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## CRITICAL RESPONSE TO INDIAN POETRY IN ENGLISH



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Amar Nath Prasad Bithika Sarkar



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#### CRITICAL RESPONSE TO INDIAN POETRY IN ENGLISH

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#### Most Respectfully Dedicated

to

The deserted and the persecuted women who flutter their aspiring wings for a free flight under the patriarchal and conservative set-up.

"We are the women who wait

Have waited so long that our eyes

Are weary with weeping

And yet we wait."

-Sujatha Modayil

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### Preface

Indian Writing in English is gaining ground by leaps and bounds. It has carved out several inimitable imprints on the pages of the history of English literature. In the field of fiction, poetry and drama, a number of writings of India have planted several milestones in both feeling and form. Some of the modern writers like Vikram Seth, Arundhati Roy, Salman Rushdie, Manju Kapur, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, Mahasweta Devi—to name only a few, have bagged several national and international literary laurels, and this process of registering their names in the international domain of literature is still going on.

Indian Poetry in English has had a rich harvest. The early poets like Sri Aurobindo, R. N. Tagore and Sarojini Naidu were strongly rooted to the rich tradition of philosophy and mysticism enshrined in our Vedas and Upanishads. In other words, they were very mystical and philosophical in their views about life and manner. After Independence, the poets like Nissim Ezekiel, Jayant Mahapatra, Keki N. Daruwalla, Arun Kolatkar, Shiv. K. Kumar, A. K. Mehrotra, R. Parthasarathy, Gieve Patel, A. K. Ramanujan, P. Lal, O. P. Bhatnagar and Pritish Nandy have enriched the Indian English poetry with the realistic presentation of the moral and spiritual breakdown of modern society. In both theme and technique, they brought a new change, they left aside the traditional images and put in their place some hard and solid images of day to day reality which very artistically and skillfully conform to the feelings of the poets. The women poets like Kamala Das,

Eunice D'Souza, Mamata Kalia, Sujata Bhatt, Imtiaz Dharkar, M. Silgardo, Charmayne D' Souza, have tried their best to raise the voice of the suppressed and the subjugated women under the patriarchal domination. Their poetic description of the trials and tribulations of women, the gender discrimination, the search for the identity of the forsaken women, their silent sufferings under the purdah and many more inexpressible and unfathomable bitter feelings of women are worth-noticing.

Indian poetry in English is still in its nascent stage; a blooming and blossoming plant which needs a constant caring and nurturing on the part of the literary artists; a plant which root must dive deep into the fertile soil of our rich tradition of culture and civilization, rites and customs.

The book saw the light of the day after the cooperation of a number of people to whom we would like to record our obligations. First of all we are very obliged to all our learned contributors who have to burn their midnight lamps for preparing their scholarly articles. We are also very thankful to Prof. B. S. Naikar, Prof. & Head, Karnataka University, Dharwad, Prof. D. C. Chambial, the editor of *Poetcrit*, Dr. A. K. Vishnu, the editor of *Sholaka*, Prof. Sharad Rajimwale, Jai Narayan Vyas University, Jodhpur, Dr. S. John Peter, Joseph, St. Xaviers College (Auto), Palayamkottai, Dr. Shibu Simon, Principal, B.P.S. College, Pirovam (Kerala), Dr. S. Kanakraj, Madurai, Kamaraj University, Madurai, D. K. Mandal, Ram Jaipal College, Chapra, Dr. M. H Siddiqui, P. C. Science College, Chapra, Mr. Swapan Kumar Sarkar, Zonal Sales Manager, Patna, Prof Chhanda Roy, Retired Professor Patna University, Patna, Prof Mrinal Kanti Dasgupta, Retired Professor, Plants Pathology, Vishva Bharti, Shantiniketan, Professor R. P. Singh, Head, Dept. of English, College of Commerce, Patna, who extended their valuable suggestions and co-operations in the preparation of this book. We also express our loving affections to the kidsPriyanka, Sandeep, Rahul, Minki and Kutkut—whose evergreen smile and their loving touch made this tedious work of editing easy and pleasant.

Last but not the least, Mr. P. K. Sharma, the Managing Director, Sarup and Sons Publishers, New Delhi, deserves our special thanks for bringing out this book so beautifully and promptly.

**Editors** 

## Contents

Contributors Preface		vii
		ix
1.	Indian Poetry in English: A Bird's Eye View	1
	- Dr. Amar Nath Prasad	
2.	Two Mystics: Aurobindo and Rabindranath	38
	— Dr. Bithika Dasgupta Sarkar	
3.	A Few Aspects of Indian Poetics or	
	Aesthetics and Gitanjali	66
	— D. Padmarani	
<u>4.</u>	Some Poems of Tagore's Gitanjali:	
	A Critical Appraisal	80
	Dr. S.K. Paul	
<b>5.</b>	Some Short Poems of Sri Aurobindo:	
	A Blending of Art and Mystcism	141
	Dr. Amar Nath Prasad	
6.	Sarojini Naidu's Poetry: An Evergreen	
	Plant of Vedantic Fruit and Poetic Fragrance	156
	- Dr. Amar Nath Prasad	
<u>7.</u>	Reading Kamala Das in the Light of	
	Lakoff's Feminist Theory	172
	- Dr. Shibu Simon	
8.	Spiritual Feminism in the Poetry of	
	Kamala Das	189
	D. K. Mandal	

9.	Feminism in the Works of Kamala Das, D. H. Lawrence and Walt Whitman	207
	— Dr. M. H. Siddiqui	201
10.	The Other Themes of Kamala Das  Dr. Shibu Simon	219
11.	The Poetry of Nissim Ezekiel:	
	A Fine Fusion of Feeling and Form  — Dr. Amar Nath Prasad	226
12.	"Vikram Seth : A Liberal Humanist —Dr. Gauri Shankar Jha	234
13.	A Framed Sand-Dune: Form and Imagery in O.P. Bhatnagar's Poetry — R.S. Pathak	241
14.	The Poet as Social Chronicler and Reformer: A Study of Basavaraj Naikar's (Trans)  Musings of Sarvajna  — S. John Peter Joseph	275
15.	"Nature" in the Poetry of D. C. Chambial — Dr. D. Murali Manohar	301
16.	Niranjan Mohanty's Poetry and Desire: An Appraisal — Dr. Ashok Kumar	309
17.	Tapascharanam and Gitanjali: A Comparative Study — Mahendra Singh	318
18.	Secular-Humanism in Indian Women's Poetry in English — Seemin Hasan	329
19.	Diasporal Life in Indian Poetry in English — Sharad Rajimwale	337
	Index	342

## 1

## Indian Poetry in English: A Bird's Eye View

Dr. Amar Nath Prasad

After the marathon efforts of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, English language came into existence in 1835 and since then a new intellectual and literary vista opened before the people of India which awakened their literary and creative genius. It was during the later half of the 19th century when English literature in India began to take its root. But the real flowering came in the form of fiction and poetry. In the field of poetry, poets like H.L.V. Derozio, Toru Dutt, R. N. Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Swami Vivekanand and Sarojini Naidu dived deep into the rich heritage of India and took out the gems of eternal values with the help of their special aesthetic and poetic creativity. The contemporary poets like Kamala Das, Nissim Ezekiel, P. Lal, Jayant Mahapatra, Keki N. Daruwalla, Arun Kolatkar, Shiv K. Kumar, A. K. Mehrotra, R. Parthasarathy, Gieve Patel, A. K. Ramanujan, Eunice De' Souza, Mamata Kalia, Sujata Bhatt, Imtiaz Dharker, M. Silgardo, Charmayne De' Souza—to name only a few—have enriched the Indian English poetry with their various themes particularly of the feminine sensibility and moral and spiritual breakdown of the modern society. The women poets of our contemporary time have given a new vision and idea to the marginalized women. Through some beautiful metaphoric presentation, they have balmed the wounds of the tortured and tormented women, caught in the vortex of cruel and callous patriarchy.

This essay contains a brief history of Indian poets in English. It also lays stress on the various works of the leading poets in a nut-shell so as to acquaint the general readers with the life, mind and art of the Indo-Anglian poets. Their biographical sketches along with their immortal contribution to theme and technique of poetry are being given below one by one:

#### 1. Henery Derozio (1809-1831)

Henery Louis Vivian Derozio is generally regarded as the father of Indian English Poetry. He was a great lover of nature and poetry. At the age of 14, he became a clerk in a firm, but he didn't take interest in the job. By the efforts of Dr. John Grant of Calcutta, he became a teacher of English literature at Hindu College. He wrote several beautiful sonnets, lyrics and long poems. His work "The Fakir of Jangheera" has a Byronic touch. It describes Nuleeni, a Brahmin widow and her various ups and downs due to her star-crossed life.

In one of his lyrics "My Native Land", Derozio presents a very beautiful picture of both the past and the present of India. He imagines India as an eagle whose feathers are chained and so the kingly eagle is groveling in the dust. His sonnet, "Poetry" deals with his concept of poetic creation. Like the Romantic poets of English literature, he strongly believed in the passionate love for Nature, nostalgic attachment to past traditions, rites and customs, the wild journey of dream and imagination. In his poem "Poetry", he gives the epithet "sweet madness" to poets, which reminds us of Shakespeare's famous poem "The Lunatic, the Lover, the Poet". He observes:

"Sweet madness! When the youthful brain is seized With that delicious frenzy which it loves,

It raving reels, to very rapture pleased—
And then through all creation wildly roves"

#### 2. Kashiprosad Ghose (1809-73)

Kashiprosad Ghose is today known for his collection of poems *The Shair and Other Poems* published in 1830. He was one of the first Indian poets in English literature who composed poems regularly. He also edited on English weekly *The Hindu Intelligence* very successfully. About his poetic craftsmanship, M. K. Naik observes:

"Kashiprosad Ghose seems to intimate by turns the stylized love-lyrics of the Cavalier poets, the moralizing note in neoclassical poetry and the British romantics, his 'Shair' being obviously Scott's ministrel' in an Indian garb, slightly dishevelled as a result of the arduous voyaga across the seas. His use of Indian material in his poems about the Hindu Festivals and in lyrics like 'The Boatman's Song to Ganga' indicates an honest attempt to strike a native wood-note which fails not because earnestness of purpose is writing but owing to sheer look of true poetic talent"<sup>2</sup>

#### 3. Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-73)

Michael Madhusudan Dutt is known as 'poet's poet' among the Bengali poets. He is an epoch-making author who wrote his great Bengali epic *Meghanad Badh*. In his early phase of his life, he essayed freely English prose, verse and drama. He is also known for his narrative poem "The captive Ladee" which has a direct influence of the great romantic poets of English literature. Regarding his poetic excellence, Sri Aurobindo pours his feelings in the form of a verse:

"No human hands such notes ambrosial moved; These accents are not of the imperfect earth; Rather the god was voiceful in their birth The god himself took up thy pen and wrote.3

Dutt's Meltonic blank verse "In Visions of the Past" (1849) deals with the theme of temptation, fall and redemption of man. M. K. Naik says that in spite of his command of English and his sense of rhythm, Dutt's English poetry hardly rises above the level of derivative, if technically accomplished, verse. He was really able to spread his wings only when he turned to Bengali for artistic expression."

#### 4. Toru Dutt (1856-77)

The place of Toru Dutt in Indian poetry in English is very short but admirable. Though, like the lily flower of Ben Jonson she lived in this world for a very brief period of time, her blooming and spreading fragrance is still being felt and enjoyed by the lovers of art and beauty. She started writing her verses in her very early age. She was very much influenced by the poetry of the Romantic and Victorian poets. The poetic influence of Keats, Shelley and Byron can well be seen in her poems particularly in her famous poem "Our Casuarina Tree". It is her extraordinary credit that at the age of 18, she has a great command over the French and English languages. She translated several French poems into English and her translation has a special charm of colour and beauty. Her mystical and spiritual approach to poetry is centred to her profound knowledge of great Sanskrit epics and scriptures.

Her first book, A Sheaf Gleaned in French Field registered her name and fame in the firmament of literature. Prompted by its success, she turned to Sanskrit literature and in 1882, her book, Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan was published. It is a work deeply rooted to the fertile soil of Indian myths and legends, culture and civilization. Her unfinished English novel, Bianca or The Young Spanish Maiden appeared in the Bengal Magazine in 1878 and her French novel, Le Journal de Mademoiselle d' Arvers was published in Paris in 1879

and she was haied as "an extraordinary feat, without precedent". K. R. S. Iyenger holds the view:

"Beauty and tragedy and fatality criss-crossed in the life of Toru Dutt, and it is difficult, when talking about her poetry, to make any nice distinction between poetry and what C. S. Lewis would call 'poetolatry."

#### 5. Manmohan Ghose (1869-1924)

Manmohan Ghose was the elder brother of Aurobindo Ghosh, better known as Sri Aurobindo. He was born on 19 January 1869. Like his brother Sri Aurobindo, he also took his early education in England where he won an open scholarship at Christ Church which helped him to proceed his further studies in Oxford University. Unlike Sri Aurobindo, Manmohan Ghose did not take interest in politics. In one of his letters to Binyon in 1887, he wrote: "I shall bury myself in poetry, simply and solely." So, while Aurobindo turned from 'revolution to revelation', Manmohan Ghose remained alone, stranger and alien in his life. The last phase of his life is full of sorrows and sufferings caused by his illness and death of his wife.

Like John Keats, his poetry reflects his alienation, his trials and tribulations. H. M. Prasad observed:

"Lonely and lost, he continued the tradition of the nineteenth century English poetry in his work, which is essentially lyrical in strain. His poetry remains derivative and he fails to gain depth and sincerity. There is an unmistakable note of pining and melancholy. His alienation also becomes literary".

Love Songs and Elegies (1898) is his single collection of poems which he published in his own life time. Like his brother, he too was richly influenced by Greek myth of Perseus. He started on this subject an ambitious blank verse epic, but due to some unavoidable reasons, he wrote only six books and left it fragmented. He also tried his pen on a long poetic play Nollo and Damayanti, but left it unfinished. The same is the case with his other

unpublished and unfinished work, Adam Alarmed in Paradise which is very near to Hardy's The Dynasts. His book, Songs of Life and Death, a collection of a number of shorter poems was published posthumously in 1926.

Manmohan's elegiac note is also very praiseworthy. He has a very good command over the proper words at proper places. Regarding his poetic genius and his need for the communion with man, K. R. S. Iygenger rightly holds the view:

"The impulse to love, the rebuff of fate—now the psychological action centred in his mother, now in his wife—this balance of forces is the real secret, the true motive force, behind Manomhan's elegiac poetry. But there was a third love too, an enveloping, a sustaining love; this was love of nature, love of collective man, and here Manmohan met no rebuff, here he was duly recompensed. Nature is generally reassuring, it is even exhilarating sometimes."

#### 6. Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)

Rabindranath Tagore was a man of extraordinary genius. He was a great poet and a great man who left behind him a number of immortal works including Vishvabharati at Shantiniketan. He is the eminent Bengali renaissance poet, philosopher, essayist, critic, composer and educator who dreamt of a harmony of universal brotherhood and humanity among the people of different origin. He became the first-ever Asian writer to be awarded a Nobel Prize in 1913 for translated version of his songpoems, *Gitanjali*. His literary works transcend caste, class, creed, colour, gender, religion, politics and geographic territory. He felt the most important need for humanity in the world. W. B. Yeats rightly observes:

"Tagore was the product of a whole people, a whole civilization, immeasurably strange to us, and seems to have been taken up into this imagination; and yet we are not moved because of is strangeness, but because we have met our own image, as

though we had walked in or heard perhaps for the first time in literature, our voice as in a dream."9

Tagore's poetic collections include Gitanjali, The Crescent Moon, The Gardener, Fruit Gathering, Lover's Gift, Crossing, The Fugitive and Other Poems. He has also to his credit some beautiful plays e. g., Chitra, The Post Office, The Cycle of Spring, Sacrifice and Other Plays, Red Oleanders, Stray Birds etc. Tagore has written some fiction like The Home and the World, The Wreck, Gora Hungry Stones, Mashi, Broken Ties. His philosophical writings include Sadhana, Personality, Creative Unity, The Religion of Man.

Tagore considers that the whole world-seen or unseen is the creation of God. He has given up power, pleasure and success. He believes that he can touch the feet of God with the help of proper words, proper songs and prayers and harmonic melody. Both Shakespeare and Tagore believe that poetry is the musical expression which is arranged in symmetrical order. In the company of music one is capable of making a world within a world. Nobody is lonely; none is alone if one is carried by musical propelling. Divine songs and divinity come through music.

Tagore's magnum opus *Gitanjali* has a fine use of apt symbolism, which is a unique blending of mysticism and music, religion and poetry. Suffused with mystical imagination and aided by the free flowing movement, the book creates a universe of haunting beauty and enchanting melody that express God's infinite love and humanity's deep compassion for all things beautiful. Though the poet is amply influenced by the rich symbolism and profound thoughts of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, his thoughts had the root in the ancient Indian culture, wisdom and tradition. Iyenger says:

"The current coin of India's devotional poetry is melted and minted anew by Rabindranath but the pure gold shines as brightly as ever even, though the inscription on the coin is English."<sup>10</sup>

Rabindranath Tagore's Chitra, written in 1913, is a fine example of Tagorean philosophy of truth and illusion. It shows his great mastery over music and metaphor. It deals with, apart from many other things, human love from the physical to the spiritual, from transient to permanence, romance to realism. It also shows how the from unnumbered saints and sages have surrendered their lifelong penance at the feet of a woman; how the sensual, mundane mortality is transcended into spirituality; how the union of man and woman is lastly sanctified through marriage; and, above all, how fame, pride and prowess have to cow down-before beauty, even though transitorily. In technique and style, the book, as we shall see, is richly metaphoric, alliterative and musical. It is a fine example of the appropriate blending of both feeling and form, fact and fantasy.

His play, *The Post Office*, deals with innocence and experience. It should be read through the eyes of a child; its hero, Amal, a child, is the centre of all the activities in the play. The central theme of the play seems to be the liberation of the child, Amal, from the bondage of various kind—social, psychological, emotional and spiritual.

His well-known poem-'Heaven of Freedom'—which is in the form of prayer deals with the freedom of all kinds. The poet prays to God for the freedom of the soul. He takes the image of 'drear deserts sand of dead habits' for the deviating forces of life. Similarly, his other poem, 'Silent Step' is also very rich in both matter and manner. The poet thinks that God's eternal present is always with man. God comes to his devote every moment, every time and every season. The phrase 'Silent Steps' seems to suggest the voice of consciousness.

#### 7. Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950)

Sri Aurobindo was a man of versatile genius. He is a poet, critic, dramatist, philosopher, patriot and a yogi. He

holds an outstanding position in Indo-Anglian Writing. He was born in Calcutta on 15th August 1872. His early life was spent in England where he got education there. He was a very brilliant student of his time. He secured the Butterworth Prize in Literature and Bedford Prize in History. He passed the I. C. S. open competitive. Examination, but he couldn't join the service. During his stay at Boroda where he worked as a Professor of English and also Vice-Principal, he took much interest in Sanskrit and Bengali literature. The Baroda period was the significant period for his literary growth. He composed Songs of Myrtilla, Urvasie and Love and Death in this period. Some of his blank verse plays particularly *Persius* the Deliverer belong to this period. In August 1906, he became the editor of the journal Bandemataram, a journal started by Bipin Chandra Pal.

The early poems of Sri Aurobindo are mostly the poems of love and romance. The young poet was the poet of love. He sang of 'passion, power and pulse'. Songs of Myritilla, Urvasie, Love and Death, Chitragandha, The Tale of Nala are his important love poems. These poems remind us of John Keats, a poet of music, memory and romance. S. Yadav observes: "Sri Aurobindo can catch the whole of the lover's inner heart—the freshness, the surrender, the assuagement of a dream-thirst, the transforming and creative penetration of the consciousness, the humble and happy gratitude as for a gift of the gods." 11

The magnum opus of Sri Aurobindo is his epic Savitri, a 24000 line blank verse in which he has widened the original legend of the Mahabharat and turned it into a symbol. In this epic, the soul of Satyawan is delivered from the grip of death and ignorance through the love of the Divine mother, incarnated upon this mortal earth as Savitri.

This masterpiece is "a spiritual dynmo communicating its power, it is a mantra-mala, uplifting of, connecting you with the centre of consciousness, truth and knowledge and working out changes in our being, when you read it not as a book to be studied, but as something to be loved, something to be made part of your life." 12

Aurobindo's unique contribution to English literature is his allusive and mythical metaphors, his fusing Sanskrit with English, his uncanny ability of changing his style with the change of topics, his realistic presentation of the inner ripples of Indian life, myth, allegory, and above all, his mystic and imagistic depth and variety. About his language and style a critic said:

"His 'great manner' is not a laboured affair. There is an air of absolute spontaneity, one-touch writing, which you don't normally expect from a writer of ornate prose. The works grew out of his mind as naturally as the leaf of a tree". 13

In Love and Death, Aurobindo has shown the victory of love over death. Ruru, the protagonist of this story, invades Patala (Hades) to get back the life of his beloved Priyumvada and barters away willingly half of his life to live the other half with his restored wife.

Sri Aurobindo's great philosophical book which contains his philosophy of life and death, man and God is *The Life Divine*, a treatise on Metaphysics. D. S. Sharma observes:

"The Life Divine is a vast philosophical prose epic......a philosophical Divine Comedia having its Inferno in the Spirit's descent into the ignorance of Mind, life and matter, its Purgatorio in the ascent to the true knowledge of the so-called Supermind and its Paradiso in the ineffable mysteries of Satchidananda". 14

#### 8. Sarojini Naidu (1879-1950)

Sarojini Naidu was born in a highly civilized and cultured family in Hyderabad. She is today known among

the lovers of literature as a poetess of a member of immortal poems. The Golden Threshold, The Bird of Time and The Broken Wings are her chief literary works which are essentially Indian in spirit and tone. Her songs are in rich tradition of Indian devotional literature. Most of her poems and songs deal with love, truth, God, peace, faith and self-realization. But what matters most in her poetry is her lyrical presentation, her spontaneous overflow of her emotions steeped in Indian ethos and culture, her simplicity of expression, her passionate desire for beauty, music and melody. H. M Prasad observes:

"Sarojini Naidu writes instant poetry where images and metaphors come rolling ready on the hotplates of imagination. Her poetry is intensely emotional, at times passionate to the point of eroticism and always has a spring" 15

The Golden Threshold, the first collection of her poems was published in 1905. The Times reviews this work saying that her poetry seems to sing itself as if her swift thoughts and strong emotions sprang into lyrics of themselves".

Sarojini Naidu's second volume of poems entitled *The Bird of Time* was widely appreciated as a great work of art. Edmund Gosse wrote its Foreword and said that it is a book of songs of life and death. Sarojini Naidu, in one of her poems of this book compares the life of man as the prism of God's light and death. She also says that both pain and pleasures are necessary to lead a happy and prosperous life.

But there is a change in her thoughts and feelings in her third volume of poems, *The Broken Wing* which was published in 1917. It contains some poems addressed to her father and Ghokhale. The poem "Lotus" in this collection is addressed to M. K. Gandhi and 'Awake' to M. A. Jinnah and the Mahatama.

In all these poem, Sarojini Naidu has blended the feeling and form very artistically she also made appropriate

use of images and symbols. Sri Aurobindo rightly holds the view:

"Her work has a real beauty. Some of her lyrical work is likely, I think, to survive among the lasting things in English literature and by these, even if they are fine rather than great, she may take her rank among the immortals". 16

Her poem Village Song is a mystical, mythical and symbolic poem. It deals with the natural feeling of a village maiden who has gone to fetch a jar of water from the river, Yamuna. The poem "Songs of Radha: The Quest" is a divine love song which presents the Indian faith that God lives within one's own self. It also describes the passionate and frantic love of the beloved for the lover whom she is searching hastily and restlessly. Her mystical poem "In salutation to the Eternal Peace", she tells us the ecstasy of the supreme soul at one hand and the fret and fever of the world on the other.

Summing up the chapter "Sarojini Naidu", K. R. S. Iyengar observes in his book *Indian writing in English*, thus:

"She was, above all, sensitive to beauty, the beauty of living things, the beauty of holiness, the beauty of the Buddha's compassion, the beauty of Brindavan's Lord. She did not especially seek out the bizarre, the exotic, the exceptional, but her poems lack neither variety nor the flavour of actuality children's poems, nature, poems, patriotic poems, poems of love and death, even poems of mystical transcendence. Sarojini Naidu essayed them all; and with her unfailing verbal felicity and rhythmical dexterity, she generally succeeded as well". 17

#### 9. Nissim Ezekiel( 1924-2004)

Nissim Ezekiel belongs to a Jewish family in Mumbai. He considers himself a modern poet. He has written in free verse as well as in traditional verse forms. The central theme of his poetry is separation, personal integration, moral and spiritual breakdown of modern society, the Indian contemporary scene, modern materialistic and

urban life. Today he is known to us for the following collection of books: A Time to change (1952), Sixty Poems (1953), The Unfinished Man (1960), The Exact Name (1965), Hymns in Darkness (1976) and Letter-Day Psalms (1982). He won'the Sahitya Akademy award on his book Letter Day Psalms.

