the woods. (Ramanujan 5)

Whereas aunt arouses fear, the immense grandfather, the 'still man' puts to shame who like some "spider-lover a pair/of his Borneo specimens mate" (Ramanujan

63) will be a silent observer of the illicit love affairs between his wife and the fisherman. The grand-mother, on the other hand, a crafty lady who like "spider- fashion, she clamped down and bit him" (Ramanujan 62). She is like a spider weaving web and watching quietly the insect entangled in the web, jumps suddenly to catch it. In like manner this spider woman attracts and draws the fisherman into her fold.

Many strange and grisly insects crowd Ramanujan's poetic landscape. He uses insects' imagery to belittle the power of the theological despots. In 'From Where' inchworms remind him of Hitler and his army:

green inchworms arching their backs in '39 from peapod  
to desolate peapod, when I'd just heard  
of the World and Hitler's packs? (Ramanujan 271)

Cannibalism, a metaphor of modern polity is employed by Ramanujan to reveal the “petulant and murky nature of contemporary politics” (Kumar 12). The fight between the politicians for scrambling influence and wealth is delineated through the image of worms where the bigger worms devour the smaller ones:

Cannibal..... devouring smaller cannibal till only two equal,  
giants are left to struggle, entwined,  
like wrestlers on a cliff: (Ramanujan 46)

The tussle continues until “One, omnipotent, maggot-cesar.” (Ramanujan 46) “emerges as alone victorious survivor from the mob of worms” (Kumar 12). This image of an insect, thus, flashes a social surveillance.

Ramanujan observes homogeneity between an insect and a human being. He infuses human ideals of communalism into ant life in the poem ‘Army Ants’. The young ants are used as brick and mortar in the construction of an anthill:

Extremists, true makers, of made things, they have only  
themselves, for bricks; knees for hinges; heads for the plinths  
of their rain soaked Corinths. (Ramanujan 70)

Like a true socialist, they live for the benefit of the society. They are both productive and destructive because it is the destruction of an individual that constructs the society. Ramanujan, a poet of scientific perception, can smell danger in his instantaneous environment. To describe the milieu of a large modern city like Chicago he employs an insect imagery very

effectively:

Invisible crabs scuttle the air. Small flies sit  
on aspirin and booze. (Ramanujan 103)

The flight of the crabs symbolizes air pollution; one of the major problems of a modern city, which destroys the healthy ambiance of the place.

The bird imagery of Ramanujan is often rich in suggestion. He mentions particular birds with a idea to characterize a human being or a place and as his typical Indian sensibility is ascetic he deliberately avoids ferocious animals and birds. Shakespeare’s bird images are remarkable for the intense feeling. In ‘*Macbeth*’, we find, when Lady Mac duff and her little son apprehend an impending danger, she compares his body to a poor bird :

Poor bird! thou’dst never fear the  
The pit-fall nor the gin. (Shakespeare 4. 2)

Othello, when he realizes that he has been deceived, uses a bird simile to express Iago’s treatment of him:

demand that demi-devil

Why he hath thus ensnar’d my soul and body.  
(Shakespeare 5. 2) Lucrece’s escape from Tarquin’s brutality is denoted in a bird image: Wrapp’d and confounded in a thousand fears,

Like to a new-kill’d bird she trembling lies.

Ramanujan is an ornithologist, showing his considerable knowledge in the study of birds. The bird image has an abiding quality. Birds and men are often identified with one another.

The archetypal concept of mother as a symbol of patience is envisaged in a bird image. Her saree is described as hanging loose like the 'feather of a onetime wing' (Ramanujan 61). The image of the feather is an noticeable reminder of a bird, attributing bird-like delicacy and a bird-like fleeting character to the existence of the mother. Her hands are compared with an eagle with one talon broken:

But her hands are a wet eagle's two black  
pink-crinkled feet, one talon crippled in a  
garden trap set for a mouse. (Ramanujan 61)

Apparently, the image of the eagle, a powerful huge bird of prey does not seem to go well with the delicate, fi-agile individuality of a mother. In Greek mythology, the eagle is the vehicle of supreme God Zeus. The association of the eagle with the mother seems to suggest that after the death of father,' the mother assumes the role of father. Again, father's toes look like talons moving towards the son:

his toes were talons, curving long  
and slow towards my sleep. (Ramanujan 155).

The image of dirt, ugliness, and dilapidation flashes in his mind's eyes when Ramanujan thinks of India and the scavenger birds stand for such dinginess and obscenity:

these are scavenger nature fit emblems  
for a city like Calcutta or Madurai  
crammed to the top of its gates (Ramanujan 128).

Ramanujan's description of modem hell, the horror and

sufferings that one endures are skillfully presented in the poem 'Conventions of Despair'. The afflict becomes shocking when he sees "a grandchild bare, her teenage flesh to the pimps, of ideal tomorrow's crowfoot eyes and the theory of a peacock-feathered future" (Ramanujan 35).The images of 'crowfoot eyes' and 'peacock-feathered' symbolize the chaos an devil which are let loose in the world. Since Ramanujan's poetry and his life are inextricable, "some images have struck deep chords in Ramanujan's psyche and quite frequently surface in his poetry" (Panciey 91). Such an obsessive picture of the poet's mind is that of the image of a woman. In every age the woman has been seen chiefly as a mother, a wife, a mistress and a sex object. The image of a woman that we find in Ezekiel's poem is replete with animalism and sexuality, with corruption and ruination. She appears as a seductress in Poverty Poem:

She didn't know beggars m India  
smile only at white foreigners.

The picture of the woman sometimes reveals her sensuality and nudity as we find in 'Nudes 1978':

'Yes, this is me as I am', naked seen,  
seeing nakedness, named, flawed in  
detail, womanly and vulnerable.

The image of a woman as a victim of cruel forces in a loose administrative framework features most prominently in Jayanta Mahapatra and Ramanujan's poetry. The humanist attitude of Mahapatra is highlighted in the image of a woman labourer in

the poem 'Again, One day, Walking By the river'. It reveals the plight of a poor Indian woman:

A tar drum smoulders in front of the  
judge's house as four women working rule the hot tar  
onto the pitted face of the road.

It is two in the afternoon, and  
the heat of yesterday still clings to the old  
walls like harsh salt on the skin.

The disgraceful image of a woman makes a sad  
commentary on the economic condition of the working woman  
of the lower class. We experience it in 'Poona Train Window':

Three women with baskets on their heads, climbing  
slowly against the slope of a hill, one of them  
lop-sided, balancing between the slope and the basket  
on the head late regnancy. (Ramanujan 81)

The prejudices and superstitions that are so main in Indian  
society make the life of a woman dejected. In our patriarchal  
society a male child is preferred to a girl child and to beget a boy  
child a woman follows certain practices:

Women circumambulate the peepul  
tree hoping for a son. (Ramanujan 199).

If this does not grant a boy child, then the baby girl that is  
born will have to live in shadows:

Daughters breed in stark family dungeons like slow  
perennials waiting for the rains. (Ramanujan 199).

The image of widowhood is often found in the Indo-Anglian

poetry. Mahapatra's widows are devoutly religious:

White-clad widowed women past the centres of their lines  
are waiting to enter the Great Temple.

Ramanujan's widows lead a plain, quiet and easy life and  
the white clothes they wear symbolize both purity and  
sobriety:

Grand-mother wearing white  
day and night in a village  
(Ramanujan 83).

mother, grandmother  
the fat cook in widow's white who fed me  
rice and ogres (Ramanujan 260).

Imagery lends fascination and beauty to the poetry of  
Ramanujan a conscious and painstaking artist who aims at  
precision and accuracy of language. His verbal communication  
has a "cold, glass-like quality" which helps Ramanujan in achieving  
the objectivity and sophistication at the equivalent time.

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## **CHAPTER-IV**

### **IMAGERY IN THE POETRY OF KAMALA DAS**

**K**amala Das is a bilingual writer who has written both in Malayalam and English. As an Indian English poet and as a feminist, she has protected a significant place in most of the anthologies of English literature. She voices the pains and pressures of a distinctive Indian woman who is suffering behind the thick veil of conservative traditions and customs. She asserts that women, including her, are victims of sexual humiliation under the male domination. Her works nurture a ray of anticipate in the hearts of women suppressed under male domination. Kamala Das expresses her judgment and experiences frankly. Her works are characterised by high level of sincerity and integrity. She is regarded a confessional writer on par with Robert Lowell, Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton, John Berryman and Theodore Roethke and the like.

Poetry of Kamala Das is in a confessional appearance. Confessional poetry concentrates on the personal and the sensible experiences of the poets themselves. It voices the poet's inner feelings, so it may be an autobiographical description of the poet. The poet analyses the position in the light of his or her surroundings and experiences, expressing her own feelings and experiences to unburden the mind from strong emotions such as failure, pain and torture - dealing with even suicide and death. Poetry of Kamala Das bears all these characteristics of love-lust

frustrations. There is an outspoken and forthright self-analysis. For example, she openly asserts this in her poem composition. By 'strip teasing' her mind, she must extrude, give a free run to her thought process, and share her feelings with the readers, totally free from any restraint or inhibition. By confessing and by peeling off her layers, she reaches close to the soul. This poem is highly passionate, laden with numerous autobiographical insights and accounts. She does not hesitate to confess her failure and say '...I feel my age and my uselessness.'

Poetry of Kamala Das gives an account of her discontented desires and frustrations. She probes deep into her own heart to get her normal feelings and pours it out into poetry. E.V. Ramakrishnan deeply impressed by her frank and natural expressions points out that she deals with private humiliations and sufferings, which are the stock theme of confessional poetry. Anisur Rahman, rightly comments that her poetry 'mirrors her life in all its nakedness, a free form, shaking all the established norms of life and art' a bunch of her poems speak out her resentment, frustration, disappointment and failure in love. She clearly brings out her misery in the following lines:

Too early the autumn  
sights Have come, too  
soon my lips Have lost  
their hunger, too soon The  
singing birds have

Left ... Too Early the Autumn Sights

Futility of physical love is a chief theme expressed in her poetry. In 'Maggots' she ponders over the futility of sexual union. She feels a sense of fatality, being reduced to the state of a corpse. The male partner is without any remorse and nibbles at her body. His soul is like a maggot, which nips at the cold, dead body. She compares his kisses to the rolling of maggot over the corpse. He does not realize her any more than a dead body. In the poem 'Suicide', she confesses in a similar tone that she has to pretend to be happy in spite of her frustration: '...but I must pose, I must pretend, I must act the role of happy woman, happy wife. '

Kamala Das through the works of art gains recent insights into truth: "Among the arts, literature, specifically, seems to claim 'truth' through the view of life (Weltanschauung 7) which every artistically coherent work possesses" (Wellek 34). While discussing her objectives in art, Kamala Das has observed that the purpose of her poetic art is to 'disturb the society' by exhibiting herself. Her objective of poetic art is the revaluation of her own life providing didactic lessons for her readers. Their art is not for its own sake. It is to equip the readers with recent perspectives to look upon the multifaceted life, by keeping them fascinated by the mystery and beauty of the life on earth.

### **Attitude of Kamala Das to Man-Woman Relationship:**

At fifteen, Kamala met one Mr. K. Madhav Das who was working in the Reserve Bank of India in Bombay. She writes that he was thin, but appeared to be sincere and intellectual. He

used to talk incessantly about homosexuality. She was then editing a private magazine jointly along with her brother. Mr. Das became a regular contributor of articles. Her parents noticed him, and they were in a hurry to find a match for their daughter. They considered him appropriate. Without much ado, Kamala and Mr. Das were engaged in no time. One day, he suddenly pulled her to a corner, embraced her fiercely and forced her to reciprocate. But she was unsuccessful to respond and felt humiliated. She did not like his advances. She started pondering over her thoughtlessness in accepting to marry him. When invited by Kamala's father, Mr. Das came to Calcutta and stayed along with them for a week. They watched movies and dined at the best hotels. Kamala writes that his hands bruised her body and left blue and red marks on the skin. She was rendered speechless and did not know how to tackle the position. In spite of all this, their marriage went ahead as scheduled, all in a hurry.

My Story gives a picture of the Nair wedding ceremony, involving elaborate arrangements. Servants worked hard for days, painstakingly cleaning and scrubbing the whole household. Little mango trees with ripe fruits in the garden were uprooted and replanted in a row. A *shamiana* with thatched palm leaves was erected. Whole place was tinted with garlands of synthetic flower made of white paper. Cooks came from Calicut and prepared traditional sweets. Ample supply of fruits was arranged. *Ladoos* and fruits took up the space of a big room. Guests praised the magnificence of the whole agreement. Everyone agreed that

it was the largely expensive marriage of the year. Kamala's father beamed with gratification. But Kamala felt very uncomfortable with this kind of pomposity and pretentiousness. She didn't want any of the decorations and adornments for the wedding. She felt disgusted and remarked cynically regarding the extravagance. Kamala's grandmother got offended. She scolded Kamala that she should be grateful to her father for arranging such a grand wedding. She asked Kamala to go to her room and stay away from the festivities. The grandmother did not want the relatives get an impression that the bride was a tomboy with strange notions. Kamala felt insulted. She refused to hide in her room. She ran away to the servant's quarters and stayed there. She felt gloomy that she was used as a scapegoat in this hollow extravaganza.

In the early hours in the morning of the wedding day, a maidservant prepared the bathroom for the bridal bath. She placed two pots of oil, some lentil paste and the shampoo made of the leaves of the hibiscus.

Grandmother woke Kamala and gave instructions to apply oil on her body and prepare herself for the bridal bath. She said: 'You are the bride; people should not see you before your bath'. Kamala did not like such restrictions. Without even looking at the elaborate arrangements, she washed herself in a hurry using soap and dressed in a white saree. The relatives were aghast to watch this misdemeanour. They exclaimed that she did not look like a bride, that she was all too plain. All these incidents

demonstrate Kamala's urge not to accept the family traditions blindly. Any other girl in her place would have probably indebted the elders by trying to please them. But Kamala was different. She was bold enough to follow her beliefs honestly, without any compromises.

In spite of the rebuttal on Kamala's part, the marriage was celebrated on a grand scale. The wedding night turned out to be big a nightmare to Kamala when her worst fears came true. She describes the beastly behaviour of her husband on his first night with her, in the following lines:

Then without warning he fell on me, surprising me by extreme brutality of the attack. I tried unsuccessfully to climb out of his embrace. Then bathed in perspiration and with my heart palpitating wildly, I begged him to think of God. This is our wedding night, we should first pray to Krishna, I said. He stared at me in disbelief. ... (Das 89)

Kamala was completely unprepared for this kind of vicious onslaught on her body and mind. She suffered from a flurry of emotions ranging from helplessness, rejection, and bitterness. Within a month, Kamala was entirely tired. She felt that she grew old abruptly. Her face changed from a child's to a woman's. Her limbs were sore and fatigued. She came face to face with the male ego that brutalised herein every way it could. Soon, Kamala came to Bombay to live along with her husband. They moved into a small apartment hired by his friends, on a shared basis. They employed a part time cook who prepared rice and curry

for the breakfast and returned in the evening to prepare for the dinner. After her husband and his friends left for office, she was the lone person idling in the flat, hungry and miserable throughout the day. She had to adjust to the hard life of Bombay as a housewife.

She received her ill fate in marrying the kind of person he was. Nonetheless, she became totally submissive, like any typical Indian housewife. It was a complete submission to a man. She tried to love and respect her husband, even though he was indifferent and unkind to her. Whenever she narrated any of her problems, he mocked that she should go back to Kerala, to her grandmother's house. He did not think of sharing her problems or consoling her. She failed to overcome her feelings of inferiority and neglect. She writes:

My husband was nearly all the time away touring in the outer districts. Even while he was with me, we had no mental contact with each other. If at all I began to talk of my unhappiness, he changed the topic immediately and walked away.... (My Story, p.161).

Kamala became pregnant. Continuous vomiting made her condition worse. She went back to Kerala. She delivered a baby son without any untoward incidents. She felt elated and wrote to her husband, inviting him to come and see the baby. However, Mr. Das ignored her letters. He came to Kerala to see the baby only after her persistent requests. The animal within him was not ready to accept an intrusion of a baby in his pleasures of

marriage. He shouted at her that he was unable to sleep at night due to all that noise from the child and Kamala's fussing overtures. He demanded that the infant should be moved away. He spent most of his time with his cousins and his sister-in-law, paying very little attention to his wife. At night, he returned like a chieftain and ruthlessly demanded for sexual pleasures. He did not show any concern to her subtle health after delivery. He finished his act without any exhilarations or appreciations, as if he was collecting the taxes due from her. This kind of repeated brutality, humiliation and indifference from her companion provoked her in the path of feminism.

After this miserable episode, Mr. Das left for Bombay. Within a few days, Kamala also followed along with her baby. Her mother-in-law too came with her Bombay to stay with them. She was a typical mother in law, orthodox, snobbish, dominating, interfering in every activity. She clogged Kamala going to the terrace, where some girls of the neighbouring apartments used to practise singing and dancing. She was too mean to concede to Kamala even a simple moment satisfaction like meeting her neighbours. Kamala Das writes that the mother-in-law plays a very important role in the Nair community.

She frequently resents the daughter-in-law as a rival, as a threat to her household. She starts suspecting that she has lost her son's attention. Jealousy and excessive self-interest mask and overpower her reasoning ability. She tends to control the daughter-in-law in an iron-grip, though normal with others.

Whenever Kamala Das could escape from this kind of vigil, she met new people and felt relieved.

She writes the following to explain her association with new friends in the new environment: In their company I forgot the bitterness of life and became for a short hours the carefree person that I was before I came to Bombay. My mother-in-law sulked, for she felt that I was spending too much time away from my child and my domestic responsibilities. Whenever she said disgruntled things my husband grew angry, and his anger was directed against meant the baby. ...

(My Story, p. 97-98.)

When the mother-in-law's disappointment grew, Kamala noticed that the servants started grumbling; her husband started avoiding her company. He almost decided to send her back to Malabar along with the baby son. The gap between the husband and wife was widening. Finally Kamala felt so desperate that she grew suicidal. She sent her cook to the drugstore to buy some barbiturates. She survived from this tragedy only since she botched to get them without prescriptions.

During Kamala's absence, Mr. Das sold their house. He did not feel the need of consulting her, even for important matters that affected her life. They enthused to a rented place. He left for his office before nine in the morning and returned at ten at night, well after their baby son fell asleep. He had no time for the baby. He despised the baby crying at night and shouted angrily. Kamala felt so depressed that she started thinking of

divorce. Mr. Das called her mad and started an amorous relation with one of their female friends. On Kamala's birthday, they shoved her out of her bedroom and locked themselves in. Kamala felt totally betrayed. This kind of agony prepared her to write poetry in protest, like the one below which she sent to Indian P. E. N:

Wipe out the paints, unmould the clay  
Let nothing remain of that yesterday.....(Das 10)

Kamala slipped into a phase of poor health. 'Like a hibiscus shedding its dark petals', her 'poor body shed red clots on the bath room floor, and no amount of rest did it any good'. She was taken to the hospital and was operated to save her from haemorrhage. She became further temperamental. She wished to run away from her home and run away from the world. She went to the isolated seashore and sat there for hours, thinking. Sometimes she shed her clothes in total abandonment, regarding them as traps. Mr. Das was worried and consulted a psychiatrist to treat her for nervous breakdown. He failed to realise that it was his very brutality and indifference that drove her to this kind of insane tragedy. All these distressed circumstances forced Kamala to seek love and comfort from others around. She started questioning herself why she should always be a dutiful wife; why she should be submissive. Unlike the traditional women, she braved to go with other men as a mark of protest against her husband. She became a rebel against the society that imposed inhibitions over her as a woman. She writes that she fell in love

with a handsome man with whom she played tennis. This relationship seemed extremely idyllic. The young man refused to 'dishonour' her body in spite of her seductive invitations.

When he went to Delhi, he wrote her a sentimental letter, and her husband got angry. When she was alone in the mornings, she painted in oils. But she felt that her mind was preoccupied with love and sex all throughout. She found that several men were craving for her companionship. A delegate, who had come to attend a course in Bombay, visited their house regularly for dinner. When she had a severe headache, he gave her a soothing massage and comforted herein his best capacity.

Kamala Das opened herself to a liberal attitude in her life. Whenever possible, she bought books and started reading. She became a regular writer. She wrote poems in English, which were published in *Illustrated Weekly of India*. She wrote almost two stories a week in Malayalam. They were published in *Mathrubhumi* under the penname of *Madhavikutty*. Strangely, even Mr. Das, in spite of the projection of his negative role in her writings, appreciated her poems and became a proud supporter. This encouraged her to continue with her literary aspirations. He often disclosed to their Parsi family doctor that she was writing stories, all about their community. He became a passionate and eager lover too. At night, they used to go to the old joint Volga for dancing. There was this aged foreign friend - old enough to be her father, who joined them and danced with her, while her husband watched them sleepily from his table. He

used to bring strings of flowers and she liked them.

Mr. Das was transferred to Calcutta to serve a term of three years. Kamala accompanied him to Calcutta. She was exposed to a world of hollow cocktail parties patronised by the city's rich personalities and high-ranking government officers. She found these parties nauseating, often making her lose faith in the essential goodness of human beings. There were intoxicated men who volunteered to rub the backs of the ladies, offering to tidy up their faces. They were eager to fondle all soft parts by extending their hands everywhere.

Kamala found a kind-hearted old gentleman living in their neighbourhood. When Kamala Das was suffering from rheumatism, he came to solace her. He massaged her affected leg. There was a visitor from Bombay who made sexual advances to her. When she revealed this to Mr. Das, he did not take it seriously. He laughed and advised her to simply become 'choosy about her mates'. On one autumn day, she opened the door and was surprised to find a new visitor at her doorsteps. It was Carlo, her pen-friend, whom she knew only through correspondence till then. She met this 'short-statured God' from Italy in person for the first time. Soon their friendship grew. When her husband was away on his duties, she wrote to Carlo explaining her loneliness. She attended a cocktail party to come out of boredom and gulped too much of chilled beer. She did not want to face her children at home in such intoxicated condition. Instead, she went to the hotel where Carlo was staying. She spent the night

in his company. All this suggests that she was constantly in search of genuine companionship, which was scarce and precious to her.

Although she hated 'the corrupt atmosphere of Calcutta', she acquired a lot of occurrence of life there. She became bold and was recognised as a poet, distinguishing herself from others. She realised the importance of maintaining a close rapport with the readers. She mentions:

The writers cannot close their shops like shopmen and return home. Their shop is their mind and as long as they carry it with them, they feel the pressures and the torments. A poet's raw material is not stone or clay; it is her personality. ... (My Story, p. 157).

Mr. Das was sent to Delhi on deputation. Kamala too moved along. This was a period of transition in her life as a writer. They lived in a flat adjacent to a slum area. She watched the slum dwellers cooking their meals. She heard their loud wailing when somebody died. She met a handful of friends who were well read and intellectuals used to go out with her friends to watch English plays, foreign films and art exhibitions. Mr. Das made no objections to her social activities. There was a young man whom she met regularly, a drama critic who resembled Mark Anthony in his looks. Whenever she looked depressed, he took her out for a stroll. For the first time she saw the eunuchs dancing. She saw prostitutes gaudily painted like cheap toys in the bazaar. She became sensitive and emotional. Her best poetry was

produced whenever there was emotional disturbance or when she was extremely happy. She brought her experiences of life into her writings.

While in Delhi, she became pregnant again and went to Calicut to join her parents. She felt that her parents and relatives had distanced themselves away from her. Her sister was getting married and the house was 'guttled with visitors'. She was unable to have any privacy and rest. She locked herself inside her room, busy writing.

Her parents were afraid and did not know what to say. She remained nonchalant and undeterred from her chosen path. After the delivery of second son, Kamala Das returned to Delhi. Her health deteriorated. Her skin had turned dark and scaly. Her voice thinned to a whisper. She looked like a moulting bird. She writes that even her baby son got frightened and burst out crying. But she wanted to 'live for a few more years and be able to see my little son play about on the green lawn'. She prayed to God that she would live an exemplary life if He spared her. After three years of his service in Calcutta, Mr. Das was transferred back to Bombay

### **Imagery and Symbols**

Works of Kamala Das are distinguishable because of rich imagery and symbols used by her, captivating the commotions going on in her mind. She draws these images from everyday life, while expressing her passion and feminist feelings. These

images function as windows to her heart and soul. They enable her to establish an easy rapport with the readers by depicting the depth of her turmoil even with a minimum use of words. One of the recurring images used by Kamala Das is that of the human body, equating it to various other objects and forms in our daily life. Male body represents lust and exploitation, whereas the female body symbolises submissiveness, suffering and humiliation. For example,

...ask me why his hand sways like a hooded  
snake Before it clasps my pubis. Ask me why like  
A great tree, felled, he slumps against my  
breasts, And sleeps. ( Das 10)

She conveys a sense of disgust for the male's behaviour. In 'Gino', she compares the lover to a venomous reptile. His kiss is like the krait's bite, sucking blood from the female body. 'Freaks' is another such example where she expresses her dislike of the male:

He talks, turning a sun-stained Cheek to me,  
his mouth, a dark Cavern. Where stalactites of  
Uneven teeth gleam, (Das 25)

The imagery of the trained dog suggests her submissiveness as a wife who is confined to her routine work:

.. I am a trained circus dog  
Jumping my routine hoops each day.....  
(Das 12) Snake is associated with lust  
and greed. For example,



... The heart an empty cistern, waiting  
Through long hours, fills itself  
With coiling snakes of silence... (Das 15)

Another image is that of the sun, which is often repeated to explain excessive sexual passion and indulgence. Instead of warming, the sun burns away the writer, destroying her whole identity - just as the male spoils the freshness of the female body:

Shut my eyes, but inside eye-lids,  
there was No more light, no more love,  
or peace, only The white, white sun  
burning. (Das 17)

Here, the white sun symbolises the envy of the male. The hunger of the flesh is portrayed in the metaphor in the following lines:

.....On the old  
Cannon stand, crows bickered over a piece Of  
lizard-meat and the white sun was there And  
everywhere. (Das 07)  
Scorching sun indicates enmity and  
excessive sexual feelings: The sun swells;  
then Swollen like a fruit  
It runs harsh silver threads Lengthwise,  
my afternoon Dream. (Das 13)  
In the poem 'The Conflagration', the  
lovers are hot suns with excessive  
feeling of excitement of which the poet

wants it to be burnt out:

We came together like two suns  
meeting, and each Raging to burn the other  
out The Conflagration

Fire symbolises frustration and death:

...My eyes lick at you like flames, my nerves  
Consume; and, when I finish with you, in the  
Pram, near the tree and, on the park bench,  
I spit Out small heaps of ash, nothing else (Das 16)

The symbol of the sea dominates some of her poems. Her wish to combine with the vast sea is similar to her search of her lover who can shower love on her. In the poem Suicide, the poet holds a dialogue with the sea and surrenders her soul to the sea. Unlike the other men, the sea is capable of accepting her, even though her body and soul have become grave with suffering and humiliation. She writes,

... go swim in the sea,  
go swim in the great blue sea.

Where the first tide you meet  
is your body, That familiar pest,

But if you learn to cross it

You are safe, yes, beyond it you  
are safe. For, even sinking would make  
no difference Then. .... (Das 22)

In the above lines, we can see that her desire to combine into the sea is identical to her search for a right man. Use of

imagery is a significant feature of Kamala Das. She is very effective in expressing the perturbing experience of lust and frustration. For instance, that was the only kind of love, This hacking at each other's parts

Like convicts hacking, breaking clods

At noon. We were earth under hot Sun.

There was a burning in our Veins and the cool

mountain nights did Nothing to lessen heat. (Das 21)

The poetry of Kamala Das is written on the subject of her childhood, her marriage, her displeasure with her husband, her sexual relationship with other men which for her is a consolation for her suffering in love through frustration and disillusionment etc. Her poetry is a kind of psychological striptease. She discloses that the theme of most of her poems is man-woman relationship and the openness about her own sex life. She appears to be a sex eager rebel. Being a poet of love and pain, she writes about the experiences of anger, humiliation, sexual torture, sickness, loneliness and frustration.

There is further sophisticated organization of the experiences related to her frustrated life. That is why she thinks about the decompose of her life. Her experiences are the real incentive for her poetry. She is a careful artist who is mainly guided by her impulse and instinct for precise and harmonious words. She is completely aware of the value of words and their finer shades of meaning. Her poems are similar in theme but unusual in images. Her skill of using images, phrases, words

appears to be very effectual. She can make delicate distinction in picking up or turning down her words and phrases.

In order to delineate her own sex life she often uses animal imagery which appears to be highly evocative and impressive. These images interpret the interior meaning of her sex life. Through these images she achieves the purpose, which she wants to present before the world. The images can be distinguished into those of the pet animals and those of the untamed animals. Her enthusiastic observation of the nature of animal as compared to men and women gives birth to the sameness in their nature. The wild animal imagery stands for the rude, cruel nature of her lovers, particularly her husband. The pet animals broadly symbolize the bound, subordinated, dependant and useless life of women in general and poetess in particular. Some of the explicit pet animals like 'a sparrow', 'a cat', 'a dog', 'a horse', 'a dove' and 'a puppet' are generally used by Kamala Das. These animals are weak creatures, which are overpowered by their masters. They have no choice to choose their way of life. On the contrary 'a lion' stands for kingly command, the strength of body and unkindness equated with her husband and therefore she questions her husband's comprise with the lion. These powerful images build up her poems and thoughts. Her idea about life is very clear to the reader due to the proper use of different images. She deserves high admire for her choice of words and images for the writing of her poem.

According to Kamala Das women are like these pet animals in the houses of their husbands. They are over-ruled by their husbands. Women don't have any liberty to ask any question. This is the occurrence of Kamala Das in her married life. She is like a doll in the hands of her lovers and husband. For her husband she is only an object of sex. He never cared for her feelings. His manner of making love to her is disgusting like 'a libertine' who crushed her innocent body without understanding her emotions. She is astounded by his strong attack. She tried unsuccessfully to come out of his clinch.

He made sex with intense brutality. His hand sways like 'hooded Snake'. She becomes fearful. The whole brutal behaviour makes her bold. She hates her husband and his brutal ways of sex. She never hides her own sex experiences and those of her husband. She expresses her distress with harsh sounds. She asks herself why she behaves like this? Why does she use bitter words for her husband? She writes about it in her poem "The Stone Age" :

Ask me, everybody ask me

What he sees in me, ask me why he is called a  
lion, A libertine, ask me the flavour of his

Mouth, ask me why his hand sways like hooded snake....  
Why life is short and love is shorter still. ( Das51)

Her husband neglects her emotions. What would a wife do when the husband is "indifferent" to her emotional needs. The husband is a eternal irritant an unwelcome intruder into the

privacy of the wife's mind and body which is also haunted by other men.

Her pain is that every man seduced her but no one loved her. She accompanies many men whom she likes. She identifies the divergence between the male psyche and the female psyche dealing with love and sex. She concludes that the woman loves and the man seduces. 'Love' has no meaning in the life of man. Every bed-partner uses her for his physical satisfaction. They are egotistic and lack emotions. They leave her for quiet weeping. No one has taken time out to ask about her trouble and emotions. They are pitiless. They never know the importance of love. Kamala Das suggests it in her poem 'The Losing Battle', that men are 'worthless' and a woman should use the cheapest bait to trap them:

How can my love hold him when the  
other Flaunts a gaudy lust and is lioness

To his Beast? Men are worthless, to trap  
them. Use cheapest bait at all, but never

Love. Which in a woman must means  
tears. And a silence in the blood (Das 12)

As a wife, she feels nervous against the massive ego and brutality of her husband. She becomes terrified whenever she is in the arms of her husband. The middle theme of her poems is her painful experience of being a woman. What has stirred her receptive psyche is the dehumanization of the woman as a being. She is an object of her husband's game of sex. Sex for him is

nothing but a game for his special enjoyment. He has used her to satisfy his sexual desire.

She has had a hurting experience during the sex. Her marriage floundered right from the start due to her husband who according to her devoted all his time to the official files and no leisure to spare for his sensitive wife who used to hanker for a compliment in love, for an emotional attachment. Lack of this emotional connectivity in sex is insufferable for her. Her own bed has not given her solace either. The pangs of her body during the sex and after are indescribable.

Her invisible sorrow is mute for others. The sound of her spirit refers to her expectation of love, which never materialized. In 'Cat in the gutter' she writes that in the act of love-making her private part is offended. The body was compressed by him and he slept. He never thought about her wounds. She was just like "a high bred kitten" in his strong arms. He fully enjoyed her body. She regards herself as a weak pet animal:

Cowardice was his favourite diet  
So who would tell him that when he made love,  
Grunting, groaning, sighing, with no soul to overpower  
me, Only his limbs and his robust lust  
I was just a high bred kitten  
Rolling for fun in the gutter. .... ( Das 99)

She has botched to get love outside her home. She had studied the deeds of her husband and his lust. Then she had studied the other men as well. The result of all is that there is no

sauntonomy from the imprisonment of the world of lust. Only sexual humiliation and frustration are present in the world. There is the predictable pain and defeat in her life. She had truly loved her husband in the hope that he would love her too. But she no longer loves him because he proved to be a egotistic man. He showed himself to be a keen and relentless viewer when in sheer desperation, she acquired other lovers and went to bed with them. She calls her husband "a ruthless watcher". Being fed up with her husband because of his lack of love for her, she turned to other men. He never uttered any word after watching her with other men. She never hesitates to admit her illicit relations and even offers a close description of her lovers' sprouted hair on chest. She compares it with "great winged moths" in which she hides her face as like tiny animals digging into the earth in order to hide themselves in it. She is conscious that what she is doing is shameful. On Kamala Das's search for ideal love and lover, Kamala Das's search for ideal love and lover, Sunanda Chavan rightly observes:

Kamala Das's search for ideal love and the resultant disappointment seem to involve the psychological phenomenon of "the animus" struggling to project the masculine imprint as interpreted by Jung. The attempt to seek in every lover the perfection of masculine being is destined to end in failure because of the impossibility of realizing the ideal human form. (Chavan 64)

In "The Sunshine Cat" she speaks of the injustice meted

out to women where again the dominant motif is suffering. She believes that the society is aggressive to women and that they are humiliated in all possible ways. Her own husband whom she loved, did not love her in revisit

.....the man

She loved, who loved her not enough  
being selfish And a coward, the husband  
who neither loved nor Used her, but was  
ruthless watcher, and the band Of cynics she  
turned to clinging to their chests where New  
hair sprouted like great – winged moths,  
burrowing her Face into their smells and  
their young lusts to forget To forget, oh to  
forget ... and, they said, each of

Them. I do not love, I cannot love, it is not

In my nature to love, but I can be kind  
to you ..... They let her slide from pegs of  
sanity into

A bed made soft with tears .... (Das 22)

The same poem again contains some vivid imagery of her sexual occurrence. After a explanation of the bushy chest of young lovers who had allowed her to slide from “Pegs of Sanity” into the bed made soft with tears, the poem then follows the vivid picture of her husband’s cruel nature. Locking her inside a room of books every morning before going to office and unlocking the room only in the evening. She recalls herself “a

yellow cat”. A ray of sunshine fell at the door of that room, and the ray of sunshine was the only friendship she had. Time passed, winter came and then she lost her “sunshine”. This appears to be symbolic:

Her husband shut her

In, every morning, locked her in a room of  
books With a streak of sunshine, lying near the door,  
like. A yellow cat, to keep her company, but soon,  
Winter came and one day while locking her in, he  
Noticed that the cat of sunshine was only a

Lone, a hair-thin line, and in the evening when He  
turned to take her out, she was a cold and

Half-dead woman, now of no use at all to men. (Das 22)

After frequent encounters like this and also as a result of her husband’s continued ill treatment to her, she lost her capacity for enjoying the sexual act. Her specification is described as that of a “half-dead woman” who is of “no use at all to men”. She becomes worthless for the men with whom she might have slept for sexual pleasure. There is a leading feeling that she has been used as a sex object by every man with whom she was on intimate terms. Her emotions form a cage with herself as the caged animal. She is not embarrassed to call herself ‘a bitch’ in the world of lust. Her husband is accountable for this condition. In her loneliness and frustration no one is interested in consoling her. In this pathetic and unbearable situation she needs emotional support by her husband but it doesn’t happen in her

life.

Kamala Das is always waiting for the love of her husband as well as that of others. Unfortunately she has harsh experiences in the world. Her husband treats her harshly which she never forgets in her whole life. Sex for her is an unavoidable phenomenon leading to her infidelity. Her husband is responsible for it. A critic, Dhar T. N., writes it in appropriate words:

The husband is not merely a cowardly and selfish person, but a jealous and ruthless watcher. When she goes out in search of love to young people, she is frankly told by them that they cannot give love to her, but only lust. The husband punishes her brutally till she returns into a “cold and half-dead woman”, whether she is in a house or on a corridor, acutely conscious of her need for love. (Dhar 27)

Kamala Das experiences utilization of woman as a wife. Regarding this subject she calls herself “a swallo” in the poem “The Old Playhouse”. Her husband had planned to tame her. The image of swallo and flight is properly used to express her feminine experience particularly as a wife. She is leap by the rules of her husband and that of the society. She is trapped in a cage of her husband like a bird. Her urge to fly and her pre-occupation with self, both are reduced gradually for she becomes the victim of male lust.

You planned to tame a swallo, to hold her

In the long summer of your love so that she would

forget Not the raw seasons alone, and the homes left behind, but Also her nature, the urge to fly, and the endless pathways of the sky. (Das 1)

Kamala Das's failure in married life, her extra-marital relationship, her revolt and pathos is depicted in the poems through varied images. Her sex experience with each one of them is unacceptable. She realizes that all men are the same by nature. They like the body of woman rather than her feelings. In one of her poems, 'Gino', she refers to her western friend whom she has gifted her womanliness. She loves him, feels secure in his arms but afterwards she knows the actuality. He likes to seduce her not for love but for bodily pleasures. He is a moody person, uses bitter words to her. She obeys his demands without uttering the word. He enjoys the sex. He never heard the silent weeping of Kamala Das. Her search of love outside the home is ineffective. Everyone plays the game of sex with her. Accompanied by the white English lover Carlo, she feels herself to be a pathetic creature of the world. Her unsound weeping is like “a homeless cat's wail”.

I shall polish the panes of his moody eyes,  
And jealous moods, after bitter words and  
rage, I shall wail in his nerves, as homeless  
cat's wail From the rubble of a storm. But  
one only gets the life one deserves and  
dreams only such dreams as The old soul  
can comprehend. (Das23)

Kamala Das's past memories of her grandmother and her childhood memories can never be alienated from her poems. Whenever the personal feels alone, her past days console her. Her grandmother was an ideal woman for her. She recalls the house where she once used to live with her grandmother who was quite fond of her and from whom she received a lot of love. The poem "My Grandmother's House" offers a striking contrast between her childhood days with grandmother and her present life as a grown up woman. As a little girl, too young to read, she enjoyed her grandmother's love, while now she gets no love from anybody and therefore feels as if she had lost her way in life. Her sense of loss is intense. So she has a feeling of dispossession. Once she had visited the deserted house of her dead grandmother, all that the poetess remembered of the visit are her past sweet recollections. She felt that she would gather a heap of darkness and calm and to take it to her city residence where she would only lie down in her bedroom in a contemplative mood, looking like "a brooding dog" which seems to be lost in contemplation.

There is a house now far away where once  
I received love That woman died,  
The house withdrew into silence, snakes  
moved..... pick an armful of Darkness to bring  
it here to lie Behind  
my bedroom door like a brooding Dog .....you cannot  
believe, darling, Can you, that I lived in such a house and Was

proud, and loved (Das 32)

The house boasted of a immense personal library and her incapacity to read the books as a child brought only regrets to her mind. This is certainly an agonising thought to her as far as the poet is concerned. The comparison with a brooding dog is not a happy one. This is a descent from the sublime into the pathetic. She deliberately used this imagery with full awareness of what it implies.

Marriage is an institution, which is based on the communal understanding between the husband and the wife. But in the Indian context it is ruled by the husband. Both, men and women are socialized to the basic patriarchal policies with regard to the status, role and disposition. Women cannot get equal status and dignity from the men. They are not ready to change their attitude. It must be changed when they have solid relationship in any condition and respect one another as a man or woman and also as a human being.

Kamala Das is also a sufferer of this patriarchal society. She faces many tribulations like other women. She recognizes that love is a very weak implement to keep the marriage alive. The woman's body is a powerful stick to hold her husband strongly. Her faith in marriage and husband is lost. In the deficiency of any pleasure whatsoever, the poet is reminded of the old grandmother in whom she identifies all the lost love in her life. She pleads to all women to kneel down before the male ego since it is implicit in the society of marriage. In her opinion

the house of lust is nothing but “a merry dog house”. She writes in her poem entitled ‘Composition’, Husband and wives, here is my advice to you.

Obey each other’s crazy commands, ignore the sane.  
Turn your home into a merry dog house,  
marriage is meant to be all this being  
arranged in most humorous heaven. (Das 8)

The ‘Composition’, ironically throws light on one’s existence which one suffers endlessly without any hope. The Indian believes marriage is being arranged in heaven. But for Kamala it is arranged in ‘humorous heaven’. It symbolizes the humour of her married life. It is one’s growth and awareness that causes the tragic catastrophe.

This thought of Kamala Das appears to be closer to Hindu belief in Karmik cycle according to which one suffers one’s prescribed share as a result at the wrongs done and sins committed during myriad cycles of births and deaths. The poem finds expansion of meaning, acquiring, new dimensions of thought and feeling.

Loveless marriage of Kamala Das is very painful for her. Her yearning of sex is not fulfilled by her husband. Sex with love seems to be the need of her heart. Germane Greer discusses about love and marriage:

Loveless marriage is anathema to our culture, and a life without love is unthinkable ..... it is axiomatic that all married couples are in love with each other. (Greer 222)

Her poems focus on the double standards of social morality, on power politics and power imbalance in sexual relationships and on a number of related social issues. It attempts to underscore the problems women face in a sexist culture. In a man’s world a woman is little more than an object that plays a marginalized role. Marriage, thus, came to Kamala Das as a retribution. She is well aware of the subordination of a woman in the world of men. She changes her love partners to bring change in her life but it doesn’t work. To show her pathos in this bitter world, she uses the imagery of dog in her poems like ‘Composition’, ‘My Grandmother’s House’, ‘In Calcutta’ and others.

Kamala Das becomes upset due to the social set up which brings no value to women in the family and the society. She is not treated as a human being. She says that every woman is trained by her family members as well as her husband to follow up their rules.

Kamala Das is one of them who had trained herself to carry out the duties of a wife in a docile manner. She has no liberty to express her inner feelings that she wants. She is obliged to live under the control of her husband like the pet animals do as per their master’s wish. This appears to her to be the stipulation of each and every woman. Therefore Kamala Das compares a woman with “a trained circus dog” in “The Moon”:

It is a trained circus dog  
That shall never miss its hoop.



Endlessly healing, it waits for

The new day's wounds ..... (Das 21)

She depicts her husband as a brute seeking, the gratification of his lust and of course, satisfying her sexual yearning also in the process and yet leaving her sorely dissatisfied and frustrated because of the complete absence of emotion from his manner of performing the sexual act. Now there is a large gap between them. They haven't any attachment. Their husband – wife relation is nominal. For the society Kamala Das and her husband is a couple like any other married couple. She is far away from him and involved in other men. Now she doesn't need his company for sexual contentment. She ironically says in 'My Dog':

The poodle, a solitary fruit On the top branch  
of our bed, Just a pearly glow against the pillow.

I told him, my husband for thirty  
years, Father, the children are all  
grown up And gone. Only the dog  
sleeps between us now. (Das 20)

For Kamala Das, the lover is an acme of accomplishment and excellence. Love brings an endless gratification in "Love". It is an all satisfying experience, which seems to end all quests of the poet:

Until I found you,  
I wrote verse, drew  
pictures, And, went out with friends for walk .....  
Now that I love you,

Curled like an old  
mongrel My life lies,  
content,

In you.....(Das 23)

Now her life is evocative because of her lover. She is involved in him. She has had mixed experiences with lovers and husband. In few of her poems depiction her anger and hatred about male partners. But sometimes she is pleased with her lover. Her mind is unstable. One of her poems 'Grey Hound' expresses the confusion in her mind. Her mind is not constant. She thinks about life in dissimilar types. Her mind is like a racing dog. She says:

Mind Lean greyhound, Awaking  
And leaping up (Das 19)

Most of the animal images in her poetry are connected with her dissatisfied life, agony; disappointment and she anger towards men specially her husband. She portrays the sensible picture of her life.

She has the pressures on her mind, which are generally found in a woman. Every married woman has a dejected psychology. But she doesn't have the courage to open it to society. She hides her suffering because of the habitual impact on her mind. Kamala Das, the poetess, has to face all the feminine problems without any hesitation and fear. Sex relations, consequent quarrels, and likes and dislikes are secret issues, making them a public issue is immoral and unconventional in

the Indian context. But in the opinion of the poet, it is the universal problem of every woman.

Her husband fulfils his yearning at his will, and she must surrender to him every time. She is like a bird in the cage of marriage she has an urge to fly in the sky of freedom. But she turns into “a bird of stone”, “a granite dove”. Her husband builds the net of rules around her. Her mind weeps for freedom. Her offended mind becomes tired and soulless. Her body is a body without spirit. Her husband does not create any hurdle regarding free love-sex. Das boldly and honestly states in “The Stone Age”:

Fond husband, ancient settler in the mind,  
Old fat spider, weaving webs of bewilderment,  
Be kind, you turn me into a bird of stone,  
a granite Dove,.....(Das 51)

Kamala Das’s failure to create an eternal bond and realise the meaning of existence is at the root of her existential despair. Her throbbing and emotional life is torn between dual loyalties to the self and non-self. The epithets “ancient settler” and “old fat spider” are too much pregnant with disrespect to shake the web off which a spider, by implication weaves around itself. This is sarcastically preceded by a better sounding address “fond husband” which heightens the irony through the device of contrast. Indeed her own identity is expressed as a “bird of stone” and a “granite dove” which gain in effect through the collocation of opposites, innocence and tenderness in contrast to hardness

and granite. This is a juxtaposition of the sign of peace with that of death. Her interior urge to fly cannot be fulfilled. It is an continuous torture which she experiences in her life with her many lovers. She has to accept it. She can’t run away herself from this world which is formed by men in a manner suitable for them. This experience generates the comprehension of the real life, in a poem entitled ‘Composition’:

.....Even  
oft - repeated moves of every scattered  
cell will give no power  
to escape from cages of involvement (Das 10)

Once a woman married, she has no option regarding her likes and dislikes. It is inescapable for her. The definition of marriage in social circumstance is the way of physical satisfaction. Love comes after sex. Kamala Das has a harsh experience about it. She ironically advises women in a poem entitled ‘Composition’:

fall in love  
fall in love with an unsuitable person,  
Fling yourself on him like a moth on a flame.  
Let there be despair in every move. Excavate  
Deep, deep pain. (Das 9)

The poetry of Kamala Das must be viewed in the light of feminine awareness. She is almost exclusively concerned with the individual experiences of love. She is aware of her husband’s misleading nature. She can’t trust in his words when he flatters

her. She asserts in a poem entitled 'Herons':

On sedatives

I am more lovable Says my husband

My speech becomes mistladen terrain

The words emerge tintured with sleep

They rise from the still coves of dreams

In unhurried flight like herons.... (Das 105)

Her feelings arise from the darkness of her heart. He never heard her nor praised her but when he called her 'loveable' she could not respond. Her words are very pitiable to come out and take the wings. Her manner, thoughts and the words are like the condition of "herons". It suggests the incapacity of the poet and her misfortune. Terror of sex, its attraction and revulsion are forcefully expressed in a poem entitled 'Gino' using the imagery of krait for her lover.

You will perish from his kiss, he said as one must surely die, when bitten by krait who fills

The bloodstream with its accursed essence, I was quiet, For once, my tongue had fainted in my mouth. (Das 13)

She expresses a sense of disgust of the male habits and dealing. The lover's kiss is compared with a krait's bite in order to articulate the horror of sex. The lover is like a reptile who keeps on sucking feminine body. Love as it is manifested in her life generates a sense of death thus one feels that it is very difficult to draw a demarcation line between life and death as well as love and desire. There is a wish to experience love but it

turns poisonous even outside marriage. A line "I was quiet" symbolizes her defeat in love.

Her sexual companionship gives a temporary sense of security and shelter because it saves her from aloneness. She feels that the kind of solitude she suffers from turns her house into a abscond. Her lovers are like "seasonable insects". Once her heart was dancing in the company of lovers. Her disloyal sex experiences are sweet but deadly. But sometimes she feels it to be solid and sometimes as an unpleasurable thing. This one makes her a poor creature of the world. Regarding this the subsequent lines from 'The Survivor' are highly significant: Her friends were romantics, they watched her survive A certain love and became her secret foes

Like seasonal insects her kind were required To die when the singing was its best, and

The dance was sweetest frenzy. Kill, if you must But in a tender way this month that escaped

The legitimate holocaust (Das 61)

It highlights the miseries of a pitiful woman. The men treated her roughly. She has not received love from her illegal orbits; she is totally alone and frustrated. Those who claimed to be kind towards her had only subjected her to mortification and injury. Act of love with them is a meaningless sexual encounter.

According to her a woman should be honest about her wants and necessities and then it would be easy for her to get a

man to love her. But it is very torturous for her. She began to feel a great emotional blankness. She is dissatisfied with these bitter experiences of life. This short-lived love injured her. She loses her mental stability. It is her suffering of life. She has dishonored these social norms due to her husband.

Indian women are positioned on a pedestal for worship on the one hand and treated badly and enslaved on the other. They are cheerful to live in the four walls of the house, looking after the kitchen and the children. But Kamala Das is not a woman of this category. She throws out these customary norms. She chooses the way of liberty. She has a firm need to move towards liberation. She seeks her individual place. It is captivity in the familial set up that the poet finds dissatisfying. Her mind moves to freedom from those bondages.

The path which she has chosen is not accepted by the society. She never cares about it. She forgets these things in her illness but again her mind is on the way of love. Her Nair family is a bunch paradox. Sex, in that community was not mentionable or a matter of talk. But Kamala Das never hides any side of her life. Her writing is an album of her private life. She confesses her deeds without hiding her actual issues. She feels miserable and angry due to the deceptive nature of the Persons of society. She bitterly comments in her poem 'Composition':

Reader You may say,  
now here is a girl with vast sexual hungers,  
a bitch after my own heart. But,

I am not yours for the asking. Grovel at my feet,  
remove you monkey – suits and dance sing Erato,  
Erato Erato, yet I shall be indifferent. Not  
because of morality but because  
I do not feel the need.... (Das 6)

A close reading of her poetry reveals the fact that most of her poems are full of anger and derision. Her poetry oozes from each word and each line. She admits her treachery but her anger against the society is expressed in the line 'remove your monkey suits'. She never finds sincerity in the nature of man. She does not call herself dishonest because her search for love is carried out on a different kind of morality like that of Lord Krishna. Kamala Das never finds love and compassion in the society. But people are selfish.