Some of the poems of Nissim Ezekiel present a very realistic picture of the city life with his urban background, Ezekiel deals with urban sensibilities, a sense of alienation and man's struggle to survive in an urban atmosphere. In his poem, "Island" he says that the city life is unsuitable for song as well as sense:

"Unsuitable for song as well as sense
the island flowers not slums
and skyscrapers, reflecting
precisely the growth of my mind.
I am here to find my way in it," (p-31).

His poem "Philosophy" is a short but very thought provoking discursive poem on the mystery of the infinite. He says that though philosophy inquires and explains a thing logically, yet it fails to unravel the external truth: "What cannot be explained don't explain".

The poem "Woman and Child" deals with the sordidness of life. It has been recorded through the point of view of two characters—an Indian and an American. Here Ezekiel lays stress on the man-woman relationship through the dream technique. It also flings a very harsh satire on modern fake love, hypocrisy and lack of humanity in modern life.

"The Night of the Scorpion" is a very fine example of 'unified sensibility'. The poet realistically presents the incident of an Indian village woman stung by a scorpion in a rainy night. The poem is suffused with the realistic portrayals of superstitions of the people of rural villages it also contains, the motherly love for the child and the helplessness and a lack of education among the poor peasants of the Indian villages.

#### 10. Kamala Das

Kamala Das is a great woman poet in Indian poetry in English. Woman poetry takes a sudden term with the advert of Kamala Das who frankly acknowledged the fact that a poet's raw material is not stone and clay, but it is her personality. Today Kamala Das is famous for the following books: Summer in Calcutta (1965), Descendants (1967), The Old Play House and Other Poems (1973).

As a confessional poet Kamala Das got recognition with her frank and truthful described of man-women relationship.

Her poetry deals with man's inner life. She writes in a confessional way like Sylvia Plath, Anne Sexton and Judith Wright. Her poetry is characterized by 'the inhibited frankness' with which she talks about sex, referring nonchalantly to 'the musk of sweet between the breasts'; 'the warm shock of menstrual blood' and even 'my pubis'. Kamala Das exhibits and takes 'endless female hungers' in her poems. She has no inhibition in exposing the latent demands of her body and the urges of flesh in her various poems. She advocates free sex as an instrument of self discover and she thinks that the woman's yeaning for free love can be gratified only through physical union with a man. She raises her voice against the persecution of women in a male-dominated society. She is a feminist ready to assert herself in a new and different way. M. K-Naik says:

"Das's poetry produces is one of a bold, ruthless honesty tearing passionately at conventional attitude to reveal the quintessential woman within." 18

#### 11. A. K. Ramanujan

A. K. Ramanujan is a leading figure in Indian poetry in English. His reputation as a literary poet rests on the following books: The Striders (1966), Relations (1971), The Selected poems (1976). The chief feature of his poetry is his

great love for Indian myth, history, heritage and environment. He himself observes:

"English and my disciplines (linguistics, Anthropology) give me my 'outer' forms—linguistics, metrical, logical and other such way of shaping experience and my first thirty years in India my frequent visits and field trips, my personal and professional preoccupations with Kanada, Tamil, the classics and folklore give me my substance, my 'inner' forms, images, symbols. They are continuous with each other, and I no longer can tell what comes from where" 19

The sense of alienation is the prominent note in the poems of A. K. Ramanujan. The poet feels alienated because of being expatriate. Yet his poems are watered and nourished by the rich tradition, myths and legends of India and Indian experience.

Ramanujan has a great sense of rootedness and cultural awareness. In the *striders*, the poet takes some powerful images in order to express his views. He compares himself with a water bug that thinks as to how can it walk on water on which only the prophets and angels of God walk. The bug recognizes its strength and sits on water.

The poem "plant" is rich in both feeling and form. It is an emotional equivalent to the inner tensions in the psyche of the poet. It also presents the poet's silent sufferings engendered by his traumatic experience of living in a noncivilization without a root of its own.

The poem "River" depicts the picture of the River Vaikaki flowing through Madurai in both summer and rainy reason. It also arouses our pity and catharsis through the image of a dead pregnant woman with twins in her womb.

In brief, A. K. Ramanujan seeks his poetic inspiration from the dead past and turns it into vivid poems. The mutilated beggar, the drowned woman, the uprooted man, etc. form the core of must of his representative poems. William Walsh observes:

"His poems all show an extreme precision so that the contour of each phrase, the sense of each image, the slightest rise and fall of rhythm is defined with an unqualified accuracy". 20

#### 12. P. Lal (b. 1931)

He is a prolific writer, literary journalist and the founder of writer's workshop. He is a poet with a delicate sensibility and lyrical impulse. His significant creative works are: The Parrot's Death and other Poems (1960), Love's the First (1962), Change! The Sad (1966), Draupadi and Jayadratha (1967), Calcutta: A Long Poem (1978). He has also transcreated The Gita, the Isa Upanishad, the Dhammapada and The Mahabharata.

P. Lal's chief contribution to English poetry is his lyrical and emotional poetry which cannot help without stimulating our heart to its heights percipience. His language has both economy and precision. In precision, he is very near to Nissiam Ezekiel, but he has his own creative and suggestive power of delineation. So far as his transcreation is concerned, his aim seems to be 'readability rather than complete faithfulness to his originals'. His transcription is more than poetry. His readability of Sanskrit literature into English in worth-noticing.

The poem, "A Leaf" shows the four stages of man. The beginning of the poem deals with the adolescent period of a man in which youth is always slave to pride and honour. The poem, "The Simplest Love" has a Keatsean sensuousness and Wordsworthian love for nature. In this poem, the rose spreads it aroma and attracts a bee. The bee sucks the essence of the flower without any disturbance. The poet wants the same type of giving and taking relation in the lives of the general men. H. M. Prasad observes:

"His language has both economy and picture squeness. He is akin to Ezekiel and Parthasarthy in precision but has his own evocative and suggestive power. Ezekiel is analytical; Parthasarthy, terse; Lal, pictorial...He is sensitive to the music of English rhythm and his poetry is graceful emotive correlate to his impressionistic sketches. But at times he slides into platitudes, weightless thoughts and ineffective employment of metaphors which fail to articulate human condition".<sup>21</sup>

#### 13. Keki N. Daruwalla

Keki N. Daruwalla is a big name in Indian Poetry in English. Like most other modern poets, the poems of Daruwalla depict and explore violence, cruelty and degradation of our time. They also explore man and nature relationship. His poems on mountains, rivers, hills and natural gifts are very interesting and meaningful. "The Ghaghra in spate", "Crossing of Rivers" and "Landscape" are some of his representative nature poems which beautifully present a realistic picture of nature. They are not like Wordsworth full of scenic beauty, pleasure, peace and happiness, but they express the miserable and helpless conditions of human being.

Daruwalla's reputation as a modern Indian poet rests on the following books: Two Decades of Indian Poetry, Under Orion\_(1970), Apparition in April (1971), Crossing of Rivers (1976) Winter poems (1980), The Keeper of the Dead (1982) and Landscape (1986).

Daruwalla has an ironical description of the various types of maladies and shortcomings of the society. He tries to give a proper shape to Indian society and culture by flinging ironies on various characters in society. Like Ezekiel, he has also described a truthful picture of the landscape of this country. About his poetry he rightly holds the view:

"I am not an urban writer and my poems are rooted in the rural landscape. My poetry is earthy, and I like to consciously keep it that way, shunning sophistication which, while adding grass, takes away from the power of verse".<sup>22</sup>

In his poem "Ghaghra in Spate", the poet deals with the destruction and devastation caused by the river in spate. The poem also contains the fury of the river, its nightmares and its havoc through some apt and suggestive symbols and images. The sound of the poem is very harsh and cacophonic"

"But it's when she recedes that the Ghaghra turns bitchy sucking with animal-heat, cross eddies diving like frogmen and sawing away the waterfront in a paranoic frenzy." (p.60)

The poem "Death of a Bird" is rich in both feeling and form. It depicts successfully the hunting expedition of the narrator. It opens with the death of the male-bird at the hands of the narrator and ends with the death of the female bird falling near dead at the feet of the protagonist. It contains a high degree of pathos. The description of the death of the bird is so vivid and moving that it arouses our sense of catharsis on the fallen birds. The choice of words, the apt use of symbols and images, the intensity of feeling, the apt presentation of sound are very significant and they show the artistic greatness of Daruwalla.

#### 14. Shiv K. Kumar (b. 1921)

Shiv K. Kumar is a multifaceted writer in Indian writing in English. He has to his credit five volumes of poetry: Articulate Silence (1970), Cobwebs in the Sun (1970), Subterfuges (1976), Woodpeckers (1979) and Trapfalls in the Sky (1986). His recurrent themes in poetry are love, sex, exploration of self, the suffocation and anguish of urban living, the flux of identity etc. His poetry is rich in theme and technique. He does not want to be called himself as a 'confessional poet'. In one of his

#### interviews, he observes:

"I have often been labelled as a 'confessional poet' and indeed in tone and structure my poetry may be called 'autobiographical'. But what most readers fail to comprehend is the fact that a poet often invents facts and experiences camouflaging them as 'real and authentic' to achieve the reader's total participation. It's more a strategy of the imagination than a transcript of empirical reality". <sup>23</sup>(PBD. 54)

His poem. "Indian Women" contains a extended metaphor of an empty pitcher which stands for the women of India. Indian village woman are just like the earthren pitchers near the well waiting for someone to fill the pitcher with love and hope:

"Patiently they set like empty pitchers on the mouth of the village well. (p. 66)

The poem "A Mango Vendor" shows beautifully the charms and glamour of an Indian women who attracts like a magnet, the men folk towards her physical beauty. Through euphemistic-language, the poet speaks a lot of things very realistically and artistically:

"Through the slits
of her patched blouse
one bare shoulder
two white moons
pull all horses
off the track" (p-67)

The phrases "white moons" and "all horses" stands connotatively for the women's physical beauty and men's wild passion for sex.

The poem "Insomania" deals with the restlessness of modern man. The images and symbols which the poet has taken to express-the modern man are very apt and suggestive. They remind us of Eliot and Yeats in modern British poetry. The poet giver a visual description of the protagonist who is terrorized and tortured by the heavy demands of modernity:

"I have counted all the stars
over my terrace. The steal bars in my
neighbour's balcony are twentyone
and three suburban bright trains rumble past
the rail-crossing between two or four. (p.69)

In the poem, "Days in New York", the poet look's at India through the eyes of a foreigner. The speaker takes the readers from the inside of his room to the outward surrounding where we see a black cat, a black maid and a 'gallon of milk' which suggest a very deep meanings. The poet also shows his deep love for the holy river Ganga which has a miraculous power on the people of India. he observes:

"They wouldn't believe it here
that Ganges water can work miracles:
in spite of the cartloads
of deadman's ashes and bonesdaily offerings to the river."

#### 15. R. Parthasarthy (b. 1934)

R. Parthaswarthy holds an eminent place in the field of contemporary Indian poetry in English. His masterpiece Rough Passage published in 1971, is such a book in which all poems form part of a single poem. In his edited anthology, Ten Twentieth Century Indian Poets, he gives an introduction to his book Rough Passage:

"Exile', 'Trial' and 'Home Coming' each represented here by a few sections, together form the three parts of Rough Passage, a long poem written over a period of fifteen years between 1961 and 1975 in which Parthasarathy dwells upon the question of language and identity and upon the inner conflict that arises from being brought up in two cultures. Exile' the first part, opposes the culture of Europe with that of India and examines the consequences of British rule in India, especially the loss of identity with his own culture and therefore the need for roots. Against the turmoil of non-relationship, personal love holds forth the promise of belonging and the second part, "Trial', celebrates love as a reality here and now. 'Home Coming', the third and final part of Rough Passage explores the phenomenon for returning to one's home. It is a sort of overture made with the aim of starting a dialogue between the poet and his Tamil past."<sup>24</sup>

His well-known poem 'Delhi' presents the city Delhi both in historical and contemporary context. The poet points out the rule of Khiljis, Tughlugs, Lodis Mughals and the Britishers and find that the blood letting for ruling the nation made us impotent:<sup>30</sup>

"Eight hundred years of blood-letting has made eunuchs of us, once for all unsettled our minds. Now atop the Himalaya unceremoniously grins an ominous skull, the sun. (p. 71)

The poet also holds the view that the Angrez or the Britishers rub the salt on our wounds they never care for the cause of the general people. Rather they enjoyed fully in flying the kite.

In the poem "Home Coming", the poet takes up the theme of language, culture and roots. The chief theme of this poem in his feeling of love, his rootedness to Indian culture and Indian myths. He remembers his past golden days of his native place and wants to be strongly glued to the nostalgic sentiments of his past days:

"My tongue of English chains
I return, after a generation, to you,
I am at the end.
Of my Dravidic tether

Hunger for you unassuaged I falter, stumble." (P-73).

#### 16 . Jayant Mahapatra (b. 1928)

Jayant Mahapatra is an eminent Indian English poet who has a number of poetic collections. His significant volumes are: A Rain of Rites (1976), Waiting (1979), The False Start, (1980) and Relationship (1980), The Whiteness of Bone (1992). He got the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award in 1981 on his book Relationship.

Mahaptra is a master of competent craft. His poems show a fine blending of feeling and form. Regarding his poetic skill, H. M. Prasad observes:

"Mahapatra has developed a competent craft, a felicity of expression, a surety of image-making to configurate congruently the real and divine impulses, his images are accurate and the contours of his phrases sharp. His language is alien but the Oriya sensibility and hence theme is an implicit attempt to natives the expressions, to relocate the *nauness* of words in accordance with the native surroundings, Indian ethos, indigenous heritage and omyth".<sup>25</sup>

His poem "Dawn at Puri" delineates a realistic portrayal of the holy place Puri in Orissa. It gives a very vivid description of the landscape of a morning at the stretching sands at Puri. The poet, through some beautiful images and phrases, presents a visual and auditory presentation. The phrases 'a skull on the holy sands', 'white clad widowed women,' 'leprous shells,' 'crouched faces' 'sullen solitary pyre' etc. are very suggestive and modern in tone and temper. The poem opens with the images of a skull:

"Endless crow noises

A skull on the holy sands

Tilts its empty country towards hunger". (p-79)

His lyrics "Waiting" recapitulates the vedic times and

themes. It deals with the mystery of life and death, pain and pleasure. His other well-known work *Relationship* is quite lyrical and comprehensive. K. R. S. Iyenger says:

"Relationship is a sustained long poem, an expansion of the pirate lyric voice into a chain of meditations embracing a region, a tradition, a whole way of life the theme and its half-hypnotic articulation alike compel respectful admiration. Jayanta enters into the spirit of the wonderful testaments in stone in Orissa's temples and exchanges heart-beats as it were with the forgotten artists and their unfolding works of sculpture and architecture. Distantly paralleled by Keat's 'Grecian Urn', Jayanta too seems to be teased by the untameable phenomenon of men and gods, Time and Eternity". 25

#### 17. Arun Kolatkar (b. 1932)

Arun Kolatkar is known today for his magnum opus Jejuri (1976), the long poem in thirty-one sections. It bagged the prestigious commonwealth Poetry Prize in 1977. R. Parthararathy has given a place of Kolatkar's poems in his anthology Ten Twentieth Century Indian Poets. His poem "The Boat Ride" is a fine blending of imagination and reality. About this poem, R. Parthararathy observes:

"The Boat Ride is characterized by hypnotic stillness. Kolatkar's poetics is original and it is in keeping with the incantatory quality of his experience. The absence of punctuations throughout reinforces this quality. The poem evokes a surreal world in which imagination and reality are fused, in which contradictions in logic are acceptable to the imagination, ordinary concepts of time and space, don't operate and everything is seen with an innocent eye".26

The poem Jejuri shows a dream like experience fused with reality. It has eleven sections. The first section deals with a boat getting ready for the voyage the sea. When the boat is about to start, the fireman with his wife enters the boat. The pot has vividly described all the activities of the self-conscious foreman and his wife. The next section points out the extraordinary skill of the foreman who wants to sail

like a seagull over and above the waves of the sea. What matters most in this section is the artistic presentation of sailing through some well-chosen words and phrases. The sound of the sentence suggests the sense. The evocation of the surreal activities is presented when the wife of the foreman says:

"throw him to the wolves she says staring fixedly at a hair in his right nostril" (The Boatride)

The supernatural atmosphere in the sea during the voyage is very near to Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner". So far the language of Kolkatkar is concerned, it is very compact and meaningful. Iyengar observes:

"Kolatkar has a real mastery of the language, and there is the stire of uneasy life in many of the pieces. As an exercise in coldblooded realism and the debunking of a place of pilgrimage, the sequence has perhaps a price-tag of its own."<sup>28</sup>

Jejuri is the name of a religious place located to the south east of Poona. The deity here is Khandoba who is worshipped Chaitanya visited this place in early 16th century. The poet also pays a visit to this religious place going by bus and returning by train. He sees gods, priest, men, animals, rodents, ruined temples and also defective water supply there. The Poet has developed a very poor opinion about the mismanagement of the Place. But Kolatkar's views about religion and God is objective. He does not want to define God and religion in clear-out terms. In one of the interviews, he said:

"I can't say I have much faith. I suppose I do believe in God someway, but I don't have any clear-cut ideas about religion. Frankly I don't define anything".<sup>29</sup>

# 18. Gieve Patel (b. 1940)

Gieve patel is one of the four great Parsee poets, other

three being Keke N. Daruwalla, Adil Jussawalla and K. D. Katrak. A medical doctor by profession, Gieve Patel has a first-hand experience of the pain, disease and death of men and women. The images of death, killing and disease come again and again in his poems. Patel has to his credit two volumes of poems: *Poems* (1966) and *How do You Withstand Body* (1976). His poetry has 'the promise and potentiality rather than achievement.

His poem "On Killing a tree" is very symbolic. The poet takes some images of disease, pain and operation which is very natural to the profession of the poet. On the denotative plane, the poem deals with an act of felling a tree. But on the connotative scale of meaning, the poet shows that mere cause of a disease is not enough. In order to cause the disease for ever, eradication of the cause of disease is relief, operation is must for the permanent relief of the patient.

His poem "Servants" deals wit the dirty and deplorable condition of the servants of India whose skin is dark and the fingers are hard: The poet observes:

"They sit without thought

Mouth slightly open recovering

From the day, and the eyes

Globe into the dim". (Servants)

Further, the poet says that most of the servants have no practical experience—They serve their duties mechanically. They set like animals and they are illinformed:

"The old flame reflected in their eyes
Large beads that though protruding
Actually rest
Behind the regular grind
Of the jaws". (Servants)

The poem "Nargol" shows the problem of begging in India. Through this poem the poet says how begging affects the psyche of our people. The realistic portrayal of the beggars and their ways of begging creates a shock-wave in the minds of the readers. The poet describes a beggar woman who follows the narrator endlessly and makes his life very miserable on the bus stand, the beggars go on pestering the passengers for a coin. The poet says:

".....I have no money

Meet me later

My fingernail rasping a coin

She'll have her money but

Cannot be allowed to bully—

Let her follow, let her drone

Sooner or later she will give up,

Stop in the centre of a lane

Let herself recede." (Nargol)

Thus, Gieve Patel's poems show the pain and agony of the deprived people of the society. He seeds 'life steadily and sees it whole'. He used very common phrases in a very simple language. Though he presents a particular beggar or peasant at a particular place, but his individual description is so powerful that the individual description assumes the universal description. He goes beyond the boundary of 'Time' and 'Place' and becomes a universal poet. His beggar woman has become a type, not an individual. Such type of beggar woman can be seen at every place of our country.

His other poems, "Naryal Purnima", "Commerce" "O My Very Own Cadaver" etc. deal with the various themes of social problems with some beautiful connotations. The poet never expresses his ideas in a dry and straightforward way, rather he weaves his material of thoughts into the colourful fabric of art and beauty.

# 19. O. P. Bhatnagar

O. P. Bhatnagar holds a prominent place in Indian poetry in English. He has published six volumes of poetry—Thought Poems (1976), Feeling Fossils (1977), Angles of Retreat (1979), Oneiric Visions (1980), Shadows in Floodlights (1984) and Audible Landscape His distinct, liberal and independent views about the growth and progress of Indian writing in English is worth nothing. He is a great champion of the Indian writers as against their British counterparts. In his scholarly "Foreward' to the book Indian Writing in English: Critical Explorations, he observes:

"Basically I am of opinion that the whole English. Literature syllabus be restructured by prescribing more of Indian literary masterpieces in English with selective British masterpieces to contest the English hegemony of literary taste and judgement. Fifty years of independence should be enough for the Indian Academia to free itself from the belief that there is no match to British literature in the world." 30

Bhatnagar considers meaning to be the vital part of any poem. He says in one of his poems that poetry is meaning (The poem, "Round and Round", *Thought poems*, p-5). He further says that it is meaning that imparts relevance to poetry. In his poetic collection, *Oneiric Vision*, he views poetry as a state of arrest and compares it to a framed sand-dune which is made and remade until it is found or lost:

"A poem is a vision
Which one can make
And unmake it
Till it is lost
To find it
One must go

To the desert

With wide-eyed wonder

Looking for shapes:

For a poem is

A framed sand-dune." (O. V., p-15.)

The beauty of his poems lies in his apt use of symbolism. The use of symbols and myths in his poems is infrequent. But when he puts them to use, he does so most effectively. His images are visual and organic. His images bespeak a sensitive mind. In one of his poems, an alienated man feels like 'a man behind on opaque glass', his fading figure looks like 'realities receding at dark'. In his volume Feeling Fossils, he employs cinematic images and compares a poem to a smile:

"A poem is a smile

That spreads

From eyes to heart

Using words

That have laid their meaning

To rest to become beautiful

Like feminity of a woman

Emerging from a happiness

Locked in blue waters

Revealing the unconscious beauty

In parts." (F. F. p. 29).

R. S. Pathak, in his scholarly paper "A Framed Sand-Dune: Form and Imagery in O. P. Bhatnagar's Poetry" rightly says that the verve and virtuosity and the poet's intense participation with the common problems are really commendable. He further observes:

"Bhatnager's poetry is admirably frank and sincere, characterized by composure and balance amidst contemporary confusion and chaos. His poetry eschews all posturing and

attitudinizing. In our age, when most poet intensity and authenticity are doubtful, he possesses a news seriousness which, lies, as Alvarez puts it, in "the poet's ability and willingness to face the full range of his experience with his full intelligence; not to take the easy exits of conventional response or choking incoherence". Bhatnagar's genuine convictions, wining intimacy and his competence in handling his form and imagery leave his readers deeply impressed whether they agree with him or not."31

## 20. Pritish Nandy (b. 1948)

Pritish Nandy has to his credit more than a dozen books of poetry. Almost all his poems have a different type of experiment about the design and pattern, rhyme and rhythm of the poem. He is very daring and ambitious experimenter who is very fond of exercising disconcerting images, pythonish gimmickry, illogical and surprising arrangements of lines and intriguing expressions. Some of his well-known books are, Early Poems, Of Gods and Olives (1967), On Either Side of Arrogance (1968), The Poetry of Pritish Nandy (1973), and Tonight This Savage Rite (1977), is his experiment in verse drama. In this book "The typographical and punctuational aberrations are apt to sidetrack the authenticity of the poet's mood and musings".

In his later poetry, Pritish Nandy lays stress on the nostalgic attachment to the root and soil of India. He develops his keen interest in the Bhajans of Mirabai. He also describes realistically the anguish of modern living and lonliness. M. K. Naik holds the opinion:

"Nandy's verse gives the impression of wild energy and verbal belligerence only occasionally amenable to discipline—a verse of which nimiety is at once a source of power and a weakness. His imagination seems to be obsessed with urban violence and horror, death and sex, and brings together Aphrodite and Shakuntala, Shenai strains and ariettas, raktakarabis and hyacinths."<sup>32</sup>

#### 21. Monika Verma

Monika Verma is a talented writer of Modern Indian Poetry in English. She collected of lyrics is Dragonfles Draw Flame (1963). She translated A Bunch of Tagore's poems and Jaydeva's Gita Govinda (1968). This renderings and metrical transactions show her sensitiveness to English speech and rhythm. She expresses her feelings with the help of some suggestive images and symbols. She never believes in the presentation of facts and figures; she feels that poetry must express the inner thought of man, the unexplored region of thoughts and imagination with the help of poetic devices. She is of the opinion that the essence of living is beauty In one of her poems, she observes:

"The essence of living is beauty,
Grapes and wine may have a more subtle flavour
but the flavour of life is living..
No, life is an endless giving,
and Death in the greatest giver of them all"
(quoted by K. R. S. Iyenger, p. 681)

Here her philosophical observation of life and death has been presented through connotative use of language.<sup>41</sup> The moral here is not dry and flat, but it is woven into the fabric of art and beauty.