The spirit which has been waiting to be filled with "flamboyant lust" is forced to reconcile itself to merely 'coiling snakes of silence'. It expresses the woman's impatience and frustration with the man as well as the moment with the man because of his sexual incapacity and looseness. And thus if she has done the masculine role, if she flaunts "a grand flamboyant lust" (Das 11) it is to save her face, to redeem her female face.

She discovers that, after all, the pleasures, her body offers are of cloying and ephemeral scenery. A love, which accompaniments and thrives on body is bound to wither with it and the search for true love in a world of philanderers is a futile exercise. So she turns to the legendary world of Krishna and

Vrindavan to seek lasting love and fulfillment. She imagines herself as Radha and finds reassurance in the arms of imaginary Krishna.

She addresses Ghanshyam and tells him that he has built a nest in the garden of her heart and that her life, which was till now a silent and sleeping jungle, is now stirring with the sounds of harmony. Ghanshyam, she says, has been leading her along a route which she had never known before. In 'Ghanshyam' she recalls him:

Ghanshyam,  
You have like a koel built your nest in  
the harbour of my heart. My life, until  
now a sleeping jungle is at last astir with music. (Das 29)

The detachment from the world of reality and venturing in the world of imagination, the eternal longing for true love is the most important concern of her poem. The persona waits along for Krishna, the 'eternal lover' like the mythical 'Chataka' bird that waits for ever for the celestial water to quench thirst. The 'koel' building nest in the arbor of heart and her sleeping life being caressed with music are beautiful analogues stressing the sense of suffering and redemption through the custom bound images. The same poetic behaviour is perceptible in the image of fisherman's net in the following movement of the poem:

Shayam O Ghanshyam  
You have like a fisherman cast your net in the narrows  
Of my mind

And towards you my thoughts today  
Must race like enchanted fish ..... (Das 95)

The imagery of the "fisherman" and "enchanted fish" comes full loop. She prays to Lord Krishna to control her judgment and feelings. She wants to live in his net of pure love. According to her God is a lasting lover of the woman. He is worldwide. He is the huge fisherman, who cast his net in the depths of her mind and her thoughts are rushing towards him like a fish, which briskly enters the fisherman's net under some mysterious urge. Thus this poem reveals Kamala Das's spiritual longings which have been dormant in her and which have come to the surface as a significance of her sexual frustrations.

Many of her poems stress on the theme of death. When her life is insufferable for her she thinks about her death. Understanding of life includes understanding of death and in any attempt to understand and solve the mystery of human existence comprehension of death is highly vital. She understands that the body is troublesome in so far as it is matter bound and hence subject to many boundaries. It is a destructive thing. She admits the boundaries of the body. She also wants to underscore worthlessness of life, which leads to suffering, and thought of death. Now the poet has no capability to continue the tragic game. She is depressed. Her age does not help her to precede her interaction. Search of perfect love in a materialistic world is impossible. All the ways are closed. Her mind needs to take rest. Her situation resembles "an old horse". She has a negative attitude

about her life.

Of late my words have worn Thin,  
my speech resembles The tagged gallop of  
A cart horse that needs to Be reshod and perhaps  
Given rest, for, poor thing Its  
roads were arduous And its  
burden always Too heavy. An old  
horse,  
If lucky, dies on road....(Das 62)  
At the same time Kamala Das compares her language  
with birds:  
Words are birds.  
Where have they gone to roost,  
Wings, tired,  
Hiding from the dusk?.....  
When I lie down to sleep I am  
not sure That I shall see  
The blessed dawn again. ( Das 25)

Her poems are her individual topics of life in general but some of her poems focused on social set up. She is also aware of the social problems. The hierarchical power construction of the city is masculine in its authoritarian disregard for human sentiments. She speaks about the brutalizing aspects of the town experience. She highlights the social, political and partisan issues in the poems like 'The House Builders', 'Nani', 'Flag', 'Visitors to the City' and 'Pigeon' etc.

In her poem 'The House Builders' the manly authority of the urban manifests itself in its corrupting influence which turns its inhabitants into victims. The poet sympathises with these employees. These workers are the losses of the rude society. They have no shelter, nor enough clothes and foodstuff. There is nothing in their survival.

They are exploited by the superior class of the society. Her poem 'Pigeon's is the most excellent example of it. She writes: Pigeons on the ledge of an afternoon dream Sit strangely silent, The hot dust rises

Falls on sun-peaked beaks .... (Das 107)

She compares these pitiable people with 'the pigeon', which sit on the edge silently. They have no protection to protect them from the heat of sun. No one cares for them. When she has seen this poverty in India, she had commented on Indian Government and their policies.

She has depicted a very wretched condition of pitiable women. They have no protection of their life. The deprived woman is forever raped by the people of upper society and never gets justice. One of the significant poems where Kamala Das draws the reader's awareness to the suffering and humiliation which women are made to experience is 'Nani'. The focus of the poem is a pregnant housemaid hanging herself, due to the shame and honest severity of the society in which she lived. The spectacle of Nani hanging from a line is heart-rending which raises unanswerable questions:

Nani the pregnant maid hanged herself

In the privy one day. For three long hours Until the  
police came, she was hanging there A clumsy puppet, and  
when the wind blew Turning her gently on the rope. (Das40)

The image of clumsy puppet performing a humorist dance is noted for its vividness and also its suggestiveness. Nani, as is made obvious by the poet, has been a puppet in the hands of fate and the real culprit who has subjected her to such humiliation is of course the society and also its moral codes. She hangs from a rope as a helpless fatality to the designs of an “unknown citizen” and the effect produced in the eyes of children is comic. These depressed women have only the way of suicide. Many questions are raised in the mind of Kamala Das regarding this pitiable creature. After passing some years the poetess asks terrible question to her grandmother about Nani. She asks her whether she remembers Nani or not. Her grandmother replies she never knows Nani. It is very incomprehensible to Kamala Das. The Grandmother avoids to speak about Nani. Why does she ignore this pathetic creature? Death of Nani is worthless for the society. So Kamala Das has a readymade answer to explain this response. In ‘Nani’ she writes:

Each truth

Ends thus with a query. It is this

designed Deafness that turns mortality into Immortality,  
the definite into The soft indefinite. ( Das 40)

This harsh practice appears to have been one of initiation.

She moves from a world of virtuousness to a narrow, conservative way of life which prefers to suppress what is unpleasant and “inexplicable”. The tragedy of Nani is not that of an individual but it appears to be entire one. The woman is one of the victimised groups of the world. Nani, a woman of lower caste, and the poetess, from rich Nair family, are comparable in the eyes of the society. She writes that Nani is the comic subject for them because she is the awkward imitation for the society. It is a chief problem of womanhood. To put it momentarily, suffering and humiliation are undoubtedly the dominating themes in her poetry. Women’s exploitation in a male leading society is the major part of her poetry.

She airs her view with gallantry unparallel. Dependent life of woman is a reason of her tragedy. Her parents and husband are the makers of her existence. Her awakening about this realism makes her delicate. Due to this she is ridiculed by a hostile globe. This circumstance of woman is described through the image of pet animals in the poetry.

Kamala Das has a fine skill of using suitable images in proper places. She is affectionate of nature so she discovers similarities between varied animals, and woman. In the Indian circumstance once a woman married she is a guest for parents. Whatever the difficulty she has, she will not be back to her parents home. She has no right to live in parent’s house even if she likes. The similar thing happens in her life when she lives with her husband and bears discontented moments. She cannot

communicate it to her parents and lives with them. In the social context the husband is the master so she has to follow the rules under his assistance otherwise she has no place. She cannot express her sufferings to her parents. To her live with him till passing away is a compulsion for her. So the poet compares this with “a brooding dog”, “a homeless cat”, “a sparrow” to highlight its intensity.

Her images have deep sense. Using the images of beast, poisonous snake for lovers and husband the poet draws the brutal selfish and cruel nature of the male. Her husband and lovers are as brutal as the lion and the poisonous snake. The husband is the master of his wife. He has treated her as per his own wish. He imprisoned her in his cage of desire. Her dominant images show it. Kamala Das has emotions arrested in glowing words, phrases, expressions and she has a skill to turn out brilliant images and similes.

Her images are communicative and spontaneous. Phrases like “hooded snake”, “a ruthless weather” are suggestive and remarkable. Some of the negative images showing her frustration and defenselessness are more authentic in comparison to the images of freedom that she tries to draw. These images stress the fact that a woman has no location. Bird images express the image of harm woman and her urge of freedom from the cage of her husband, a wicked animal. No doubt the animal images in her poetry are leading and impress the reader.

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## **CHAPTER-V**

### **IMAGERY IN THE POETRY OF KEKI N DARUWALLA**

**K**eki Nasserwanji Daruwalla was born in Lahore in January, 1937. After taking his master's degree in English Literature from Punjab University he joined the Indian Police Service. His first book of poems *Under Orion* was published in 1970 and his *Apparition in April* published in 1971 won the Uttar Pradesh State Award in 1972. His third book *Crossing of Rivers* was published by the Oxford University Press in 1976. His poems figure in a number of anthologies and he has himself edited an anthology of modern Indian poetry under the title *Two Decades of Indian Poetry in English 1960 - 1980*. He won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1984.

Daruwalla is known for his bitter, satiric tone and as one who writes from his experience of violence, (of the brutal nature of man encountered in the police department), he shows a preoccupation with some of the darker sides of existence particularly with death and destruction. Daruwalla is one who believes, like many other poets writing in recent years, that poetry should derive its inner strength from a social awareness and sense of commitment.

While his early poems, especially those written from his experience as a police officer, show an acuteness of observation and sharpness of expression, the later poems show an intensification of social awareness, of a deep consciousness of

the environment in which a poem is set. His third book, *Crossing of Rivets* comprises poems in which the central metaphor is the Ganges. The river comes alive in the poems not only as a physical reality symbolising nature in tooth and claw but also as a mythical and spiritual presence with several primal, religious and emotive connotations. The present selection, "Boat-ride along the Ganga" is the first poem in this book.

The Indianness of Daruwalla's poetry derives not so much from his portrayal of Indian life as he has seen and experienced as a police officer on duty nor from a conscious effort to make his writing Indian but from the rural Indian landscape which has inspired it. According to the poet's own admission his poems are rooted in the rural landscape and his poetry is earthy which means that he has avoided that sophistication which "while adding gloss, takes away from the power of verse".

One finds the contemporary poets experimenting deliberately in the field of imagery. These poets have abandoned the old and predictable models of imagery. They are found inclined towards bold and dominant imagery which is realistic and economical. Though Daruwalla started writing poetry in the late seventies, he has a meteoroid rise and he is a poet of large promise. He equals Nissim Ezekiel, Kamala Das and R. Parthasarthy so far poetic contribution is concerned and in some respect such as depth of sentiment, language economy and originality of sensibility; he even appears to be greater to some of his contemporaries. He is a conscious craftsman. In

his best poem, subject and tone, structure and imagery interact in creating an absorbing human drama which has few parallel in Indian poetry in English. One finds Daruwalla drawing poetic provisions from myths, rituals, festivals and religious performances. In Mehar Ali, the Keeper of the Dead", The Parsi Hell, Caag Matam, Sixth Moharram in Lucknow and The Mzars of Amroha, one finds Daruwalla dealing with the topic related to myths and rituals. Pointing to a Tibetan myth which relates that one day the divinity would descend on the earth to take away the dead, he writes in Mehar Ali, the Keeper of the Dead:

Red rain will fall As the goddess descends,

Her rain-red hair streaming

Backwards in the wind, to cart

Away the dead in the fold of her mists. (Daruwalla 05)

In the parallel way, Aag Matam and Sixth Moharram in Lucknow and 'The Mazars of Amroha' refer to the rituals practiced by the two sects of Muslims on the eve of Moharram and to a legend respectively. In the opening lines of Aag Matam referring towards the eternal sacrifice of Hussain and the ritual, practiced in his pious memory, Daruwalla writes: "Alams held aloft the procession comes (as though blisters along the arid skull);

So also shoulder-high, the Imama's enemies Carried his severed head, spiked to a bear) Alams held aloft, green sticed with stained Topaz-the green which the arab soul hungers For spiced with the brown realities of the Desert-the process

emerges from the Imambara.

Similarly, in „Sixth Moharram in Lucknow“, he writes:  
The breast-hating thuds away, as the Lament rises, Hai  
Husain! Hussain! Hussain! (Daruwalla 10)

Likewise, he refers to Hindu rituals and legends in the poem, 'The Waterfront' such as, Dassazsvazmedh, Pindan, Mantra, Gyatri, 'Panchtirth', etc. In The Parsi Hell he has made use of Chinvat Bridge, 'gethas' and dakha well which are related to the Parsi myth. So, it would not be wrong to say that Daruwalla's poetic vision is deeply rooted in myths. His reaction towards the rituals performed by different sects is not pleasing because he feels himself alienated from them.

Daruwalla's poetry has smooth musical flow. The quick change in rhythm provides breathing gap in his verse. He writes in free canto but his lines mostly have vowel endings or consonant endings. This brings his poetry almost near to the rhyming scheme. In the following lines it can be seen how quickly the rhythm varies but how effectively the poet conveys the gathered up experiences through them:

Pairs of padded feet Are behind me Astride me

In front of me The footpaths are black feet

Conveering on the town Brown shoulders black  
shoulders Shoulders round as orbs Muscles smooth  
as river-stones Glisten Till a dry wind scourges  
The sweat from off their backs. (Daruwalla 20)

In the above quoted lines, one notices rhyming pattern

approximately near to coherence. Besides, they are also notable for attractive functional images and well-chosen words. Here, the town bears the image of a concave mirror and the people that of the rays of light. Likewise smooth muscles bear the resemblances with weather-torn will rounded stones.

The other grand characteristic of Daruwalla as a poet is his power of generalization. He begins his poem with an individual note but without any great complexity he makes it universal in character. As in 'Mother', he starts sketching his aged and crippled mother but by his massive power of generalization, he makes the sketch of his mother of entire nature. This special value in Daruwalla highly speaks of his craftsmanship:

Your spine goes creaking now Across the bow of your body.  
Your skin preserves the past In its creases

Like mummy-wrap.

Likewise, referring to his mother's pangs of partition at her widowhood and the fire of ever-dying love, he says in a generalizing tone: I think something shrivelled Within you, Mother,

The day you broke you bangles And shook the lion-dust  
Of my father from your brow.

The above lines are significant not only for the poet's power of generalisation but they also break highly about the economy of word. Here Daruwalla adeptly presents the individual sorrow in entire way by making the use of well-chosen economical

words. The similar trait of Daruwalla can be also seen in the following lines of for my daughter. (Anaheita):

You have armlets of breads, Black and red an topaz  
That brave the dark arrows of the evil eye,  
Brandy in the navel Driver the cold away  
Your navel-cord is the same Your mother  
had and here Mother before her an  
elongation In time. (Daruwalla 15)

A poet's imagery usually shoots out from his own experience. Consequently, it is found that most of the images used in Daruwalla's pomes have sprung up from his experience as a police administrator. Even in the sensuous thing, he finds something hideous, offensive and dreadful. By contrasting the objects of his poetic vision with their just opposites, Daruwalla efficiently has his say. Referring to the people who carry bearers of a different genus and to the dead being carried by them, he adds on the string-beds they carry no henna-smeared brides. In short, as his poetic tool, he just exposes sensuous with the dead and ugly to have the desired effect which is definitely a modernist trait. This technique is noticeable in the following lines:

They are palanquin-bearers of a Different sort on the string-beds  
They carry no henna-smeared brides Prone upon them  
are frail bodies Frozen bodies delirious bodies some  
Drained of fever and sap some moving  
Others supine transfixed under the sun. (Daruwalla 15)

Quite contrary to Daruwalla, the neo romanticists are ever found to be fed with beautiful and beautiful things. Daruwalla like other new poets expresses his experience through well-chosen solid images. His sensuousness gets expression in the following lines of „Monologue in the Chambal Valley:

Do you recall how it was with the women When we started?  
Taut-breasted ones-from the Hill, brow ones from Bihar, soft  
and overripe Daughters of the desert/daughters of the Forest  
tribes. (Daruwalla 20)

In the following lines, it is again seen how the poet graphically describes the moments of man's sexual exhilaration and also the process of his being pulled down through the find images of 'faloon-fury' and the dove: this is a part of Daruwalla's poetic technique as stated earlier:

And heal with your own bodies;  
That is the crux of love :  
The faloon-fury of the moment turns into the dove.  
The face as spirit, the face as flesh  
Blend in the face as love. (Daruwalla 10)

Again, it can be seen how the poet describes irresistible physical passion through well-chosen solid images, functional in nature in the following lines:

However you bury the shadow in  
the heart Under slabs of concrete and a coil of bone  
However you wall the cave-impulse at the mouth, It  
will hammer at the sides and break free,

However you bury the shadow in the heart (Daruwalla 15)

Like other new poets, Daruwalla also, is found consciously experimenting in new imagery. To express the unappeasable thirst for blood of the rioting people, he makes use of a new image, not earlier in vogue, in the expression barracuda- eyes/ searching for prey. Likewise, that collection of liquefied flesh/ seething in fear' stands for a man living in constant fear of death, 'the marionette head' for a senseless man, bleached white and utterly raped' for an anaemic and exhausted persons. Stalactite becomes symbol of cosmic vivacity and energy, tonsured heads for people with completely shaved head, 'colour of daggered flesh' for redness of melon and buzzard winds for violent wind and so on and so forth. In short, Daruwalla has presented his experience through quite new and sensible images.

Daruwalla's denomination of words is Indian with a view to giving soft rhythmic flow to his verse he coins words in Indian fashion, such as blue bottles, a main land, smokestack, tree line, floorboards, toadstool, dragonfly, Chrissie, rucksack sailboats etc. he also uses rhyming lines in order to heighten the effect of his lyrical work. This also adds to the swift flow of his feelings:

The serpent-water unwinding from their coils Hiss in  
turmoil Down the flagstones. Nothing's bluer, not either Not  
comet-fires

Nor crystal nor sapphire,  
No speculum of a mineral-coloured bird  
Is s intense, The blue dot is the word. (Daruwalla 15)

In his former works such as *Under Orion* and *Winter Poems*, the poet has dealt with the contemporary themes such as draught, famine, pestilence, communal riot, exquisiteness etc. He has used mockery and satire as his tools in these poetic works, consequently they are inclusive and impressive, while in his later works, his bent is rather inward. Hence their incisiveness and impressiveness are not as great as they are in his former works.

Being a strict follower of the creative encircle dedicated to the cause of writer's workshops, he has never drifted back to the old modality and technique of the neo-romanticist. The poet has uttered himself through his works using new idioms, phrases and realistic images. He has not ignored the physical portion of man in his poetry. On the similar he has made it all the more sensuous and lively by using apt phrases and well-chosen images. Commenting on Daruwalla, Nissim Ezekiel writes:

To most Indo-anglian poets, simple expressions of emotion with a sprinkling of imagery exhaust the craftsmanship. They rarely attempt the dramatic, the creation of characters and situations, the poetic dialogue and the sustained reflection on an experience. Even description skill is rarely demonstrated. Daruwalla is in a different class. (Daruwalla 15)

At another place while comparatively looking on Daruwalla, Ezekiel remarks, "By putting Daruwalla among his contemporaries one sees how he scores deeply over them. By

depth of feeling, economy of language and creativity of insight, Daruwalla commands respect." In the following poem one finds the use of two violent sensual imagery. At one place the poet creates a sight of bleeding womb, as in the lines:

her seizures are cyclic

The visit her in her menses. (Daruwalla 20)

At the other the poet presents the image of a woman who has fallen victim to the lust of some brutes:

She recovered, bleached white

And utterly raped. (Daruwalla 25)

In the second segment of the poem, i.e. At 'Bansa' one finds sensual imagery, both beautiful and ugly in the lines quoted under:

that everybody is here then, scrawny girls

carved out of a single thigh hysteric quail-like brides

banging their foreheads on the floor and loose-fleshed

women with a foetus and a demon

in their ballooned bellies. (Daruwalla 11)

Daruwalla presents a lively image of the surrounding in which 'Bansa Mazar' is situated:

It was a village like one other village mustard fields incised by dirt-tracks timorous outgrowths of mud and wattle and here and there a patch of stonework beginnings in a new atrophy.

Around one mud house White chalk-prints of

a palm Khamza the protecting hand of FatimaRun

all along the wall. (Daruwalla 21)

Digging at the people believing in exorcism and such other rituals, the poet further tells about their mode of management in a mocking vein in the following lines:

In low melodic murmurs he intones suras from  
the Quran kindled arabesques that unwind from  
his mouth like a thread of light with a black finger-  
and the smears mascare on her eyelash  
daughter! Your troubles are at an end. (Daruwalla 21)

Winter has been used as a symbol of old age and dispossession. Daruwalla narrates the awesome power of winter in the following lines:

Suddenly the tree near our windows  
shook. its whiskers twitched, its leaves,  
yellow and ochrous like henna-smeared hands  
fell severed from the wrists. (Daruwalla 21)

The poet used here the gorgeous sensuous imagery of henna smeared hands quite in an opposite context. He further prolongs the all baring supremacy of winter in the following lines:

The tree is now all bark and bough. leafless twigs scratch  
against the glasslike skeletal children scribbling on a state  
chalk fingered (Daruwalla 21)

The phrase chalk-fingered suggest blood-lesners which is frequently to be found in man during his old age. Winter is also a sign of the lack of vitality and life. Hence, the poet described hail-ridden winter wind as follows:

there is a smell of hail  
in the air and lighting burns the just-widowed wind.  
Beats her head against the glass panes. (Daruwalla 20)

In the second section of the poem, the poet delightfully enumerates the effect of the crippled age on man's life. As man is drained of energy during this phase, he becomes rather introvert. At the same time, passions also start to tap with him as do the flakes of dandruff from the portion of the head having no hair. To quote the poet:

the expressions ripped away like torn wings  
its passion is flaking off like dandruff, like falling hair  
blown back like maenad-hari. (Daruwalla 21)

In the third section, the poet beautifully expresses man's defencelessness during the old age. He tells that the ghosts of man's magnificent period keep on haunting him even during his old age. Man becomes horror struck the moment the comparatively looks on himself, that is, on his present physical state to that of his past one. In the words of the poet:

I heard the thick waters of your dreams lap  
the shores of your night: behind your  
rhinestone eyes flickered a flame of terror (Daruwalla 21)

In spite of all his effort to forget his past to mould him as the present demands, man sometimes fails to cope himself with the changed condition. He remains awestruck and dumb-founded. The shocks gained during this era remain fixed in his psyche till his death:

but you tucked the dream within  
the sleeve of your body.  
It lies confined in your psyche another  
seal affixed on the mouth of love. Your never  
opened up..... (Daruwalla 21)

Last, the poet says that once strong and potent man  
becomes object of pity and consideration during his old age, his  
rhinestone eyes express helplessness:

behind your rhinestone eyes  
flickered compassion. (Daruwalla 15)

In the fourth segment of the poem, Daruwalla presents a  
fine-sketch of man just before his death. Actually, man gets  
completely deformed before his usual death. His body gets a  
timorous growth, his skin becomes 'raffia', his hair grows very  
thin, his body represents nothing but a case of 'charred ribs'  
and he becomes as helpless as fledglings. Even the voice sticks  
in his throat and he finds horrible darkness looming around  
him. To quote the poet:

in twig-nested and sparse-leaved  
November the nest against the dusk  
glows like charred ribs bristles as if a bush had been  
grafted on a tree-fork bloats as if a gland  
in the tree's groin had turned tumorous.  
with cotton seed and raffia but the nest is  
lined overhead the mother-kite keens ircline  
anxiously withing the twig-walls fledgelings

shrill consonants syllables. (Daruwalla 21)

Here Daruwalla's precession and correctness are worth  
noting. The poet appears to be at his finest in his particular  
section. Images used in the section are well chose. While going  
through the poem one gets a lively and colourful sketch of age  
and deformity.

In the fifth section of the poem, Daruwalla presents a  
moving image of a man awaiting death drained off energy and  
vitality and dried off life juice, man is surrounded by many of  
his well-wishers and admires. He appears like a drugged man  
internally months start their journey in his physical self. In the  
meantime, the time of his stay in this world is up and 'honey-  
thieves' come and smoking out the bees, take out a 'honey-  
laden crescent' and leave the conflict aside. The poet presents  
the progression of man's death as follows:

as the afternoon wore on the honey-thieves  
came and smoked the bees out and carved out  
a honey-laden crescent for themselves  
and left a lump of pocked was behind. (Daruwalla 21)

Lastly, the poet delightfully puts the process of assimilation  
of man's dusty self into dust. He also mentions how man's friends  
and relatives leave his down-to- earth self to its fate and take  
their own ways:

Sparrows and squirrels, a bird  
with a black crest and a red half-moon  
of an eyelid bickered over



the wax remains the next day.

Then with a drone of straining endings  
the bees rose like a flock of passions from  
a dying heart, and left (Daruwalla 22)

The poet further gives a gorgeous expression of the hissing wind originating from the horizon and slapping the people in their face, who came in its way. The bombard winds suggest its predatory nature and speediness. Similarly the phrase, 'cocooned in a body-heat' is suggestive of a man having nothing to protect from the biting cold, excepting the warmth of his body. The lines quoted under are given significant for the use of line imagery:

The horizon was well-stocked with the buzzard-winds  
keening high and fierce on the bank across. He heard it  
though he did not feel the ice. Finger-tip and toe  
were still cocooned in body-heat, but he heard among the  
reeds and latched his windows. (Daruwalla 24)

Daruwalla gives an account of the windfall just after the twilight, using again fine images and symbols in the lines quoted under :

At nightfall the wind like a bored  
of Tartars lashing their ponies with rawhide  
whips crossed the river (Daruwalla 23)

A bored of Tartars lashing their ponies with rawhide whips crossed the river, is suggestive of the ravaging return of some foreign invaders who left the country after plundering it of life

and prosperity.

In 'The Fighting Eagles' the poet makes a resemblance between the fighting eagles and the fighting people. He adds sarcastically that even the reasons for fighting are same in the case of the eagles and the war-mongers. To quote the poet: They fought for the same reasons:

a female, a patch of the sky or crag-kingdom (Daruwalla 36) Pointing out the devastation causes during the war and also mockingly talking about the fad of the war-mongers the poet comments:

Their keening was no longer fierce and chill;  
a language of pure sounds but a splurging hysteria.  
As they dipped and rose their senses reeled.  
The enemy became faceless, voiceless and the crag-kingdom  
black with a million nights of frost  
swivelled round them. (Daruwalla 32)

Lastly, the poet wishes intently, had the war been fought in such a place where the majority of the people could have remained untouched by the misery it brought in its wake:

Were they eagles raking up the skies  
or berserk soldiers fighting on a hill? (Daruwalla 21)

In 'Haring', the poet talks about his individual superstition. He does not keep himself aloof from the group of the irrational people; rather he feels that he is one of them. To him, 'haring' is the symbol of impending misfortune and depression. The split second he or any other member of his family sees it, his family

is bound to be visited with some kinds of misfortunes or the others. He confirms his superstition by many examples taken from his everyday life. In short, to him 'haring' is a ominous creature. Talking about the abode of his ominous creature, the poem opens with these lines:

The bamboo jungle grew around for house, an arthritic  
forest of tangled bone Spiked with leaf. (Daruwalla 36)

He calls the twisted bamboo as tangled bone spiked with leaf. The use of this gorgeous image heightens the experience of the poet and makes his description vivid and lively.

The other thing which led to the affirmation of the poet's doubt with later on acquired the form of superstition in him, is the death of his dog, named 'Tiger', Referring to Nagpanchami, Daruwalla writes:

We, like others had made a serpent-god  
from lashed blades of straw and offered  
it milk in an earthen bowl and grain, the hand legs  
of our dog Tiger frozen paralytic. his lungs strained  
and heaved like a pair of bellows and broke.  
Pointing out the purple tongue The vet, who  
won't a minute ago Had treated him for colic,  
said, Sure as death, he had died of  
snake-bite. (Daruwalla 42)

In 'My Father's House', the poet talks about the tomb of his father. He exhibits the only difference to the noticed in his father's new above is abode is lack of warmness, activity and

throbbing, life. The varying seasons do not affect the internal world of the tomb in any way. The images are vivid.

Nothing is new around this place except  
the snow, except the quiet monastic vows of  
wizened bark on skeleton tree. the ribs too are a monastery  
when seasons do not change within. (Daruwalla 21)

The poet narrates that his father gazes towards him as if he were energetic. The poet questioningly comments who would remind him of his physical death; in its reply he adds:

The quickening drip, agitated mud,  
icicles rotting muscle. April rites;  
The spring has dog into his flanks  
grass flames in regions phlegm plagued one (Daruwalla 15)  
and lastly, the poet remarks that the settling of grave-levels  
would surely remind him of his physical death.

'Mehar Ali, the Keeper of the Dead' presents well sketch of the last man of a tribe. 'This man I sunken into the marshy land of orthodoxy up to the nose.' The man talked about is Mehar Ali, the final descendant of Chanzee Khan. He still has a hope that some day goddess will descend to cart away the dead. These points to an orthodox faith still held by majority of the Tibetans. Pointing towards their belief the poet reproduces images of Mehar Ali:

In the year of the fire-serpent, the prophecy runs  
lightning will chop the cumulus into chunks of meat  
Red rain will fall As the goddess descends,

her rain-red hari streaming backwards in the wind, to cart  
way the dead in the folds of her mist. Introduction Mehar  
Ali and his lineage, the poet sardonically presents:

Two of them survived and had this catacomb hewn out of  
limestone cliff; married, Bhotwomen and begot children who  
wited-ine generations scorched like dying melons on a withered  
vine.

And now with a face like a patch of fissured bark  
and eyes; pools dulled with a film of moss, Mehar  
Ali, the Keeper of the dead, remains the last of the living,  
his days slowly emerging into ash (Daruwalla 21)

Sketching the survivors of Changez Khan and their views,  
Daruwalla presents attractive images of Changes Khan:

The two survivors lie here and these their  
Tibetan wives. A match flares across the vault  
This miniature on the wall, look at the faces-each  
smaller than a match-head- and the paint-effect, like  
hair line fractures on a cartilage. (Daruwalla 22)

Mehar Ali, appears in the poem as a man of serious  
disposition but truthful belief. He rarely replies to queries of  
the visitors of tombs of his forefathers, on which he is keeping  
an incessant watch. But sporadically he is found to be conversing  
with the dead ones. The images are very apt:

But when high winds mona, Driving the rain  
into the catafalque, and lightning rends the sky,  
speech starts fermenting in his mouth and bursts

out in bee-stung incoherence. It is then that he  
communes with the dead, they say, and his eyes  
probe each wraith of mist for the sky-woman,  
her hair flaming red, as she alights upon  
the shroud-grey skin that keeps him whole-  
Mehar Ali, the Keeper of the dead; (Daruwalla 25)

In 'The Unrest of Desire', Daruwalla has recollected his  
early nuptial experiences. This poem has nine sections, most  
of which deal with the theme of love at a physical level and in four  
of them the poet expresses his fear and apprehension holding  
him regarding a rapid end of his happy marital life. Howling of  
the jackals at night is telephonic suggestion for communion,  
for the poet. Frankly, the poet relates:

It is just the telephone between us, grey, impersonal:  
The children are sleeping, she says, Comel!'

She had to think of me now with the elements in full cry  
and the air smelling of lightning burns like a scorched pelt;

Now the poet relates how he is received by his better –  
half : It will go well with her if I kiss them on their foreheads  
suddenly.

she is in my arms swarming.

Her nipples and the grass outside harden together,  
tense with coming thunder. Kissing her on the neck

I nibble the words as they slur across her  
skin; did the thunder frighten you ?

Yes, with both the kids asleep

it was eerie, terrifying. (Daruwalla 36)

These lines are significant for voluptuousness and sensuousness but only at physical level. Daruwalla recollects that a turning point sets in his conjugal life when the 'semul' flower appears a red alert for him because his wife suffers from cough and gets dismayed during the time. He gives vent to her feelings in the following lines:

When the semutree flowers with ember  
that's the flower dust, I think.  
Pollen, I corrected her  
and read dismay in her eyes.

how will you ever write, my love;  
Poetry is written with the wrong words,  
don't you know? (Daruwalla 12)

Now, the jackals howl becomes ominous for him because there is a fairy story about it;

Their cries herald the death of the wilderness  
the passing of ghosts. (Daruwalla 10)

Thus, 'The Unrest of Desire' recollects the poet's excessive attachment to his wife as well as doubts, fear and nervousness. This poem contains some lines of rare loveliness, depicting sensuousness and voluptuousness on the poet's part. Likewise, some lines are prominent for the suspense and the psychological fear they create such as:

For a moment I am amazed that the almond tree  
all dressed up in white does not sway on its roots

in the wall and the wind of these vulpine hungers;  
but stands there petrified, a white shadow etched  
on the darkness, its white flowers tattooed  
on the body of the night. (Daruwalla 20)

'Love among Pines' recollects love experiences of the lyricist had on an evening. Enjoying a walk with his wife the poet catches vision of some sensuous scene which makes him whisper :

destiny lies in parting of hair  
in the parting of grasses  
in the parting of thighs? (Daruwalla 12)

Daruwalla mentions the advent of the looming dimness using the beautiful imagery of 'black shrapnel' and further adds an account of his love-making, full of sensuous and voluptuous description:

Dusk explodes into black shrapnel on  
the knife-rim of the earth.  
What is there in my hand when  
it slides into your blouse  
it prowls like an animal that makes you writhe,  
turning your nipples into black sprout of barriers?  
We sweep pine needles into a stack  
(they don't prick at all when vertically spread).  
The pine cricket overhead is a shrill monotone.  
The moments stacked against each  
other turn incandescent with a  
running flame. We both know that

we are here for: beneath you skin  
of wild talk you are tense,  
beneath the cindering ash of  
my body your body is a surprise  
for as I fall upon the earth-crust that  
is you we spin, we spin, we spin  
your feet pointed to the skies (Daruwalla 22)

Using transferred soubriquet, the poet calls the commotion caused by a baby- whale in the sea, as 'baby-whale talk'. He also presents very efficiently how the wave foam carried baby-whale caused great stink in the city:

The night passes in baby-whale talk,  
a baby whale which came in  
with the foam and out stank the city,  
till the fire-brigade cut it up and threw  
it back into the ocean. (Daruwalla 25)

In the crack of dawn, it appears that the islands had walked out on the mainland like somnambulist 'Somnambulist' presents an illustration of a man who walks in sleep. Owing to this difficulty sometimes he gets out to unexpected places. In similar way islands also appeared to be misery from somnambulism and hence in the sea:

Morning: islands, like somnambulists which  
had walked out on the mainland and awoke  
to find themselves waist-deep in the seas.  
The wind sings at high tide,

the palm-fronds reverberate, (Daruwalla 11)

Metaphorically, Daruwalla views Bombay as 'black yeast', black salt and a wall or rotting muscle'. All these things speak to the dreadful look presented by the city. But the city presents quite a different look if viewed from the harbour. He presents this scenery as under:

Bombay is black yeast from here,  
and black salt, a wall of rotting muscle.  
Across the harbour the vertical city of  
the righkeps rising- grotesque heads  
on unsteady shoulders.

The slum-city of asbestos squats at its ankles,  
huddled behind a smokestack. (Daruwalla 12)

Mentioning the terrible and violent sound of the cyclone at night and depicting the picture thereof poet puts as below:

At night the cyclone is many-throated,  
many lunged. Gulls dash against the lighthouse  
on the hill: squall-debris. The searchlight is  
hinged to a broken joints It swings, throwing  
its yellow spray at the storm, even though salt blinded;  
a wild dilated eye to which birds home with wild  
dilated eyes. (Daruwalla 25)

Sketching another well landscape on his poetic canvass, Daruwalla likens the sea and the sky as two concave mirrors faced towards each other. Secondly, he likens them with the two giant wings of a violet moth that is the just risen sun. He compares

them also with arose cherry or looking for a boat' and lilac axe-blade looking for a tree line'. Thus, one finds the under quoted lines, full of beautiful purposeful imageries, and giving a fine sketch of the scenic beauty of the dawn:

The sea and the sky, two concaves mirroring  
each other, two gaint wings of a purple moth,  
a rose-pink oar looking for a boat,  
a lilac axe-blade looking for a tree line.

The gulls were not here nor their cries nor  
the angry rhythm of their wings. (Daruwalla 10)

It is a excellent attempt on the part of Daruwalla to sketch the scenic beauty of a seaside and the sea in its various moods realistically. The poet's choice of words and images is so accurate that while perusing the poem, on finds the landscapes pictured in it, just moving before one's eyes. Gulzaman's son is a fine sketch of a bearded, gaunt' and broad boned shepherded who accepts solitariness as his lost son. It is winter. So, Gulzaman takes refuge „in a stone breaker's pine-hut at night. His ewe lines by his side to be warmed by his body's warmth. In the meantime, she starts groaning with toil pain and in an hour gives birth to a feeble lamb. Gulzaman sees the reflection of his lost son in it and joyfully exclaims; 'this is my son'. He forgets the pangs of his lost son and starts healing up his individual injury by being one with the lamb. The poet has presented a graphic image of Gulzaman, his relatives, his surrounding and the biting cold of winter and lakes of his excessive joy at the

arrival of the new-lamb, in the poem. Recalling his pleasure, the poet puts him as under with his ewe and refuge:

The turf is sodden but his own fold  
is a small den made snug by bales of hay.  
His ewe snuggles up to him and bleats  
recognition, a thin tremolo of love blanketed  
by gutturals of pain. Relations crowd,  
darkening the doorway, as with heavily-greased  
arms Gulzaman examines her. Yes, the lamb is on  
its way! An hour later it is there, quavery-legged  
and wet and uncertain about its rickety, foru-prongede  
hold on the earth Shortly it pees. Allah he praised,  
now it will oive. It cannot die of a chill in the stomach  
Either the doorway has been cleared, or  
clouds have been parted for an instant by the sun.  
Gulzaman picks the dun-coloured lamb and holds  
It to his chest, this he says, this is my son. (Daruwalla 20)

Daruwalla is at his top in sketching the country side with its people and animals very effectively. The image of the people, living in snowy region is so vivid that it appears that he is one of them. He also brings their grief and misery to limelight by drawing it on his poetic canvass. Though himself an urban but he apply describes the problems and emotions of the rural mass with equivalent skill and intensity. In short, his poetry is an integration of the rural with the urban civilization.

'Fish are speared by Night', graphically recalls how the

coastal-people do fishing at night. During daylight they use nets to catch the fishes but night they use spears to catch them. Daruwalla presents a lively sketch of fishing at night in the lines as under:

Hash lights stab the sea,  
from shoulder-height javelins descend,  
splintering the light as the fish is skewered  
and forced down the pear-head,  
still threshing the sand. (Daruwalla 25)

'Flashlight stab' gives one a preliminary image of the violent act which is going to follow. Likewise splintering the light presents a fine image of the javelins- stirred water and „threshing the sand stands for the completions of the sheering progression. The fishermen return to their houses, with their reap on their backs, two hours before dawn. 'Shell-grit and sand still clinging to their feet', indicating that their just return from the sea. But when the climate is not worth fishing, they do fishing of a different type. This fishing also is done at night. This fishing is not done in flashlights but it is performed in dimness. How graphically the poet presents the copulation method is worth noting in the following lines:

But when clouds go about like shrieking gulls and  
each wave descends from its cliff-top like a contract,  
and the wicker lamps are snuffed, they spread their  
fishing-nets on the ground and spread their women  
over them splay-legged. Fish here are speared by

night. (Daruwalla 26)

This is indicative of the poet's capability of suddenly changing over from the individual to the entire and this quality adds to his greatness as a poet. Shrieking gulls' stands for the elements of nature in fuzzy. Likewise, each wave descends from its cliff-top, indicates the aggressive waves of the sea and spread their women. Poems from the Tarai in Under Orion portray vividly the low-lying, mosquito infected area of the Tarai. The Parijat Tree depicts the mild and calm mood of nature. Snowman, Pilgrimage to Badrinath, The Old Man of the Sea etc. are some of the best nature poems in Apparition in April. Mark the picturesque description of mountains cape over them 'splay legged' makes the poem grossly sensuous.

Poems from the Tarai in Under Orion portray brightly the low-lying, mosquito infected area of the Tarai. The Parijat Tree depicts the gentle and calm mood of nature. Snowman, Pilgrimage to Badrinath, The Old Man of the Sea etc. are some of the finest nature poems in Appartition in April. Mark the picturesque description of mountains cape:

Stony eyes turn northward toward  
stone and the grey austerity in the stance  
of hills; the snow-hush under granite skies  
and the wind biting like the dentist's drill,  
whipping the mist into a horizon. (Daruwalla 5)

In Crossing of Rivers there are some significant pictures of nightscape, rivers cape, mudscape and ghosts cape in poems

like Boat-ride along the Ganga, Nightscape, Vignettes I, II & III. The River Silt, Crossing of Rivers and Harang. In most of these poems the sight is laid in Varanasi and the central simile here is Ganga. Ganga appears in these poems “with all its primal, religious and emotive connotations. The River’s Rhythm, writes ‘Vrinda Nahar,’ is that of life and death, of birth and rebirth, of passion and refutation. In and around it are all symbols of stagnancy the tonsured heads, the fossilized anchorites, the tatted harlots, and the dead who are brought to it shrouded in the anonymity of white”. The opening poem Boat-ride along the Ganga presents a vivid and pragmatic description of the Ganga whose banks are littered with flaming pyres:

and once more the pyres; against a mahogany sky  
the flames look like a hedge of spear-blades heated red  
for a ritual that bades no good. The mourners are a  
cave painting, grotesque done with charred wood.  
(Daruwalla 24)

The background in Daruwalla’s poetry is provided by his instant surroundings– by a ganga, a Ghaghra, a Chambal valley, a Tarai, a Varanai, a haridwar, a Rishikesh and a Badrinath. This background is associated with legends and tradition drawn from remote antiquity. The distillation rituals associated with the Ganga as the sportive framework extend his poetry to tradition, to myth and to the symbolic, even spiritual dimension. He liberally uses words which are indicative of rituals and religious aspects of Hindus; such as “mantra”, “gayatri”, “pind-dan”, “panchtritha”,

“ashratm”, “Ardhkumbh” etc. Daruwalla also uses Muslim legends and rituals in Aag Matam, sixth Moharram in Lucknow, and the Mazars of Amroha. In the Parasi Hall he has made use of Parsi myth. Daruwalla’s poetry, thus, represents the combination religious culture of secular India. Daruwalla is a gifted poetic performer. He has cultivated a modern idiom to capture the attention of the modern rational. He imparts a colloquial and ironical hue to his technique when he exposes the social and political evils of modern existence.

Daruwalla is unquestionably a front rank poet in present Indian English poetry. Nissim Ezekiel writes “By putting Daruwalla among his contemporaries one sees how he scores over them. By depth of feeling, economy of language and originality of insight, Daruwalla commands respect”.

Thus the majority of Daruwalla’s images are Indian but he differs from his contemporaries in the use of his similes. His images are apt and indicate his excellence in poetic art

Daruwalla mentions the advent of the looming dimness using the beautiful imagery of ‘black shrapnel’ and further adds an account of his love-making, full so sensuous and voluptuous description:

Dust explodes into black shrapnel On the knife-rim of the earth.

What is there in my hand that when it sidles into your blouse it prowls like an animal that makes you writhe, turning you nipples into black sprout of berries ?



We sweep pine needles into a stack  
(they don't prick at all when vertically spread).  
The pine cricket overhead is a shrill monotone.  
The moments stacked against each other Turn  
in candescence with a running flame. We both  
known what we are here for : beneath your skin  
Of wild talk you are tense,  
beneath the endearing ash of my body your body  
is a surprise for as I fall upon the earth-crust  
that is you We spin, we spin, we spin  
your feet pointed to the skies (Daruwalla 26)

The above lines are prominent for they present a vivid image of the gross physical love. Though they expose sensuality in a lively way but they are approximately near to sexual morbidity. After all, the image painted by the poet of state of physical communion is grossly at the physical plane and hence sensible.

'Form the Snows in Ranikhet' is another superior part of love poem, full of voluptuousness and corporeal elements. This poem is addressed to a newly-wedded friend of the poet. So, using wit and funniness, the poet instructs him how to make the maximum use of the physical pleasure. Advising him how to infiltrate the poet writes:

Words footholds, winds, are trapped in the snow he a little effort and they can be found Just dig through too white feet of silence till you hit the ground.

Even now the hush is where it was  
when the flakes first floated down. (Daruwalla 52)

Again, mentioning the corporeal aspects and the process of even renewal the poet writes:

But the goddess of the seasons still chews her  
comic end. Her mastication brings forth green  
leaf and golden bud. Fish will erupt from larval beds and go  
downstream with the flood. (Daruwalla 20)

How physical unification creates new life on earth, is also related by the poet in the above quoted lines. In the following lines, Daruwalla narrates how 'the falcon fury of the moment' subsidizes after the act of sexual consummation:

And heal with your own bodies; that is the crux of love,  
the falcon-fury of the moment turns into the dove.  
The face as spirit, the face as flesh  
blend in the face as love. (Daruwalla 25)

Reminding his friend that in the act of creation, 'a little killing' also takes place after each act, the poet jokingly explanation:

You'll be probing for the fire-core of creation  
abruptly red, the embryo hatched from your joint flame.  
You don't forget the dead; for you'll do a little killing  
with every act in bed. (Daruwalla 26)

Again, the poet adds hilariously that in course of time, the killing would so swell in number as his further exploration would be nowhere but in dead cities:

Old terrors that were sung of even in ancient  
runes will die a cell-by-cell death within your bed  
and soon you will explore dead cities in each  
house of the moon. (Daruwalla 20)

The above lines also stress the biological phenomena in human body, according to which out of the thousands of sperms and ovum only one of the each fertilizes with the other and in abnormal cases, the two of each group. In short, the poem is a fine piece of love poem written by the prose for his newly-wedded friend because it also attempts to make the addresses known about the biological phenomena ever going in human body.

‘The Unrest of Desire’ relates that man’s physical craving is quite usual and it gets particularly through his eyes. The poem also reveals that man’s craving for physical union cannot be repressed even if how tough he tries. Commenting on an inevitable and natural physical phenomena and biological instinct, the poet writes:

However you bury the shadow in the heart  
under slabs of concrete and a coil of bone,  
however you wall the cave-impulse at the mouth,  
it will hammer at the sides and break free,  
however you bury the shadow in the heart (Daruwalla 12)

The repetition of the line, ‘However you bury the shadow in the heart’, makes his statement rather aggressive in tone and texture. ‘The Parsi Hell’ highlights the poet’s religious values

and ideas. The poet feels that ‘the parsi hell’ is the imaginative product of the religious heads. Expressing his own feeling about it, he tries. Commenting on this inevitable and natural physical phenomena and biological instinct, the poet writes:

However you bury the shadow in the heart  
under slabs of concrete and a coil of bone,  
however you wall the cave-impulse at the mouth,  
it will hammer at the sides and break free, however  
you bury the shadow in the heart (Daruwalla 20)

The replication of the line, however you bury the shadow in the heart, makes his statement rather assertive in tone and texture. ‘The Parsi Hell’ highlights the poet’s religious beliefs and ideas. The poet feels that ‘the parsi hell’ is the imaginative product of the religious heads. Expressing his own opinion about it, he writes:

The parsi hell is insubstantial, a long stint  
in the house of falsehood, foul food  
and speech turning base on a wailing tongue.  
Talking about the dreaded Chinvat Bridge’,  
the is highly critical and mockingly reveals: Even  
the Chinvat Bridge which turns its edge towards  
the evil is not an Aztec knife which cuts through fat,  
spiced tendon, cartilage. (Daruwalla 25)

Keki N. Daruwalla, has made a close study of Indian life in some of his poetry. In some he has dealt with the contemporary subject which are assuming alarming proportion and waiting

for their final solution whereas in some others he has taken up such issues which are legendary in nature but are doing disservices to the Indians because they have lost rationale behind them in the present context. Even then they are being observed by the Indian because they have acquired conventional importance and have been part and parcel of our character. In this chapter an attempt is being made to see how Daruwalla reacts to dissimilar habits, behaviour and customs of the Indian and to what extent he is justified in doing so. Love has been a perennial source of stimulation for poets whether ancient or modern down the ages. Indian too have taken it to be a synonym of life. To them it stands for 'Satya, Shivam and Sundaram', with the growing pace of renovation and urbanization love has become pretentious in nature. Now it does not represent the pure creamy juice of life and to some it is merely restricted to the physical level. What is the poet's concept about it, is also to be considered? Sex occupies a significant place in almost all works of the 'neo-modernists' whether verse or prose. India being the land of Vatsyayana, the huge 'sex-pundit', has never ignored sex as an unimportant part of man's life. But the attitudes of most of the Indians as to the matters of sexual characteristics display striking difference. They have taken sex not as the mere achievement of animal desires of two opposite sexes but as some important creative social obligation of individuals.

The country's partition and its aftermath seize the poet's

mind with large imagination. His heart goes to the guiltless people who are put to unfold sorrow and suffering by the imposition of curfew on the areas disturbed by communal frenzy. He is perturbed to see the reign of chaos and mystification which is trying to engulf the entire area in its spate. Actually the poet laughs at the insanity and idiocy of the rioting people who lack any genuine cause to quarrel over. Daruwalla is significantly shocked to note the long-cherished principle of co-existence being shattered in a communal-rake up. In this poem, 'Curfew-In a Riot Torn City', Daruwalla presents the view of social – disintegration which our society undergoes in the form of communal aggression. As the poet lacks in correct equivalence to express the feeling of the suffering masses, he takes the resort of an image and expresses their feel as under: the starch on your Khaki back

turns soggy, the feel of things is queer your  
which to forget it all the riot, the town, the people  
- that mass of liquefied flesh. (Daruwalla 13)

Like many other modern poets and writers, Daruwalla expresses his large disgust of the process of urbanization. To him urbanization is cancerous and he calls 'the town is a tumour growth'. This remark of his is quite apt and much nearer to the Indian culture. Ease and comfort disappear from the life of man as socially grows on industrially and urbanely. Evils and corruptions spring up from urbanism. Hence during antique times the Indian seers and sages always kept themselves aloof

from the din and bustle of the urban civilization.