Her greatness as a poetess lies in her verse translation of Gita Govinda by the poet Jaydeva. The main theme of Gita Govinda is the true eternal love between Krishna and Radha, Radha's separation from Krishna, a her sweet memory with Lord Sri Krishna and her ecstasy with the reunion with Krishna Monika Verma has taken a very serious attempt to translate this highly sensuous poetry of Jayadeva in a very beautiful and poetic way. Let us take a passage from the Book XII which shows Monika's mastery over handling the translation in an original and forceful way:

"As they embraced, the terrible passionate lila of Sri Krishna began: the quiver and thrill of the senses acts as a hindrance, a slight impediment to the consumption of love, just as eyelids are an impediment when the eye seeks to look, and look again and again at the beloved, and as the lips seek for kisses, and more and more of these, speech is an impediment; and at the final victory of passion, at its final acclamation, even the deep-felt joy is an impediment and yet all these impediments these that act as barriers, and momentary bars, to the consummation of ultimate love of Sri Krishna, take one to the regions of unending joy" (Quoted by K. R. S. Iyengar, p. 681-82).

### 22. Eunice de Souza

She is the most combative women poet after Kamala Das. She is often linked with Sylvia Plath and the other confessional women poets for her bold and frank description of women persecution and male domination. In her poems, we final the women struggling for their identity crisis in a conservative society. Eunice has had a cosmopolitan education. Which exercised a great influence on her thoughts about the slavery and persecution of women. In a very bold and assertive way she has raised the silent voice of the deserted women and by breaking the age long betters

of convention and tradition she advocated the freedom of the women who continued to feel suffocation in the cage of so called tradition and convention. She weeps over the fatality of being born a woman and hits the male-mentality:

"I have heard it said
my parents wanted a boy
I've done my best to quality.
I hid the blood, stains
Of my clothes
and let my breasts sag..." (Quoted by Iyengar, p. 727).

Through her autobiographical out parings of her deepest feelings, she has presented a patriarchal world which is ever ready to engulf the dreams and wishes of a tormented woman. Her description, though mostly autobiographical, is so alive and vivid that it transcends the individualism of the poet and points to the universal portrayal of weman. She Observes:

"I thought the whole world
was trying to rip me up
cut me down go through me
with a razor blade
then I discovered
a cliché: that's what I wanted
to do to the world." (Quoted by Iyengar, P-0727)

# 23. Mamta Kalia (1942)

Mamta Kalia extends the boundary of women poetry through her poetic work *Tribute to Papa* (1974) and *Poems* (1978). She has written extensively on love, life, marriage, family and society with irony and wit.

The poetry of Mamta Kalia is richly influenced by the champions of feminism what Iyengar observes about the modern Indian women poets is fully applied to Mamta

## Kalia. Iyerngar says:

"Certainly the women poets of today have dared all that men had dared, and they have few inhibitions. Freedom and energy often team together, but there is need also to go beyond the recurrent sense of hurt and appetite for strife, and reach at the beauty, harmony, peace, fulfilment."<sup>33</sup>

### 24. Imtiaz Dharker

Imtiaz Dharker was born in Lahore and grew up in Glasgow. She has been living in Bombay since 1970. She always oscillates between Bombay and London. Most of her themes centre round such a life of her transitions. She describes beautifully exile, home, childhood, journey and religious strife in her poems.

Imtiaz Darker is a poet as well as an editor. For several years, she has been the poetry editor of *Debonair*. Her poems have been collected in the book *Purdah* (1992). She also works as a documentary film maker in India. She is also an artist. She conceives her books as sequences of poems and drawings. Her other book *Postcards from God* (1997) is a well-knit book.

Her poems deal with a complex and revolutionary journey. They transcend the nationality, religion and gender. She represents the issues of homesickness, urban violence, religious upheavals and political activities in a very simple and artistic way.

In her latest work "I Speak for the Devil" she thinks that the woman's body in a territory. It is a thing that is possessed and owned by herself or by another. She acknowledges that in many societies women are getting respect and honour only because they are carrying someone else inside their bodies—a child, a devil. For some, to be 'possessed' is to be set free. In other words, Dharker's presentation of the sorrows and sufferings of women is very realistic and they remind us of Shashi Deshpande in fiction, and Mahesh Dattani in Drama whose plays *Tara* and

Where There's a Will are the true analysis of the gender discrimination and woman's search for their identity in a male dominated society.

Thus, the contribution of Indian poets in English literature in both matter and manner is manner. Their poetic outpourings to various subjects, their nostalgic attachment to the roots of Indian culture, myths, customs and rites, their marathon efforts for picturizing the tone and temperament of Indianess, their new poetic and structural devices to make the feelings quite equivalent to the form are really very encouraging and worth appreciating. V. K. Gokak in his introduction to the anthology of poems *The Golden Treasury of Indo-Anglian Verse* appreciates the efforts of all the poets whom he has included in his anthology. He says that Sarojini Naidu is the Yeats of India and Sri Aurobindo is a great innovator of verse and versification.

Now Indian English poets are paying attention to the various subjects of day-to-day reality. They are very alive to the contemporary situations particularly the social, economic and political problems of society. They are also very conscious of the identity crisis of the women, the Dalit and the deserted of our nation. They now no longer sit in the ivory towers of love and romance, about dream and fantasy, birds and cuckoos', but they are very conscious of creating several new poetic devices, idioms, words and imagery as to suit the sentiments of the people of this land. They now seldom prefer to write in conventional rhythm and thyme; they prefer to write the language of the common people, a language that is always heard, spoken and understood by the common people. Some of the women poets like Mamata Kalia, Imtiaz Dharker, Eunice de Souza, Melanie Silgardo, Charmayne De Souza are memorable exponents of feminism who represent both 'the new women' and 'the newly born women'. They are the brave soldiers ever ready for fight for the cause of women liberation from

the bondage of patriarchal domination. Sujatha Modayil observes:

"We are the women who wait

Have waited so long that our eyes

Are weary with weeping

And yet we wait".

Vijaya Goel, another soldier of feminism views women as the power of this earth:

"You are the power of this earth

The creator of man,

Yet you lie at his feet

Begging to survive."

Women poets are not simply fighting for the free flight from the betters of patriarchy, but they are also seen struggling for a new language of their own. Rukmini Nair has an ardent desire of possessing a new language:

"She wants, she badly strong man

Not a fresh lover, strong man

Or clown, but a new language

In which to hold her own".

To sum up, Indian poetry in English is just like a newly established park of various flowers, trees, and meadows which needs a constant care and nursing on the part of the gardeners and caretakers of this park so that the flowers may bloom and blossom and spread the aroma to every directions without any impediments. The field of the garden in English, no doubt, but the skill of gardening sowing, planting, nurturing and fostering is purely Indian. And therein lies its greatness.

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# Two Mystics: Aurobindo and Rabindranath

Dr. Bithika Dasgupta Sarkar

It is a poise of consciousness of the spiritual unity with all and an endless yearning of man for the Beyond that distinguishes the later poems of Rabindranath and Sri Aurobindo. At this phase comes to the poets a range of experience, wholly inward and subjective. A new world of insight and experience of the little known who "comes, comes, ever comes" but in silent steps emerges. The eager listening to the footsteps of the Eternal Fugitive and a keen sense of the vast undone pervade the realm of their later poetry. A sense of incompleteness extends to deeper levels of awareness, bordering upon the crisis of identity. The experience of something beyond man's physical multicellular body helps a sensitive mind to recognize the larger cosmic self as the truth of our being. This very recognition is the beginning and end of all mystic approaches, to life and poetry, the voice of life.

Unequivocally, the mystical inspiration of Rabindranath and Sri Aurobindo has introduced a new age in poetry. *Encyclopaedia Britannica* defines mysticism as "the immediate experience of oneness with Ultimate Reality". According to *Chamber's Dictionary*, a mystic means "a sacredly obscure or secret, involving a sacred or secret meaning hidden from the eyes of the ordinary person,

only revealed to a spiritually enlightened mind" <sup>2</sup>. Sri Aurobindo himself says:

"The mystic feels real and the present, even ever-present to his experience, intimate to his being; truths to the ordinary reader are intellectual abstraction or metaphysical speculations ....He used words and images in order to convey to the mind some perception some figure of that which is beyond thought. To the mystic there is no such thing as an abstraction ....The mystical poet can only describe what he has felt, seen in himself or other or in the world just as he has felt or seen it or experienced through exact vision, close contact or identity and leave to the general reader to understand or not understand or misunderstand according to his capacity."

### Sri Aurobindo further clarifies the same in a letter:

"A mystic is currently supposed to be one who has mystic experience, and a mystic philosopher is one who has such experience and has formed a view of life in harmony with his experience. Merely to have metaphysical notion about the Infinite and Godhead and underlying or overshadowing forces does not make a man a mystic."4

### In another letter Aurobindo writes:

"I used the word 'mystic' in the sense of a certain kind of inner seeing and feeling of things, a way which to the intellect would seem occult and visionary. One can go far in the spiritual way, have plenty of spiritual visions and dreamt even without having this mystic mind and way of seeing things. So too one may write poetry from different planes or sources of inspiration and expressing spiritual feelings, images, experience and yet use the poetic intelligence as the thought medium, which gives them shape in speech; such poems are not of the mystic type. One may be mystic in this sense without being spiritual -one may also be spiritual without being mystic or one may be both spiritual and mystic in one."

# Prof. Nalini Kanta Gupta observes:

"The mystic gives us, we can say, the magic of the Infinite, what I turn spiritual proper, gives in addition the logic of the Infinite."

The object of mystic poetry is the expression of an inner truth, of thoughts and ideas unfamiliar to the

common mind. This is the revelation of inner experiences. A mystic poet does not deliberately arrange the words and cannot always account to the critical intellect.

To quote Dr. Prem Tyagi,

"Mystic poetry therefore attempts to express in terms and rhythms of the flesh, the earthly and sensuous are meant as none, and form a support, a pointer and symbol of the spiritual import. Mysticism lies in the play of the two-human and divine, flesh and soul -a hide and seek between them."

No doubt, a mystic is more than the 'maker', more than a mere poet. He is the Prophetic Voice, the Mediator, the hearer and singer of divine songs. He is, in Vedic terms, the 'Kavi', the seer and channel of the Word and vision is his primary power.

In his introduction to *Hymns to Mystic Fire*, Sri Aurobindo explains the origin of the poetry of the Vedas. He says:

"The name given to the sages who received the inspired poetry in their illumined minds rather than mentally constructed, a great universal, eternal and impersonal truth, was "kavi", which afterwards came to mean any poet, but at that time had the sense of seer of truth — "kavayah satya shrutah". Rishi Dirghatma speaks of the Rks, the hymns of the Vedas, as "existing in a supreme either imperishable and immutable, in which all the gods are seated"; and he further adds: "One who knows not That, what shall he do with the Rks?"

Therefore, a kavi or a mystic poet is one who has the vision of the Reality beyond the range of mind or senses and in whom the vision finds a spontaneous expression in the body of rhythm and words. God was given the name of 'kavi' by the ancient people, which meant the poet of the universe or cosmos. In the light of this discussion, let us consider the poetry of the two seer poets: Rabindranath and Sri Aurobindo.

The poetry of Rabindranath and Sri Aurobindo springs out of their seeing or vision, of the truth that 'a death bound littleness is not all we are'. We also move to the frontiers of eternity. We pass beyond the range of sense into the realm of the Eternal Day fronting the supreme Creatrix power with our mounting aspiration, conquering all the forces of darkness and ignorance. Thus can be established the divine life on earth. Like Joan of Ark we hear heavenly voices in their poetry, the voice of light, truth, beauty and harmony, balancing between the ends: the mortal and the immortal, the finite and the infinite, a perennial source of boundless joy.

In *The Peacock Lute.* V. N. Bhushan has pertinently observed: "Sri Aurobindo's is a type by itself—poetry of the highest and rarest kind, the poetry of mystic vision, magical word and mantric vibration. It is not simply poetry of Yoga or the poetry of austerity revealing in recondite thought, reeling expression and serpentine movement. Born out of deep spiritual experience and self-realization, Sri Aurobindo's poetry is a "call to spiritual adventure".

In Rabindranath again, one can notice that poetry is derived from his inner vision of truth. But unlike Aurobindo, Rabindranath remains a child forever. In him, the closest approach to mystic state is that sense of wonder that gives a child his right to enter into the treasure house of mystery that is in the heart of the universe.

# As Prof. S.K, Ghose says:

"Tagore is a quasi-mystic — more romantic than religious" 10. But at the same time, he also admits that one cannot deny Tagore's mystical affiliations or his feeling for the unity of life, the same pervading everywhere:

The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day

Runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures -

It is the same life that shouts in joy through the dust of the earth

In numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers.

It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean-cradle of birth and

death in ebb and in flow.

I feel that my limbs are made glorious by the touch of this world of life.

And my pride is from the life-throb of ages dancing in my blood this moment."11.

On earth what is finite is frail, small, little and limited. But the touch of the infinite makes it fresh, eternal, immortal and ineffable. In the eyes of Tagore child is a unique idea, a symbol of new life. One may think of the imaginative, retrospective memoir of the child, for the manner in which a child speaks in *The Crescent Moon* or the hallelujah to the hero in *Navajatak* which is a bit more conscious because of its critical background:

"The New Age looks/To the path of your coming/What message have you brought for the world?/Children bring again and again/The promise of eternal assurance!"<sup>12</sup>.

No one can deny the mystic affiliation in these lines. Here the child is not a mere child. He is the symbol of eternity that can go beyond the world of perception.

So far Sri Aurobindo's mystical inspiration is concerned, everywhere in his poetry, he brings out living symbols from the mystical planes—a concrete contact with the Divine's presence, which in Tagore sometimes remains ungrasped. Even when he talks of reality, a direct rhythm is heard from an inner poise. There is always a direct consciousness of the presence of the supreme spirit. This consciousness covers all phenomena significantly beyond the reach of an ordinary mind. As the mind is frequently baffled, it is necessary to grip the sound of mystical poetry, the rhythm that is the only possible media to appreciate the grandeur of the many-sided mystical vision and experience.

Regarding the rhythm of Aurobindo's mystical poetry, K.D. Sethna has observed:

"...it has a massive vision and an ample meaning, but the main gate for these things into us is the rhythm, the sound-reflex of their hidden life-throb, their inner force of existence. Once the rhythm has transmitted to us that throb and that force, the eye will open wider and wider and our thought will begin to shape itself according to the truth of the Spirit."13.

Indeed, audible reading, if repeated, is sure to save us from falling foul of a poem. In this regard, let us consider the poem — Thought the Paraclete. This poem reveals the ascent of consciousness to the Supreme Power through different stages. It traces the flight of thought as it takes off from the normal intellectual plane, sweeps across the illumined, intuitive overhead regions, and finally disappears bound for the Ultimate. The poem deals with the transformation in the self brought about as a result of the ascent of consciousness to the supramental level, suggested by the images and the music of the poem. The poetic expression is packed with symbols and visions straight from the spiritual planes:

"The face

Lustred, pale-blue-lined of the hippogriff,
Eremite, sole, daring the bourneless ways,
Over world-bare summits of timeless being
Gleamed; the deep twilights of the world-abyss
Failed below. Sun-realms of supernal seeing.
Crimson-white mooned oceans of pauseless bliss
Drew its vague heart-yearning with voices sweet.
Hungering, large-soiled to surprise the unconned
Secrets white-fire-veiled of the last Beyond,
Crossing power-swept silences rapture-stunned,
Climbing high far ethers eternal-stunned,
Though the great-wined wanderer Paraclete
Disappeared slow-singing a flame-word rune,
Self was left, lone, limitless, nude, immune."

Seerhood and vitality—the constant features of Sri Aurobindo's style can only be felt here through a audible reading, for the sound suggestions make a formidable impact on us, striking upon our aesthetic faculties, with a splendour of poetry. In one of his letters, Sri Aurobindo made the following observation about this poem:

"A mystic poem may explain itself or a general idea may emerge from it, but it is the vision that is important or what one can get from it by intuitive feeling, not the explanation or idea. Thought the Paraclete is a vision or revelation of an ascent through spiritual planes, but gives no names to photographic descriptions of the planes crossed."<sup>14</sup>.

In Revelation, which V. K Gokak calls "a lovely mystical lyric of great transparency" <sup>15</sup>, reveals a vision. In a mood of spiritual ecstasy here the poet realizes a divine vision that has dawned on him. He saw the vision of the Divine, like a startled bright surmise. It was even visible to mortal eyes 'just like a cheek of a frightened rose that with a sudden beauty glows' or 'a footstep like the wind and a hurried glance behind.' Then it disappears as thought escapes the mind before it is caught. The poet has yoked together in a sweet and sonorous diction the concrete and the abstract.

The sonnet, *Transformation* shows the poet's change from the sensuous to the spiritual life, from the life of flesh to that of divinity. The poet's soul is illumined. He is no more "a slave to Nature and her laden rule." He has freed himself from the narrow mesh of senses. His body has become God's happy living tool. Now the immortality of his spirit is revealed to him. And he has drunk the Infinite like a giant's wine.

"I am no more a vassal of the flesh,

A slave to Nature and her laden rule;

I am caught no more in the senses' narrow mesh.

My soul unhorizoned widens to measureless sight.

My body is God's happy living tool,

My spirit a vast sun of deathless light."

In this poem, a subtle fancy suggests a strange entity living in an uncommon world, and a particular state of consciousness is vividly conveyed by the impact of words plucked from the unknown and the deific.

Like Transformation, Trance of Waiting is also a poem

of spiritual illumination. The poet has heard in the state of trance eternal whispers. When the mystic mood of trance overpowers him, he attains a 'luminous sleep' in which thought escapes and 'wisdom supernal' pervades. 'A stillness of God' pervades everywhere. It is the poetry of the real mantra which, if chanted repeatedly, elevates the reader to the poet's experience of communion with the Divine. Wisdom supernal looks down on me,

Knowledge mind cannot measure;

Light that no vision can render garments

The silence with splendour.

Filled with a rapturous presence

The crowded spaces of being

Tremble with me fire that knows, thrill with the might of repose.

Earth is now girdled with trance and Heaven is put round her for vesture.

Wings that are brilliant with fate

Sleep at Eternity's gate.

Time waits vacant, the Lightening that kindles,

The Word that transfigures:

Space is stillness of God

Building his earthly abode.

All waits hushed for the fiat to come

And the tread of the Eternal;

Passion of a bliss yet-to-be

Sweeps from Eternity's sea.

Mysticism rising to a climax of the incantatory art — there we have Aurobindo's Rose of God. This poem is a cry of the soul in four stanzas. Here Rose is the symbol of the essence and efforescence of God. According to Aurobindo, God possesses five components: Bliss, Light of Wisdom, Power over mighty infinity, Life conquering immortality and Love. These components correspond to the five-stanzaform of this poem. The two lines of each quatrain appeal

passionately to the Mighty God for endowing the gifts of bliss, wisdom, power and immortality to those who have chosen the righteous path.

According to Sri Aurobindo, rose that has got all the attributes of God is heaven and should bloom on this earth, for it is on this very earth that the Life Divine should be enacted. Rose of God is "vision, invocation and action — all at once." The heavenly attributes should live in the mind of our earthhood. As Aurobindo says:

Rose of God, great wisdom-bloom on the summits of being, Rose of Light, immaculate core of the ultimate seeing!

Live in the mind of our earthhood; O Golden Mystery, flower Sun on the head of the Timeless, guest of the marvellous Hour.

Aurobindo never condemns the earth or bodily existence of man on it. In his words, "Make earth the home of the wonderful and life Beatitude's kiss." He deems it the ordained scene of an evolution in which its own terms will not just be transcended but purified and fulfilled, discovering a solution rather than a dissolution. Within the imperfect parts of our mundane existence, the poet seeks a spark of the Divine. "..... the psychic being, as he terms it, which is all perfection in embryo and which acts at present indirectly through general influence on mind, life force and body. But it has to be brought forward into the midst and made to grow as an open link between the Divine and the Human and a focal starting-point for the latter's irradiation by the former. This secret psyche is the most poignant intensity and its pure emotion...infuses often into Sri Aurobindo's overhead grandeurs, either openly or from the background, its strange sweetness or its usefulness, that is never weak or escapist."16

A God's Labour, another mystical poem also bears the very stamp of this secret psyche all over its sublime overhead vision. What is more in this poem is that it is cast directly into a personal mould:

I have delved through the dumb earth's dreadful heart

And heard her black mass' bell.

He who I am was with me still;

All veils are breaking now.

I have heard His voice and borne His will

On my vast untroubled brow....

We hear this same tone voicing his own spiritual realization in his sonnets too.

In Rose of God, the last poem in Transformation and Other Poems, we have observed two sides of spiritual reality present in each stanza. The first two lines in every stanza sing the glory of that which is beyond human consciousness, ever manifest and supreme. In the last two lines, the same supreme reality reveals itself within human consciousness through the process of evolution. Indeed, the poet convinces us that even in our mortal existence, we can be glorified by the magnificent touches of some other being, some other world, but the fullness of the deathless is still beyond. It awaits the human endeavour to know the mysteries of the Absolute—the absolute Bliss, the absolute Light, the absolute Power, the absolute Life, the absolute Love. And in the eyes of Aurobindo, this Absolute Being is identical with the Divine Mother who joins the Infinite to the finite, through her roles as Creatrix and Mediatrix.

Undoubtedly, Rose of God is an achievement by every standard. This is one of the most magical and potent poems of Sri Aurobindo, in which the root symbols of an almost lost tradition blooms forever. In true sense, this poem is an addition to the world of Sri Aurobindo's poetry — in its power and passion, insight and intensity. In poems after poems, Sri Aurobindo lifts us to the heights of silence and concentration with such an ease and convincingness that no sensitive reader can miss. For instance, the titles like Ocean Silence, Trance in Waiting, Soul's scene, The Dream Boat, Musa Spiritus, A God's Labour are to name a few. Everywhere with the poet as inner guide and explorer, a

### reader too can move

Into the Silence, into the Silence, Arise, O Spirit immortal, Away from the turning Wheel, breaking the magical Circle. Ascend, single and deathless:

.. .Pass from the sphere of the grey and the little,

Leaving the cry and the struggle forever.

We hear this same tone voicing his own spiritual realization in his sonnets too. Aurobindo's sonnets speak of the Cosmic Consciousness, the Bliss of Identity and the joy of this enlarged awareness, of the Silence on the Mountains of Delight. Surprisingly enough, everywhere the touch of the Earth is always invigorating. Although his mind dwells upon great and distant things, the vision is always clear and imperative, the unadulterated truth of the human situation. Prof. S. K, Ghose has rightly considered Sri Aurobindo the 'poet of cosmic mysteries', who was also a poet of Man the Master. And with such a poet as fellow traveler who would not set out on The Infinite Adventure towards Apocalypse?<sup>17</sup>.

However, no discussion of Sri Aurobindo's poetry can be completed without Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol, because it is the unique adventure in poetic creation, his all other works lead up to it. Savitri has been considered by an American Professor, Raymond Frank Piper as "the most comprehensive, integrated, beautiful and perfect cosmic poem ever composed. It ranges symbolically from a primordial cosmic void, through earth's darkness and struggles, to the highest realms of supramental spiritual existence, and illumines every important concern of man, through verse of unparalleled massiveness, magnificence and metaphorical balance — Savitri is perhaps the most powerful artistic work in the world for expanding man's mind towards the Absolute" 18.

No doubt, the canvas of Savitri is as wide as cosmos and it takes into purview worlds of being that are not yet fully recognized by humanity—the different planes of Light, Consciousness and Bliss, the Worlds of Truth. In this magnificent work, Aurobindo has crammed the whole universe. But in this study, we will concentrate only on one aspect of *Savitri*: mysticism.