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## **CHAPTER-VI**

### **IMAGERY IN JAYANTA MAHAPATRA'S POETRY**

Jayanta Mahapatra is one of the most excellent Indian English poets. Perhaps any disagreement on Indian English Poetry is uncompleted without reference to his poetical works. Physicist, bilingual poet and essayist, Jayanta Mahapatra holds the peculiarity of being the first Indian English poet to have received the Sahitya Akademi Award (1981) for Relationship. In 2009 he was awarded by Government of India with 'Padmashree Award', country's most considerable award for civilian citizen for his admirable contribution to the field of literature.

All his working years, he taught physics at different colleges in Orissa. He retired in 1986. Mahapatra has authored 18 books of poetry. He started writing poetry at the age of thirty-eight, fairly late by average standards. Mahapatra's tryst with the intentional came rather late in life. He published his opening poems in his early 40s. The publication of his opening book of poems, *Svayamvara and Other Poems*, in 1971 was followed by the publication of *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten*. His collections of poems include *A Rain of Rites*, *Life Signs* and *A Whiteness of Bone*. One of Mahapatra's superior remembered works is the long poem *Relationship*, for which he won the Sahitya Akademi award in 1981. He is the first Indian English Poet to receive the honesty. Besides being one of the most

popular Indian poets of his generation, Mahapatra was also part of the trio of poets who laid the foundations of new Indian English Poetry. He shared a particular bond with A. K. Ramanujan, one the finest poets in the IEP tradition. Mahapatra is also unusual in not being a product of the Bombay school of poets. Over time, he has managed to carve a quiet, tranquil poetic voice of his own—distinctly different from those of his contemporaries. His wordy lyricism combined with reliable Indian themes puts him in a league of his own.

a word the wind pushing across the free fetch  
of notion turns it into a world of changing  
boundariesthat become mere names / numbers  
and hard metal signs. (Mahapatra 38)

Mahapatra's work, says Bruce King, "has no clear demarcation of contrasting opinions, new kinds of material or radical departures in organization." (King 206) Many of Mahapatra's poetry come near the same theme from a different angle or from the same angle with different arrangement of words. His poems thus appear to be a continuous reflection on themes like silence, guilt, loneliness and relation of the self to others. The images found in *Father's Hours*, like those of religion, silence, stone, wind, sky, river, also recur in his other volumes. Many poems share the same or similar titles. *Svayamvara and other Poems* has two poems titled *Poems*; one distinguished from the other by its dedication to R.M.(Runu Mahapatra). The volume has a poem titled *Morning* which it shares with two poems of

comparable title appearing in *Waiting* these again are set apart as Morning (I) and Morning (II). *Waiting* is his fifth volume having a title poem that it shares with a poem in *Burden of Waves and Fruit False Start, Shadow Space, A Whiteness of Bone, Random Descent* all have poems titled *Shadows*. Both *Rain of Rites* and *Bare Face* have poems titled *Silence*. Some words appear frequently in his titles, like, while his first volume has *Love*, the second volume has *A Kind of Love*. *Rain of Rites* has two poems appearing one after the other titled *The Face* and *The Faces*. The images are also closely wicker in the poems appearing throughout his published fifteen volumes. It therefore becomes difficult to divide the quantity of his work into several distinct periods for study.

The gamut of his poems can, however, be distinguished into two clear stages, the investigational stage when he was experimenting with his medium of expression, and the later experiential stage when he emerged as a poet sure of himself.

This stage, dealing with the first of the two phases, deals with his early volumes, namely, *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* and *Svayamvara and Other Poems*, both published in 1971. The poems that show in these two early volumes deal with similar images that emanate from the personal and turn around the private world, and are impassive to his native backdrop and its inhabitants –a trait that stamps many of Mahapatra's later works as regional. In this phase he displays a attraction for experimenting with form and syntax. The images in these two

early volumes are similar. The poet searches for an abode that will serve as a shelter, both for him and his visions that at times turn surrealistic, but concurrently expresses his dissatisfaction for the limitations imposed by his habitual existence that keeps him, and all that he aspires to within constrained margins.

Jayanta Mahapatra, extensively in print today, entered the literary scene in a way that had astonished all. He skilled Physics at Ravenshaw College in Orissa and took up his pen at forty, when most of the poets reach the crest of their career. In a desperate urge to express him, Mahapatra had tried his hand at a sentimental novel based on his own life, a novel that 'reeks of Hemingway' observed Runu Mahapatra the poet's wife and perhaps the only reader of his unfinished novel. (Mahapatra 144)

Mahapatra also wrote a number of short stories and sent them to the *Illustrated Weekly of India* only to be rejected. Disappointment made him disinterested in writing: "My poetry came to meet an age when most poets would have been basking in the warm glow of success: I was forty", writes the poet in *Contemporary Authors Autobiography Series*. (144) Mahapatra began with his poetic career with two thin volumes; *Close the Sky Ten by Ten* and *Svayamvara and Other Poems*. In the poems of these volumes he displays a restive and a probin gimpulse to revise his style in accord with his innovation. These two volumes show his desperate attempt to grapple with the medium of expression he had finally chosen.

Mahapatra writes poetry in an effort to coherent his private world and tribulations concerning the relationship between the self and reality. Bruce King refers to an essay published in the *Literary Criterion* (xv) where Mahapatra speaks of the poet's mental landscape, the inner world that he specifically creates, a world adhering to his private system of references. (King 86)

My hunger of words covered me with

Walking into the village of my mind. (Mahapatra 69)

F.A. Inamdar points out that the title of Mahapatra's first collection of poems, *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* is symbolic of claustrophobia, "We impose on ourselves self-willed imprisonment. We miss oneness with others." (Inamdar 85) Mahapatra is haunted by this sense of incarceration as is evident in the image of 'cage' that recurs in many of his later poems. The image of the classified or ensnared birds and animals to show that imprisonment of the self prevents it from realizing its potential. Men are shown to be fascinated by dreams, memories or words. In the present context the images of imprisonment reveal that we lack the desired candidness. We live in a closed survival that results in severance with the others around us. The captivity of the soul is represented in these two early volumes by the images of house building, the material restrictions and tangible limitations that enclose space. In *An Ordinary Day*: the walls join themselves to two chairs a tumbler beside the bed dry and hard from the dark commencing the slow leak of day (Mahapatra 23)

In the enclosed space trickling in of the day is considered. It is the predicament of *Some People* in *Close the Sky Ten by Ten*, to hide under 'the emission of thought in doomed/ living rooms.' For they are trapped in space like the image of green parrots in a poem appropriately titled *Inertia*. Sometimes the walls 'join themselves'; sometimes there is Vail beyond'. The poet comes home, from walking 'through these walls'. Existence is essentially within the walls where:

your mouth is a room

holding different views. (Mahapatra 25)

In *Looking at Instants* home is a space that 'Blankets' the poet's mind To Isolation'. It is a restricted existence and the poet cries, 'living moss makes me catch my breath'. (Mahapatra 12) The poet is segregated into a closed self in a confidential world that is part of our predicament but the escape that the poet seeks has no intonation of any Utopia. While what confines him is definite, what he seeks to escape into is unclear and carries no ethical tenor. His room prevents the entry of the birds that bring in passion, earth seed and rain. (Mahapatra 30) Closely linked up with 'Close the sky' is the image of 'close the circle'. In *A Kind of Love* in *Svayamvara and Other Poems* the poet handles such images. The circle representing our enclosed self therefore becomes a significant symbol for Mahapatra. Lakshman's (although the footnote says that it is Rama's) magical circle on the ground and his advice to Sita not to step beyond it becomes symbolic of our fear that keeps us in our cocooned existence:



With each quiet breath he draws his  
circle still (Mahapatra 10)

Since Mahapatra has expressed the closed existence by the images of closed circle and edifice of walls, some kind of vent becomes crucial and we come across images of windows. Windows are significant for they are receptive as well as they help to expose emotions:

the silent windows of my body open (Mahapatra 32)

and one with a lonely heart' stands by the window as in *The Marriage Portrait*. The space that the poet inhabits is sometimes ironically depicted as a vast infinite space within the enclosed space, such as in *Day Thought*:

All the world and I he room overdone

When the walls 'come apart/without cause' and the poet is released from his humdrum existence into the large vision as in *Apartment*, the experiences are surreal.

Poetry reveals the process of the poet's mind. The poet's employ concealed symbols and images of which the readers often have no hint at all, and the poems are left entirely to the mercy of the readers for their own interpretation of the images. Mahapatra confesses in *Face to face with the Contemporary Poem* that this applies to many of the poetry he has written:

If contemporary life is *no* longer what it was say,  
twenty-five years back, can one expect the same  
content, the same form, the same substance  
from contemporary poems? (King 86)

This synthesis of the conscious and the insentient is, time and again, found in Mahapatra's poetry as in *An Ordinary Day*. In the poem 'the walls join themselves' and the poet carries his body after love -making with a sign into the black streets. Surrealism fuses the marginal world with the interior world of the poet but there seems no concluding escape for there in the black streets the poet grows into walls. When Mahapatra declares that he has been 'groping' from poem to poem he instinctively refers to the image of sightlessness. (King 86) This sightlessness that he refers to becomes a considerable image in his early volumes.

In *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten*, '*The Indian Eye*' is wild, covered with starving decomposition'. Looking eyes are shut for fear of contamination. We hear of 'Shining retinas' and of Braille. The breeze that blows in through the windows stumbles the blindness that Mahapatra depicts is like that of Gloucester, in *King Lear*.

I have no way, and therefore want no eyes;

I stumbled when I saw (Shakespeare 120)

Images of blindness recur in *Svyamvara and Other Poems*. In *Blind this World*, the poet's fettle is that of the unsighted: 'Now there are things I do not see'. Blindness appears in *A Kind Of Love*. The sightlessness that estranges the beggar from the society and leaves him alone unites the poet with him in *Blind Beggar*. The Blind Beggar stands in a crowded and lighted market place. He is friendless. Aloneness that surfaces from his individual life emerges as one of the major themes in Mahapatra's poetry.

He is also disturbed from the rites and rituals around him that form the core of the ethos of Orissa. For him, life itself sometimes takes up a meaning of aloneness:

Life is a lonely leaning memory. (Mahapatra 02)

Images of alienation difficulty his poetic psyche and by their recurrence become motifs. It forms one of the key images that connect this phase with the later one. These motifs help in giving unity to individual poems and the volumes of poetry separated by many years so that they appear to be continuous meditations on his preferred themes. *Loneliness*, the first poem of his first published collection remains invasive in Mahapatra's poetic space. In the poem he measures his 'loneliness' against time and space and attempts to express it through a series of significant images. Aloneness is not only seen against where and when, it is also of 'now', of his hidden psyche:

Loneliness is a face alive Labelled from my  
other selves (Mahapatra 1) In *Snakes* the poet inquires:  
How do we release ourselves? In the stretched,  
dropped scales of loneliness? (Mahapatra 20)

*Loneliness* in his first poem 'is of a winner/ turned loser, traitor and beggar'. If aloneness is the condition that establishes the awareness between the poet and the beggar in *Blind Beggar*, the beggar in *Blind Singer in a Train* is juxtaposed against the academic cultured embarrassment of our 'bone's blind beggary'. Beggars, who become an necessary element of the landscape in Mahapatra's later poems on Puri, do not emerge as strong

elements in these two untimely volumes. *The Indian Eye* gives us a dependable image of the beggar who showers blessings on those who offer slams and curses all those who do not.

The beggars are not the only characters depicted as lonely.

Loneliness engulfs all the characters in *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* and *Svayamvara and Other Poems*. Mahatma Gandhi, the peace negotiators, the nuns, and men and women in love relations, father and son, all are feeling alone. Gandhi, appearing early, emerges as an image in the later phase. Gandhi is here depicted as a discarded leader and our approach to him is indecisive: We are on his side, perhaps We hate him

We do not know it (Mahapatra 12)

*Gandhi* unites with the Winner turned loser' image of *loneliness*. The quiet negotiators, the old men who talk of peace 'under the gaze of war' have been deserted. The Nun is lonely with her 'isolate honour' and 'isolation of skin'. The sun in the nun's world suffers from 'iciness' and satirically *The Peace Negotiators*, who have been forsaken:

Most of them Are rich old men with dogs (Mahapatra 18)

*City Night 2a m* is another poem in his first volume that records loneliness. The buses and trams are no longer plying. The doors are all closed. A city tree, representing man, begins bleeding in the on light. His quest for love includes the personal, and the protagonist is in largely cases acknowledged with the poet. The quest either relapses into bodily love or leaves the lovers feeling alone. *The Anniversary* in his first volume rings no

note of pleasure. It is rather clouded with pessimism:

Nothing happens. It only seems a pity We have  
the need to tell each other Of this painful  
nothingness. (Mahapatra 31)

*The Performance* brings out the tedium of love- making:

Again tonight As before Without  
the need. (Mahapatra 37)

The last poem of Svyamvara, *Poem for R.M*, depicts loneliness an existing within personal relationships. It celebrates the intimate moments of connubial life but the moonlight distorts the features and the bedroom mirror is implied. Through silence and words what emerges is 'plain sadness', an utter aloneness of existence. The situation brings to mind Mrs. Moore's contemplation on analogous topic in *A Passage to India*:

She felt increasingly (vision or nightmare?) that though people are important the relation between them are not, and that in particular too much fuss has been made over marriage; centuries of carnal embrace meant yet man is no nearer to understanding man. (Forster 134)

Mahapatra's images of physical combination leaves us contemplating parallel thought. In *The Bride* the recently married girl's feeling lonely wait for her husband after 'many a virgin night' is with no aura of love, but for artificial dell of joy

from a stranger's anonymous care. (Mahapatra 17)

At last, when her husband comes in like a 'mammoth' her experience of love is likened to that of a common harlot. In

Mahapatra's universe admire fails. The man- woman relationship establishes no announcement. In *Love's Caress* in *Svayamvara and Other Poems* the poet does not hear the voice of flowers and his night remains without love's stroke. In *Bells* he cries:

Can love talk in odd and secret voices?

Every poem cries in gloom; (Mahapatra 16)

In *Intimacy*:

Whatever joined my lips to yours

Was not intimacy (Mahapatra 16)

In *The Poster*, in early volume, the poet's demonstrative tone of love ends in a ruthless satire:

a pity we will not learn to deceive each other  
from the very first time. (Mahapatra 31)

It is perhaps ironical that the volume *Svayamvara and Other Poems* dedicated to Mahapatra's wife with eloquent poems contains poems that deal with aloneness in personal relationship. The volume *Close the Sky, Ten by Ten* dedicated to his father with a quotation from Nissim Ezekiel

"My father, sceptic, rationalist, trying every curse and  
blessing powder mixture, herb and hybrid." (Mahapatra 12)

It includes the poems that deal with loneliness in the filial relationships. Two poems in this volume deal with father, *To My Father* and *The Report Card*, that won him the Poetry honour for 1970. The two poems are allied to each other by the image of loneliness. In *To My Father*, the father depicted has withdrawn himself into seclusion with age and a partition separates him

from his son. The son too in *The Report Card* is as lonely:

Unknown is the seed of loneliness which seeks to  
make the boy's pocket its dark and poisoned  
home (Mahapatra 45)

This green isolation of our skins is embedded in peacefulness. Stillness is another theme that emerges as one of the chief themes in Mahapatra's later volumes. Images of stillness help the poet to bring out the deep inner stillness of a conscious being. Silence of predictability "could be more eloquent, more meaningful to the writer of words", says Mahapatra. "It is easy to find instances in our own century of writers who chose not to write after being entirely successful in the one or two books they published. He gives the example of J.D. Salinger and believes that the silence of Salinger is his own making, "a silence that served his needs of life and which his words were unable to accomplish." (Panja19)

That Mahapatra takes words to be an inadequate means of expressions, although, paradoxically, he as a poet depends most on words to express himself is apparent in a lot of his poetry. In his later volumes there are many instances of combination of silence against words. For Mahapatra, harmony is sometimes that of the skin, like in *The Birds* or in *Betrayal*, for

After a while the word is no longer a gift' (Mahapatra 10)

In *Marriage Portrait* stillness becomes inevitability. Widow's lips assume still. In *Intimacy* the poet is sceptical about the durability of togetherness of the poet and his lover but what

shall really remain of their relationship is 'indifferent silence'. Silence is also reparation. The peace of the lovers sitting together is described as a ritual in *Ritual* but it is never the unconditional stillness the poet looks for and therefore brings no consolation to the poet

the quietness is no solace to our shoulders  
hunched over the distant stars  
even this holds the promise of noise

Invader in *The Symbolic Mode in Poetry—A Critique of Jayanta Mahapatra* points out that: For Mahapatra's lover's speech is disagreeable. Since, their love has died; it serves as a ghastly reminder of hypocrisy which loveless communication entails." (Bhatnagar 85) In Mahapatra's early volumes, closing the world into a poet's inner world that distances him from the realism around is a recurring theme. In *Morning* the poet returns to the reflection again:

the morning seems distant as  
I climb into words (Mahapatra 21)

The process of composing poetry that in result distances the poet from the certainty sometimes merges into knowledge of sexual love as in *The Wave*:

feel each particle of the mind how it rises to  
an attitude before sliding down its own lift  
back where the old trembling was and you  
realize what has passed is not the mad rush of a sentiment  
nor the steep pulse of a vein. (Mahapatra 38)

Speaking of the resemblance that the poet attempts between love making and writing poetry R.K. Swain points out that Mahapatra strikes such a parallel since both the acts are impulsive and aware acts. Mahapatra, Swain says:

tries to strike a balance between the heart and the mind in the body of his poetry; he wants his love as well as his poem to be “in a medium /cut to size” conscious as he is that “is doing / something new/ towards”, he is also aware that the creative experience is eventually inexpressible and opaque.(Swain 229)

These analogies are not, however, achieved by passion but rather by efficiency:

Mahapatra seems to have evolved his poetry largely on his own as an intellectual act. Many of the poems in his first book, *Close the sky, Ten by Ten*, are curious experiments and read more as if willed by intellect than produced by emotion. (King 196).

Mahapatra neither had the guidance nor a wish for poetry like the other contemporary poets such as Shiv Kumar, Nissim Ezekiel, P.Lai, R.Parthasarathy, Adil Jessuwalla, Gauri Deshpande, Arvind Krishna Mahrotra, Agha Sahid Ali, Darius Cooper, Meena Alexander or Bibhu Padhi all of whom taught English nor was like Ramanujan who was a Professor of Linguistics. The poet admits in an interview:

I had no idea of what earlier poets in India had done. Nor was I aware of the poetry being written outside my country. I was teaching physics, true, but my interests lay always in novels

and stories, mainly in English. I was doing a lot of reading and was acquainted with the fiction being written and published abroad. Of course I wasn't into poetry. (Contemporary Poetry Review)

In the first two consecutive volumes the poet remains fussy with form and language. In both *Close the Sky Ten by Ten*, and *Svayamvara and Other Poems*, the poet is preoccupied with the imagery of building materials and its necessary apparatus like doors, windows, walls and roof.

The visual images call for no display of colours. We rather hear of gloominess. The window is 'dark', the sun is icy and the 'noonday sun' is covered with obscurity. The mountains are 'black', the hours 'black'. Amidst this obscurity the lone tree bleeds, as does Gandhi. The tree at night is not green, the parrots are, but they are only impressions on a platter. Greenness is the colour not of innocence or natural world, but of partition. When a flower is seen to flourish in yellow light' the poet distances himself. Occasionally we come across the Silver Star or the 'silver of the sun'. The poet depicts a world where men wait for paint

Everyday We drag our bodies Into the sky,  
Waiting for the colour (Mahapatra 20)

Auditory images are inconsequential, especially in these two volumes, for silence emerges as a vital image. The poems strike us for their unusual and highly stylised vocal construction. Many of Mahapatra's early lines carry a conscious permutation of

contrary or contradictory words and ideas welcome across lines like 'the defence /of a smooth defencelessness's. The wind is in place and 'still' while we learn to 'move'. In *Instant* we have:

the instant will -born dying... (Mahapatra 15)

Similar juxtapositions are found in *Svayamvara and Other Poems*. In *Morning* for instance we come across:

climb into words

shrinking from lotus. (Mahapatra 15)

There occurs oxymoron like 'blind man stares', 'looking, eyes shut', 'sun's iciness', or 'crowded silence'. Most of the poems in these two volumes are short where only *Traditions, Intimacy, If I am Wrong*, and *Henry the Robot / A Theme of Love* stand out as exceptions. John Berryman's *Dream Songs* has Henry as a character appearing sometimes as a sulking man, at other times as an unconcerned man. He appears in so many dissimilar contexts that, it becomes impossible to pinpoint who he is. Mahapatra's Henry is clearly not all habitual. He is a body 'pinned with consciousness.' He has his special images and associations but understands nothing of the conditioning the hard-pressed world forces on him. While Henry remains impenetrable with his individual associations the poet is 'afraid / in the big joke to be understood.'

Many of Mahapatra's early poems revolve around this individual world with a 'secret progression of thought emotion and dream 'that Henry speaks of. The stanzas are unbalanced, the lines are short, sometimes one word forms a line, and

sometimes one line is a stanza with no punctuation marks. At times this briefness is achieved by discarding verbs or articles. In this early phase Mahapatra comes out as a beginner preparing himself for the next volumes to come.

Life:

the silt left behind by the year's flood

a telegraph key tapping away in the dark

In its years is the smoke of our fires

which didn't burn out all we wanted to end.((Mahapatra 37)

Jayanta Mahapatra's third volume, *A Father's Hours* (1976) declares the end of his tentative step. By his third volume Mahapatra emerges as a poet sure of himself pouring out volume after volume of that entire lay deep within him seeking appearance. In the first two volumes Mahapatra shows an urgency to grip his medium of manifestation. He had used shape and sentence structure like a poet unsure of himself:

My first two books of verse were .mainly experimental; it was the language again I wanted to exploit, because I felt I would mould it like clay, and I suppose Adil Jussawala was right in his own way when he said in are view that I was a poem-maker. (Raghavan 60)

By the third volume we find that his syntax becomes quiet. Words deliberately activist are no longer yoked together but their flow seems more natural as do the epithet. The poet has at last gripped his medium of expression and his obsession with words and forms are on the reject. However, the poet's love

forum usual epithet persists in his later volumes calling for his matchlessness in appearance. This phase has the poet, now sure of himself, pouring out themes beyond the private and the personal to encompass the landscape, legend and history, rites and rituals of his region and later his canvas encompasses his country and outside.

Although he still draws on images from his personal life and personal associations, they are now presented in clearer stipulations. The images of this phase are diverse including religion, landscape, animals, human, and more abstract ones like silence, guilt, and lonesomeness. His later volumes have images of decrepitude and death, his contemplations on life, along with the other chief images of the experiential phase.

One of the chief themes haunting the poetic awareness is religion, the Hindu rituals and practices that he sees around him, but from which he himself has been estranged by his grandfather's conversion into Christianity. Consequently, we have a abundance of spiritual imagery in Mahapatra. He seeks the truth behind the pious practices that the men and women around him so faithfully follow: 'Does the praying fakir know from where the questions come?' asks the poet (Mahapatra 28) He tries to find out that is there in ceremony, in a ritual's deeply hidden meaning?' (Mahapatra 15) Religion is a probable expiation of guilt:

The great Indian sun in its millionth run Opens  
its memory doors. There within sits a man With

a lifetime of half-understood guilt Shuffling like  
beads through his unseeing fingers. ((Mahapatra 33)

Whatever Mahapatra's official commitments to Christianity might have been, his religious images stem from Hindu way of life and rituals. Scattered throughout his volumes are temples, temple bells, priests, sacred thread (Waiting: 16) and offerings to gods such as coconuts, charred coconuts of the festival (32), Lowers, milk, vermilion, 'balls of cooked rice to appease the dead'.(4 1 ). He refers to the Jagganath temple, Lingaraja temple, Hanuman temple. He speaks of the crowd outside the temples; the long waits for worship, the fasting, the ringing of the temple bells and the offering of fruits and flowers. Mahapatra's images capture the beliefs and practices that form the real meaning of Indian tradition:

An old woman prostrates herself to the day's  
last sun. (Mahapatra 42)

Mahapatra is not content only by giving us a reliable image of the rituals and practices. His attitude to religion is not as easy as it appears. His performance is not that of resignation to god for a solution to all the exertion around. Early in his third volume man's sightlessness to faith is exposed: 'Faith is a blind child holding on to man's hands.' (Mahapatra 33)

The volume containing poems dealing with mysterious religious symbols of people who settle down serenely into a deep-rooted tradition of their ancestors is aptly titled *A Rain of Rites*. *Listening to a Prayer* delightfully brings out the helpless

dependence of men on god as a reliever of all pains:

A bell trembles Touched by the pain  
Of countless people. (Mahapatra 29)

The wind that blows across the temple courtyard settles on the poet's shoulders. But the poet is unable to give any answer or alternate solution. It therefore has nowhere to go with neither a silent nor an answer. Although priests are bathed in the religious aura Mahapatra never speaks of them with adulation. He is rather sceptical in his treatment of them. Priests are 'crafty'. Although they look handsome and impenetrable, the associative 'glow of light' is 'counterfeit'. (Mahapatra 19)

When the Puri pastor stands in the sun, the sunshine is described as 'indulgent' (Mahapatra 14). The Brahmin priest is 'proud' (Waiting: 15), and shown as waiting haughtily by the 'temple door'. (Mahapatra 8) The images of discarded temples suggest lost belief. When he refers to Christianity it always associates a feeling of separation. As in *Brothers*, or in *Requiem XV*: 'I look into the white sea of sunlight/ Flooding the sixth century before Christ. There were no walls then. 'Later god became a 'terrible mental silence'. (Mahapatra 71)

Mahapatra seems fascinated by the stone depiction of Shiva, the lingam. They are phallic representations that symbolize the moment of construction itself. Steeped in Hindu system of beliefs he speaks of 'primitive purity of afterlife' (Waiting: 45). The poet, however, remains a detached spectator of this belief, the customs and practices from which he has been separated by the early

switch in his family. His attempt to enter the temple where 'myth shifts' from hand to hand, eye to eye results into altercation: 'Are you a Hindoo?' (Mahapatra 22) By his ninth volume published in 1986 the lyricist displays a regular disillusionment

a temple drifts away

From vague stretched -out hands. (Mahapatra 15)

A thirteen-year-old girl who was religious, meticulously fasted each festival-day and followed a stringently vegetarian diet on Mondays and Saturdays, who visited the temple and smeared god's feet with red powder, dies of tetanus. The poet's voice is that of contempt:

You would think our gods are as the winds,

reaching away In fairness everywhere; (Mahapatra 29)

In *Bare Face* although the spiritual images continue God hides in the dark like an alien' and the poet tries to grow out of these practices by not wearing ashes on the forehead. In a discussion with Sumanyu Satpathy the poet says:

I grew up in Cuttack, close to a temple. There were two rivers close by. The ways of life there were different. I was into religion. My poems today don't have those old images. I have taken temple out of my system, (Panja 31)

Religion is so intertwined with every aspect of the Indian life and its enlightening expressions, music, art, dance, painting, sculpture, or architecture, that the poet's delineation of religion becomes a feature representation of India. Later the pain country is likened to



The decapitated old temple by the river

Its mouth open, and staring

All its bewildering hunger born into sorrow. (Mahapatra 7)

It is absurd to wince at being called a adoring poet. Unless one is that, one is not a poet at all", says Wallace Stevens in *Opus Posthumous*. Nature imagery that the affectionate poets abounded in continued into poems of the later era. Marianne Moore draws lessons from seagulls or fishes. Richard Wilbur has composed a present *Bestiary*. Robert Frost images onward truth about man and nature from birches or butterflies or cows. The poetry of Jayanta Mahapatra pitifully leads to a landscape that is characteristic of Orissa.