### As Sri Aurobindo says:

"To the vision of Savitri, the whole of life is a legitimate field for the Divine to manifest Himself in. In raising this basic problem of Ultimation of the Inconscient, the cause of man's subjection to his imperfection, suffering and evil, Savitri is unique, and goes deeper than other epics towards its solution. It calls out the Divine that is hidden at present in the human mould to deal directly with the problem of man's emancipation and of establishment of the divine kingdom on earth." 19

It is not only the content but the poetic manner, the height of tone, and the inevitability of the word — all the elements that make up the highest manner and technique of poetic creation are also present in Savitri.

## To quote Prof. S.K, Ghose:

"In a deeper sense, the poem is more than a triumph of individual talent. It is a whole tradition come alive again, in a modern medium, concentrating centuries of development, not of a race and a culture, but of many races and cultures Like his own Aswapathy, our poet is the Representative Man:

Sometimes one life is charged with earth's destiny.

We are all involved, in the profoundest sense, ....both events and locale are within us,.. a larger self that lives within us, by ourselves unseen."20.

Indeed, Savitri is the poetic expression of 'Rishi' Aurobindo's Divine Vision, his yogic sadhana and his 'integral yoga'. Here the poet has endeavoured to synthesize the three trends of the most authoritative ancient philosophical systems of Vedanta — the Dvaita, the Advaita and the Vishisthadvaita. Aswapathy's as well as Savitri's yoga is Sri Aurobindo's; this is everyman's yoga, this is of the whole human race. What is true of Aswapathy is also true of Sri Aurobindo to a great extent:

His is a search of darkness for the Light,

Of mortal life for immortality. - Book I, Canto 4.

Aswapathy's journeys in the 'world -stair' and Savitri's entry into the 'inner countries' are on the pattern of the journey of the human soul through Hell, Purgatory and Paradise in Dante's Divine Comedy.

To quote Iyengar,

" Reading through Savitri is journeying through the mystic occult worlds going on 'a cosmic conducted tour', starting with the occult regions of Gross Matter, Subtle Matter and Material Paradise — moving on to the realms of the Little Life inhabited by Insect, Animal and Primitive Man and then to the kingdom of the Morning Star peopled by 'rajasic' heroes cast on a mighty mould — then dropping on a downward moving 'lift' into the nether worlds of the Mother of Falsehood and the son of darkness, and anon, out of this dark, this gloom, this hell, along a tunnel to the bright light of the Gandharva World of Life — Gods and then, following a ladder of ascent, to the worlds of the Little and the Greater Mind covering the whole range from the first glimmering of thought to the highest illuminations of the intuitive mind, and winging still higher to the immaculate world of the Rose and the Flame, leading at last to the regions of Sovereign Silence and of the mystic rule of the dual power of Purusha and Prakriti."21.

The characters of the epic are no mere human figures. Aswapathy is the conscious soul of the world or humanity aspiring for union with the Infinite, for removal of ignorance. Savitri herself is the Divine Mother. Satyavan is Truth, an embodiment of truth whom Ignorance in the form of Lord of Death wants to kill. From the thematic, philosophical, purposive, descriptive and characterization points of view, Savitri is a piece of mystic poetry. It brings home to us the Unknown as it is in itself. It is a legend as well as symbol, a story with many scenes and levels of development, and is instinct with a mystical light which plays itself over many regions and does not fail to cover most of the aspects of world-thought. It does not reject any strand of human life. It includes and absorbs every theme

of importance in man's evolution towards deity. K. D. Sethna was right to observe:

"... the earth-born heart of man is shown in the poem not only in its finiteness aching for the infinite, but also in an apocalyptic fulfilment. And this fulfilment, though dense with the mystical light, is again and again depicted in terms which go home to us and which set forth in a colossal clarity the Eternal in the movements of Time. For, Sri Aurobindo did not write his epic with the disposition of either a sworn Surrealist wedded to the obscurely entangled or a strictly symbolist cherishing a cult of the glimmeringly elusive. Behind the poet in him is the Master of Yoga whose work was to enlighten and not to puzzle and who, with all his roots in India's hoary past of spirituality, Was yet a modern among moderns and the seer of new mystical progression, a collective advance in consciousness from mind to Supermind, a whole world evolving Godwards and breaking the fetters not only of political or social tyranny but also of moral ignorance. A democracy of the Divine liberating the human was his goal, as in these words he puts into the mouth of his Savitri:

A lonely freedom cannot satisfy

A heart that has grown one with every heart:

I am a deputy of the aspiring world,

My spirit's liberty I ask for all."22

Belief in God as the supreme power and soul's longing to be united with God are the essence of all mystical poetry. This very essence pervades the entire realm of Savitri. On the lower plane, there is a tremendous hide and seek, and the soul has to pierce through masks and meet its own white truth. Once the piercing is done, the light is seen and our whole existence seems to thrill in contact with the Eternal's luminous stuff, the Eternal's rhythm of vastitude. In the words of Sethna:

"Yes, a new stuff of being, a new rhythm of experience press to incarnate themselves, so that our limited consciousness may not view the Beyond as from behind unbreakable glass but find windows and doors flung open in the crystal walls of imagination for the breath of the shining mystery to blow in and our mind and heart to rush out. That gigantic intercommunion

and that boundless freedom are what the Vedic and Upanishadic poetry is composed of. It is these things that are also Savitri."23

Throughout the whole of this inner epic, one feels the pulsating presence of God — the One, the Perfect and the Divine. Let us consider the following quotations:

Then by a touch, a presence or a voice

The world is turned into a temple ground

And all discloses the unknown Beloved. Book II, Canto 12, p. 278.

And

The matter of existence lurks in us

And plays at hide-and-seek with his own Force,

In Nature's instrument loiters secret God

The Immanent lives in man as in house.....Book I, Canto 4, p.66.

It is the song of life divine, in which humanity finds its fulfilment. On the one hand, it sees the spirit, the divine, and the supreme who is Absolute. On the other hand, it is an Eternity of Darkness, of Night, unfathomable dark night. But out of the negative eternity, there arises to our view the gross material world. But this world seems to bring out into her gross form the beauty and delight of the subtle material world. The Mother is right to consider it a 'super-epic'. Here poetry and metaphysics reach culmination. It is a poem full of Vedic symbolism and Upanishadic mysticism.

As a mystic poet, Sri Aurobindo is unequalled into Indian mystical poetry as well as into that of many devotee poets of the West, there is only a calm shadow of the overhead plane. George Herbert shows a religious simplicity at once piquant and passionate. Crashaw has a rich sensuousness veiled in spirituality. Donne fairly troubles the Unknown, whereas Francis Thompson only presents a restless and colourful heat of response to the many-splendoured being. Even Wordsworth or Coleridge takes a mere flight into the sky of the Infinite, but they

never reach the realm of Eternity. Though Eliot sometimes wanders over the spiritual plane, he is too intellectual to reach the height of gnosticism. On the other hand, Sri Aurobindo is capable of dealing at ease with all the mystical planes—occult, psychic and spiritual. As he says:

I would hear in my spirit's wideness solitary

The Voice that speaks when moral lips are mute:

I seek the wonder of things absolute

Born from the silence of Eternity<sup>24</sup>.

Unequivocally, the coupling of the overhead vision with the overhead word 'rhythm' is the achievement par excellence of Sri Aurobindo. Other mystical poets rarely go beyond the heart's lyrical God-drunkenness. Even in Tagore's Gitanjali, the overhead language stir is mostly absent. However, one should not forget that Gitanjali is prose-poetry and so should be kept aside from the absolute overhead ring. Moreover, one cannot deny the vividness and vibrancy in it.

Tagore's Gitanjali stirred Yeats, as did nothing else. Being overwhelmed, Yeats compared Tagore with those saints who have known the Absolute Truth. But what differentiates Tagore from Sri Aurobindo is something very distinctive. Apart from the growing charisma of his personality, the hypotheses cast by his poetry, and miles apart from his participation in the country's national life, Tagore remained essentially a solitary, a lonely individual. Perhaps S.K, Ghose was right to describe Tagore as a 'quasi-mystic, more romantic than religious'25, perhaps, because still now we have not succeeded in reaching finalities about many vexed questions relating to his poetry or personality. K.D. Sethna points out:

"Tagore is the ideal psalmist of emotions - emotions not feverishly uncontrolled and rendered a confusing flame ...but harmoniously psychicised and tinged by the superb serenity which enters into all Indian mysticism."<sup>26</sup>

However, Tagore gets the overhead afflatus to a recognizable degree, in a reminiscence of Upanishad's verse about the Transcendental supra-cosmic Divine:

He it is, the innermost one, who awakens my being with his deep hidden touches He it is who puts his enchantment upon these eyes and joyfully plays On the chords of my heart in varied cadence of pleasure and pain.

....Days come and ages pass,

And it is ever he who moves my heart

In many a name, in many a guise,

In many a rapture of joy and sorrow.27

K. R. S. Iyengar has acknowledged the profound impression made by Gitanjali on him:

"..open this little book a whole half-century after its first publication, and the very first line still seems to have the power to set the heart ablaze: "thou has made me endless, such is thy pleasure".

What is this but the gift of abhaya, the sure promise of immortality? The Lord willed that man should be immortal. Is this the frail vessel of little consequence? .... Yet even this frail vessel is filled over with fresh life by the grace of God. This little flute can still breathe 'melodies eternally new'. This little heart can still transcend its human limitations and taste pure anada. What is here finite is frail, little, limited, small; yet the touch of the infinite makes it fresh, immortal, ineffable; Man's hunger is infinite and the Lord's grace is equally infinite;" Ages pass and thou pourest, and still there is room to fill". This God is man's friend, lover and protector" 28

All poetry is an endeavour to express man's relation to the circumambient universe, only the aspects may differ. Gitanjali is the recordation of the vicissitudes in the drama of the human soul in its progress from the finite to the infinite. The progress is conceived as a continuing sacrifice, culminating in a total offering of all one possesses. Sometimes there is a sudden invasion of darkness. Human mind cries out in fear:

Light, oh where is the light!

The Night is black as a black stone.

Let not the hours pass by in the dark.

Kindle the lamp of love with thy life<sup>29</sup>.

Darkness involves ignorance, the approaching tread of death. It may also be joined with drought. When the battle with the evil forces is over, one may venture on the journey:

"Early in the day it was whispered that we should sail in a boat, only thou and I, and never a soul in the world would know of this, our pilgrimage to no country and to no end. In that shoreless ocean, at thy silently listening smile my songs would swell in melodies, free as waves, free from all bondage of words."30.

Again, the poet prophetically shows us how the Infinite is manifested in thousand forms of delight, all very familiar to us:

"He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path maker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like him comedown on the dusty soil".<sup>31</sup>

"Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight."32

In *Gitaniali*, everything that belongs to the poet — his senses, his mind, his songs and his entire life — takes its journey to reach the eternal home. This collection of songs begins with the statement:

"Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure.

This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life."33.

It ends with a prayer too -

"Let all my songs gather together their diverse strains into a single current

And flow to a sea of silence in one salutation to thee.

Like a flock of homesick cranes flying night and day back to their mountain nests, let all

my life take its voyage to its eternal home in one salutation to thee"34.

Thus the wheel has come full circle. The elemental dynamism of youth has found its finale on the borders of silence, when all his senses have spread out and touched this world at His feet. For Tagore, God is the soul of seasons, the cycle of existence, but always something within the sight and sight and touch. In fact, the relation between the finite and the Infinite has always been the major theme of Tagore's poetry. But Tagore feels it "less as a philosopher and more as a poet, mixing emotion with speculation" 35.

Similarly, in *Rogsaivae*, we can realize a deep feeling for the Law or Harmony at the heart of all existence.

"and I felt that this one birth of mine

Is woven in the web of many births of many changing forms

And like the sunlight composed of varied rays

Every appearance in its unity

Is blended with countless invisible other ones."36.

The varied rays blended with countless invisible other ones grow naturally in this period. It is an act of meditation, grave and sweet.

Arogva has a pervasive pathos, in which the love of the earth and every common sight, sound and touch blends with premonition of the Beyond. But as we all know, not only in Gitanjali or Arogva. Rabindranath's first mystical experiences were realized in Evening Songs followed by Morning Songs. The former was composed in a period when the outward life failed to harmonize with the inner. So the dweller within felt hurt, tormented. His agony manifests itself in the outer consciousness. Closely following Evening Songs came Morning Songs. The poems in this volume are the outcome of what one may call the poet's first mystical experience. To quote Tagore:

"I felt sure that some Being who comprehended me and my world was seeking his best expression in all my experiences, uniting them into an ever-widening individuality which is a spiritual work of art. To this Being I was responsible; for the creation in me is His as well as mine. It may be that it was the same creative mind that is shaping the universe to its eternal idea, but in me as a person it had one of its special centres of a personal relationship growing into a deepening consciousness. It gave me a great joy to feel in my life the mystery of a meeting of the two in a creative comradeship. I felt that I had found my religion at last, the religion of Man, in which the infinite became defined in humanity and came close to me so as to need my love and my cooperation."<sup>37</sup>

Tagore calls this supreme reality his jeevandevata the Lord of his life. This conception of the Lord plays a significant role throughout his poetry. Similarly, Sri Aurobindo also shows how a larger self abides within us, by ourselves unseen, how it charges human life with earth's destiny. In this very respect, the influence of the Upanishads on both the minds is noticeable. However, for Tagore, there was also the influence of the village singers of India. Even today t he unlettered village rustics, both Muslim and Hindu have a simple and direct concept of God, whom they call Nara-narayana ox God-man. It was under the influence these singers as well as that of the Upanishads relating to the concept of One God, One Law, and One Prime Element that Tagore sought for the Supreme Personality in his poetry. Tagore's Hibbert Lectures, delivered at Oxford, in 1930 give us an account of his spiritual development under the title: The Religion of Man.

Tagore's religion is the religion of a poet and not of a scholar or scientist. His religion does not come from his knowledge of the world as a phenomenon that revolves and rotates. Rather to the universe, natural and human, his mind is tinglingly conscious. His religion is that of an artist, trying to explain the relationship between the finite and the Infinite. For him, life is an incessant explosion of freedom.

The truth of such life cannot be the subject of science or metaphysics alone. Realization of this very truth comes to Tagore through his vision, vision of the universe as a perennial source of joy. To him, the vision of the world is the vision of Paradise.

Let us have a close look at both the poets. In Sri Aurobindo we have observed Vedantist unification, whereas in Tagore the Upanishadic monism and the Vaishnava dualism, maintaining the separateness of the self, the one and all, you and me, the finite and the Infinite, God and man. In Tagore one can notice the influence of the Bengal Bauls and the impact of Sufism. But is there any difference between these ideas while each of them tunes the same — Almighty is wooing each individual and He is also the ground reality of all creations? In fact, the entire poetic life of Tagore as well as Aurobindo is a testimony of a longing for what Carl Sandburg named "the endless yearnings of man for the Beyond". But Tagore was rather a wanderer and the glory of going on has always been an important aspect of his life, serenity all the more surprising.

"If they turn away leaving you to cross the wilderness O thou evil luck,

Trample the thorns under thy feet,

And along the blood-stained track walk alone."38.

To the aspect of Tagore's Jeevandevata, one may refer to Urvasi, the poem that crowns the Sadhana period of his poetic life.

"Thou art not Mother, art not Daughter,

Art not Bride, Thou beautiful comely One,

O Dweller in Paradise, Urvasi!"39.

Edward Thompson has admitted, "No translation could bring out the richness of the mood, or give any hint of the music". But the poem has something more to offer. Urvasi, the protagonist is not merely the heavenly dancer of the Indian myth. She is the cosmic spirit of life, in the

mazes of an eternal dance. She is Beauty dissociated from all human relationships, the world-chanting love which moves the sun and other stars. This long poem has an extraordinary passion and adoration — a dazzling picture of the Goddess within and without. Urvasi is Tagore's Ideal Beauty; True love, Life and the essence of existence. But the love-lorn poet does not lose his separateness, he is never fused with his Urvasi. Rather he never forgets that Urvasi is a dweller of Paradise. This dualism is always present in Tagore's poetry — the interplay of the two — thou and me, one and all, the limited and the limitless. Gitanjali begins with the pleasure of the Infinite for He has made the finite endless. As Tagore sings:

"Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure.

This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again,

And fillest it ever with fresh life"40.

Gitanjali is an eternal duet, between the finite and the Infinite, God and human soul. This duality pervades in Tagore's nature too. On the one hand, he has his longing for peace, quiet contemplation and desire to realize God in the serenity of Nature. On the other hand, there is the restless urge to action and to battle against the injustice of man towards man. Out of this duality, springs out Tagore's poetry. Tagore never preaches about withdrawal from the world. Like Sri Aurobindo or Kabir, he too scorns the ascetic who seeks his God in the flight from life. Rather like a true prophet, he preaches:

"Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads Whom dost thou worship In this dark lonely corner ... with doors all shut? Open thy eyes and see God is not before thee."41.

In the Upanishads, Brahman is described as "Atmada", the Giver of Himself, and as Balada, Giver of Strength. In Sadhana, Lectures delivered at Harvard

University (1913), Tagore gives us a poet's interpretation of the Upanishadic verses. Tagore dedicated this volume to the Welsh poet, Ernest Rhys (founder and first editor of Everyman's Library), who gives the following testimony:

In Tagore you feel the humanity that was in the Son of Man, comforting the children of light in their awe of the Eternal. In him, the spirit of the Upanishads reaches the same threshold. It was natural that out of a living belief in the beauty of the earth, in the sun and the stars, and in the water below, there should grow a living faith such as Rabindranath Tagore has expounded in Sadhana.<sup>42</sup>.

## And finally this last avowal of Tagore:

"...if ever I have somehow come to realize God, if the vision of God has ever been granted to me, I must have received the vision through this world, through man, through trees and birds and beasts, the dust and the soil."<sup>43</sup>.

In Naivedva, Tagore offers us the common joy, the common happiness that wakes at everyman's door. He shows delight as a lotus floating in the infinite sky, blooming everywhere. The characteristic beauty of Naivedva is its atmosphere. The atmosphere is that of the life we live, every day and all our days, common yet filled with God, in Whom we live, move, and have our being. It is by the path of his daily life that the Invisible has touched him; he knows no other way.

This is the mystic state of Tagore. The closest approach to his mystic state is that sense of wonder that gives a child his right of entry into the treasure house of mystery that is located in the heart of this universe. Tagore himself tells us that his vision of the Eternal is free from any theological preoccupation with evil and sin. Rather it springs out of the beauty and harmony he saw in Nature and in the relationship of the individual with the universe. This vision was supported by no system of logic but by the experience of the eternal assurance of our spiritual relationships to reality, which the inner spirit of things evoked by the manifestation of physical and moral beauty.

Vision is called the science of the self, which, according to the Upanishads is an illumined perception being direct and immediate consciousness of reality. This illumination has nothing in common with normal apprehension. Rather it seems to reverse the order of usual cognizance. In this elated state — father is not father, the Vedas not Vedas, gods not gods. For attaining this gnosis, the mind needs to be completely divested of the sensible.

But to Rabindranath, any denial of the sensible world was an anathema, because it contradicted his optimistic doctrines. Revenge of Nature is very explicit in its arguments against the denial of natural life. And for him, deliverance was not in renunciation. The same view is also reaffirmed in his *Sharps and Flats*. Tagore's views on esoteric experience and its place in his outlook is beyond doubt. Yet there had been at least one vision in his life, the one he described in the *Reminiscences* and *The Religion of Man*. These two works have relevance to Tagore's spiritual belief. No doubt, the vision is definitely of the type known as mystic. The exaltation of feeling that followed, the depth of his impression and the noticeable transformation in outlook are effects that go with revelation.

The naturalistic bias of this vision distinguishes it from the traditional vision. In fact, it stands apart from the usual mystic thought, ancient and modern. For instance, it is in sharp contrast to Ramakrishna Paramahansa's ecstasy at the very sight of wild swans in the sky which brought about a typical trance in which objective consciousness was lost, whereas in Tagore it was considerably sharpened.

Like Shelley, Tennyson or Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath envisaged in his poetry the progress of the soul in its journey through life and death. In his eyes, the apprehension of beauty amounted to the experience of the infinite. This is no divine afflatus, it is only poetic ecstasy. Like Aurobindo, Tagore also emphasizes the role of a

deeper intuitive poetry that will help us in having a vision of inmost things, Divinity of Man. A long note in Bharati shows Tagore's opinion in this regard:

"....the manifestation of the infinite in natural beauty is not an abstraction. Rather it is directly apprehensible but only to the poetic mind."44.

### In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

"The voice of the poet will reveal to us ...the God who is the self of all things and beings, the Life of the universe, the Divinity in man,...all the emotion and the delight of the endeavour of the human soul to discover the touch and joy of that Divinity within him in whom he feels the mighty founts of his own being and life and effort and his fullness and unity with all cosmic experience and with Nature and with all creatures."45.

Each of the seer poets, Tagore and Aurobindo, each in his own way, conscious of and responsive to the workings of the higher forces. Both aim at a luminous and joyful fusion between the spirit and life. It is this unifying vision that joins the two. But whereas Aurobindo was more of a philosopher than a romanticist, Tagore was more of a romanticist than a philosopher. Whereas Tagore's poetry springs out of his vision, not out of his knowledge, Aurobindo's poetry is derived chiefly from knowledge and yogic experience. No doubt, both of them are visionaries and can be ranked among the world's foremost mystic seers and poets. Moreover, though Aurobindo has never argued out any particular system, his is critical interpretation of the totality of human experience and life in the light of profoundest mystic realization. But Rabindranath was hardly a critic.

Tagore is, indeed, an ideal psalmist of the emotions that are not uncontrolled and rendered a confusing flame and harmoniously tinged by a calm shadow of the overhead. This overhead plane always remains far and faint in his poetry, whereas in Aurobindo it is intimately known.

As mystics, none of them is an escapist. They give

equal importance to spirit and matter. It is neither the complete denial of the phenomenal life nor the complete surrender to the spiritual life. Rather there is always interplay between the two — spirit and matter, light and dark, love and death, the individual and the eternal.

But Tagore is a quasi-mystic, more romantic than spiritual, a nomad of the Beyond, whereas Aurobindo is a true mystic, an integral yogi who set forth a series of psychological disciplines. Tagore never tries to interpret his vision in terms of reason. Neither he turns the current of itself towards the progress goal superhumanhood, nor does he fashion any means to attain that goal. Aesthetically too, one can notice some difference between the two poets. What Tagore thinks about aesthetics is the product of his vision and not that of his knowledge or academic learning. The thrust is that of temperament and not in the tradition of a sense that art is an adjustment in the sacred world of archetypes. On the contrary, Aurobindo is a man of spiritual disciplines as he shows us in The Life Divine. His aesthetics is that of a creative harmony, right in the direction of human experiences. A realizing of our souls in the cosmic wideness is the essence of Aurobindo's aesthetics.

However, one must admit that both the masters have spoken of the face of Truth, regard the world as real, as real as God Himself, a purposive creation of God. Like hymns, they whisper in our ears that we are on earth to manifest the divinity of God in the life of the world, to raise our life to its optimum value, and that our terrestrial life should grow into the fullness and rich splendour of the Divine.

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# A Few Aspects of Indian Poetics or Aesthetics and *Gitanjali*

D. Padmarani

'Rasa' is one of the greatest contributions that India has made to the world literature. Indian poetics is believed to have its roots in the Vedas and the word rasa, which forms the main concept of Indian poetics or aesthetics has been used in the Rig Veda in the sense of the sap or flavour of the honey of all things and as the essential property and virtue of the rasvat'. Anandavardhana (9th century) in his Dhvanyaloka observed that the karuna rasa of the epic Ramayana has made the critics and poets to look upon Valmiki as the Father of the theory of Rasa.

Bharata (First century B.C.), the prime exponent of the rasa theory was firm in his view that rasa was the vital essence of poetry. Rasa is so called because it is relished; the work of art having rasa is Rasavat, the lover of rasa, who enjoys it is the Rasika and tasting of rasa that is aesthetic contemplation of relishing is Rasaswadana. Rasa or flavour is not an objective, concrete thing. It is subjective and depends on the poet's capacity to rouse a corresponding deep response from a receptive and sensitive reader (Sahrdaya).

Bharata's theory of rasa is primarily based on the psychological aspect of a human being that there are certain primary emotions which are innate in man and which lie dormant in the subconscious or unconscious strata of his psyche. As these primary emotions are universal and permanent in all human beings, they can be called *sthayibhavas* or dominant emotions. These *sthayibhavas* attain relishability (*rasatva*) only when they are aesthetically excited through an artistic means. A dramatic composition or a poem or any work of art seeks to build up a particular dominant emotion through a variety of factors. When this dominant emotion is roused, the reader or spectator (*rasika*) feels aesthetic pleasure and relishes the rasa.

Bharata in his Natyasastra defines rasa as Vibhava anubhava vyabhichari Samyogat nishpattihi'. Aesthetic emotion or Rasa in the rasika is said to be effectively caused through the operations of Vibhavas (determinants) anubhavas (consequents) vyabhichari bhavas or sanchari bhavas (Accessory emotions). The vibhavas are the objective constituents like the plot, the theme, the situations, the aesthetic problem and others. The anubhavas are the bodily gestures, expressions, words and the vyabhichari bhavas or moods are the secondary or transient emotions and sensations which feed the sthayibhavas, which evoke the corresponding rasa in the heart of the Rasika. If a literary work should evoke rasa, one of the permanent or dominant emotions or sthayins must form a master motif to which all other expressions of emotions are subordinate.

Sri R. P. Sharma in his 'Insights into Literary theory' says that just as the spices and other ingredients give a delicious flavour to the food, similarly these different feelings, emotions, these *vyabhichari bhavas* together produce a dominant emotion which in its fully developed form achieves relishability (*Rasatva*).

Again just as the mixing and blending of different ingredients yields a drink with a flavour that is altogether different from any of the ingredients, likewise, the proper combination of vibhavas, anubhavas and sancharibhavas produce a dominant emotion (sthayibhava) which evokes aesthetic pleasure-rasa. The dominant emotion may not be a simple aesthetic emotion, it may be complex, a synthesis of diverse elements in which their varied nature lose their individual identities and coalesce to form a new united whole. 'Such a concept of the aesthetic emotion was perhaps implied by Coleridge when he claimed that imagination had the power of 'reducing multitude into a unity of effect, and modifying a series of thoughts by some one predominant thought or feeling'. When this unified new whole is developed to a climax, it becomes maximally pleasurable to the audience; such a pleasurable experience is Rasa: Asvadya manaivat<sup>2</sup>.

Many attempts by scholars to arrive at a convincing explanation of this Rasa led to a variety of theories of Rasa. Bhatta Lottata's (early ninth century) Rasa as production (Utpatt) Sri Sankuka's (middle of ninth century) Rasa as Inference (Anumati) Bhatta Nayaka's (tenth century) Rasa as Enjoyment (Bhoga) and Abhinavagupata's (end of ninth and beginning of eleventh century) Rasa as Manifestation (Abhivyaktij are the main theories, but the first three had received many objections. Abhinavagupta's theory of rasa has not yet been supplanted by any other view. His Abhinavabharati is a comprehensive commentary on Bharata's Natyasastra.

Abhinavagupta made use of nine heads under which rasa could be studied, which are the sthayibhavas. These sthayins are mutually exclusive and together exhaustive, and lay inert in the heart. When a stimulus in the form of Vibhavas, Anubhavas and Vyabhichari bhavas activates them, they spring up as the corresponding rasas. A poet conveys these or any one of these emotions through his

poetry by using objective correlatives like images, situations and suggestions. When the reader comes into contact, with these, the corresponding sthayin within him is evoked and he relishes the corresponding rasa. The nine sthayins and the corresponding rasas to be evoked as expressed by Abhinavagupta are Rati evoking the rasa—Srinagara (love), Hasa — Hasya (comic), Soka — Karuna (Pathos), Krodha — Roudra (anger), utsaha-vira (heroic), bhaya — bhayanaka (fear), Jugupsa — Bibhatsa (disgust) Vismaya — Adbhuta (wonder) and Sama evoking the rasa Santa (serenity).

But Abhinavagupta has not mentioned 'Bhakti' as rasa. But Madhusudhana Saraswati, an eminent scholar, in his 'Bhakti Rasayanam' named Bhakti as another Rasa. He stated that Bhakti is the prime or important rasa from which Sringara and other rasas have risen. Rupa Goswami, an ardent devotee of Lord Krishna, in his 'Ujvala' Neelamani' has stated 'Madhurarasam'. He too, basing on his love for Krishna evoked Bhakti rasa. Though most of the former Indian aestheticians did not consider Bhakti as a Rasa, it is generally accepted that Bhakti is a rasa.

Rabindranath Tagore's 'Gitanjali' is a perennial source of joy and inspiration to the lovers of God. The dominant rasa that gushes out from the heart of any reader of Gitanjali is the divine love for Him. Tagore's ardent devotion for Him permeates Gitanjali which could move a Rasika like W.B. Yeats to tears who said, 'I have often had to close it lest some stranger would see how much it moved me" (Introduction to Gitanjali by W. B. Yeats).

The sthayibhava or the dominant emotion in the reader of Gitanjali could be the dormant tinge of love for Him. This sthayibhava can become a rasa of bhakti through the evocation of Vibhavas, anubhavas and Vyabhichari bhavas that are present in the poem. The Vibhava in Gitanjali is the poet himself. His alambana is God. The poet's ardent love for Him is the stimulant for the

delineation of Bhakti rasa. The words that express the various nuances of feelings, ideas, suggestions etc are anubhavas. In Gitanjali, the diction is simple, apt, suggestive and pregnant with emotional overtones. A very deceptively simple and interesting feature in Gitanjali is that Tagore uses the archaic expressions like Thee, Thou etc for God to give the flavour of sublimity to the poem. Yet Tagore never uses a capital for the first letter of the pronouns referring to God. This simple deliberate deviation from the normal practice perhaps may have sprung out of the poet's endearment with God, who is not remote and awe-inspiring to him. Thus the words used render simplicity and sublimity to the poems. With extraordinary ease, Tagore capriciously blends noble sentiments, lofty ideas, nectarean feelings, beautiful images into the delicate network of rhythmic prose-poems through apparently simple but powerful words. Through these anubhavas, he evokes love sentiment in the readers. The dominant Rasa that is experienced by any reader of Gitanjali is the divine love for the Lord-Bhakti.

The Vyabhichari bhavas or the Sanchari bhavas which feed the main emotion i.e. the bhakti rasa are varied but these converge into the main sentiment. Like a butterfly that falls on different flowers of varied hues and fragrances, Tagore moves from one issue to the other. But what he gathers from all the flowers is nothing but honey which he transforms into the nectar of love for God. Whatever may be the issue that is touched, it ultimately leads to God. The Bhakti rasa is manifested in Gitanjali in many ramifications. It could be Sringara rasa or erotic sentiment with its two factors the vipralamba (the separation from God) and sambhoga (Union with the lover). The poet oscillates between these self-gratifying cadences and his fervent emotional upheavals found apt illustration through various poems.

He feels depressed because

'Away from the sight of thy face my

heart knows no rest nor respite'... (Git 5)

The poet longs to join the song of his beloved Lord but in vain

'My heart longs to join in thy song,

but vainly struggles for a voice.'... [3]

Tagore *laments* that his love for the poor and the downtrodden may not be adequate so as to reach God. His *depression and anxiety* are revealed when he says,

'My heart can never find way to where thou keepest company with the companionless among the poorest, the lowliest and the lost'... [10]

The poet is apprehensive of his meeting with Him. He is very anxious to meet his lord.

I live in the hope of meeting him,

but this meeting is not yet'.... [13]

His innate yearning is evident in the following lines:

'if thou showest me not thy face, if thou

leavest me wholly aside, I know not how

I am to pass these long, rainy hours'.... [18]

But when the Lord actually comes and sits by him, he is asleep. He curses himself for his sleep. He becomes impatient of himself as he misses Him narrowly. He laments thus:

He came and sat by my side but I woke not

What a cursed sleep it was, O miserable me!

Ah, why do I ever miss his sight whose

breath touches my sleep'...[26]

He moans that death is better than this condition.

'...is such thy fate, my heart?

An, death were better by far for thee!'... [27]

But his sorrowful mood changes. There is hope in his heart. In his vagrant moods, he considers himself a woman, who is in deep love with God. The erotic sentiment comes to the forefront. The poet expresses his emotion in the Sambhoga (Union) with the Lord.

The lover *dreams* of her beloved, who comes to her at night with a harp in his hands. A reference to Lord Krishna can be found here as the Lord plays on the harp.

'He came when the night was still, he had his harp in his hands, and my dreams are resonant with its melodies'...[26]

The poet now becomes assured of God's love. The poet lover arrogantly ask her beloved. What he would do without her.

'O thou lord of all heavens, where would be thy love if I were not? 'And for this thy love Loses itself in the love of they lover, and there art thou seen in the perfect union of two'......[56]

The perfect union of the two implies the union of Atman with the Paramatma. The poet feels extreme faith in the benevolence of God which brings him unbounded joy. In his optimistic fervour he says confidently,

The morning will surely come, the darkness will vanish and thy voice pour down in golden streams breaking through the sky .....[19] 'And when old words die out on the tongue, new melodies break forth from the heart;.....[37] 'Have you not heard his silent steps? He comes, comes, ever comes'......[45]

The poet sees dazzling light in this excited, exaulted mood,

'Ah, the light dances my darling, at the centre of my life, The light strikes, my darling, the chords of my love;....[57]

He sings the glories of God in his *intoxicated mood* and treats God as his friend,

'Drunk with the joy of singing I forget myself and call thee friend who art my Lord'.....[2]

The poet feels contentment having full trust on his Lord

'In the night of weariness let me give myself up to sleep without struggle, resting my trust upon thee'...[25]

He advises us to:

'Leave all thy burdens on his hands who can bear all, and never look behind in regret'.... [9]

His Vyabhichari moods make the poet find God in the entire gamut of *Nature*.

The poet further sees God as the *Master poet* and *Musician*,

'O Master poet, I have sat down at thy feet only let me make my life simple and straight, like a flute of feed for thee to fill with music'...... [7]

The poet becomes philosophical and comments about life and *laments* about his own shortcomings:

All things rush on, they stop not, they look not Behind, no power can hold them back, they rush on ...' [70] The shroud that covers me is a shroud of dust and death; I hate it, yet hug it with love'........... [28] He turns to God with a *prayer* to root out his evil, to redeem his country and people.

This is my prayer to thee, my lord-strike, strike at the root of penury in my heart..... [36)

In his Vyabhichari bhavas, he treats God as a *Mother*, Mother, I shall weave a chain of pearls for thy neck with my tears of sorrow......[83]

He address death -

One final glance from thine eyes and Life will be ever thine own...... [91]

Sometimes he treats God as his *comrade* and sometimes he feels *reverential love* for him.

In the early morning thou wouldst call me from my sleep like my own comrade and lead me running from glade to glade...... [97]

I know thee as my God and stand apart — I do not know thee as my own and come closer. I know thee

as my father and bow before thy feet — I do not grasp thy hand as my friend's...... [77]

Thus all these *vyabhichari bhavas*, the varied love sentiments gather together their diverse strains into a single dominant rasa that is Tagore's evocation of *Bhakti rasa* as expressed by him in his own words:

'Let all my songs gather together their diverse strains into a single current and flow to a sea of silence in one salutation to thee......; [103]

Another important aspect of Indian Aesthetics vying with Rasa for equal footing is 'Dhvani' or suggestion theory put forward by Anandavardhana and presented in Dhvanyaloka which appeared in 902. He postulated suggestiveness to be the vital essence of poetry, in which the conventional or surface meaning becomes secondary which suggests the intended or implied primary meaning. Dhvani is therefore the link between the words on the page

on the one hand and the vision or experience on the other. It is called 'vyanjana', more appropriately rendered as the significative power of words. The unexpected or the suggested sense to which the name Dhvani is applied when it is pre-dominant is now definitely posed as the soul (Atman) of poetry. Dhvani has three different aspects (1) Vastu Dhvani, when a distinct idea or thought is suggested (2) Alankara Dhvani when the suggested sense is figurative and (3) Rasadhvani when the suggested may be a mood or a feeling. Of the three 'Rasadhvani' is given utmost importance. The other two types also ultimately resolve themselves into the suggestion of feeling. Thus the Dhvani tradition represents one of the major triumphs of Indian Aesthetics.

According to this aspect, Gitanjali has many poems pregnant with suggestion or *Dhvani*. For example the poem:

'Ornaments would mar our union; they would come between thee and me; their jingling would drown thy whispers'....... [7]

Isolated from the context, the lines suggest an erotic sentiment in which the lover says that ornaments are a hindrance for their union, the jingling of the ornaments would make love whispers inaudible. Contextual meaning is that the song or poem of the poet, if it has lot of embellishments loses its natural melody, the essence of which would be submerged in the flood of adornments. Yet another suggested meaning could be that the material possessions and the attachments would be impediments for the soul or atma to reach the universal soul or paramatma. Thus the suggested or underlying sense dominates the expressed sense and is the essence of the poem.

Another example is

"The flowers have been woven and the garland is ready for the bridegroom.

After the wedding the bride shall leave her home and meet her Lord alone in the solitude of night'...... [91]

The Dhvani or suggested meaning is very deep here. The bridegroom is God. The bride is the poet and the wedding is death. The bride is actually the soul and after death the released soul will join the universal soul. The Finite will join the Infinite. The Jeevatma unites with the paramatma. Thus in the majority of poems in Gitanjali Dhvani or suggestion is manifest as the suggested sense predominates the apparent sense.

Anandavardhana says that the greatest secret of Rasa is 'Aucitya' or propriety or decorum, the lack of which is Anaucitya. Ksemendra's book 'Auchitya Vichar Charcha appeared in 1050. According to these aestheticians Aucitya is harmony, it is proportion between the whole and parts and between the chief and the subsidiary. Rasa dosas (flaws) called virasa (that is flowing in an irrelevant or contradictory sentiment into the current of main rasa) mars the effect of the poem. The diction should also correspond with the mood and the atmosphere of the Guna and Rasa. For example in the delineation of Sringara or Karuna Rasa soft, tender words should be preferred to bring out sweet or pathetic emotional effect. Harsh, jarring words, if used would mar the effect. Anandavardhana says if there is one word which is Nirasa (devoid of Rasa) it is the greatest literary flaw, the Anaucitya. In Gitanjali there is a continuous flow of thought with lucidity of language. The diction, alankaras, the images and the like are unified in bringing out the Bhakti rasa. Nowhere is found Anaucitya or Virasa.

Apart from Rasa theory, a second theory of poetics in India was the theory of alankara formulated by Bhamaha (700-750 AD). "Bharata's emphasis was on the emotive and imaginative content of the poetry and not its form. But Bhamaha shifted the emphasis from content to form and considered alankaras, i.e. ornamentation achieved through

a figurative use of language, to be a defining feature of poetry' (P 18). In his opinion, alankaras not just add beauty to poetry but they produce it, making it distinct from varta day-to-day use of language. Thus Anandavardhana, Bhamudatha and Bhattanayaka emphasized the emotive and imaginative content of poetry whereas Bhahama, Kuntaka and others gave importance to form. But Anandavardhana in Chapter-II of Dhvanyaloka says that though Alankaras are only the Sarira, the outer body, they can be made the Sariri the soul sometimes i.e. when Alankaras are not expressed but suggested, when simile, contrast and others are richly embedded in an utterance, and in the coming together of words in an expression, Alankara flashes forth' 3. The clever use of Alankaras thus will be conducive to the realization of the chief object namely Bhava and Rasa.

In Gitanjali, the alankaras are not just embellishments but they aid in bringing out the intensive feelings and ideas of the poet. Though Gitanjali is replete with different Alankaras, a couple of illustrations are shown as examples in which the Alankaras are made use of very artistically by the renowned poet. Tagore attains lyrical excellence and romantic supremacy through using utpreksha Alankara or Poetic Fancy. (He combines the scientific truth of sunlight evaporating water to form clouds with his spiritual devotion and love for God). He says:

"Thy sunbeam comes upon this earth of mine with arms outstretched and stands at my door the livelong day to carry back to thy feet clouds made of my tears and sighs and songs"...
[68]

He used *Vyathireka alankara* to highlight his thoughts. He knows that the attraction and the pull of mundane things is merely that of dust and death. Yet he is unable to tear away from it. He expresses this conflict by using *Vyathireka Alankara*.

The shroud that covers me is a shroud of dust and death; I hate it, yet hug it in love'...... [28]

The lover expects to find rose wreath on the lover's bed, she finds a sword instead. The fact of finding the sword is expressed very artistically creating suspense in the reader by using the same alankara.

'Ah me, what is it I find? ...... It is no flower, no spices, no vase of perfumed water. It is thy mighty sword ..."..[52]

Not only these, Tagore used many Alankaras which aid in the delineation of Bhakti rasa.

Style (Vrtti) according to Indian aesthetics is of four types — "Verbal" (bharati), the Grand (Sattvati), the Graceful (Kaisiki) and the Energetic (arabhati). These can be translated as Eloquent, Grandiose, Gay and Horrific. As there is a continuous flow of thought with lucidity of language, the style of 'Gitanjali' seems Eloquent.

Intonation or Kaku also is crucial in the accomplishment of Rasa. The intonation or kaku suggests subtle shades of meaning, cognitive or emotive. Intonation brings to light all manners of emotional attitudes irony, pathos, argument and so forth. Kaku is of two main types viz (1) Sakanksa may express an objection or disapproval, doubt or uncertainty or a question. The Nirakanksa may express a statement, or an answer or a decision. Tagore made the use of prasnagarbha kaku, a division of the Sankanksa Kaku to rouse the curiosity of the reader. The poet's intense frustration and disappointment at missing the sight of his beloved is conveyed thus by this kaku:

'Alas, why are my nights all thus lost?

Ah, why do I ever miss his sight whose breath touches my sleep?'.................... [26]

By using the question form again, the poet in a very few words very dexterously expresses the excitement, the clamour, the anxiety, the animated agitation of the villagers when they unexpectedly encounter the king.

The king has come — but where are lights, Where are wreaths? Where is the throne to seat him?

Oh, shame! Oh utter shame! where is the hall, the decorations?....[51]

Mention must be made about *Drukkonam* or Point of view in Gitanjali which is a little peculiar. There is mostly first person narration and the person addressed to is God. But the person addressed to changes now and then. For example in one poem, the poet addresses a mother and advises her not to dress the child in the good robes.

'Mother, it is no gain, thy bondage of finery, if it keeps one shut off from the healthful dust of the earth'....[8]

In the very next stanza, he addresses a common man, 'O Fool, to try to carry thyself upon thy own shoulders! O beggar, to come to beg at thy own door!"

In the immediate stanza, he addresses God When I try to bow to thee, my obeisance cannot reach down to the depth....'..... [10]

Many other instances are evident in 'Gitanjali' in which this change of address is seen. This might have confused the readers had the poet been some other one and not Tagore.

Thus in the Indian aesthetic point of view Gitanjali can be considered the greatest poetry ever attempted by an Indian poet writing in English.

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## 4

# Some Poems of Tagore's Gitanjali: A Critical Appraisal

Dr. S.K. Paul

Rabindranath Tagore, who died in 1941 at the age of eighty, is a towering figure in the millennium-old literature of Bengal. Anyone who becomes familiar with this large and flourishing tradition will be impressed by the power of Tagore's presence in Bangladesh and in India. His poetry as well as his novels, short stories, and essays are very widely read, and the songs he composed reverberate around the eastern part of India and throughout Bangladesh.

In contrast, in the rest of the world, especially in Europe and America, the excitement that Tagore's writings created in the early years of the twentieth century has largely vanished. The enthusiasm with which his work was once greeted was quite remarkable. *Gitanjali*, a selection of his poetry for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913, was published in English translation in London in March of that year, and had been reprinted ten times by November, when the award was announced. But he is not much read now in the West, and already by 1937, Graham Greene was able to say: "As for Rabindranath Tagore, I cannot believe that anyone but Mr. Yeats can still take his poems very seriously."

The contrast between Tagore's commanding presence in Bengali literature and culture, and his near-total eclipse in the rest of the world, is perhaps less interesting than the distinction between the view of Tagore as a deeply relevant and many-sided contemporary thinker in Bangladesh and India, and his image in the West as a repetitive and remote spiritualist. Graham Greene had, in fact, gone on to explain that he associated Tagore "with what Chesterton calls the bright pebbly eyes' of the Theosophists." Certainly, an air of played some part in the "selling" of mysticism Rabindranath Tagore to the West by Yeats, Ezra Pound, and his other early champions. Even Anna Akhmatova, one of Tagore's few later admirers (who translated his poems into Russian in the mid-1960s), talks of "that mighty How of poetry which takes its strength from Hinduism as from the Ganges, and is called Rabindranath Tagore."

Rabindranath did come from a Hindu family—one of the landed gentry who owned estates mostly in what is now Bangladesh. But whatever wisdom there might be in Akhmatova's invoking of Hinduism and the Ganges, it did not prevent the largely Muslim citizens of Bangladesh from having a deep sense of identity with Tagore and his ideas. Nor did it stop the newly independent Bangladesh from choosing one of Tagore's songs—the "Amar Sonar Bangla" which means "my golden Bengal"—as its national anthem. This must be very confusing to those who see the contemporary world as a "clash of civilizations"—with "the Muslim civilization," "the Hindu civilization," and "the Western civilization," each forcefully confronting the others. They would also be confused by Rabindranath Tagore's own description of his Bengali family as the product of "a confluence of three cultures: Hindu, Mohammedan, and British".

Rabindranath's grandfather, Dwarkanath, was well known for his command of Arabic and Persian, and Rabindranath grew up in a family atmosphere in which a deep knowledge of Sanskrit and ancient Hindu texts was combined with an understanding of Islamic traditions as well as Persian literature. It is not so much that Rabindranath tried to produce—or had an interest in producing—a "synthesis" of the different religions (as the great Moghul emperor Akbar tried hard to achieve) as that his outlook was persistently non-sectarian, and his writings—some two hundred books—show the influence of different parts of the Indian cultural background as well as of the rest of the world.

Most of his work was written at Santiniketan (Abode of Peace), the small town that grew around the school he founded in Bengal in 1901, and he not only conceived there an imaginative and innovative system of education, but through his writings and his influence on students and teachers, he was able to use the school as a base from which he could take a major part in India's social, political, and cultural movements.

The profoundly original writer, whose elegant prose and magical poetry Bengali readers know well, is not the sermonizing spiritual guru admired—and then rejected—in London. Tagore was not only an immensely versatile poet; he was also a great short story writer, novelist, playwright, essayist, and composer of songs, as well as a talented painter whose pictures, with their mixture representation and abstraction, are only now beginning to receive the acclaim that they have long deserved. His essays, moreover, ranged over literature, politics, culture, social change, religious beliefs, philosophical analysis, international relations, and much else. The coincidence of the fiftieth, anniversary of Indian independence with the publication of a selection of Tagore's letters by Cambridge University Press<sup>3</sup>, brought Tagore's ideas and reflections to the fore, which makes it important to examine what kind of leadership in thought and understanding he provided in the Indian subcontinent in the first half of this century.

Since Rabindranath Tagore and Mohandas Gandhi were two leading Indian thinkers in the twentieth century, many commentators have tried to compare their ideas. On learning of Rabindranath's death, Jawaharlal Nehru, then incarcerated in a British jail in India, wrote in his prison diary for August 7, 1941:

"Gandhi and Tagore. Two types entirely different from each other, and yet both of them typical of India, both in the long line of India's great men ... It is not so much because of any single virtue but because of the *tout ensemble*, that I felt that among the world's great men today Gandhi and Tagore were supreme as human beings. What good fortune for me to have come into close contact with them."

Romain Rolland was fascinated by the contrast between them, and when he completed his book on Gandhi, he wrote to an Indian academic, in March 1923: "I have finished my Gandhi, in which I pay tribute to your two great river-like souls, overflowing with divine spirit, Tagore and Gandhi." The following month, he recorded in his diary an account of some of the differences between Gandhi and Tagore written by Reverend C.F. Andrews, the English clergyman and public activist who was a close friend of both men and whose important role in Gandhi's life in South Africa as well as India is well portrayed in Richard Attenborough's film Gandhi [1982]). Andrews described to Rolland a discussion between Tagore and Gandhi, at which he was present, on subjects that divided them:

"The first subject of discussion was idols; Gandhi defended them, believing the masses incapable of raising themselves immediately to abstract ideas. Tagore cannot bear to see the people eternally treated as a child. Gandhi quoted the great things achieved in Europe by the flag as an idol; Tagore found it easy to object, but Gandhi held his ground, contrasting European flags bearing eagles, etc., with his own, on which he has put a spinning wheel. The second point of discussion was nationalism, which Gandhi defended. He said that one must go through nationalism to reach internationalism, in the same way that one must go through war to reach peace.

Tagore greatly admired Gandhi but he had many disagreements with him on a variety of subjects, including nationalism, patriotism, the importance of cultural exchange, the role of rationality and of science, and the nature of economic and social development. These differences, I shall argue, have a clear and consistent pattern, with Tagore pressing for more room for reasoning, and for a less traditionalist view, a greater interest in the rest of the world, and more respect for science and for objectivity generally.