Mahapatra's nature images carry forward the topic of his poetry, the strain of which is generally more solemn than the mere fascination of nature. Mahapatra is not an obsessive in the sense. Wordsworth or Keats was. In using the term Nature imagery for Mahapatra we should not be guided by the ideological composition of what the Romantic poets stood for. He never turns to nature for the mere enchantment of it, missing its serene radiance like Yeats' 'I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shoreline; nor is he a pantheist, trying to see

a World in a Grain of Sand

And Heaven in a Wild Flower (Blake 21)

Mahapatra is a modern both in terms of his susceptibility and expression. Among the principal natural lineages employed arc: flower, sky, wind, rain, and stone. In human history, every

age is found to have copiously used flourish imagery in art and poetry. In almost every culture be it East or west, we find flowers woven into material, carved into architecture, painted along borders of text and glazed onto porcelain or used profusely in poetry and songs. Flower has usually been associated in poetry with beauty, tenderness and conciseness. The burden of a Shakespearean sonnet is that if the nasty time destroys the whole thing

How writh this rage shall beauty hold a plea,

Whose action is no stronger than a flower? ( Mahapatra 65) Of the flowers rose held a special place as a. symbol of love and charisma:

There's sweetness in an apple tree, And profit in the corn; But lady of all beauty

Is a rose upon a thorn. (Christina Rossetti 25)

Mahapatra never chooses the rose as of a symbol either of prettiness or infirmity or lost love. The most common blossom to occur in Mahapatra is the jasmine, 'the frail white flower' with an intense smell. 'Jasmine is sweet, and has many loves', wrote Thomas Hood in *Flowers*, but he had finally preferred the rose. Flower is an important image in Mahapatra's religious scene. Blossom for most part acquaintances the custom of worship:

...a frail white flower of worship

pays for my sins and watches. (Mahapatra 14)

A man bathes at sunrise plucks some holy flowers and sits

down to adoration. (Mahapatra 42) while worship is holy, the flowers a foreseeable part of worship, become holy themselves. The 'holy flower' includes marigold along with the pallid flower. Thus flowers themselves become symbolic of the burial and rituals of worship. 'Flowers, dried and sacrificed, smile at the poet' (22) The temple rituals embodying the image of sacrificial flowers cheerful at the poet bring in suggestions of Devdasis, the dancers at the temples, who sacrificed their lives to the service of god. Blossom images connect girls as in 'To a Young Girl, Waiting for summer of 1994.' The whiteness of jasmines serves as a reminder of stained simplicity. Mahapatra's jasmine images hold associations with life in *Twilight*.

There is a sound of crying in there  
Of an evening jasmine  
being born  
The sounds of satisfaction after love's been made  
Who cares why a frail flower raises its head

And smiles? (Mahapatra 13)

When the unrest in Punjab fills the country  
with blood and death: the jasmine's arms  
stretch out (Mahapatra 37)

In *Waiting for Summer 1994* the stories of summer that 'smelled of god and was a flower' denotes the poet's search for cheerfulness and life after rioting in India. (Mahapatra 50) Sometimes it is the flower in common that is a chronicle of the life lived: 'In her eyes the soft flower of her days glows' (Mahapatra 43).

Sometimes they are minutely ocular images involving

unexpected images. In *The Return* the Gulmohar's glowed ruby like bureaucrat's eyes/ in the midday sun' and bougainvilleas 'Burst through like victory banners' (Mahapatra 21), or, in lines like 'the tight grey knots of days on the horizon' open 'like a flower in slow motion' (Mahapatra 15)

Hyacinth, the Christian symbol of prudence, peace of mind, and the desire for paradise that came from the legend of Apollo's accidental killing of Hyacinth thus is associated in Mahapatra with death and rebirth.

In *Temple*, as the river 'brooded over the burning corpses', Ceramal found herself waking up within her own shade 'to the mauve tissues of hyacinth' (17). Sometimes flowers connect the conventional romanticism as in *Harvest*, or serve as reminders of lost loves:

..the flowers dangling over the silence, trying desperately  
to look like friends I knew once. (Mahapatra 13)

Thus we find that the flowers in Mahapatra are not constrained to a particular sense. Their association is diverse, perhaps best seen in the lines of *Father's Hours* where the poet says, Thinking doom/ or flower or sentence/which remains simply an ambition, / perhaps one that would be understood by a allegory. 'Later in the same poem flower is used as a synonym to 'idea' since idea too 'flowers' like a plant does.(Mahapatra 10) In 'Ash' the flowers along with the rain are part of the ways of liberation. The flower is not only a means of salvation. The poet asks whether the flourish he 'perceives' pulls him down to

'despair'. (11)

The abnormal treatment of the poet of the flower image lies in his repealing the weakness and briefness that are associated with the flowers.

the wind tearing the white flowers apart

without causing harm to its myth of strength. (Mahapatra 1)

"For T.S. Eliot the sky is a universal symbol of god, so too it is for Mahapatra", says Inamdar. (Bhatnagar 86) The sky exists in the poet's awareness, as the vast undeniable space. This in dissimilar hugeness stands as a contrast to the trivial things that occur on the earth that share undue importance. In *Main Temple Street, Puri*, the poet depicts scenes like children laughing at cripples and mongrels mating. The focus then shifts to the sky, which exists indisputable in its huge presence:

And the sky there Claimed by inviolable authority

Hanging on to its crutches of silence (Mahapatra 16)

The firmament that covers the earth remains indifferent to all human interaction. The sky's face' is expressionless. Sickness, starvation and losses are vain to the sun and the sky'. When the thirteen year-old Lakshmi dies her tragedy is wrecked by celebrating voices and laughter 'before it rolled over and faced the blue sky.'(Mahapatra 53). In *The Lost Children of America*:

the emptiness of skies luminous bowl fills their

eyes with a single hue the colour of the

Third Eye, the oblique, the great (Mahapatra 25)

The sky's immobility is no verdict. Man's hatred is as

insignificant as the silence of the sky. (Mahapatra 62) When the poet carps of his country's politics as in *Possessions*, The sky sin assuredness is stressed to convey the country's deferred policies. This inconclusiveness, this inactivity also works on the individual level:

Was the earth and sky Taking a last chance

To exercise its power over *me*? To find me

with that impotence Which had so often

Overcome me in the past? (Mahapatra 28)

In *Dispossessed Nests* the poet is concerned with 'madunrest' of Punjab that throws the country into anarchy. The first part of the volume *Bewildered Wheatfield's* concentrates on the communal aggression that took place under the cap of insurgency. Like the confused wheat fields of Punjab, other normal images are employed and shown to respond to this human carnage. The riverbed dries up, the rainbow chokes and the moonlight is pallid.

Only the grasses of the dead grow speedy. The sky here is presented the space that keeps the seeds of each incident to be unfolded in time. The idea that the sky is the space connected to distance, to time, to the occurrence of the succession of things past and future occurs early in *A Rain of Rites*:

In limbo of things that accept the past

the blood grows softer, glossier, in the shadows.

Here the string goes lax that holds the sky ,

fluxes of the will ,the vague far places. The distance

opens and closes the palms of my hands. (Mahapatra 4)

Elsewhere the sky is a refuge, the fortification of the earth. When the poet feels discarded by his friends, Chinu, Bibhu and Ranju, he feels insecure, like the dawn under a rain tree, 'seeking its sky'. (Mahapatra 15) Sky is also the mental ambience. It comes down to the mind when the poet walks alone. (Mahapatra 69) Sometimes the 'Sky grows lonely'. (Mahapatra 36) in '*Hunger*' when the hunt for food makes the father oblivious to morals and conventions of society and offers his daughter to the poet for enjoyment, 'the sky falls' on the poet suggesting the final crumple of ethical values. In *One Clear Night* when 'the end of a love comes near' the sky referred to is 'cold' and 'stony'. The Set sky' is 'no meagre comfort' (Mahapatra 18). The child shut to nature who plays in sun and rain like Wordsworth's *Lucy* has a face 'clear as the sky' that 'mirrored the purity of her soul'. (Mahapatra 55). In *Days* the poet monitors how the days come and go, in an endless reiteration, so endless that the days do not seem to go away at all nor do they stand in his way. Pondering thus, the poet reflects that he is 'one with the sky'. Here the prominence is on the unchanging aspect of the sky. For all, the poet realizes his limits of appearance and laments that the vastness of the sky 'is not my freedom of speech'. (Mahapatra 17)

Rain the reliever of the scorching summer heat, a welcome break to the tedium of regular schedule has always occupied a major segment in the Indian poetic realization. The cursed

Yaksha in Kalidasa's *Meghdootum* separated from his beloved likens the gathering clouds in the month of Ashadha to a mature elephant playfully knocking against the river bank and notes that even the mind of a cheerful person is excited at the sight of a cloud. Poet after poet poured out songs addressing the rain. The tumultuous thundershowers; the merging of forest, field, river and sky into a particular continuum of watery mass; the gathering of the rain clouds played upon Tagore's imagination. He wrote numerous poems on rain. The approaching rain made the poet's compassion dance like a peacock' (Mahapatra 1). Sometimes rain brought in an association of lonesomeness;

clouds rumbling in the sky .teeming rain

sit on the river bank sad and alone. (Mahapatra 12)

Rain knocks on Mahapatra's imagination and he has a number of poems on rain. *Rain Sense, A Rain, A Rain of Rites, Four Rain Poems, Again the Rain Falls, Rains in Orissa* are some of them. Rain is captured in many moods, sometimes it comes unhurriedly across the sky, (Mahapatra 10) In *Unreal Country* when ever thing merges in the darkness of gloom and there is defeat in the poet's eye, 'Rain grates in the silence'. Here is also the solid image of rain hanging from the branches. *The Wound* that portrays the decayed world begins with dark and cold, has rain slashing the streets. (Mahapatra 3) when the country is in turmoil due to communal violence, the rain 'falls heavy hard as stone' (Mahapatra 20). *June Rain* tries hard to give 'darkness and light an organic unity'. The air smells of raped woman as

well as of henna. Rain's trapping alongside the door is sometimes so persistent that it is mistaken for the dead themselves are trying to come in. (Mahapatra 14). When the proverbial rain that the poet has trampled on is thrown like some seaweed on the beach, it associates guilt,

like some shape of conscience I cannot look at  
A malignant purpose in a nun's eye. (Mahapatra 10)

Sometimes it is not guilt, but an awkwardness that raises as therein 'stinks of mould and wet dog's skin' in a country stricken with suffering and poverty. (Mahapatra 13) Rain is ascribed with 'clear wise eyes' when he relates it to the game one played in childhood in *A Rain*. Word 'and 'rain' co-exist in the poem as means of prolific expression that will reveal the poet. While rain is plethora of expression, water is a refuge, a means of hiding. When the water is dying in *Letter* the poet's concern is what will I keep secret to myself when nothing is unseen anymore? (Mahapatra 49) In *A Rain of Rites*, the sky shakes itself from long burning rains' and he year's newly resurrected gods move out of their sleep (Mahapatra 8)

Autumn that celebrates the festivals like Durga puja, the festivals relating harvesting of new rice, restore the gods back to life once more as though they all reawaken after sleep. Rain as a means of renaissance is seen in *The Fifteenth of August*. The poet's concern with the country's future merges into monsoon rain. Where the rain fails to wet the earth the desired restoration fails. A rain that, cannot wet the earth, therefore

'has lost its purpose'. (Mahapatra 13)

Rain again works as something opposed to renaissance, related to an insipid living when the men returning from a cremation faint to memory, succumb to rain once more and the waters of thought moves into an 'even sleep of blood' (23). Here rain stands for submissive existence disparate from reawakening. In *Tonight I Hear the Water Flowing*, the poet's hearing 'the water' instead of the blood in his veins emphasizes once more the passivity and gentleness of existence.

The 'voiceless rain' associates memory. (Mahapatra 24) as it does constantly in *Life Signs* (Mahapatra 12), in *Unreal Country* (Mahapatra 4), or in *Poem for Angela Elston* where the 'soft rain' brings in memory (Mahapatra 18). This association of water and memory is made explicit in poems like *A Morning Walk in Bhopal*, *A Rain Poem*, *Hands*, *River*, *Afternoon*. To sink under water is a trait of a poet or a lover that is impulsively linked to scepticism. The poet's father who keeps faith even unto his very last days 'cannot drown himself in water' and is, therefore, neither a poet nor all over (Mahapatra 2).

Rain images bring in several levels of meaning and evocations. Rain contacts physical yearning in *The Rain Falling*. For rain is Capacious, like the body of a woman.' (Mahapatra 13) It knows that 'Rain is her mother / a fitful time of sweat and tears.' (Mahapatra 28)

Like Wordsworth's 'I wandered lonely as a cloud' the poet's recognition with the natural order is complete in: 'I move on

like rain, to its flaunting flight' (Mahapatra 50) He aspires to obliterate the overtiredness of the spirit, flying over cruel hearts and alleys to the river. Realization is the cloud, which rains pains of responsiveness. (Mahapatra 50) Rain and pain are linked again in *The Hollow Mouth*.

Like rain and water river images happen again in Mahapatra, sometimes taking up similar connotations. An aspiration for self-realization is expressed in terms of the river's desire to join into the sea. When the self cannot be realized due to the corporeal desires it is like a 'river swallowed up by deserts / before it reaches the sea'(Mahapatra 31). The water that by its very nature seeps into the earth, also seeps through the poet, and suggests a progression towards realizing a vision of life's immense prospective:

absently I stare towards the east, towards which a river  
flows, deep in the hills of my blood ;I remember it is  
summer's end and far out ,a storm is about to begin crying  
from the lonely places of the sea.(Mahapatra 33)

In *The Life*, the poet draws a similarity between life and river. Life and its philosophy are brought forward in the images of river and water. Life is a 'river' that flows powerlessly forward and even a thus and monstrous winds cannot rework its direction. In the revise is again the 'river's mouth' form whence the red first 'current' had emerged. While everything floats in this river somewhere the belief of that idyllic refuge, a respite from the being ceaselessly carried forward, exists in the human

imagination. The 'giant wave' of time cannot hold the instant between present and future. We have not much option than to surrender to this surge. Since Life does not teach gladness, what harm is there if the water carries away /your ailing mind?' (Mahapatra 43)

Mahapatra's wind, of all his nature images, most enthusiastically responds to human agony. In *Winds of Spring* written on the brutal massacre of women and children in the paddy fields at Nellie, Assam, nature is shown as actively responding to the slaughter. The winds grow 'wilder' and the moon shudders and drops when the women are slashed. The winds can lift the body of spring over the chasm and travel to 'find death' in the trodden paddy fields. It can partake of the slayer's delight, 'bear the pleasure' of the slicing of the tender soft tissue. Wind is shown as partaking in human deed. In *Another Hour's Bell* where 'pain is the scent of earth' the poet inquires, 'how far away have the wounded winds gone?' (Mahapatra 56) When something dies beneath the grass, there is the Sind's low whine'. (Mahapatra 13) The wind also bears the 'excited beat of lines of marchers' protesting against a corrupt government (Mahapatra 24) the human mind too is responsive of the wind's manners. In *A Dark Wind* the women answers to the "wind's dark pull". Wind sometimes brings in dreams, sometimes 'a prayer to one's lips' (Mahapatra 27), sometimes it is just the cool air, and after storm when the ferocity of the wind is spent 'It opens the knotted bit of mind', and gives

it harmony. (42)

*Macbeth* has the image of the wind, 'sightless couriers of the air', as the vehicle on which pity shall ride to blow the horrid deed of murder to every eye.

Mahapatra's wind functions as a courier of news of death and destruction. When the poet's mind turns on them series of the world, to someone who revenges upon himself for his broken life, or to a girl dying in her mother's arms, the wind fluently carries her scream. (Bare Face: 16) The wind as the news carrier is present in many poems of Mahapatra. In *Shapashy Daya*, which turns on the slaughtering of the Oriyas by Ashoka's army, 'the wind blows everywhere and words dance/like the ghastly remains of long -dead men.' (Burden of Waves and Fruit: 21) In *The Wind* it carries ash, smoke and odour of a memorial service. It twists and turns and rises like flowers of violent colours.

Wind functions not only as carrier but also as revealers of truth. In *The Twenty fifth Anniversary of a Republic: 1975*, the occasion is celebrated with the launching of new postage stamp that brings faint colour to the otherwise monotonous weeks is like 'a sudden wind that slips under the door and stirs'(J), but neither the poet nor the wind stops at that. The occasion has recent statues put up on crossroads, but the wind:

continues to search for dead boughs

soot and litter and dust ,the ruins of dead skies (III).

The wind here reveals the dire aspect of the town underneath its sparkle as it does in *The Wind*. Sometimes the

revelations are simple (Mahapatra 51), sometimes by 'the early wind's, unease', an entire world of manifestation is laid bare (Mahapatra 42).

A sullen wind stalks out

even the restful dead in this country. (Mahapatra 57)

In *A Time*, a evocative 'naked wind' blows from the river where Lakshmi was raped the night before. Although the wind 'pushes 'the poet into contemplating the past calamity, the wind does not bear any hint of the scent of flattened grass from the fore gone night (Mahapatra 17) The wind, the mighty force of exposing the reality is sometimes shown as feeble. When city is in plight of misdeeds, 'a lustful fire' smoulders in green grass, and the trees are charred in the poisoned air, the once proud winds are without the power to blow.'(Mahapatra 72) Here we have the hopelessness of wind. The same manner of suggestion is continued in *May*. In a country' where 'dust thickens on the trees', a country which makes the poet mortified, the wind continues to blow over the 'unexpected walls' and the 'stiff statues', incapable to bring change. (Mahapatra 32)

The imagery of stone helps the poet to look into the traditions and beliefs of his people, and contemplate on the metaphysical and personal opinion that arises in him. The stone as a slab worshipped as god, it exists as a part of a temple that shelters age-old traditions and beliefs, stones exist in ruins as on-lookers of the momentous past. The stone that tolerates, that retains its comprehensiveness in its ruins, by its very subsistence is a

witness to the art-form that lives beyond the sequential as in *Ikonsoor The Ruins*. The enduring superiority of stone is also representative of the continuity of ideals and values. The scabbed stone characterizes the Hindu home as does the cow and the sacred place. The father's touching the lingo with his forehead asserts his belief in the customs. (Mahapatra 40) 'Stone is the theme,' says the poet early in *Bhubaneswar* (Mahapatra 8) Stone, the witness of the ages, linking up the mythic and the historical past with the present is seen in poems like *Stone, Orissa, Song of the River*. In *Konaraka* stone chronicles the legend of the crowning slab of the sun temple. The legend goes that the op wedge of this thirteenth century temple structure could only be fitted into place by twelve year old boy, the son of chief architect, after every attempt of the twelve hundred artisans failed.

Later the boy jumped to his death from the temple top to save his father's name and reputation. Here are also allusions to the inhuman toil undergone by the artisans, the ancestors of Mahapatra, under tyrannical kings. The poet's own standing 'close to the stone,/trying to smear it with blood /to give it life' is a measure of apology for his apathy to that wounded past that he shares with his chase. The poet is unfaltering in his responsibility to bear his tradition and says, 'I must carry the stone I found'

The stones are also a testimony to the killing of the ancestors of Mahapatra by Ashoka's army beside river Daya:

Rock, altar of my ancestors, teach those who rule my

impoverished land today to stand in your valley of the tortures of the dead

and feel the shudder that runs down your granite back,  
(Mahapatra 22)

The stone that exists as a storyteller, chronicling 'a stony epic of loneliness and desire'(Mahapatra 56) is also worshipped in the form of a slab. One of the noteworthy associations of stone is with god Shiva the ultimate witness, the forbearing creator, and the destroyer. Shiva linga is the Vermillion smeared whored stone' (Mahapatra 3).On the block of a 'common stone/the blue shadows of worship rest'. (Mahapatra

38) Among the other nature images, that occurs in Mahapatra, though not as recurrently as the major natural images are sun, moon, stars, trees, dawn.

Sunlight appears in *A Father's Hours* as indeterminate veracity against which the men bound in hard old traditions, like the silversmith, the green grocer, the schoolteacher and Kamala, the whore who reappears in Mahapatra, are juxtaposed. The movement of the sun is a. appraise of the time as in Donne. It' makes lotuses age'. (31) The 'frail early light' that breaks with the rising sun also associates hard reality. The image of dawn recurs in poems like *Morning, Dawn. Dusk* is the time that 'melts into future'. In *Bhopal Dawn* the daylight is likened to a white open page. The moon on the other hand associates death, decay, and lodge.

The moon's babble grows incoherent



like a dying man's, hour to hour. (Mahapatra 16)

F. A. Inamdar points out that: The adversative symbol of the sun is the moon. It evokes the situation of a man whose dreams fall to pieces. Therefore the moon symbolizes our broken dreams ... in *Moon Moments* sometimes we get an authoritative symbol of the moon representing death of our dreams.

(Bhatnagar 87)

Stars combine the memory of the dead, as in *A Father's Hours* and *Ann*. It refers to the faith that the dead become stars. The poet also reinforces the idea that, the heavenly bodies are bound by laws that they are compelled to observe. The evening star returns to the sky. 'Night is where slavish stars move.'

(Mahapatra 44)

The sun 'pushes on' suffering in the loneliness of compulsion.

(Mahapatra 67)

The rainbow often associates worthlessness, the mountain's loneliness, or the dawn travelling alone is symbolic of the alienation of man. The abundance of nature images in Mahapatra makes John Oliver Perry in *World Literature Today* anoint Mahapatra as a Wordsworth 'operating in the Orissa landscape'. The Orissa landscape, its culture and history, rites and rituals constitute an essential theme in Mahapatra. He never lets us forget that on the banks of River Daya the Ashokan army had slaughtered the Oriyas, that twelve hundred artisans toiled under a tyrannical king to construct the sun temple and that the principal artisan's son had jumped off from the temple top after placing its

crowning slab. Poems alluding to ancient culture and history include Orissa poems, Orissa landscape and Karnataka among his a lot of others. Relationship is a volume that combines fable and history of Orissa. Many of his poems bring out the characteristic impression of Orissa, such as *Dawn at Puri*, *Taste for Tomorrow*, *Slum and Evening Landscape by the River*. *A Kind of Grief* explicitly states the poet's love for his state:

From somewhere

One calls back the love

Of what one hungers to be touched by

So I can call you by your name—Orissa. (Mahapatra 13)

The Orissa temples, its men and women, beggars, cripples, lepers, priests and prostitutes all appear as a part of the place. Images of fishermen that appear in some of his poems serve to enhance the atmosphere of Orissa. Orissa is shown in its festivals, in its sufferings such as hunger and scarcity, bound in its rites and rituals. Intertwined with Orissa are the images of hunger, scarcity and cripples. It is a town that celebrates its festivals in the 'whine' of cripples and lepers. (Mahapatra 27)

Many of Mahapatra's images are derived from his childhood recollection. T.S. Eliot in *The use of Poetry and the use of criticism* has said that only a part of an author's imagery comes from his appraisal. It comes from the whole of his receptive life since early childhood. Mahapatra's father, mother, grandfather and his adaptation to Christianity, his own strained relationship with his mother, his study in 'Stewart European, with the ecclesiastics',

his lonely childhood, all appear in his poetry. He could never leave his childhood behind, and asks in *a Time of Winter Rain*:

Does childhood spread out all its way From  
the hills of innocence to horizon of the sea?(Mahapatra 18)

In *Collaboration* he speaks of the corridors of his childhood he hasn't absent behind. Children serve as a means of identification with the place. Since the childhood he depicts is characteristic of his native land it brings in associations of shortage, disease and negligence. *Hands, On the Banks of the Ganges, Five Indian Songs, An Old Country, A Twilight Poem, Learning to Flow Free in the Chariot Festival at Puri, Main Temple Street, Puri* foster images of childhood.