Rabindranath knew that he could not have given India the political leadership that Gandhi provided, and he was never stingy in his praise for what Gandhi did for the nation (it was, in fact, Tagore who popularized the term "Mahatma"—great soul—as a description of Gandhi). And yet each remained deeply critical of many things that the other stood for. That Mahatma Gandhi has received incomparably more attention outside India and also within much of India itself makes it important to understand "Tagore's side" of the Gandhi-Tagore debates.

In his prison diary, Nehru wrote: "Perhaps it is as well that [Tagore] died now and did not see the many horrors that are likely to descend in increasing measure on the world and on India. He had seen enough and he was infinitely sad and unhappy." Toward the end of his life, Tagore was indeed becoming discouraged about the state of India, especially as its normal burden of problems, such as hunger and poverty, was being supplemented by politically organized incitement to "communal" violence between Hindus and Muslims. This conflict would lead in 1947, six years after Tagore's death, to the widespread killing that took place during partition; but there was much gore already during his declining days. In December 1939, he wrote to his friend Leonard Elmhirst, the English philanthropist and social reformer who had worked closely with him on rural reconstruction in India (and who had

gone on to found the Dartington Hall Trust in England and a progressive school at Dartington that explicitly invoked Rabindranath's educational ideals).

"It does not need a defeatist to feel deeply anxious about the future of millions who, with all their innate culture and their peaceful traditions are being simultaneously subjected to hunger, disease, exploitations foreign and indigenous, and the seething discontents of communalism." How would Tagore have viewed the India of today? Would he see progress there, or wasted opportunity, perhaps even a betrayal of its promise and conviction? And, on a wider subject, how would he react to the spread of cultural separatism in the contemporary world?

Given the vast range of his creative achievements, perhaps the most astonishing aspect of the image of Tagore in the West is its narrowness; he is recurrently viewed as "the great mystic from the East," an image with a putative message for the West, which some would welcome, others dislike, and still others find deeply boring. To a great extent this Tagore was the West's own creation, part of its tradition of message-seeking from the East, particularly from India, which—as Hegel put it—had "existed for millennia in the imagination of the Europeans".6 Friedrich Schlegel, Schelling, Herder, and Schopenhauer were only a few of the thinkers who followed the same pattern. They theorized, at first, that India was the source of superior wisdom. Schopenhauer at one stage even argued that the New Testament "must somehow be of Indian origin: this is attested by its completely Indian ethics, which transforms morals into asceticism, its pessimism, and its avatar," in "the person of Christ". But then they rejected their own theories with great vehemence, sometimes blaming India for not living up to their unfounded expectations.

We can imagine that Rabindranath's physical appearance—handsome, bearded, dressed in non-Western

clothes—may, to some extent, have encouraged his being seen as a carrier of exotic wisdom. Yasunari Kawabata, the first Japanese Nobel Laureate in Literature, treasured memories from his middle-school days of "this sage-like poet":

His white hair flowed softly down both sides of his forehead; the tufts of hair under the temples also were long like two beards, and linking up with the hair on his cheeks, continued into his beard, so that he gave an impression, to the boy I was then, of some ancient Oriental wizard.

That appearance would have been well-suited to the selling of Tagore in the West as a quintessentially mystical poet, and it could have made it somewhat easier to Commenting on Rabindranath's pigeonhole him. appearance, Frances Comford told William Rothenstein, "I can now imagine a powerful and gentle Christ, which I never could before." Beatrice Webb, who did not like Tagore and resented what she took to be his "quite obvious dislike of all that the Webbs stand for" (there is, in fact, little evidence that Tagore had given much thought to this .subject), said that he was "beautiful to look at" and that "his speech has the perfect intonation and slow chant-like moderation of the dramatic saint." Ezra Pound and W. B. Yeats, among others, first led the chorus of adoration in the Western appreciation of Tagore, and then soon moved to neglect and even shrill criticism. The contrast between Yeats's praise of his work in 1912 ("These lyrics...display in their thought a world I have dreamed of all my life long," "the work of a supreme culture") and his denunciation in 1935 ("Damn Tagore") arose partly from the inability of Tagore's many-sided writings to fit into the narrow box in which Yeats wanted to place—and keep—him. Certainly, Tagore did write a huge amount, and published ceaselessly, even in English (sometimes in indifferent English translation), but Yeats was also bothered, it is clear, by the difficulty of filling Tagore's later writings into the image

Yeats had presented to the West. Tagore, he had said, was the product of "a whole people, a whole civilization, immeasurably strange to us," and yet "we have met our own image,...or heard, perhaps for the first time in literature, our voice as in a dream.

Gitanjali is a collection of 103 English poems, largely translations, by the Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore. This volume became very famous in the West, and was widely translated. Gitanjali is also the title of an earlier Bengali volume (1910) of mostly devotional songs. The word "Gitanjali" is a composed from "Gita", song, and "anjali", offering, and thus means — "An offering of songs"; but the word for offering, anjali, has a strong devotional connotation, so the title may also be interpreted as prayer offering of song.

The English collection is not a translation of poems from the Bengali volume of the same name. While half the poems (52 out of 103) in the English text were selected from the Bengali volume, others were taken from these works (given with year and number of songs selected for the English text): Gitimalya (1914-17), Naivedya (1901-15), Kheya (1906-11) and a handful from other works. The translations were often radical, leaving out or altering large chunks of the poem and in one instance even fusing two separate poems (song 95, which unifies songs 89-90 of Naivedya).

The translations were undertaken prior to a visit to England in 1912, where the poems were extremely well received. A slender volume was published in 1913 with an exhilarating preface by W.B. Yeats, and in the same year, based on a corpus of three thin translations, Rabindranath became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize for literature.

The poems of Gitanjali have a largely metaphysical outlook, and much of the poetry talks about an union with

the supreme, but the union also has in it much of the of two earthly lovers. This anthropomorphic depiction of celestial love is quite common in the Vaishnava literature of India since the 12th c. (see Vidyapati or Jayadeva). Rabindranath encountered it also in his interactions with the Baul community in rural Bengal. For example, poem 7 in the English volume renders poem 127 from the Bengali Gitanjali, Amare gaan chherechhe tar sakul alamkar and talks of heavenly love in terms of the lover taking off her jewelry, which is getting in the way of the union. Yeats did not totally reject his early admiration (as Ezra Pound and several others did), and he included some of Tagore's early poems in The Oxford Book of Modern Verse, which he edited in 1936. Yeats also had some favorable things to say about Tagore's prose writings. His censure of Tagore's later poems was reinforced by his dislike of Tagore's own English translations of his work ("Tagore does not know English, no Indian knows English," Yeats explained), unlike the English version of Gitanjali which Yeats had himself helped to prepare. Poetry is, of course, notoriously difficult to translate, and anyone who knows Tagore's poems in their original Bengali cannot feel satisfied with any of the translations (made with or without Yeats's help). Even the translations of his prose works suffer, to some extent, from distortion. E.M. Forster noted, in a review of a translation of one of Tagore's great Bengali novels, The Home and the World, in 1919: "The theme is so beautiful," but the charms have "vanished in translation," or perhaps "in an experiment that has not quite come off."

Tagore himself played a somewhat bemused part in the boom and bust of his English reputation. He accepted the extravagant praise with much surprise as well as pleasure, and then received denunciations with even greater surprise, and barely concealed pain. Tagore was sensitive to criticism, and was hurt by even the most farfetched accusations, such as the charge that he was getting credit for the work of Yeats, who had "rewritten" Gitanjali. (This charge was made by a correspondent for The Times, Sir Valentine Chirol, whom E.M. Forster once described as "an old Anglo-Indian reactionary hack.") From time to time Tagore also protested the crudity of some of his overexcited advocates. He wrote C.F. Andrews in 1920: "These people...are like drunkards who are afraid of their lucid intervals."

Yeats was not wrong to see a large religious element in Tagore's writings. He certainly had interesting and arresting things to say about life and death. Susan Owen, the mother of Wilfred Owen, wrote to Rabindranath in 1920, describing her last conversations with her son before he left for the war which would take his life. Wilfred said goodbye with "those wonderful words of yours—beginning at 'When 1 go from hence, let this be my parting word." When Wilfred's pocket notebook was returned to his mother, she found "these words written in his dear writing—with your name beneath."

The idea of a direct, joyful, and totally fearless relationship with God can be found in many of Tagore's religious writings, including the poems of Gitanjali. From India's diverse religious traditions he drew many ideas, both from ancient texts and from popular poetry. But "the bright pebbly eyes of the Theosophists" do not stare out of his verses. Despite the archaic language of the original translation of Gitanjali, which did not, I believe, help to preserve the simplicity of the original, its elementary humanity comes through more clearly than any complex and intense spirituality:

#### **GITANJALI**

#### Poem 1: Thou Hast Made Me Endless

Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure.

This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it

ever

with fresh life. This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills

and dales, and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new.

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

Thy infinite gifts come to me only on these very small hands of mine.

Ages pass, and still thou pourest, and still there is room to fill.

Spiritual life is the emancipation of consciousness. Through it we find immediate response of soul everywhere. Before we attain this life, we see men through the medium of self-interest, prejudice or classification, because of the perpetual remoteness around us which we cannot cross over. When the veil is removed, we not only see the fleeting forms of the world, but come close to its eternal being, which is ineffable beauty. Some seek for the evidence of spiritual truth in the outside world. In this quest one may stumble upon ghosts or some super-sensual phenomenon of Nature, but these do not lead us to spiritual 'truth, as new words in a dictionary do not give us literature. We must make time to realize in the heart of this place the truth which is beauty. And for this we have lighted our lamps. In the morning the sun came out brightly, in the dusk the -stars held up their lights. But these were not sufficient for us. Until we light our own little lamps, the world of lights in the sky is in vain, and unless the passages have been numbered in the present edition. We make our own preparations; the great wealth of the world-preparations remains waiting like a lute for the finger-touch.

The road is ever extended to the outside and has no meaning within itself. Its significance is reached when it reaches the home where begins the manifestation of the inward. When the course of evolution advanced to the stage of Man its character changed; it shifted its emphasis mainly from the body to the mind. There is relentless competition

among them, where creatures struggle to preserve their physical integrity. But in their mind it becomes possible for them to realize their unity and their fulfilment in mutual co-operation. In the world of Man individuals are conscious of a comprehensive truth which is spiritual and whose members they are themselves. The best expression of Man therefore is that which does not exclusively represent an isolated mind, but can be accepted by the minds of men of all times. To set up creeds and practices to which the universal mind cannot respond is what we call barbarism. Once, seeking perfection, Man engaged in external forms, in rituals and ceremonies. At last, in the language of the Gita, he declared that the sacrifice which is comprehended in the inner culture is superior to material sacrifices. In the words of Christ, he heard that purity lies, not in external commands and prohibitions, but in the sanctifying of the heart. This was the invocation of the universal Personality in the mind of the individual person. The final utterance of this very consciousness is that he alone knows Truth who realizes in his own soul those of others, and in the soul of others, his own.

### Poem 2: When Thou Commandest

When thou commandest me to sing it seems that my heart would break

with pride; and I look to thy face, and tears come to my eyes.

All that is harsh and dissonant in my life melts into one sweet harmony—and my adoration spreads wings

like a glad bird on its flight 'across' the sea.

I know thou takest pleasure in my singing.

I know that only as a singer I come before thy presence.

I touch by the edge of the far-spreading wing of my song thy feet which I could never aspire to reach.

Drunk with the joy of singing I forget myself and call thee friend who art my lord.

The aspect of man which has surpassed the animal grows with its ideal. It is an aspiration for that which is not evident in his material world nor urgent for his physical life, it belongs to his universal self. In the Rigueda we find of this universal Being: A quarter of him is in the apparent world, the remainder subsists above in the form of immortality. This is proved when the individual man at a great cost of himself thinks the thoughts of all men, fulfils the desire of the many and gives form to the joy that is for every one. The extent to which his trend is in the opposite direction, towards the narrow distinctions of time and place, to that extent he is a barbarian. The human body is a universe inhabited by millions of cells. Each of them is instinct with its own individual life and yet with a deep direction towards a mystery of unity. If they had selfconsciousness they would have been conscious of their separateness and at the same time of their identity with the whole body. The latter fact could only have been possible through an unaccountable indication of relationship, though the complete and direct knowledge of the whole body would surely be beyond the power of those cells.

This body exists not only here and now, but its past persists in it, its future awaits it. There is also a common element of general felicity pervading the whole system which cannot be analyzed and which is what we mean by health. Besides this each cell embodies a spirit of self-dedication to that purpose of the maintenance of life's wholeness. If we try to grasp the mystery of this career, we can understand that the truest nature of these minute bodies centres round something which we can call their universal aspect.

It is the same with Man. He has observed the deeper endeavour of his own heart and felt that he is not exclusively an individual: he is also one in spirit with the universal Man, under whose inspiration the individual engages in expressing his ultimate truth through crossing nature's limitations. To these expressions he gives the name of the true, the good, the beautiful, not only from the point of view of the preservation and enrichment of society, but from the completeness of his own self.

It should be imagined that the creature as if he is born, lives and dies in a railway carriage. This train travels towards a fixed destination along a definite narrow route. The head of the animal is parallel to the floor of the carriage, his vision is stretched downward, and he carries on his quest of food and recreation within the limits of the car. Even in this restricted sphere, opposition and danger are many, and his time is taken up in struggling with them. He cannot lift up his head and stand up-right like man. His vision does not reach up to the window above. The impulse of his mind does not take him beyond the needs of the security of life. Man has stood up and found the window in front. He has come to know that the universe is not confined within the carriage. Outside it, vistas on vistas open out. Would it have mattered if he had remained indifferent to the 'beyond' which serves no immediate need? But in defiance of the sharply mapped dominion of the Life Force he ventured out to find his own autonomy. In this triumphal march, his natural instincts do not side with him. On this path, he knows neither comfort nor rest, and yet hundreds of explorers are continually widening the path and opening it up ever, at the cost of their own lives.

One needs have no anxiety about the world of Nature. The sun does not wait to be trimmed by one. But from the early morning all poet's thoughts are occupied by this little world of himself. Its importance is owing to the fact that One has a world given to me which is mine. It is great because one has the power to make it worthy of its relationship with me; it is great because by its help he can offer his own hospitality to the God of the entire world. In our everyday world we live in poverty; our resources have to be husbanded with care; our strength becomes exhausted,

and we come to our God as beggars for our joy of life. On festival days, we display our wealth and say to Him that we are even as He is; and we are not afraid to spend. This is the day when we bring to Him our own gift of joy. For we truly meet God, when we come to Him with our offerings and not with our wants. Life's highest opportunity is to be able to offer hospitality to our God. We live in God's world and forget Him, for the blind acceptance which is one-sided never finds its truth. It is a desert which receives rain but never offers fruit in return, and its receiving has no meaning. God's world is given to us, and when we offer our world to God, and then the gift is realized. When Tagore had thrust the great world unnoticed behind the bars of my office habit, he developed in me the belief that he was indispensable. Of the many means by which Nature exacts work from man, this pride is one of the most efficient. Those who work for money, work only to the extent of their wages, up to a definite point, beyond which they would count it a loss to work. But those whose pride impels them to work, they have no rest; even over-time work is not felt as a loss by them.

So busy used Tagore to be under the belief that he was indispensable, that he hardly dared to wink. His doctor now and again would warn him, saying: 'Stop, take it easy.' But he would reply: 'How will things go on ill stop?' Just then his health failed him, the wheels of his car broke down and it came to a stop beneath this window.

From here Tagore looked out upon the limitless space. There he saw whirling the numberless flashing wheels of the triumphal chariot of time,—no dust raised, no din, not even a scratch left on the roadway. On a sudden he came to himself. He clearly perceived that things could get along without me. There was no sign that those wheels would stop, or drag the least bit, for lack of anyone in particular.

### Poem 3: I know Not How Thou Singest

I know not how thou singest, my master!

I ever listen in silent amazement.

The light of thy music illumines the world.

The life breath of thy music runs from sky to sky.

The holy stream of thy music breaks through all stony obstacles and rushes on.

My heart longs to join in thy song,

but vainly struggles for a voice. I would speak,

but speech breaks not into song, and I cry out baffled.

Ah, thou hast made my heart captive

in the endless meshes of thy music, my master!

Power can be measured. Its volume, its weight, its momentum can all be brought within the purview of mathematics. So it is the endeavour of those who hold Power to be supreme, to increase in bulk. They would repeatedly multiply numbers—the number of men, the number of coins, and the number of appliances. When they strive for success they sacrifice others' wealth, others' rights, and others' lives; for sacrifice is the essence of the cult of Power; and the earth is running red with the blood of that sacrifice. The distinctive feature of materialism is the measurability of its outward expression, which is the same thing as the finiteness of its boundaries. And the disputes, civil and criminal, which have raged in the history of man, have mostly been over these same boundaries. To increase one's own bounds one has necessarily to encroach upon those of others. So, because the pride of Power is the pride of quantity, the most powerful telescope, when pointed in me direction of Power, fails to reveal the shore of peace across the sea of blood. But when engaged in adding up the quantities of these forces and facts of Power, we do not find them to be an ever-increasing series. In our pursuit of the principle of accumulation we are all of a sudden held up by stumbling upon the principle of check which bars the

way. We discover that there is not only onward motion, but there are also pauses. And we repeatedly find in history that whenever the blindness of Power has tried to overrule this rule of rhythm, it has committed suicide. And that is why man still remembers the story of the toppling over the Tower of Babel.

So we see that the principle of Power, of which the outward expression is bulk, is neither the final nor the supreme Truth. It has to stop itself to keep time with the rhythm of the universe. Restraint is the gateway of the Good. The value of the Good is not measured in terms of dimension or multitude. He who has known it within himself feels no shame in rags and tatters. He rolls his crown in the dust and marches out on the open road.

Tagore was an artist-poet who considered the physical, emotional, the mental and the spiritual effects of music. On the physical, sound has the ability to rearrange molecular structure. This is a scientific fact. As we know, everything in the universe is in a state of vibration, from the chair you may be sitting in to the pages of this article. All the various parts of our body are also in a state of vibration, from the various organs, tissues, bones, etc. When we are in a state of health, all these bodily parts are working together in harmony, creating an overall harmonic of health. If one of these parts begins to vibrate at a different rate, this is what we call disease. One of the basic concepts of healing with sound on the physical body is to project the correct resonant frequency of the organ, or whatever is out of balance, back into the body.

On the emotional and mental bodies, music is very effective. In particular, music affects the limbic system, that aspect of the brain which governs emotional response. Through using specific music (specific for the individual), we can help elicit certain emotional responses that may be very therapeutic and transformative in their nature. For the spiritual body, both sound and music can

be equally effective. In particular, Tagore believes that self-created sounds such as mantras, vowel sounds and harmonics are most powerful, though of course, listening to either recorded or live music or chanting can also be very effective.

Naturally, since we now know of the inter-relationship between the mind and the body, that which affects the emotional or mental will also effect the physical and viceversa. This includes the spiritual body as well, of course. For working with the physical body, we are dealing with the concept of resonant frequency healing — that is, projecting the correct resonant frequency of an unbalanced area back into the body — in order to affect a healing. This can be done through various external instruments or it can be done using what consider to be the most natural and effective tool on the planet — our own voices. There are a number of different people who are working with different electronic or acoustic, technologies to achieve this. Tagore has made an extensive researches in this area of sound healing for quite a while and one of the interesting paradoxes is that the different people working with finding the correct resonant frequency of, say the heart or the liver, will all seemingly have great success with their frequencies. And yet, these frequencies will all differ.

There is the use of harmonics, which are sounds within sounds, in order to resonate the brain. It is my belief that we will find out in the very near future, that self-created sounds may be the only way we can actually stimulate different parts of the brain through mechanical resonance. Now, there are various technologies that are being offered in which sound travels through the ear into the brain in order to affect the brain. But this is a different phenomenon—what the poet is talking about is a direct resonance of the brain using our own sounds. Tagore believes it is possible to make new neural-synaptic connections in the brain with sound. And that it is possible

to stimulate the various glands such as the pituitary and pineal with these sounds.

#### Poem 4 Life of My Life

Life of my life, I shall ever try to keep my body pure, knowing that thy living touch is upon all my limbs.

I shall ever try to keep all untruths out from my thoughts, knowing that thou art that truth which has kindled the light of reason in my mind.

I shall ever try to drive all evils away from my heart and keep my love in flower, knowing that thou hast thy seat in the inmost shrine of my heart.

And it shall be my endeavour to reveal thee in my actions, knowing it is thy power gives me strength to act.

Light as the radiant energy of creation, started the ring-dance of atoms in a diminutive sky, and also the dance of the stars in the vast, lonely theatre of time and space. The planets came out of their bath of fire and basked in the sun for ages. They were the thrones of the gigantic Inert, dumb and desolate, which knew not the meaning of its own blind destiny and majestically frowned upon a future when its monarchy would be menaced. Then came a time when life was brought into the arena in the tiniest little mono cycle of a cell. With its gift of growth and power of adaptation it faced the ponderous enormity of things, and contradicted the unmeaningness of their bulk. It was made conscious not of the volume but of the value of existence, which it ever tried to enhance and maintain in manybranched paths of creation, overcoming the obstructive inertia of Nature by obeying Nature's law.

The miracle of creation did not stop here in this isolated speck of life launched on a lonely voyage to the Unknown. A multitude of cells were bound together into a larger unit, not through aggregation, but through a marvellous quality of complex interrelationship

maintaining a perfect co-ordination of functions. This is the creative principle of unity, the divine mystery of existence that baffles all analysis. The larger cooperative Units could adequately pay for a greater freedom of self-expression, and they began to form and develop in their bodies new organs of power, new instruments of efficiency. This was the march of evolution ever unfolding the potentialities of life.

This evolution which continues on the physical plane has its limited range. All exaggeration in that direction becomes a burden that breaks the natural rhythm of life, and those creatures that encouraged their ambitious flesh to grow in dimensions have nearly all perished of their cumbrous absurdity. Before the chapter ended Man appeared and turned the course of this evolution from an indefinite march of physical aggrandizement to a freedom of a more subtle perfection. This has made possible his progress to become unlimited, and has enabled him to realize the boundless in his power.

The fire is lighted, the hammers are working, and for laborious days and nights amidst dirt and discordance the musical instrument is being made. We may accept this as a detached fact and follow its evolution. But when the music is revealed, we know that the whole thing is a part of the manifestation of music in spite of its contradictory character. The process of evolution, which after ages has reached man, must be realized in its unity with him; though in him it assumes a new value and proceeds to a different path. It is a continuous process that finds its meaning in Man; and we must acknowledge that the evolution which Science talks of is that of Man's universe. The leather binding and title-page are parts of the book itself; and this world that we perceive through our senses and mind and life's experience is profoundly one with ourselves.

The divine principle of unity has ever been that of an inner interrelationship. This is revealed in some of its earliest stages in the evolution of multicellular life on this

planet. The most perfect inward expression has been attained by man in his own body. But what is most important of all is the fact that man has also attained its realization in a more subtle body outside his physical system. He misses himself when isolated; he finds his own larger and truer self in his wide human relationship. His multicellular body is born and it dies; his multi-personal humanity is immortal. In this ideal of unity he realizes the eternal in his life and the boundless in his love. The unity becomes not a mere subjective idea, but an energizing truth. Whatever name may be given to it, and whatever form it symbolizes, the consciousness of this unity is spiritual, and our effort to be true to it is our religion. It ever waits to be revealed in our history in a more and more perfect illumination. We have our eyes, which relate to us the vision of the physical universe. We have also an inner faculty of our own which helps us to find our relationship with the supreme self of man, the universe of personality. This faculty is our luminous imagination, which in its higher stage is special to man. It offers us that vision of wholeness which for the biological necessity of physical survival is superfluous; its purpose is to arouse in us the sense of perfection which is our true sense of immortality. For perfection dwells ideally in Man the Eternal, inspiring love for this ideal in the individual, urging him more and more to realize it.

The development of intelligence and physical power is equally necessary in animals and men for their purposes of living; but what is unique in man is the development of his consciousness which gradually deepens and widens the realization of his immortal being, the perfect, the eternal. It inspires those creations of his that reveal the divinity in him—which is his humanity—in the varied manifestations of truth, goodness and beauty, in the freedom of activity which is not of his use but for his ultimate expression. The individual man must exist for Man the great, and must

express him in disinterested works, in science and philosophy, in literature and arts, in service and worship. This is his religion, which is working in the heart of all his religions in various names and forms. He knows and uses this world where it is endless and thus attains greatness, but he realizes his own truth where it is perfect and thus finds his fulfilment.

The idea of the humanity of our God, or the divinity of Man the Eternal, is the main subject of this book. This thought of God has not grown in my mind through any process of philosophical reasoning. On the contrary, it has followed the current of my temperament from early days until it suddenly flashed into my consciousness with a direct vision. The experience which I have described in one of the chapters which follow convinced me that on the surface of our being we have the ever-changing phases of the individual self, but in the depth there dwells the Eternal Spirit of human unity beyond our direct knowledge. It very often contradicts the trivialities of our daily life, and upsets the arrangements made for securing our personal exclusiveness behind the walls of individual habits and superficial conventions. It inspires in us works that are the expressions of a Universal Spirit; it invokes unexpectedly in the midst of a self-centred life a supreme sacrifice. At its call, we hasten to dedicate our lives to the cause of truth and beauty, to unrewarded service of others, in spite of our lack of faith in the positive reality of the ideal values.

I begin with a brief overview of Rabindranath Tagore's nature of literary universals, distinguishing universal features of this poem from features specific to particular traditions and from features which may be seen as distinctive of individual works. From here, I take up imagery in particular, noting some universal principles of literary imagery. The bulk of the paper, however, addresses tradition-specific features of such imagery. Focusing on a particular, illustrative example from Sanskrit, I argue that

tradition-specific features-including features that are interpretively opaque to readers outside the tradition in question-result from the combination and particularization of universal features. In other words, the differences between literary traditions should not be set in opposition to universals, but seen as the product of universals. We do not rightly understand these differences if we do not analyze the universal principles that they manifest. Following this, I consider how these universal principles and their tradition-specific manifestations may be understood more concretely in terms of processes on the mental lexicon. In conclusion, I turn to the issue of individual poetic idiosyncrasy. Here too I argue that superficial differences result from combinations and specifications of universal principles-in this case, universal principles re-applied to tradition-specific features. By way of illustration, I consider a famous play of I Henerik Ibsen's "The Ghost "of well-known dialogue' Where is the light? Where is the light?

Imagery is regarded as the focal point of poetic composition. The poetry of Rabindranath Tagore is rich in figurative language, creating a wide variety of imagery. He utilizes many different methods of creating images, such as similes, metonymy, metaphors and abstract language. Similes have elemental pleasure as The Sky, The Earth, The water, The Air; pre-dating India as a vital element of poetic imagery. Poets like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Jibonanand Das were famed for the beauty of their similes. However, the most eloquent similes are found in the Vedas and Puranas.

I shall ever try to keep all untruths out from my thoughts, knowing that thou art that truth which has kindled the light of reason in my mind.

I shall ever try to drive all evils away from my heart and keep my love in flower, knowing that thou hast thy scat in the inmost shrine of my heart. And it shall be my endeavour to reveal thee in my actions, knowing it is thy power gives me strength to act.

Readers of Tagore's poetry should familiarize themselves with the various aspects of figurative language in order to fully appreciate his rich verse. In this poem we see that the poet is no longer using comparison, but is directly introducing his endeavour to reveal god in his actions, If the reader attempts to analyze the various components of this image separately, the beauty and coherence of the image are lost, as these are established over the lines as a whole, leading to the understanding that 'inmost shrine of my heart'.

## Poem 5: I Ask for a Moment's Indulgence

I ask for a moment's indulgence to sit by thy side.

The works that I have in hand I will finish afterwards.

Away from the sight of thy face my heart knows no rest nor respite,

and my work becomes an endless toil in a shoreless sea of toil.

Today the summer has come at my window with its sighs and murmurs;

and the bees are plying their minstrelsy

at the court of the flowering grove.

Now it is time to sit quite, face to face with thee,

and to sing dedication of live

in this silent and overflowing leisure.,

During the discussion of Tagore's religious experience he has expressed his belief that the first stage of his realization was through his feeling of intimacy with Nature—not that Nature which has its channel of information for our mind and physical relationship with our living body, but that which satisfies our personality with manifestations that make our life rich and stimulate our imagination in their harmony of forms, colours, sounds and movements. It is not that world which vanishes into abstract symbols behind its own testimony to Science, but that which lavishly displays its wealth of reality to our personal self having its own perpetual reaction upon our human nature.

Tagore mentioned in connection with his personal experience some songs which he had often heard from wandering village singers, belonging to a popular sect of Bengal, called Bawls, who have no images, temples, scriptures, or ceremonials, who declare in their songs the divinity of Man, and express for him an intense feeling of love. Coming from men who are unsophisticated, living a simple life in obscurity, it gives us a clue to the inner meaning of all religions. For it suggests that these religions are never about a God of cosmic force, but rather about the God of human personality.

At the same time it must be admitted that even the impersonal aspect of truth dealt with by Science belongs to the human Universe. But men of Science tell us that truth, unlike beauty and goodness, is independent of our consciousness. They explain to us how the belief that truth is independent of the human mind is a mystical belief, natural to man but at the same time inexplicable. But may not the explanation be this that ideal truth does not depend upon the individual mind of man, but on the universal mind which comprehends the individual? For to say that truth, as we see it, exists apart from humanity is really to contradict Science itself; because Science can only organize into rational concepts those facts which man can know and understand, and logic is a machinery of thinking created by the mechanic man.

Tagore's poems with all its varied meanings appears as a table for man through his special organ of senses and his special organ of thoughts. When scientifically analyzed the same table offers an enormously different appearance to him from that given by his senses. The evidence of his physical senses and that of his logic and his scientific instruments are both related to his own power of comprehension; both are true and true for him. He makes use of the table with full confidence for his physical purposes, and with equal confidence makes intellectual use of it for his scientific knowledge. But the knowledge is his who is a man. If a particular man as an individual did not exist, the table would exist all the same, but still as a thing that is related to the human mind. The contradiction that there is between the table of our sense the walls of individual habits and superficial conventions. It inspires in us works that are the expressions of a Universal Spirit; it invokes unexpectedly in the midst of a self-centred life a supreme sacrifice. At its call, we hasten to dedicate our lives to the cause of truth and beauty, to unrewarded service of others, in spite of our lack of faith in the positive reality of the ideal values.

During the discussion of his own religious experience he has expressed his belief that the first stage of his realization was through his feeling of intimacy with Nature—not that Nature which has its channel of information for our mind and physical relationship with our living body, but that which satisfies our personality with manifestations that make our life rich and stimulate our imagination in their harmony of forms, colours, sounds and movements. It is not that world which vanishes into abstract symbols behind its own testimony to Science, but that which lavishly displays its wealth of reality to our personal self having its own perpetual reaction upon our human nature.

When we read the works of Kabir, Rahiman, Malik Muhammad Jaysi and of many other Sufi poets, we shall find that they are full of the same imagery, and this is partly because that was the time of Islam. The mission of Islam had a particular object in view; and in order to attain that object, it had strict rules about life. A free thinker had difficulty in expressing his thoughts without being accused of having done a great wrong towards the religion and the state. These free thinkers of India, with their dancing souls and continual enthusiasm, began to express their souls in

this particular imagery, using words such as 'the beloved,¹ 'stone,' 'sacrifice,' and 'renunciation' This poem became so popular that not only did the wise benefit from it, but also the simple ones enjoyed the beauty of its, wonderful expressions, which made an immediate appeal to every soul. No doubt souls who were already awakened and those on the point of awakening were inspired by these poems. Souls who were opening their eyes after the deep slumber of many years began to rise up and dance.

This concept of singing devotion is used in various connections and conveys many different meanings. In the first place, imagine that there is a magic house where there are many different kinds of pleasures. Each wine has a different effect upon the person who obtains it. One drinks wine which makes him light-hearted, frivolous, humorous. Another drinks a wine which makes him sympathetic, kind, tender and gentle. Someone else drinks one which makes him bewildered at everything he sees. Another drinks and finds his way into the ditch. One becomes angry after drinking, while another becomes passionate. One drinks and is drowned in despair. Another drinks and begins to feel loving and affectionate. Yet another drinks a wine that makes him discouraged with everything. Imagine how interested we should all be to see that tavern! In point of fact, we live in that tavern and we see it every day; only, we do not take proper notice of it.

#### Poem 6: Pluck This Little Flower

Pluck this little flower and take it, delay not!

I fear lest it droop and drop into the dust.

I may not find a place in thy garland,
but honour it with a touch of pain
from thy hand and pluck it. I fear lest the day end
before I am aware, and the time of offering go by.

Though its colour be not deep and its smell be faint,
use this flower in thy service and pluck it
while there is time.

We only know through experience that waves of different rhythms form it. It is further reported now that to call it mere wave-radiation does not give a full account of the nature of light; it also radiates minute corpuscles. All these contradictory statements are beyond the simple language of the ordinary intelligence of man. But man was not to be frightened by the deepwater of the unintelligible. He declared the stone wall to be the unceasing dance of electrons and never for a moment suspected that he had perhaps turned insane. It never occurred to him that perhaps Reason is an acrobat in the circus of the mind, that is profession is to turn everything upside down. If animals were placed in judgment over man, they would have characterized him as born insane. In fact, human science has proved all men to be creatures possessed by a universal dementia. It prompts them to say that things are not at all what they appear to be, but just the reverse. Animals never declare such libel about themselves. To their instinct a thing is what is, in other words, for them only facts exist. The area of their world is confined to its surface. All their obligations are at its ground floor.

As with other animals fact constitutes man's resources, and yet his wealth consists in truth. The ultimate aim of wealth is not to satisfy needs but to convey the sense of splendour. That is why man declares—that there is no happiness in littleness, it lies in immensity. These are after all the words of a spendthrift. Caution tells us that it is a matter for congratulation when our needs agree in measure with what we have. There is a proverb in English that the enough is as good as a feast. Our Sastras also tell us—that he who seeks happiness must be contented.

We thus seem to meet the two contradictory statements that happiness does and does not lie in contentment. The reason for this apparent contradiction is that there is a basic duality in man's being. In the aspect of

man which belongs to animal life, the satisfaction of his necessities is adequate to his happiness. But in his heart of hearts, man the animal reaches up to the World-Man. There he no longer wants mere happiness, but something greater. He wants magnificence. That is why of all animals man alone is intemperate. He wants profusely and has to give profusely, for in him there is the Infinite man. This Infinite Man does not hanker after happiness, nor is he afraid of suffering: This Infinite Man shatters the shelters of comfort which men build, and continuously calls them out to an architecture of a difficult design. The little man who is also in us laughs in mockery at this wasting of our substance in wild goose chase. But he laughs in vain. In the Upanishad there is a question and answer about God: 'Where does God have his seal?' The answer comes, 'In his own glory.' This glory is his nature, and his nature is his joy. Man's delight is also in his glory. That is why it is said that happiness is in immensity. But the nature to which glory belongs is realized by man only through strain and struggle. Only through great suffering is measured the truth of his happiness. There is continual tension between man's natural condition and his true character. That is why the path of religion, the path dictated by his inmost nature is called the path that is difficult of crossing.

The nature of an animal conforms to its condition. Its claims never exceed what is due to it. But with man it is different. He puts forward claims far beyond what was due to him by nature. The portion allotted to one can be fixed, but there is no limit to the extras one may demand. Man finds sustenance for life from his allotted portion. But it is his extras that reveals his glory. Even in respect of keeping himself alive, man exacts many extras. He must live magnificently, for this his sustenance must not be commonplace. It is not enough that his dress and his dwelling should merely serve their barest purposes: they must also reveal his greatness, reveal something which is

worthy of man; and a greater portion of the activities of his life is engaged in crossing the boundaries of a passive existence where there is a provision for enough, but none for the feast. Man has an inherent distrust of what is offered to his senses, what lies spread before his instincts on the surface of existence. For he himself is not superficial, he realizes that deep within him there is something which he calls truth and which is often the opposite of what seems to be the fact. Although everything is essentially Shiva, there are various aspects in Him. On a certain level, of course, there is a difference: The worldly desires are those which do not lead you to the Highest Goal, while the spiritual desires are those which do lead you to the that Supreme Goal. And what is that Goal? It is simply to realize that you are not you (the limited person) but Shiva (the Supreme Sell). It is the realization of the Absolute indeed after abandoning the identification with the limited role you are playing in this world. I said "abandoning the identification with the limited role" and not "abandoning the limited role". There is a subtle teaching in that. Tantricism does not encourage people to abandon all limited roles they are playing, but to abandon their identification with those roles. For example: "I am an engineer", "I am a lawyer", "I am a plumber", "I am a pilot", "I am a husband", "I am a wife", "I am a student", etc. Each of these roles is only a role... not myself.

When we play a role and become fully identified with it, we lose energy. For instance: we are a lawyer and file a suit against someone. Afterwards, during the trial, we get angry with the prosecutor because you feel he is lying or something, etc. We really lose a lot of energy in the process of becoming furious. Only We own anger is the cause for the loss of force in us. And this anger results from your identification with the role of being a lawyer. Neither the prosecutor nor the trial nor even God is guilty. Most people think that something or someone outside is making them

lose energy, but this is not true. So, do not abandon all and go to the woods (in fact, if the human being keeps cutting trees there will be no forest to go. No, just abandon your identification with the limited role you happen to play right now. Some people attempt to change the role, but they continue to lose energy as it is not the role the real cause but their identification with it. No matter which profession, life style, etc. we may choose, we will keep losing force if you identify with that role.

## Poem 7: My Song has Put off Her Adornments

My song has put off her adornments.

She has no pride of dress and decoration.

Ornaments would mar our union; they would come

between thee and me; their jingling would drown thy whispers.

My poet's vanity dies in shame before thy sight.

O master poet, I have sat down at thy feet.

Only let me make my life simple and straight,

like a flute of reed for thee to fill with music.

It is still dark and the day is about to dawn. The stallkeepers, who gathered for the festival fair, have spent the winter night singing round the lighted fires. Now they are preparing to disperse. Their noise, unlike the birds' notes, disturbs the morning peace. For man stands at the parting of the ways. His strings have to be tuned for a deeper and a more complex music than those of Nature. Man has his mind which reasons and his will which seeks its own path. These have not yet found their full harmony with their surroundings. Therefore they are apt to break out in the ugliness of discord. But in this very ugliness lies the great hope of the future. For these discords are not mere facts which we are compelled to acknowledge; they are ugly facts. This itself asserts every moment that they are not what they should be; they are incomplete, and they are hopeful because they are painful. We are like a stray line of a poem, which ever feels that it .rhymes with another line and must

find it, or miss its own fulfilment. This quest of the unattained is the great impulse in man which brings forth all his best creations. Man, seems deeply to be aware of a separation at the root of his being, he cries to be led across it to a union; and somehow he knows that it is love which can lead him to a love which is final.

Tagore has a relationship with the world which is deeply personal. It is not of mere knowledge and use. All our relationships with facts have an infinite medium which is Law, satyam; all our relationship with truth has an infinite medium which is Reason, jnanam; all our personal relationship has an infinite medium which is Love, anandam. We are not mere facts in this world, like pieces of stone; we are persons. And therefore we cannot be content with drifting along the stream of circumstances. We have a central ideal of love with which to harmonize our existence, we have to manifest a truth in our life, which is the perfect relationship with the Eternal Person.

Frequency+ Intent= Healing. What this means is that the energy that occurs when a sound is created (the "intent") is of equal importance to the actual sound (the "frequency") that is used. Intent is the energy behind the sound and it is something that should be considered whenever we make a sound, particularly a sound for healing or transformation. The brain may be just a transmitter and receiver of different frequencies. The brain may be thought of as a kind of radio that can be tuned to different signals. If we can learn to tune the brain to different frequencies using sound, we can open up to many different aspects of consciousness and energy.

Music seems to work best on the emotional and mental. However, music does also affect us physically. An quick example of this is that our heart beat, respiration and brain waves all entrain, or synchronize with different rhythms. Slow music tends to slow down our heart rate respiration and brain waves. Fast music has the opposite effect, tending to speed us up. This little bit of information can be very effectively used by your readers, who no doubt intuitively understand this but may have never given it much conscious thought. If you want to speed up your heart rate, respiration and brain waves for activities such as movement or even staying awake, then fast paced music is your best bet. But if you want to relax, usually, it's the slower music that works best.

On an emotional level, we all have different tastes in music. I think there is about a 60% agreement in the way people respond to different music. Everyone is different and has different tastes. One piece of music may bring a person to states of euphoria while the same piece of music might depress someone else. So in terms of music affecting our emotional states, it really depends on what we like and don't like. If we could take a sort of musical cure for ourselves and write down what particular pieces of music created specific emotional states for ourselves, we could use these different pieces of music to help elicit different emotional states. If we were depressed and knew of a certain musical selection that made us feel joyous, playing that music would be helpful in changing our emotional state. Obviously, then, depending upon the time, place and need of the individual, what music works best to elicit different emotional and mental states depends upon the person.

# Poem 8: The Child Who Is Decked with Prince's Robes

The child who is decked with prince's robes and who has jewelled chains round his neck loses all pleasure in his play; his dress hampers him at even' step.

In fear that it may be frayed, or stained with dust he keeps himself from the world, and is afraid even to move. Mother, it is no gain, thy bondage of finery,

if it keeps one shut off from the healthful dust of the earth, if it rob one of the right of entrance to the great fair of common human life.

When you abandon identification with a limited role, all that energy which was wasted in anger, anxiety, fear, etc. is redirect towards the accomplishment of your Goal. For example, if you are a meditator, you can meditate much better with the help of that extra energy. If you are a devotee of the Lord, you can develop more love for the Godhead. If you are a scholar, you find it easier to learn abstruse scriptures in Sanskrit. On the other hand, the spiritual desires are related to the Supreme Goal. They give rise to such questions as: Who am I?, What am I doing here?, What is this world?, What am I to do?, etc. In fact, the desire of realizing the Self is not considered to be a mere desire. It is the highest desire indeed. When a desire is not fulfilled, wrath emerges automatically. In turn, wrath clouds the intellect and consequently memory is lost. Therefore, wrath negatively affects your memory. The real problem does not lie in that you will not remember where the keys are but in that you will not remember what your Goal is in this lifetime. Most people you can see have lost their memory because of wrath. They wander about trying to find a little happiness in objects, other people, roles, etc., but they do not find anything because... there is nothing there. Their frequent wrath makes them forget about the Supreme Self who is the final Shelter for everybody. Bliss, full satisfaction and delight, etc. are all within you, not outside. When you forget that you are Shiva, you are certainly like a wrecked at drill in this ocean known as world. Wrath clouds your intellect and makes you think that something insignificant is tremendously valuable, and that something invaluable is of no worth. Wrath makes you see only the tree and not the entire forest. In other words, it makes you narrow-minded. There are many methods to deal with wrath. One of them is to abandon identification

with anger by removing the I-sense from it. For example, when wrath comes to you, you generally feel: "I am angry". Well, if you use that method, you should strive no to become identified with it: "Anger has emerged in me, but I am a witness to it. My mind is angry, not me, etc". The point is to get rid of the identification with wrath by seeing it as a witness. This method is really good, but it is extremely difficult for some people. Consider wrath like the Supreme Goddess or Shakti (if you want to give it a personal form in your mind, go ahead). Then, address to Her like a passive devotee. By "passive" I mean that you must keep internally still while beholding how the anger arises and grows calm within you without manifesting itself outside. Your mouth has not uttered any horrible word and your face is full of peace. When you consider wrath to be the Shakti, it is easily overcome. When you add love and devotion to any method, you will notice that it becomes easier to do.

The horse harnessed to a carriage is only a part of it; the master is he who drives it unattached. We are enjoined to work with vigour and yet retain our detachment of mind. For our deeds must express our freedom above all, otherwise we become like wheels revolving because compelled. There is a harmony between doing and not doing, between gaining and renouncing, which we must attain. Our daily How of prayer carries our self into the supreme Self, it makes us feel the reality of that fullness which we gain by utterly giving ourselves up, makes our consciousness expand in a large world of peace, where movements are beauty and all relations are truths because of their inner freedom, which is disinterestedness. Our will attains its perfection when it is one with love, for only love is true freedom. This freedom is not in the egation of restraint. It spontaneously accepts bondage, because bondage does not bind it, but only measures its truth. Nonslavery is in the cessation of service, but freedom is in service itself.

A village poet of Bengal says:

In love the end is neither pain nor pleasure, hut love only. Love gives freedom while it hinds, for love is what unites.

When feeling greed, you identify yourself with a sense of possessing and gelling hold of something. Note that avarice is not only related to objects and people, but also knowledge. For instance, if you acquire certain knowledge and proceed to retain it exceedingly, that very act of exceeding retention immediately manifests a contraction in the universe. As a result, if you merely keep accumulating knowledge without sharing it with others, this knowledge gradually will begin to suffocate you. Such is the effect of that contraction. Avarice is one of the main qualities of Ahankaara or Ego the inner psychic organ through which Ahankaara attempts to accumulate power.

The imagery of these lines is based on their rhythmic antithesis. The juxtaposition of "decked with prince's robes' and 'his dress hampers him' conveys the paradoxical sense of longing and satisfaction felt by the poet when regarding his beloved. Even whilst gazing at her face, thus sating his hunger, he still wants to gaze upon her for longer and so the hunger is renewed. This image could not have been conveyed without the skilful application of antithesis. Though Tagore's poems contain disparate images, these images are arranged in such a way as to form a harmonious whole.

The title of this poem sets the theme. Throughout, the poet uses references to fire, (such as 'jewelled chains', 'his dress hampers him', 'strained with dust', 'healthful dust on the earth'), to signify his burning passion for his beloved.

The transition through the different stages of socioeconomical aspects is used to echo the different stages of emotional anguish that the poet experiences. The poet's choice of jewel as a metaphor for renunciation also has the effect of infusing the entire poem with ordinarilyness. This poem is rich in various images rather than predominantly one thematic metaphor being applied and reapplied as in the previous poem. Images such as "thy bondage of finery" contribute to the sorrow and despair that is the underlying emotion of the poem's subject. The poet supplements Such imagery with a profound humanistic dimension and a clear sense of ethical values by staging the poem as a dialogue between an authority figure and the rejected mother who has come to ask for justice.

The poet uses many rich images such as "is decked with prince's robes", "it may be frayed, or stained with dust", "the great fair of common human life. These and other images flow throughout this poem, but there is a thin yet strong thread which connects all these minor images so that what emerges is a cohesive picture of an old man - a composite image, as it were. In some couplets we are treated to an extended image.

## Poem 9: O Fool, Try to Carry Thyself Upon Thy Own

Shoulders!

O Fool, try to carry thyself upon thy own shoulders!

O beggar, to come beg at thy own door!

Leave all thy burdens on his hands

who can bear all, and never look behind in regret.

Thy desire at once puts out the light from the lamp

it touches with its breath.

It is unholy—take not thy gifts through its unclean hands. Accept only what is offered by sacred love.

The world things in which we live misses its equilibrium when its communication with the world of love is lost. Then we have to pay with our soul then we have to pay with our soul for objects which are immensely cheap. And this can only happen when the prison wall of things threaten us with being final in themselves. Then it gives rise to terrible fights, jealousies and coercions, to a scramble for space and coercions, to scramble for space and

opportunities, for these are limited. We become painfully aware of the evil of this and try all measures of adjustment within the narrow bounds of a mutilated truth. This leads to failures. Only he helps us who proves by his life that we have a soul whose dwelling is in the kingdom of love, and things lose that tyranny of fictitious price when we come to our spiritual freedom.

It is hard for us to free ourselves from the grip of our acquisitions. For the pull of their gravitation is towards the centre of our self. The force of perfect love acts towards the contrary direction. And this is why love gives us freedom from the weights of things. Therefore our days of joy are our days of expenditure. It is not the likeness of pressure in the outside world which we need in order to be free, but love which has the power to bear the world's weight, not only with ease but with joy. Only because we have closed our path to the inner world of freedom, has the outer world become terrible in this exactions. It is slavery to continue to live in a sphere where things are, yet their meaning is obstructed. It has become possible for men to say that existence is evil only because, in our blindness, we have missed something in which our existence has its truth. If a bird tries to soar in the sky with only one of its wings, it is offended with the wind for buffeting it down to the dust. Coming to the theatre of life we foolishly sit with our back to the stage. We see the gilded pillars and decorations, we watch the coming and going of the crowd; and when the light is put out at the end, we ask ourselves in bewilderment, what is the meaning of it all? If we paid attention to the inner stage, we could witness the eternal love-drama of the soul and be assured that it has pauses, but no end, and that the gorgeous world-preparations are not a magnificent delirium of things.

As practiced by Tagore and his successors, the distinguishing feature of metaphysical poetry is not just philosophical subtlety or intellectual rigor—since these

elements are found in all good moral and didactic poetry—but a peculiar blend of thought with passion, the colloquial with the ingenious, and realistic violence and meditative refinement. The metaphysical poets turned to the medieval scholastic philsophers for stylistic inspiration, borrowing from them the terminology and the difficulty of their style of argument.