Among the other chief imagery at work in Mahapatra's poetry is the animal imagery. Mahapatra does not have a wide diversity of animals recurring as images in his poetry. He rather turns within a few selected species among which are jackal, cow, bull, water buffalo, and the goat. The birds are more varied, have a wider range and insinuation than the animals. These birds are no longer the 'sadeyed birds' of his first volume, who dare not enter the poet's room but take up a diversity of functions. The most recurrent animal and bird to occur are the jackal and the crow, both the typical trickster figures, associated with trickery, intelligence, cynicism, and both are scavengers.

Jackals are associated with a physical union without love. When the memorable old whore with her tired breasts trails the poet in *The False Start*, jackal's find rotting carcass.'(Mahapatra

29) Sometimes when the, poet's mate's presence becomes 'body's presence' and the poet is simply not seeking precision in the desired interactions, the jackal' flashes its sudden obscene smile.' (Mahapatra 48) This genital instinct associated with the jackal characterizes the animals in general:

The young are excited by mysterious graffiti  
On walls and monuments And crouch like animals  
At the edge of this breathless jungle. (Mahapatra 47)

This organization often extends to include the jungle, the home of animals. In *A Father's Hours*, 'the jungles have become gentle' and the pretty neighbour, sparkling on golden stage of life with a divorce and a Ph.D. hides 'jungles' in her purse. (Mahapatra 27) The crow is an important image in Mahapatra. The crow, a very well synthesis of many folktales of different parts of the world, also associates selfishness, greed and aggressive mischief along with the qualities that characterize the jackal. A sharer of many common qualities, the crow brings to the poet's mind, comparable kind of associations.

When one is apprehensive of acknowledging past adventures he is also frightened of 'raucous cries of crows' (Mahapatra 74). The poet's mate wakes up in a dissimilar place, hearing the 'Orion-call' but the recognition 'Of love's bare hour of absence and drift' begin 'flight of crows in the blood'. (Mahapatra 33) Crows appear in *A Summer Night* with associations of general degeneration, but, they are, for the most part associated with social and political manipulators.

In *The Twenty-fifth Anniversary of a Republic, 1975*, the celebration that begins with the launching of 'new postage stamps' has new statues placed on intersection. But on the statues of the exemplary dead men sits the 'coarse crow'. They are comparing greatly to the 'crafty priests'. (Mahapatra 19) Indicating that, the country's history is at exposure 'crowd of crows swoop down over the statues of the great dead men'. (Mahapatra 36) But these crows, the sneaky priests, who are an important part of our country's guidelines, do not aim merely at the dead:

I thought I saw crows aiming at the leafy places of the soul, scavengers crawling along the tracks of stagnant shores of existence (Mahapatra 37)

The world that the scavengers crawl into is an overcast world, where marigolds flower in the 'wrong way'. For all their wish to crowd into the delicate indispensable places of existence, the leaves are so conditioned by now that they 'are weary and can feel no more' The crows also bring in associations of individual disputation:

A ten- year old girl combs her mother's hair  
where crows of rivalry are quietly nesting.( Mahapatra 14)

The voice of a crow has no music. It caws in a hoarse voice and in disgusting language. The crows are neither attractive nor have sweet voice but draw our attention by their 'noises', which are not songs. Their call brings in disagreeable effects.

Endless crow noises. A skull on the holy sands

Tilts its empty country towards hunger. (Mahapatra 28).

Even the consecrated crows of Puri have 'clumsy sardonic persistence' and sink away 'the progress of rain's logic' (Mahapatra 45). In *Evening*, the evening's strength offers a solace that makes the poet forget the causes of his as well as other's sufferings. Yet it cannot demolish 'all that is to happen' and the poet remains apprehensive:

Like the smell that lingers of a dead cow's entail The day's crows have dragged up to the skies. (Mahapatra 37)

The crow's scattering of debris and stink, serve to add up to the list of their wrongdoing. Its reference is coupled not only with the socially and politically significant but sometimes associates the tedium of regularity, like in 'the dawn crows flying back at sunset' (Mahapatra 18) or the tired man. Mahapatra turns to scavengers, be it the crow or the vulture when he is sceptic:

a lifeless story chewed on by the vultures  
of a country's leaders. (Mahapatra 30)  
As the political leaders tell convincing lies the  
birds in the trees are dreaming and hungry. ( Mahapatra 23)

The noteworthy are not only crows. The social worker Rama Devi is compared to a triumphant snake which has just shed its skin' (A Fathers Hours: 32). What coils around our errors are the same poisonous creatures, as in *Assassins*. The hawk on the other hand carries the image of isolation and of miserable. And I know I am alone.

Tonight I can remember the lost mornings.

A hawk cries in gloom: (Mahapatra 32).

A surrealistic proclivity is evident in the poet's fascination for sinking under the surface, implying a going beyond the observable. The water buffalo goes into water, crocodiles move into deeper waters (Mahapatra 35), and, 'elsewhere a hawk stoops to its deep existence of hope.' (Mahapatra 15) In *Another Day in Rain* the pariah kite is 'of another world and light'. (Mahapatra 8) Pigeons are symbols of indolence:

Two gray wood pigeons as though half awake Grope  
around like new ashramites in Rishikesh. (Mahapatra 33)

In *Dispossessed Nests* they take on a dissimilar meaning. Pigeons, the symbols of peace are necessary for rectifying the harm done by the crows. The pigeons must alight on the bronze statues, on which the crows had alighted:

pigeons of ray town must fly and perch on  
the unspoken sadness of the bronze statue  
decapitated once in sudden redness. (Mahapatra 35)

Later, they are again the apathetic, creatures. Mahapatra uses animal imagery sometimes as a natural part of a landscape. The small patient birds that sing in summer twilights (Mahapatra 50) are as much a part of the Indian scenario as the Shiva linga. The dog that 'scratches itself and lies down again is a normal part of A Day. (Mahapatra 31) The cow is kept with reverence in the Hindu home.

In *Total Solar Eclipse* there is a group of animals. Their

responses show the effects of the eclipse on the animal world. It is noteworthy that both the crow and the crocodile are compared to the priests. While the crows are 'crafty priests', layers of sleep protect the crocodile. In *Another Day in Rain*, Mahapatra uses a number of animals and shows their behavioural pattern in rain. (Mahapatra 8)

But for most parts, the animal images are employed with a purpose of carrying forward his subject matter. A cow and a bull mating in the marketplace and the consequent, embarrassment, caused are part growing up, part sacred, and most part lust' (Mahapatra 30)

Some animal images are suggestive of life as the monkeys in *Ceremony, or* the oriole in *Story At the Start Of 1978*. In *Temple* glitwingedorioles challenge the sun as Chelammal goes through the unpleasant memories (Mahapatra 47)

While the Oriole preserves the sequence of the season in its throat Some birds, like the Swans are essentially quiet Mallarme in his famous sonnet *La Virge* depicts the poet's failure of imagination through the remote but lovely symbolic image of an earthbound swan trapped in hoarfrost. Mahapatra who repeatedly displays a concern for the act of composition has his swans sink noiselessly into the carpet. The gulls cry. Swans remain indoors while the gulls are in the open green but when the swans accompany the gulls; they too fold their 'cold throats'. (Mahapatra 41) This voice of the swans, now the voice of slumber, is what the poet must carry:

I must carry its voice, the swans Of slumber,  
with me. It's delicate ivory, I know, shall  
destroy me while I live. (Mahapatra 53).

When the paddy is ready for reaping 'the throats of my nah  
break with tunes of hope:' (Mahapatra 31) sometimes birds with  
voices desert the poet as in *June* leaving the active poet motionless  
and mute. The parakeets circle for a time 'before their cries are  
lost' (Mahapatra 24). The flap of birds may quieten at night but  
the poet confesses that his knowledge and time 'Fail to quiet the  
night' (Mahapatra 16)

*A Rain of Rites* introduces the sparrow. Sparrow is associated  
with softness: 'The sun beats slowly like an exhausted sparrow'.  
(Mahapatra 9) Or again,

how that time blew away softly with her, like  
sparrows in a gust of wind but perhaps  
I am embarrassed ;I stand back and find another  
world, the music of peacocks frozen in rain.' (Mahapatra 29).

Peacock associates multihued splendour as in *Temple*.  
(Mahapatra 19) The methodical mind questions the way of life  
as the peacock wonders, what made him dance to the rain'.  
(Mahapatra 33) Fanaticism in religion brings the peacock back  
in *Dispossessed Nests* whose bends now blazes with hatred and  
the pale rain of monsoons shrink like the skin (Mahapatra 28).

Fireflies signify a blazing up after bearings of life's events  
early in *Bare Face* (Mahapatra 19), they become the glimmer of  
compassion as the Hindus and the Muslims seek union

(Mahapatra 67), later they are like the precedent exquisiteness:

The past becomes beautiful because it faces us.

Like old fireflies against the cold banyan. (Mahapatra 59)

What the wise owl stares at is 'our narrow world'  
(Mahapatra 41). The poet who is not blind to the social  
circumstances has his longing seated 'Like a gray owl on a branch  
of my breath/Eyes wide open in another dumb, dirty trick.'  
(Mahapatra 53) Goats, the dumb creatures that are butchered  
haunt Mahapatra's a cruelty towards the guiltless.

Brother Late at night, as you come home

There will be goat's heads Staring at you with glaucous eyes

From the wooden blocks of butcher's shop. (Mahapatra 18).

Vegetarianism is rooted in Indian culture and religion as a  
part of the doctrine of ahimsa. Gandhi, who becomes an icon  
with Mahapatra, preached the supremacy of peace. A story goes  
that Gandhi's childhood friend Sheik Mehtab succeeded in  
convincing Gandhi to eat meat and he eventually ate goat meat  
furtively. Gandhi

writes in his autobiography that he had a extremely bad  
night afterwards. Every time he dozed off to sleep he felt that a  
goat was bleating inside him and he woke up with atonement  
The butchering of the goat placed with Gandhi is noteworthy  
since he preached the gospel of peace but, was assassinated  
incongruously. *30th January 1982: A Story*, the day of Gandhi's  
assassination in 1948, begins with: 'Another day. Like any other'.  
In no way dissimilar from any previous one, it has the dumb

goat on the butcher's block taking its last breath and staring with wide eyes while the butcher thinks that his knife is losing sharpness, is juxtaposed against Gandhi's 'once-favourite hymn'. (Mahapatra 26) When the goat occurs again in *Bare Face* it recalls Gandhi again. In *Sometimes* man is shown as separated against man. The statue of Gandhi's chest in the city square speaks the truth. It calls to mind the goat again.

Sadder like the bleat

The slaughtered goat gives out

From the dinner plate. (Mahapatra 29)

Gandhi is generally associated with truth and non-violence. He is the national leader, who, with Mahapatra becomes the emblem of peace and of all the unrealised dreams of the country. There are Gandhi's head on coins in the children's pockets, the spinning steering wheel whirrs on. *Dispossessed Nests* that speaks of violence and death has the 'redeeming monument of Gandhi'. In *Bare Face* we hear of compassion, the whirring of the spinning wheel and the dying man's last words: 'He Ram'. Even the headless torso of Gandhi speaks the truth. (Mahapatra 29) He is the leader of the heart, his head being surplus. In *Dare Face* that speaks of India as a little girl, Gandhi is shown as spinning distress and turning them into threads of love. (Mahapatra 63)

The images of the trapped bird or the caged animal that occur in his early volumes recur in his later ones as fine. They bring out the idea of the incarceration of the self in the material

world. The poet himself is suffocated and asks for an open window so that, he can 'breathe'. His reminiscences are like a ferocious animal ensnared. (Mahapatra 31)

Sometimes the self is restrained by the earthbound duties that one has to perform. In *Rising* it is the hidden nest that stops the bird from soaring. The trapped birds and animals are next related towards in poems which are trapped within describiforms and expressions. The poet expresses discontent caused by the gap between thought and expression. Words are poor means of appearance. A poem is compared to a fascinated bird in *The Lines Of My Poem*:

Today a line of this poem Has lost the use of

its healthy legs, Trapped like a sparrow

Which has strayed inside, Beating its wings against

The bars of world's conscience. (Mahapatra 15)

Myth and mythology provide the poets with countless stories from which they can draw their images and allusions. When the subject's myth, the story has been recognized over generations and the readers are well aware of allusions. Mahapatra often alludes to Indian myths and legends and many of his images are drawn from the Ramayana and Mahabharat. In *A Father's Hours* he relates the imagery from the game of dice in Mahabharat to the legend of the sun temple. Here the 'brooding dots on six deathly pale faces 'bring to mind the death of the twelve-year-old artisan. The ruins hold the 'interiors of myth' (Mahapatra 2) Radha from the legend of Radha - Krishna symbolizes the Indian

women in search of true love with its accompanying pain and desire. Mahapatra alludes to the myth of Ahalya from Ramayana in a poem significantly titled *Appearances* for the myth of Ahalya turns on the woman's mistaking appearance for reality. Ahalya legend is reinterpreted in *The Women Who Wanted To Be Loved* where a woman whose passions are dried up turns into a stone. In *Bare Face* he seeks the truth like a karmayogi, like Parvati undergoing penance for union with Shiva. The word 'myth' appears many times all through his volumes. The poet speaks of old myth in the clouds (Mahapatra 12), the 'myth of sun and rain' (Mahapatra 65), of the dumb order of myth in *The False Start*. (52) The poet's use of the fable allows him to escape from the transitory and the fragmented. The fable of the land, racial consciousness and personal experience are intertwined in *Relationship*. He refers to the legend of Dharama, to Ashoka's killing of the Oriyas in BC. He turns to the Putana myth from Mahabharat, to fable of the golden deer from Ramayana. For Mahapatra the 'laksmanrekha' puts an individual into remoteness more than it offers security.

Death imagery mostly appears in *Burden of Waves and Fruit* published in 1988 when the poet is virtually sixty. It shows the poet's gradual consciousness of age and decrepit body that is not present in the previous volumes. In *Summer Afternoons* he speaks of his physical shabbiness. The grass that is the symbol of youth and sparkle is now only a memory. His presence today 'hardens the trees and their fruit'. The poet has aged now and a

touch easy as desire 'stretches' him out and he suffers penance. In *Waiting* the poet shuts his tired eyes; he thinks back but doesn't memorize when his beard had begun to grow. His shoulders are now 'bare and contrite'. The poet is now but a 'poet's poise, a soiled shirt as though it were vacant of its body' (Mahapatra 50) calls to mind Yeats' image of 'a tattered coat upon a stick' in *Sailing to Byzantium*. Mahapatra does not sentimentalise with death, nor is he short in love with its easefulness. What worries him is the 'suffering the only thing that's hard to bear'. But there is hope of re-establishing all that has been lost:

And I sit all alone

Waiting for my joys to come back. (Mahapatra 12)

Contemplation on death in *Cloak of White* ends up in weighing the opposites of life namely hurt and joy, light of suns and distance, and ends in an indecisive 'cloak of white'. In *Last Night the Poem* ends with the poet's picking up tomorrow and seeing his body lying still in the middle of it. There is no further explanation of what happens later. In *The Season Of Old Rain* the poet's private house on death reveals 'neither sorrow nor hope nor loss'. The poet seems more affected by the unnatural and impulsive deaths that happen around him. In *Fragments* he speaks on the death of his father. In *March* he turns to murder and rape and concludes that death is conditional.

His attitude to life is uniformly sensible. There is no romantic feeling, or lyrical improving about life. Life is an endless fluctuation. It 'does not give us a day off'. (Mahapatra 42) In

Today, although this present day is only a small knot, 'can one ignore it? 'The poet asks. *Something Spreading Itself* makes his outlook explicit:

Life is not a precious corner, lyrically hidden,  
Dreams bobbing up and down on the water  
line of sleep. It is the potato -peel the teeth won't let go  
After the core has gone.

Ash images connect death in Mahapatra the south wind startles 'the ashes of the dead' (Mahapatra 21). With another death 'A little pile of ash/Uncurls' (Mahapatra 17). Since all bodies are burnt and finally reduced to ashes, and 'Even the long fame of someone like Christ eventually turns to ashes', (Shadow Space:54) ash stands for the eventual certainty. 'Emptiness echoes from the ashes of the truth.' (Mahapatra 6) Another image that the poet attends to is the mirror picture. The mirror does not stand for an immobile sign of an image for Mahapatra. In *Shadow Space* memory is a mirror held from a remoteness. It is a moment of introspection, it drive 'uncertainties' in his heart (Mahapatra 46) It provides the poet with a moment of apprehension. When introspection is lacking, the mirror grows so small that it is incapable of showing several image. (Mahapatra 34) Its reflection is not limited to the peripheral but it captures the internal truth.

In my familiar mirror  
The eyes peer through a mask That approves of my act  
A scrutiny we cruelly practice. (Mahapatra 76)

Darkness sets early in *A Father's Hours*. (Mahapatra 26) Darkness associates unawareness, moulder and death. In *Shadow Space* the ruins are darkened by the diffuseness of our own shadows. Dimness as death appears in *Through the Stone, A Certain Refrain*. In *Death* the image of death is compared to 'A handcart you push,/through a day full of moonlight, of unhappiness you can't trust' (Mahapatra 78).

In *Dispossessed Nests* Mahapatra exposes horror by using colour imagery. Eyes of 'bright yellow sunflowers' disclose terror; bunches of yellow flowers peep out'. The volume is besmeared with 'blood', 'scarlet colours'. Vermillion of woman's forehead ripples in the dark.' (Mahapatra 21) There are orange decorated masks on the faces of the 'possessed fire dancers'. In the eyes of the masks is a tremulous mauve. There is 'golden smoke'. The rainbow with its spectrum of colours chokes, and in general darkness pervades. Bruce King says:

The use of recurring motifs and images is a means of giving unity to the volume of poems and bringing the individual lyrics into closer relations so that they seem continuous meditation on such themes as loneliness and personal relationship. (King 196.)

Certain images link up the early tentative stage with this later one giving the impression of a unified corpus of work. Such images are the images of house with its associative doors and windows and rooms, images of peace, seclusion, and his concern with poetry.



The house that stood *for* tangible limitations *on* the self in the experimental stage of Mahapatra appears again in *The False Start*. In *The House* the door is a symbol of promise of life the house is a place of acceptance and security 'that someone somewhere is always waiting for his dream.' As one grows up the ideal changes and the door assumes a 'false look of tranquillity' (Mahapatra 58) House is the place of his expansion like his land, a place of refuge that the poet looks for:

In house I figure the possibilities of life :could I  
hide again as a child, someplace here? (Mahapatra 22)

The 'grey walls of room' (Mahapatra 4) suggest the margin of existence. The wall that works as a barrier that separates the past from the present crumples where the memory co-exists with the nearby. The old brick walls of his house 'goes down into shadows' (Mahapatra 39) as he recalls the history. The door when closed, provides a place of hiding, and when open, brings to view all that is lay hidden within the confined human survival. In *The Sentence*, 'behind locked door you wait for things' and when the door is opened there remains 'no word to hide in'. In *The Day After My Friends became Godly and Great*, the door is 'like history through which they have gone'. Doors as a link of hours is also present in *Another Hour's Bell. Tonight I Hear The Water Flowing* that deals with the poet's personal experiences in the tangible as well as the fantasy world, speaks of open doors. (Mahapatra 62)

Mahapatra's mission for silence was evident enough in his

early volumes. Peace, as we have seen, was the ultimate refuge of Mahapatra's lovers who come together merely in a physical love in a world where no communiqué is established. Despite all his yearning for silence we have seen that it could bring no discharge to the poet. He picks up the thread again in *A Father's Hours* and asks: 'Has silence lost its importance?' The silence that sets in early in the volume includes the usual world, like the 'vine' that 'climbs silently' (Moving), the human world, where old men wait in 'their silence, and god, whose eyes are silent. 'Silence has gripped my sleeves,' he Mahapatra in *A Rain of Rites*. In *Bare Face* the days meekly graze in the land of their peace. (Mahapatra 73)

In many of his poems silence is juxtaposed alongside words, as in the *Poem For Angela Elson*:

you said: hold me just once, tonight, before you  
leave this land. But then, these were words again,  
Pieces of silence people merely tell (Mahapatra 21)

Words that communicate nothing are but immobility. Similar juxtapositions of words and peace are found in *Voice, The Rain Falling, 1992, Dispossessed Nests*. In *Dawn of a New Year* voices drift in silence about his tired bunk bed. Silence is the outcome of loneliness, of the lonely existence of man. In poems such as *Silence, Last Night the Poem* silence associates lonesomeness. 'I am afraid of loneliness', Mahapatra says in *Waiting* (55). Loneliness is frozen around his childhood images. In *June* the poet watches his aloneness 'come from the tamarind's shade'.

Loneliness engulfs personal relationship: We take precautions not to grow apart .Yet we are alone'. (Mahapatra 22)

The contemplation on end of life has the image  
of loneliness again: Sometime somewhere,  
perhaps on the shore of some sea,  
we shall feel as much alone in the world  
as the others who have won their victories. (Mahapatra 20)

The words are often related to the words in his poetry, the appearance he seeks, and quiet is the absence of such words. This kind of organization is seen in poems like *The Time afterwards*, *Last Night the Poem*.

Silence is a word that is repeated so many times in Mahapatra that Inamdar comments that it gets consecrated in Mahapatra. Mahapatra's concern for poetry and poetic composition remains throughout his poetic line of work. A poet's concern with the act of composition is a common theme, but Mahapatra deals with it in a special way, with a desperation that seemed almost an obsession in the early stage. In this experiential stage he is more concerned with the value of poetry than with its production. The successful poet now counts his young experiences by his publication. An 'old poem' now brings in reminiscences of his wild youth. (Mahapatra 46) Personally, it is poet's hunger for words that led him to discover the hidden corners of his mind:

My hunger of words covered me with  
Walking into the village of my mind. (Mahapatra 69)

Mahapatra sees poetry as a separate living organism that he once found 'at the outskirts of a country' (Mahapatra 64), sometimes, 'in the summers of a country'. (Mahapatra 74) In *Not In Defence Of A Poem* a poem is personified as a woman standing with folded arms with an air that the poet has cheated her. Mahapatra does not look at poetry as a means of immortality that we find in Shakespeare, who attempts to commemorate his love in black ink, nor is his, the assured imagination of Tagore and Yeats who address a reader hundred years hence. He rather speaks of failure of poetry in today's world. In *Will a Poem of Mine be the Only Answer* he speaks of its failure at the personal level. His very bodily responses betray the philosophy his 'poems seemed to profess.' The poet here is 'defeated' by his 'own tactics' that is poetry. Although he tries to believe that as a poet there is something between him and the world, a relationship and a responsibility that makes his mouth turn dry with deaths that should not have affected him because they are not his (Mahapatra 41), he is ultimately incapable to bring any change. Yet he tries to access the power of poetry:

you have to check whether poetry  
really becomes a cry for protecting man. (Mahapatra 46)

He turns to the contemporary condition tracing the predicament off rail human lot. The poet has walked to the remote truths 'Poems were supposed to hold', (Mahapatra 69) but 'for poetry the world lives far away'. In *The Woman Who Wanted to Be Loved* the dark days of the woman 'cannot be

braided into a poem'. The poets for all their shade and weep are powerless to change the world:

Children will go hungry again  
Poet's will sip their tea in stupid  
looking cafes, Our poems look to the right and to the left , Then  
turn to torment in meek expectation.

And always the waiting; a hundred years hence  
The poems will still be luxuries, hiding their impotent  
hatred for the world's unresurrected life. (Mahapatra 25)  
In a last tone of capitulation the value of poetry is  
assessed: The world plots on Poetry stumbles  
and falls. (Mahapatra 59)

Mahapatra like most of the Indian English poets writes in free verse. Although the tone is conversational the images are complicated and the voice that speaks through them can in general be identified with the poet. Mahapatra's world as revealed by his images turns around his own personal self and its problems of being alone, guilt, his childhood and its associative memories, love and poetry. His concern with the contemporary situation makes the poet focus on the solemn aspects of the present day world. He evokes the contemporary situation of India by the images of lepers, beggars, prostitutes, hunger, lack and violence. His treatment of the images is neither ironical nor satiric and by the truthful voice of concern that we hear through the dismal contemporary representations, the poet comes out as a social critic.

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## CHAPTER-VII

### CONCLUSION

Though Indian Poetry in English lacked a rich store of poetic themes and, therefore, could not sustain diversity in the larger sense of them but in course of time it advanced rapidly. Adoption and assimilation poured in it Indian English poetry attains maturity and non-derivativeness in the hands of Toru Dutt, Manmohan Ghose, Sarojini Naidu, Aurobindo Ghose and Harindranath Chattopadhyay. Laxmi Holmstrom says, "The striking thing about nineteenth century Indian poetry in English is that it is mostly about set themes, it is mostly narrative poetry using legends from the Indian stock of storytelling. It is passionate in the narrow sense of using adventurous or chivalrous themes, remote from the scenes and incidents of ordinary life Satire is almost entirely absent and his private voice is rarely heard". But one thing is evident that a time for experimentation and poetic revolt was fast resembling. Following the adulthood and fruition of the tradition, an ear of revolt and experimentation was ushered in by the advent of the post-Independence Indian English poets who bestowed the prominent quality of modernity in their poetry.

The purpose behind selecting these poets to discuss the expedition for self and Indian ethos in their poetry is many-folded, and it is hoped that it has served its purpose well. Both the poets use verse as a tool to search their selves. Although

Ramanujan and Ezekiel write in dissimilar manner, all roads lead to the journey within. Through the varying themes and treatment, these poets are searching the meaning of their existence in their canto.

Nissim Ezekiel deals with the theme of expedition for self from the point of view of a citizen of Bombay. The city of Bombay for Ezekiel is a material which he uses abundantly in his free verse. The city poet has a love-hate relationship with the urban. Although he feels demoralized by the city, he feels that Bombay is a place which has sustained him long. One more glaring aspect of Ezekiel's life and literature is that although by birth he belongs to so-called minority of Bene-Israel Jew, he accepts India from the perspectives of one of so-called mainstream people living here. Ezekiel appears to be the part and package of Indian landscape.

Nissim Ezekiel has dealt with the quest for self through the themes like city existence, man-woman relationship, illusion with religion and spirituality and the disenchantment. The stance Ezekiel accepts, more or less throughout his verse, is that of modern secularist. Living in the modern age, the versifier feels dissatisfied with the existing ethical, social and religious codes. Searching for real happiness; while abandoning the age-old morality codes is a starting point in the poetry of Ezekiel. The poet does experiment with the accepted notions of cheerfulness but feels constantly disillusioned in such attempts. The domestic life seems not to please the poet, and thus we have good number

of poetry dealing satirically with the themes of familial quarrels. There is a well ripeness of attitude, a widening of the inner horizons, almost a fine altruistic benevolence towards humanity. The journey is now from places to persons, from persons to people, and from man to kindness, as the following lines from a recent poem 'At 62' suggest:

I want my hands To  
learn how to heal Myself  
and others, Before I hear  
My last song (Ezekiel 272)

For Ezekiel India is a place of his preference. He attempts to look at Indian realities from a contemporary insider. His very Indian style of writing about Indian themes in his poetry has provided neatness in the genre of Indian poetry in English. Although he appears to be satiric of certain Indian attitudes and assurance system, he is never without sympathy. His unique tongue in cheek style of appearance makes his poetry the poetry of next door writing. It appears that Ezekiel loves India and Indian people with all their weaknesses and drawbacks. He laughs with the regular Indian people in his poetry. But when it comes to dig at the corrupted way of life of so-called religious people Ezekiel appears honestly satiric. Perhaps very hardly any poets of his times are triumphant in presenting India in its varied colours as Ezekiel has been. There does not appear that he is writing about India very soon to present India for the foreigners. Definitely, it can be said that Ezekiel is well-rooted and well-

placed in India. His presentation of India seems valid.

Ramanujan is basically a poet of memories.

He declares that: Letting go Of fairytales Is letting go  
Of what will not Let go: (Ramanujan 260)

His dealing with the theme of expedition for self is chiefly rooted in memories of his childhood located in the culture of South India. While Ezekiel deals with the theme of self-search in his poetry approximately sans memories and history, Ramanujan is completely absorbed in his memories, Indian history, mythologies and mythology. These two different starting points in these two poets make them two tremendous poles. Ramanujan is full of references and allusions, while Ezekiel is 'plain' poet in this sagacity. This makes Ezekiel reasonably 'easy' poet and Ramanujan a 'difficult' one. For Ramanujan, memories and history are indispensable and it seems that the persona believes that past can never be cut off. The poet searches the meaning in this cobweb of history and recollections. The way Ramanujan correlates the past with the present is notable and makes his poetry a rare pleasure.

Vinay Dharwadker accurately observes that, "At the end of the search for self- which serves as the subjective midpoint of experience in the human and natural worlds, even as it seeks to escape from the web of domestic and social relations into a realm of independence- we find a series of 'mere seers' without substantial unity, agency, or will. These watchers can 'make the scene', in the twice sense of the phrase, only by returning

subjectivity to the objects, events, and relations it encounters routinely in its world of concrete particulars. As the self executes this illogical return, it locks itself into the space it wishes to leave in the earliest place: it involutes the entire historical and social structure, so that the innermost circle of experience circles, completing a loop from which there is no escape." (Dharwadker xxxvi)

Ramanujan has a particular relationship with India and hence the Indian themes get particular treatment in his poetry. A scholar in Indian linguistics and a teacher of Dravidian Studies, Ramanujan treats India with ambiguous inter-textuality. In the words of M. K. Naik, "While Ramanujan's poetry of the past provides ample proof of the fact that his thematic strategy is exactly the right one for a poet in his situation, one is not sure that during the dozen years and more that he has been writing; he has fully exploited the opportunities his material offers him." (Naik 21)

Ramanujan uses Indian history and mythologies to deal with the contemporary Indian scene. Alike Girish Karnad, Ramanujan too is a scholar of mythologies and believes that current India can only be understood by understanding its past. Although Ramanujan has stayed approximately all of his productive years in America, there is less poetry on the theme of isolation. Ramanujan rarely appears regretful and romantic while talking about India. He uses India more or less as a fact that roots can never be denied to understand the leaves and

undergrowth. It must definitely be conceded that he has efficiently demonstrated

to his contemporaries the supreme importance having roots.

A study of Ramanujan's verse "convinces one that here is an indo-Anglican poet who has been able to find in his native back-ground and experience an "objective correlative." In their expression, too, these poems impress us for they give evidence of a craftsman at work, an artist who can detach himself from that which is being experienced and communicated it through precise images." (Lall 61)

Kamala Das as a representative of Indian women shows their condition as marginalized. Indian society is patriarchal society where male domination exists. Females have to live under the males in the figure of father, brother and husband. Husband is considered as a sheltering tree for his wife. She has to live her entire life as a subordinated being. She is marginalized and subordinated by her husband. The similar has been felt and faced by Kamala Das. Her poems do not belong to Das only but they speak the awful condition and lowered position of an Indian wife. The poems of Kamala Das obviously paint the picture of an Indian woman as marginalized and subordinated human being. Her cravings to take her as a human being of blood and flesh are the themes of Kamala's verse.

The second aspect of this thesis was to discuss their quest for self, their personality in the poetry of Kamala Das. A person

is known to all by his/her uniqueness. The self of a person is his/her confidence and pride. But a woman is known by males of her family. In a patriarchal society a woman has no individuality. She exists nowhere. Although because of education women are becoming conscious of their selves. They are trying to make their identity instead of accepting the culturally imposed one in which a woman is taken merely as a toy in the hands of males. But as it is known to all that the increasing number of rapes, molestation and sexual assaults, female foeticide are the burning issues of today. All these problems are making pressures on the parents to think upon the liberty given by them to their daughters. It is the alarming situation on the endurance of women on earth.

'Quest for self' is the crux of Kamala Das poetry. Kamala Das has dealt with the mission for self through the themes like physical relations, oppression of husband, forced sex and foundations of house wife. Living the life of an Indian woman, she feels displeased with the Patriarchal Indian Society. The dominating nature of her husband, his feelings less heart, his carnal hunger, his reckless behaviour as father as well as husband, breaks Das absolutely. Kamala craves to be identified as an individual human being. Her role of a wife seems not to gratify the poet and thus we have good number of poems dealing with the 'search of an identity', 'search for herself', 'search for her existence'.

The third aspect of the study was to explore their



autobiographical and confessional mode in their verse. Both of the poets have written about their life and experiences in their verse. An autobiographical poem deals with any genuine event of poet's life. But a confessional poem habitually deals with the intimate details of poet's life. These details are those events that a person would usually share it with a close friend or with a therapist. Thus confessional poetry is a detachment of autobiographical poetry. So all confessional poems are autobiographical but all autobiographical poems are not confessional.

Kamala Das is an immense poet. She can be categorized as imagery, a confessional and an autobiographical poet. Searching for true love, she does the experiment of extra-marital affairs but feels continuously dissatisfied in such attempts. Her childhood, love for grandmother and familial house, motherly feelings, change in life after birth of Jaisurya marriage, husband sex are the variety of themes that labelled her an autobiographical poet. Her bold inauguration of many intimate details of her life such as her husband's forced sex, nudeness of female, details of sexual organs and extra-marital affairs are the themes of her poetry that make Kamala as not only a confessional poet but the queen of confessional poetry also. It is because of her confessions in poems that whenever the word confessional poetry comes, then name of 'Kamala Das is at the height.

The study of Indian women poets in English makes it evident that they have added a new measurement to Indian

poetry in English by their subtle and honest probing of man-woman relationship in terms of love and sex. An Indian woman poet's almost exclusive concern with love is specially justified in the context of her particular Indian situation complicated by the conventional ideas of womanhood. Hence it is the woman, more than the man, who shares the experience of love with unusual intensity and a sense of nearness. The comparison of the love poetry by men with that written by women shows that women are more pragmatic, direct, intense and explorative than men.

Kamala Das introduces a new trend in Indian poetry in English with her bold, original and arduous approach to the theme of love. She is the only poet so far whose poetry tries to define the obscurity of man-woman relationship with the full consciousness of its physical aspect. Poetry and life become identical in her case in the sense that poetry provides the exclusive means of resolving the tensions in her personal life. Her love-experience involves the predicament of an Indian woman obliged to obey the traditional ideals of womanhood. She revolts against conventions and struggles to realize her desire for ideal love through extra-marital sexual relationships only to be met with unfulfilment and dissatisfaction. Yet the clarity, authenticity and originality with which she communicates the ambivalent tensions caused by such relationships bring a new note of confessional sincerity in the Indian poetry in English.

Kamala Das and a few others, all of them are infatuated

with the idea of a love that never crosses the boundaries of an adolescent love". The quotations he cites in support reveal that he is not adequately acquainted with the love-poems of every individual woman poet, and seems to interpret in a disastrously limited context. It is also difficult to assume that adolescent love is not a feasible poetic experience. Now withstanding his disapproval against the so-called "idealised love" of the women poets, love is in fact a more frank, honest and multi-dimensional experience on physical, intellectual and spiritual levels in the case of women than it is in the case of men poets.

The new Indian poetry in English, thus, is not merely novel and varied but also closely concerned with the situation around. It is neither shut up in the assumed crisis of self and identity nor in the mockery of Indian character and behaviour from the western eyes. This new poetry has a variety of concerns which speaks of the sensitivity of the new poetic realization opening new directions both, in its themes and treatment. Though it does not have the finish of the line like the earlier poetry, it is completely natural and human. It has turned the use of English from its British correctness to its natural adaptation and growth in the Indian situation. This poetry may be less known for reasons of journalistic chauvinism but those who wish to know the real Indian poetry in English will do well to dust off the layers of publicized poetry and see what genuine poetry exists beneath it.

In his dialogues with a Third Voice, Daruwalla has three

sections permitted 'Myth Talk', 'Poetry Talk' and 'Tragedy Talk', respectively. Taking one's use from this, one is tempted to characterize Daruwalla's most successful poems as 'Drama Talk', for the voice heard in them is obviously the second of the 'Three Voices of Poetry' noted by T.S. Eliot i.e., The voice of the poet addressing an audience, whether huge or small (situational poetry), and not the first voice which is the voice of the poet talking to himself or to nobody' (lyrical poetry). In these poems, Daruwalla's poetic approach is to present a character in a concrete situation, and intensive scrutiny reveals that he succeeds best when his presentation is marked by clear visualization, the presence of a substantial thematic core, an integrated approach and a well-ordered structure, and that consequently, the absence or the relative paucity of one or more of these elements spells varying degrees of a failure.

It would thus appear that Daruwalla's poetry needs an encapsulation by „the membrane of fact and it is possible to suggest the connection between this and his calling as a police officeholder. Georges Simenon's celebrated Inspector Maigret tells us, "We see..... All sorts of men and women in the most unbelievable situations at every societal level. We see them, we take note, we try to understand"..... our job is to study men. We watch their manners. But of course, in Daruwalla's case, it is not simply a question of studying men and watching their manners, but of responding to their situations in a number of ways and creatively too. Hence, he makes the suggestive distinction

between easy and difficult animals. The easy animals are all that move on legs/flew on wings/ crawled on the belly/inhaled through fins" the one hard animal being Man (Easy and Difficult Animals).

Though a common strategy seems to be at work in these poems dealing with the not easy animal, there is sample variety in the kinds of characters presented, the locales against which they are observed, the different attitudes brought to bear upon them by the poet, thus making for widely divergent moods and tones and the several narrative patterns adopted, ranging from omniscient performance to dramatic monologue.

At places, the protagonist in a Daruwalla's poem is drawn not from the human world but from the empire of the diving. Some poems centre round forces of Nature-, but this is something more than descriptive poetry in the usual sense of the term, because descriptive poetry largely operates within an essentially human frame of reference, the basic point or view being the difficult physical-mental human response to Nature in her diverse aspects. In Daruwalla's poetry, on the other hand, forces of Nature often emerge as living entities with a individuality of their own and those these poems do describe, the effect these forces have on the human situation, their main thrust is to project these forces as.

Like forces of Nature, the animal world also provides Daruwalla with some of his protagonists and in spite of the distinction made between easy animal, which include birds and

beast and difficult animals (i.e., human beings), the easy animals in Daruwalla's poetry do possess a complex dimensions. Animal and Man impinge upon each other in dissimilar ways in these poems.

Nature, society, religion, politics, culture and literature – all these provides locales for Daruwalla's poetry, thus, underscoring the need of a strong underpinning of certainty for his art. The poet's changing responses to his experience range from non-committal, clinical detachment on the one hand to cynical indifference on the other, with in between these two extremes there is a whole spectrum of varying attitudes. From empathy to empathy is but a short step and in some of Daruwalla's shorter pieces the poetry is definitely in pity, as in 'The Leper at the Taj'. But it is totally in keeping with the spirit of the modern age that irony and satire should time and again characterize the poet's response to men and matters.

These changing responses to experience are also matched by a variety of suitable narrative modes. In both "Monologue" in the "Chambal Valley" and "Apothecary", the poet presents a character talking to another, but the difference is that in the earlier monologue, the reactions of the listener are not recorded, while in "Apothecary" Daruwalla comes nearest to Browning's dramatic monologues in which the speaker, caught a responsive listener, whose reactions also contribute to the drama.

In the midst of all this large variety, the one element that

does not seem to change is Daruwalla's imagery and this is as it should be because, while it is rather limited in range, his imagery at its best is eminently, functional and its ethos is all of a piece with the "Drama Talk". The two principal types of images that recur in Daruwalla's poetry are those of violence and dirt-disease and the connections between each and the "Drama Talk" is obvious. The images of hostility reinforce the drama of action in a poem in terms of visualized parallelism and symbol and the violence is seen to operate in three separate worlds- those of external Nature, the predatory animal kingdom and man. His finest poems possess a substantial thematic core, clear visualization of scene, compact and arresting presentation of incident, suggestive imagery and an impressive unity of tone and effect... in Daruwalla's best poems theme and tone, structure and imagery, interact in creating an absorbing human drama which has few parallels in Indian poetry in English.

Daruwalla's poetry also has a proximity and anger. It contrasts the artlessness of violence, aggression and sexual desires with repression, by pores and dishonesty. Generally, the speaker and sympathetic character appear alone, isolated, alienated from their society. There is annoyance at incompetence, passivity, official lies, romantic illusions and the repressiveness of communal solidarity; but there is also a strong interest in Indian history and traditions.

A characteristic of Daruwalla's poetry is of the often uneasy mixture of freedom and control represses desire but is

necessary for survival that is dangerous and in which the individual's life is threatened by society and by nature. Daruwalla is satirically aware of contradictions in his own attitudes. A consciousness of the need to celebrate death then is part of Daruwalla's aesthetics and follows from his concentration on memories, dream and the senses. While Daruwalla's verse gives expression to desire, memory and sense, they are grounded in concrete image, characters and situations.

Daruwalla's poems seems private, personal, people, even lovers, are out there, to be observed, rather than part of shared experience fall at the finger-tips. The withholding of the self is part of his poetry's strength as it communicates an intelligence poised between anger and indication, knowingness towards what is seen and experienced. He has a fascination for obsessive commitment which involves dedication, violence, such as he finds, and would appear to identity within Muslim culture.

Daruwalla seldom appears at ease among the passivity, fatalism and rituals of Hindu civilization. His attempt to merge his own concern with dying into a combined Indian psyche in "The Waterfront" sequence strikes me as unconvincing despite the high-competence of the poetry. What comes across mostly powerfully in Daruwalla's poetry is rather the self-control and repressed anger of the alienated, as in "Routine" and "The Hawk".

The range, variety, themes, attitudes and voices of Indian English poetry have increased greatly in recent decades. Instead of India being ignored by the poet's imagination or reduced to

stereotype sentiments, Indian has become realism. It is seen, felt, experienced, the poet responds to its various details, events, happenings, politics, values, peoples, manners and legends. Rather than on the periphery of His awareness, it has become a focus of it, a place where the imagination work and creates.

Modern Indian poetry in English has been neglected by most critics, foreign readers and intellectuals for it has no obvious direct relationship to the cultural movements which led to national sovereignty. Their verse is part of the process of modernization, which includes urbanization, industrialisation, mobility, independence, social change, increased communication, national and international transportation networks, mass education and the resulting paradox that as an independent national culture emerges. It also participates in the international, modern, frequently westernized world.

As the language of upward mobility and modern consumer tastes, its use is likely to spread further and as it does it will increasingly become Indianite, a process already noticeable in magazines and English-language poetry-in such features as the syntax, word order, lexis, idioms, articulation, intonation and stress patterns. This reflects a change in mentality. The increased perception of details in Indian social reality, found in the work of Ezekiel, Kamala Das, and the Ramayana during the 60s, and taken up by Daruwalla, has how been internalized with recent poetry being more affluent in its sense of location and range of subject-matter.

The man-alone-in-a-hostile world's attitude with its sense of option, cynicism and the ironies of life, found in the poetry of Daruwalla, has its affinities in American literature, as does Daruwalla trust in the speaking tone of voice. Although he continues to use traditional prosody and proper stanzaic shapes, the voice seems closer to the experience of the senses than in previous Indian poetry where there was often a distance between moral reflection and actuality. There is also sincerity, especially noticeable in the middle portions of the poems, as if association were taking over from logic. Narrative becomes experience itself instead of an example in a disagreement.

As far as his themes and images are concerned he is modernist. Mahapatra is extremely conscious of his racial identity, the historical and mythical past of Orissa. There is identification with his native locale, a sense of rootedness that we find in the post-colonial poetry, an undaunted representation of the fact cured of idealism and romanticism and a sharp social concern. Mahapatra's symbols turn around the blind faith of the ordinary people of Orissa, the ocular images of the Hindu priests, temples and elusive gods and the auditory images of the temple bells. The poems attempt to bring out the worthlessness of the religious observances of which he himself remains a detached observer.

Mahapatra draws his images from nature like sky, wind, water, trees and stone. Some of these like wind and water portray the world of flux while the other essentials like the sky

or stone imply rootedness. The images of social concerns include hunger, scarcity, the downtrodden, the children, the women, the prostitutes. Memory occupies a huge portion in his poetry and much of his world is absorbed by personal pain, guilt, remorse, desire and moments of renewal. One of the major concerns of the poet is poetry and the feat of writing it

The sky watches me turn  
And fall into my grey notebook.  
Over virgin stretches of water  
Strange geese fly. (Mahapatra 61)

Mahapatra personifies poetry as standing with arms folded with an accusation that the poet has cheated her. (Mahapatra 24) Like Eliot, Mahapatra believes that poetry has a life of its own distinct from that of the poet. Mahapatra believes that the capability of bringing out the indispensable experience expressed in a particular poem depends primarily on the poem itself:

Perhaps I begin with an image or a collect of images or an image leads to another, or perhaps the images belonging to a sort of group...the image starts the movement of the poem...but I do not know where I am proceeding in the poem or how the poem is going to end. It is as though I am entering a region of darkness, a place of the mind which I have never visited before. Or I have visited it; I have not been able to see into all the corners of that position. Therefore, without conscious reasoning, I grope from one level to another in my mind and try to reach the end,

that's how the end of a poem of mine comes about ,and it is explanatory, no doubt, because I don't know myself how the poem is going to be.' (Das 26) For Mahapatra writing verse is an experience, and with each poem he arrives at the secret corners of his mind:

I stand on the bank of a poem,  
even though each word has a price ,  
even though this poetry appears as a  
river, a river without water  
we have to swim across ,  
and even if its words  
do not welcome us to its secret country  
where we live without knowing. (Mahapatra 61)

Although Mahapatra shares with the other poets many features like the identification with his native locale and the social concern 'he focuses on the subliminal private world behind the poem' (King 87) In an interview with Rabindra Swain and Preston Merchant in *Contemporary Poetry Review* Mahapatra says that with poetry he found for himself an inner world and like a surrealist, "the world I found myself in, this inner world, became a very real world for me." subsequently his poetry deals with his inner world of guilt, remorse, renewal, desire, and frustrations and even surrealist experiences. Poems are efforts to express the indescribable. Words are the only means by which a poet can convey his central explorations.

I tried to reach into my cage

of words Trying to cut down this little animal  
Who ridicules me into silence (Mahapatra 59)

Mahapatra juxtaposes the opposites the context of a poem ashore we have word against stillness. This is a frequent juxtaposition seen in Mahapatra. In *Prologue III* we come across 'is that a silence /we mistake for words.' Das compares him with Yeats who believed that without contraries there is no progression. (Das 40)

for no one regains the whiteness  
or the dark, neither these dead nor  
the living; (Mahapatra 17)

Sometimes the juxtapositions are condensed into oxymoron. In *A Death* we hear of 'the silenced shout of a child'. Mahapatra's poems abounds in such figures of speech like, 'in the dark white,' (Mahapatra 21) or, 'eyes shut/looking down ...' (Mahapatra 50). Mahapatra has a laborious style of writing. He uses unusual epithets like 'garden's obese flowers', 'crouching silence'. His images are intricate in the sense we do not come across or think of such likenesses ordinarily. A likeness between the compared objects can be found when the reader stretches his thoughts. Bad imaginings are like 'frightened mouse' scampering here and there.

Thirst breaks like a abrupt day. Dream is lost like endless railway tracks. In *Learning for Ourselves* the rape of a young girl shocks us 'like ripe mangoes

/dropping from bare trees in winter'. In *Days* the incessant

continuation of days is compared to domestic animals crossing the road. This yoking of apparently disparate objects is found even in his images:

Time is a green mango. (Mahapatra 17)

Even when he deals with the traditional poetic themes he chooses uncommon expressions that give an appearance of matchlessness. For instance, in *A Summer Afternoon* to express blossoming red flowers of May the poet says:

Bursts of scarlet on bare summer tree. It is May.

In *A Sound of Flutes* he deals with the traditional images of inspiration, the shepherd and his flute but what he writes appears unique:

Breathe softly into your wooden flute,  
Shepherd. Through your notes you  
would let my death live, a heartbeat of hooves  
tame sheep leave over devious slopes. (Mahapatra 21)

Mahapatra like most of his contemporary Indian English poets writes in free stanza. His verse pattern is irregular. He follows no regular rhyme format. "Mahapatra's is an elite art aiming at small discriminating readership", says King. (King 195) Although Mahapatra is a detached observer there is a genuine voice speaking through the poems. In the interview conducted by Rabindra Swain and Preston Merchant reflecting on the poem titled *Woman* in his first volume, Mahapatra says, that he would not have chosen to write such a poem now because of the lack of voice in the poem. The 'voice' present in his poems is a distinct

one portraying actuality of the modern world objectively and is, in most cases, identifiable with that of the poet. Poetry for him is a craft that needs chiselling as is evident from the poems dealing with his concern with the method of composition. In Mahapatra the theme and method go together as he experiments with language poem after poem trying to express his experiences outward and inward. Mahapatra makes it unambiguous in the interview: =

Suppose poetry can at times be useful in providing answers or responses to questions which bother themselves. It can be a kind of test of our attitudes to the self. And poetry, its form as we all know, is a meeting place between the inward and the outward. It can be extremely intimate too, and my thoughts, when they come into a poem, do not want me to be alone in them. Whether these provide one with answers is difficult to say but the urge to confess, and unburden oneself, is a jump that can tie the poet's impulses to the community and contribute to a sharing of the human voice. So I sat down to write poetry not knowing about the kind of happiness it sought (Mahapatra 2004)

The imagistic world of Indian women poets in English is far more rich and wide than the restricted range of their themes. For all of them, nature presents an immediate frame of reference as in the case of men poets like A. K. Ramanujan, K. N. Daruwalla, Jayanta Mahapatra and many others. The women poets like Kamala Das etc. tend to incorporate their private experience

through the archetypal nature images like the sun, sea, tree and seasons. The abnormally feminine attachment to home and its surroundings gives an air of warm familiarity to the domestic imagery as found in the poetry of Kamala Das.

The analysis of the poems from the selected poets has shown how their minds work with memories, alliances, affiliations, blending there together in infinite variety of images. Imagery can be seen as a hallmark of these Indian poets because it comes out as an intuitive perception of similarities between seeming dissimilar and it is transformed into fresh visions or insights

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