## Poem 10: Here Is Thy Footstool

Here is thy footstool and there rest thy feet where live the poorest, and lowliest, and lost. When I try to bow to thee, my obeisance cannot reach down to the depth where thy feet rest among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost. Pride can never approach to where thou walkest in the clothes of the humble among the poorest, and lowliest, and lost. My heart can never find its way to where thou keepest company with the companionless among the poorest, the lowliest, and the lost.

We look down upon Nature from outside when we separate it in our mind from human nature, and blame it for being devoid of pity and justice. Let the wick burn with indignation at the want of light in the rest of the candle, but the truth is that the wick represents the whole candle in its illumination. Obstacles are necessary companions to expression, and we know that the positive element in language is not in its obstructiveness. Exclusively viewed from the side of the obstacle, Nature appears as inimical to the idea of morality. But if that were absolutely true, moral life could never come to exist. Life, moral or physical, is not a completed fact, but is a continual process, depending for its movement upon two contrary forces, the force of resistance and that of expression. Dividing these forces into

two mutually opposing principles does not help us, for the truth dwells not in the opposition but in its continual reconciliation.

All good and tasty is needful for the true understanding of a poem, comes from the vision of unity seen in the light of imagination. Faith has the similar function in our acceptance of life. It is a spiritual organ of sight which enables us instinctively to realize the vision of wholeness when in fact we only see the parts. Skeptics may scoff at this vision as an hallucination; they may select and arrange facts in such a manner as to disprove it, and yet faith never doubts its own direct apprehension of the inner truth which binds, which builds, which heals, which leads to an ideal of fullness. Faith is this spontaneous response in our being to the voice of the all-pervading Yes, and therefore it is the greatest of all creative forces in human life. It is not merely a passive acknowledgement of truth, it is an ever active effort for attaining harmony with that peace which is in the rhythm of truth in creation, goodness which is in the rhythm of combination in society, and unity of love which is in the rhythm of self-realization in soul. The mere fact of innumerable breaks in such a rhythm no more proves its unreality to a man gifted with faith than the prevalent fact of harsh notes and noises disproves the truth of music to a musician. It only calls him to a strenuous endeavour to mend the break and establish harmony with truth.

False pride is based upon ego, and is, in fact, one of its most important features. The foundations of ego are "I am one way or the other". The phrase "one way or the other" is added to the original "I am" due to the contraction and conditioning one assumes. This goddess called false pride gives you an erroneous notion about your own spiritual nature by causing you to believe that you are what you are not, and that you are not what you really are. When one is dependent on false pride, he is always in a restless

condition, since many things might destroy that illusory "one way or the other". It is as if one is wearing lots of coats and thus he is unable to go through the door. As he cannot go through the door due to his coats, he cannot also go to a different room. Likewise, a person with false pride is too "thick" and cannot go to a different state of consciousness. In fact, you cannot even move comfortably in the only room or state you are confined.

Even though this false pride is a very weak foundation, one insists on building the house called "his life" on it. This is so because the goddess false pride has not been worshipped in an adequate manner. She is not pleased, she does not rest where she should, that is, in one's own Self. With this act of salutation, you surrender yourself completely to her, and she surrenders herself completely to you in return. The result is harmony and cessation of that false pride.

Tagore's manifest universe is now composed of all that is perceived, the rest of universe is totally unmanifested. On one hand, if that person making you apparently jealous is not manifested, what is the point of being jealous? He or she is devoid of any manifest form, since you (the only Self of the universe) are not giving him/her one. On the other hand, if that person is currently manifest, what is the point of being jealous? He or she has an ephemeral manifest form that will be unmanifested at any moment. As a matter of fact, one does not feel jealousy about the external person, since he/she appears and disappears the whole time, but about the internal person, the mental person who lasts for more time in a manifest form.

This mental person about whom you are jealous, is a shakti or power. In the same way, the feeling of possession and jealousy are also shakti-s. These shakti-s must be appeased through devotion, their fire must be extinguished through the nectar of love. There is no other way. The act of wanting to control them by force makes them stronger.

Therefore, when you salute them, do it with all your heart.

One has the right to action alone, never to the fruits, Bhagavadgiitaa states. The mundane or worldly rewards are the fleeting fruits offered by most actions, while the divine rewards are the eternal fruits offered by a special kind of actions. In fact, it is not the action which bears fruits but the attitude with which it is done. If you do an action, which is apparently mundane, with an attitude of service and surrender (i.e. with a divine attitude), that action bears fruits of the same nature, that is, it bears divine fruits. This means that if you have a "divine" attitude, regardless the kind of action you are doing, the results are similar in nature. Anyway, do not indulge in horrible actions with a divine attitude,

#### Poem 11: Leave This Chanting and Singing

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee! He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the pathmaker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put of thy holy mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil!

Deliverance? Where is this deliverance to be found?

Our master himself has joyfully taken upon him the bonds of creation; he is bound with us all for ever.

Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense! What harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained?

Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow.

With the Sunrise in the east, like a bud bursting its sheath to come out in flower. But if this fact belonged only to the outside world of events, how could we ever find our entrance into it? It is a sunrise in the sky of our consciousness; it is a new creation, fresh in bloom, in our life. Open your eyes and see. Feel this world as a living flute might feel the breath of music passing through it, feel the meeting of creative joy in the depth of your consciousness. Meet this morning light in the majesty of your existence, where it is one with you. But if you sit with your face turned away, you build a separating barrier in the undivided sphere of creation, where events and the creative consciousness meet. Darkness which isolates consciousness within our own self. It hides the great truth of our unity with the world, giving rise to doubt and contention. Groping in the dark, we stumble against objects to which we cling, believing them to be the only things we have. When light comes we slacken our hold, finding them to be mere parts of the all to which we are related. This is freedom-freedom from the isolation of self, from the isolation of things which impart fierce intensity to our sense of possession. Our God is that freedom, for He is Light, and in that light we find out truth, which is our perfect relationship with all.

Fear has unlimited dimensions in the dark, because it is the shadow of the self which has lost its foothold in the all; the self which is a doubter, an unbeliever, which puts its emphasis upon negation, exaggerating detached facts into fearful distortions. In the light we find the harmony of things and know that our world is great and therefore we are great: we know that, with more and more extensive realization of truth, conflicts will vanish; for existence itself is harmony. It is a particular manifestation of our Self-consciousness which allows us to give the things a name. The name is in itself something abstract and as intangible as the object denoted by it. Intellect takes charge of managing these abstract concepts. Without the operation of the intellect right now, we would still be able to perceive all

around, but we could name nothing.

Intellect has a predominantly sattvic nature, that is, one which is pure, harmonious and full of knowledge. It is like a mirror reflecting Self's beauty. If this mirror is clear, the reflection will also be clear. However, should it be dim due to limitations, the respective reflection will look distorted. The notion "Dehoham" (I am the body) is one of the results of such a distorted reflection. Those limitating notions arise on account bf the intellect becoming dim or clouded. Wrath is the principle cause for the aforesaid mirror known as intellect not to work adequately. It clouds the intellect and brings about loss of memory.

Wrath is born from the desires that are not fulfilled. The goddess "wrath" along with the goddess "worldly desires" have already been worshipped and saluted in the last circuit. As these goddesses are already pleased, they are changed into pure Bliss. So, intellect assumes clarity (Sattva), which is its essential nature. The other two gunas (Rajas and Tamas) had so far dimmed the crystal called intellect, but when worshipped in the form of the abovementioned goddess, they minimize their activity, thus letting Sattva shine like a gem over the specular surface of the fourteenth tattva (i.e. Buddhi or intellect). This is the sense. It is "I am one way or the other". Originally, "I am" is with no predicate, but through ego you assume various types of predicates (e.g. "beautiful, ugly, fat, thin, wealthy, poor, etc.). Ego is neither mind (Manas) nor intellect (Buddhi), but rather that which produces the thoughts forming the mind. If you try to stop the mind, you will notice a sort of internal pressure that attempts to manifest thoughts again. This internal pressure is ego.

With his sense of decorum, clarity, proportion and classical form, Tagore brought to lyrical poetry both a craftsmanship and a tone which owed much to the classical poets of India: Kalidas, Bhartrihari, Tulsidas. Yet his work never seemed far removed from colloquial English and from

a kind of rough realism that was particularly English in focus.

Tagore's poetry falls into five groups based mostly on stylistic qualities: poems of festive ceremony, which celebrate the qualities of ordered richness and dignified delight which represent his image of the good life, elegies and epitaphs: brief, simple, full poems; direct, impersonal, inevitable; compliments and tributes, which summarize warmly and yet judiciously compliment a man's character and achievement, such as his tribute to Upnishadas, songs; and epigrams, done in imitation of Indian Sufi poet Kabir.

Since the origins of time, luminaries of the philosophical, theological and literary worlds have been inspired by two of the most elementary geometric figures, the circle and the straight line, to formulate and express original abstractions on arguably life's most prevalent and powerful emotion, love. Through the poetic verse of John Donne's 'A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning' and Henry Vaughan's 'The World', an examination of circular conceits will demonstrate the nature and perceptions of love in the context of the Renaissance. Juxtaposed with these texts, 'The Definition of Love' by Andrew Marvell and 'The Search' by George Herbert will indicate, via the use of lineal conceits, opposing sentiments on the characteristics of love, being a 'strong and passionate predilection of affection for another. Rabindranath had simililarity with them but his primary sources were the Hindu scriptures. Whilst purists may argue that a consistent, literal and specific definition of Metaphysical Poetry is non-existent, numerous varying suppositions have been compiled over time to produce a progressive interpretation of this seventeenth century style of verse. While all contemporary theories on the nature of Metaphysical Poetry rest on the essayists' perceived understanding and commentary of distinct texts, a firm

article of consensus is often found amongst literary critics in relation to the vital attributes of Metaphysical Poetry.

#### Poem 12: The Time That My Journey Takes

The time that my journey takes is long

And the way of it long.

I came out on the chariot of the first gleam of light,

And pursued my voyage through

The wildernesses of worlds leaving my track

On many a star and planet.

It is the most distant course that comes nearest to thyself,

and that training is the most intricate

which leads to the utter simplicity of a tune.

The traveller has to knock at every alien door

to come to his own, and one has to wander through all the outer worlds to reach the innermost shrine at the end,

My eyes strayed far and wide before I shut them and said 'Here art thou!'

The question and the cry 'Oh, where?'

melt into tears of a thousand streams and deluge

the world with the flood of the assurance 'I am!'

Our great masters in all ages did truly realize in themselves the freedom of the soul in their consciousness of the spiritual kinship of man which is universal. And yet human races, owing to their external geographical condition, developed in their individual isolation a mentality that is obnoxiously selfish. In their instinctive search for truth in religion either they dwarfed and deformed it in the mould of the primitive distortions of their own race-mind, or else they shut their God within temple walls and scriptural texts safely away, especially from those departments of life where his absence gives easy access to devil-worship in various names and forms. They treated their God in the same way as in some forms of government the King is treated, who has traditional honour but no effective authority. The true meaning of God has

remained vague in our minds only because our consciousness of the spiritual unity has been thwarted. One of the potent reasons for this—our geographical separation—has now been nearly removed. Therefore the time has come when we must, for the sake of truth and for the sake of that peace, which is the harvest of truth, refuse to allow the idea of our God to remain indistinct behind unrealities of formal rites and theological mistiness.

The creature that lives its life screened and sheltered in a dark cave, finds its safety in the very narrowness of its own environment. The economical providence of Nature curtails and tones down its sensibilities to such a limited necessity. But if these cave-walls were to become suddenly removed by some catastrophe, then either it must accept the doom of extinction, or carry on satisfactory negotiations with its wider surroundings.

The races of mankind will never again be able to go back to their citadels of high-walled exclusiveness. They are to-day exposed to one another, physically and intellectually. The shells, which have so long given them full security within their individual enclosures have been broken, and by no artificial process can they be mended again. So we have to accept this fact, even though we have not yet fully adapted our minds to this changed environment of publicity, even though through it we may have to run all the risks entailed by the wider expansion of life's freedom. A large part of our tradition is our code of adjustment which deals with the circumstances special to us. These traditions, no doubt, variegate the several racial personalities with their distinctive colours-colours which have their poetry and also certain protective qualities suitable to each different environment. We may come to acquire a strong love for our own colourful race specialty; but if that gives us fitness only for a very narrow world, then, at the slightest variation in our outward

circumstances, we may have to pay for this love with our life itself.

In the animal world there are numerous instances of complete race suicide overtaking those who fondly clung to some advantage which later on became a hindrance in an altered dispensation. In fact the superiority of man is proved by his adaptability to extreme surprises of chance—neither the torrid nor the frigid zone of his destiny offering him insuperable obstacles. The vastness of the race problem with which we are faced today will either compel us to train ourselves to moral fitness in the place of merely external efficiency, or the complications arising out of it will fetter all our movements and drag us to our death.

When our necessity becomes urgently insistent, when the resources that have sustained us so long are exhausted, then our spirit puts forth all its force to discover some other source of sustenance deeper and more permanent. This leads us from the exterior to the interior of our store-house. When muscle does not fully serve us, we come to awaken intellect to ask for its help and are then surprised to find in it a greater source of strength for us than physical power. When, in their turn, our intellectual gifts grow perverse, and only help to render our suicide gorgeous and exhaustive, our soul must seek an alliance with some power which is still deeper, yet further removed from the rude stupidity of muscle. Hitherto the cultivation of intense race egotism is the one thing that has found its fullest scope at this meeting of men. In no period of human history has there been such an epidemic of moral perversity, such a universal churning up of jealousy, greed, hatred and mutual suspicion. Every people, weak or strong, is constantly indulging in a violent dream of rendering itself thoroughly hurtful to others. In this galloping competition of hurtfulness, on the slope of a bottomless pit, no nation dares to stop or slow down. A scarlet fever with a raging temperature has attacked the entire body of mankind, and

political passion has taken the place of creative personality in all departments of life.

It is well known that when greed has for its object material gain then it can have no end. It is like the chasing of the horizon by a lunatic. To go on in a competition multiplying millions becomes a steeplechase of insensate futility that has obstacles but no goal. It has for its parallel the fight with material weapons-weapons which must perpetually be multiplied, opening up new vistas of destruction and evoking new forms of insanity in the forging of frightfulness. Thus seems now to have commenced the last fatal adventure of drunken. Passion riding on an intellect of prodigious power. Love is not a mere impulse, it must contain truth, which is law. It accepts limitations from truth because of its own inner wealth. The child willingly exercises restraint to correct its bodily balance, because it has true pleasure in the freedom of its movements; and love also counts no cost as too great to realize its truth. Poetry is much more strict in its form of expression than prose, because poetry has the freedom of joy in its origin and end. Our love of God is accurately careful of its responsibilities. It is austere in its probity and it must It must have intellect for its ally. Since what it deals with is immense in value, it has to be cautious about the purity of its coins. Therefore, when our soul cries for the gift of immortality, its first prayer is-Lead me from the unreal to Truth.'

The goddess Vaisnavii has to do with imagination. Your fantasies are bewildering and thus you fall prey to them. Reality is different from your fantasies indeed, but somehow your ego forces you to live in dreaming despite your eyes be widely open. The extremely dangerous imaginations are not those in which you imagine to be a World War II hero, or a tough guy driving a sumptuous car, or a femme fatale with a long row of men awaiting to kiss

us. No, these forms of imagination are certainly harmful but not tremendously dangerous.

The real problem lies in those imaginations which force you to consider yourself to be a limited being that lives a handful of years and that all the time tries to attain true happiness with likewise limited objects and people. These very forms of imagination make you think that everything and everyone is not Shiva, and consequently you feel separation and lack of unity in all. In fact, you imagine that there is a manifest universe out there which is different from us, Shiva. Also, you imagine that space and time are related to Your Existence, dear Self, and that your mind is affecting

The Father is Working in His world, but the Beloved is lying asleep in our heart, in depth of his darkness. He will wake only when our own love wakes. It may sound paradoxical to say that we are unconscious of our own love, as we are unconscious of the fact that the earth is carrying us round the sun. But the truth is that all parts of our nature are not fully illuminated, and in most cases we have the immediate knowledge of ourselves only on the surface where our mind is occupied with the temporary needs and ferments of our life. To Wake Up in Love is not to wake up in a world of sweetness, but in the world heroic endeavours where life wins its eternity through death, and joy its worth in suffering. As the most positive affirmation of truth is in love, it must realize itself through all that threatens us with deprivation. Poverty is afraid of the smallest loss, and wealth is daring in its expenditure. Love is the wealth of soul and therefore it reveals itself in utmost bravery and fortitude. And because it finds its resource in itself it begs not praise from men and no punishment can reach it from outside.

# Poem 13: The Song That I Came to Sing

The song that I came to sing remains unsung to this day.

I have spent my days in stringing and in unstringing my instrument.

The time has not come true, the words have not been rightly set; only there is the agony of wishing in my heart.

The blossom has not opened; only the wind is sighing by.

I have not seen his face, nor have I listened to his voice; only I have heard his gentle footsteps from the road before my house.

The livelong day has passed in spreading his seat on the floor; but the lamp has not been lit and I cannot ask him into my house.

I live in the hope of meeting with him; but this meeting is not yet.

To-day, more than ever before in our history, the aid of spiritual power is needed. Therefore, Tagore believes its resources will surely be discovered in the hidden depths of our being. Pioneers will come to take up this adventure and suffer, and through suffering open out a path to that higher elevation of life in which lies our safety. There was a noble period in the early days of India when, to a band of dreamers, agriculture appeared as a great idea and not merely useful fact. The heroic personality of Ramachandra, who espoused its cause, was sung in popular ballads, which in a later age forgot their original message and were crystallized into an epic merely extolling some domestic virtues of its hero. It is quite evident, however, from the legendary relics lying entombed in the story, that a new age ushered in by the spread of agriculture came as a divine voice to those who could hear. It lifted up the primeval screen of the wilderness, brought the distant near, and broke down all barricades. Men who had formed separate and antagonistic groups in their sheltered seclusions were called upon to form a united people.

In the Vedic verses, we find constant mention of conflicts between the original inhabitants of Ancient India and the colonists. There we find the expression of a spirit that was one of mutual distrust and a struggle in which was sought either wholesale slavery or extermination for the opponents carried on in the manner of animals who live in the narrow segregation imposed upon them by their limited imagination and imperfect sympathy. This spirit would have continued in all its ferocious vigour of savagery had men failed to find the opportunity for the discovery that man's highest truth was in the union of co-operation and love.

The progress of agriculture was the first external step which led to such a discovery. It not only made a settled life possible for a large number of men living in close proximity, but it claimed for its very purpose a life of peaceful cooperation. The mere fact of such a sudden change from a nomadic to an agricultural condition would not have benefited Man if he had not developed there with his spiritual sensitiveness to an inner principle of truth. We can realize, from our reading of the Ramayana, the birth of idealism among a section of the Indian colonists of those days, before whose mind's eye was opened a vision of emancipation rich with the responsibility of a higher life. The epic represents in its ideal the change of the people's aspiration from the path of conquest to that of reconciliation.

The world of things in which we live misses its equilibrium when its communication with the world of love is lost. Then we have to pay with our soul then we have to pay with our soul for objects which are immensely cheap. And this can only happen when the prison wall of things threaten us with being final in themselves. Then it gives rise to terrible fights, jealousies and coercions, to a scramble for space and coercions, to scramble for space and opportunities, for these are limited. We become painfully aware of the evil of this and try all measures of adjustment within the narrow bounds of a mutilated truth. This leads to failures. Only he helps us who proves by his life that we

have a soul whose dwelling is in the kingdom of love, and things lose that tyranny of fictitious price when we come to our spiritual freedom.

It is hard for us to free ourselves from the grip of our acquisitions. For the pull of their gravitation is towards the centre of our self. The force of perfect love acts towards the contrary direction. And this is why love gives us freedom from the weights of things. Therefore our days of joy are our days of expenditure. It is not the likeness of pressure in the outside world which we need in order to be free, but love which has the power to bear the world's weight, not only with ease but with joy.

"The entire universal manifestation, all that is right now around you, mind, senses, ego, intellect, etc., are here because You are also here. It is your Self-consciousness or Shakti appearing in the form of 'I am' which allows all to keep existing. Without 'I am', there is no experience, since when you express I am going to do this, I am going to do that', it is 'I am' what comes first. Why? Because without 'I am' the remaining part of the sentence (i.e. 'going to do...') makes no sense. Hence, all that is perceived by you, right now, is nothing but an extension of your Self-consciousness. It is only a form you assume for your own delight". Such goddesses or powers (shakti-s) must not be fought against, as this behaviour leads to nowhere. It would be like fighting against one's own foot or hand. No, they are to be saluted with respect and love, realizing that they are different aspects of your Shakti. You must surrender yourself to them with all your heart. If you do not do so, those goddesses will bring about contraction and conditioning. It is as if such goddesses, when they are not properly worshipped and contemplated, would get angry and manifest a whole host of limitations. For that reason, the first circuit has as the chief object praising the shakti-s or powers which are mostly rejected by everyone, so that none

of them will interfere the ceremony. One has to become conscious of them at first, and see them as they are really: spontaneous natural manifestations of one's Self. There is no difference here.

If you have this state of consciousness, the shakti-s or powers that caused you affliction before, now give you Bliss. They do so because the natural essence of Shakti is Bliss, Supreme Joy or Aananda. Therefore, in each of the eight "points" of the first circuit, you salute a particular goddess or power, that is, one of the manifestations of your own Self, by realizing that You are them. This is the secret.

Our universe consists of different sounds, touches (tactile sensations), colors, tastes and smells. To differentiate them, the mind uses five patterns as reference (patter sound, touch, color, taste and smell). For instance, by comparing different sounds to the pattern sound, you come to perceive the differences between them all. The same thing is true in respect of the remaining four patterns. These patterns are known as Tanmaatra-s or subtle elements. The five Tanmaatra-s are the minimal quantity of sound, touch, color, taste and smell which could be perceived by the respective senses. Beyond Tanmaatra-s, in other words, beyond that minimal quantity of sensory material, the senses stop their activities. Jnaanendriya-s or the powers behind each of the senses are five in number: the powers of hearing, touching, seeing, tasting and smelling. They are the energies or shakti-s flowing through the five organs of sense (ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose). Therefore, they are not the organs themselves, but the powers circulating through them. That is why, if your eyes stop working for some reason, the power of seeing (Caksurindriya) moves toward another organ (e.g. ears or skin). Enough of this, (go to "Saanzkhya" there) for more information on Tanmaatra-s and Jnaanendriya-s, and their realization. Intellect, ego and mind form a group called "Antahkarana" (inner psychic organ). The mind (Manas) rules over the senses, by focusing them on particular objects. The mind is nothing but the thoughts emerging continuously. It is not something existing apart from thoughts, but the thoughts themselves.

Manas or mind controls the Jnaanendriya-s or Powers of perception by making them focus on a specific object at a given moment and not on other objects. Even though there are many things to see, touch and so on, Manas selects only a few or even only one every moment. In other words, it makes clear or distinct only a narrow band out of the wide band of manifestation. Such is its nature.

# Poem 14: My Desires Are Many

My desires are many and my cry is pitiful, but ever didst thou save me by hard refusals; and this strong mercy has been wrought into my life through and through.

Day by day thou art making me worthy of the simple, great gifts that thou gavest to me unasked—this sky and the light, this body and the life and the mind—saving me from perils of overmuch desire.

There are times when I languidly linger and times when I awaken and hurry in search of my goal; but cruelly thou hidest thyself from before me.

Day by day thou art making me worthy of thy full acceptance by refusing me ever and anon, saving me from perils of weak, uncertain desire.

In our experience of unity, an apparent contraction or limitation emerges all of a sudden. As a result of this contraction, the notion of residing in a particular body, space and time, is developed accordingly in you. Such a notion is called "individual soul". It is also knows as "anu" or finite being (read the above Abhinavagupta's stanza). "Purusa" or "jiiva" are its other appellatives. From the seed of this individual soul arises the creeper of intellect, ego, mind and senses, whose final fruit is the physical universe. As an individual soul, you are wrapped up by limitations

which apparently prevent you from realizing You are the Absolute. In turn, they also prevent you from identifying yourself with the gross matter (Mahaabhuuta-s or the gross elements, for more information). Therefore, the individual soul remains suspended between the Highest Self and the material universe... between heaven and earth, as it were. You can verify this fact right now. Note how you are neither able to become identified with the external objects around up to the point of being one of them, nor realize your unity with the Supreme Self. You are right in the middle (of course, if you are the embodiment of Abhinavagupta on the earth, you will be able to do that easily... I am talking about "normal" people, of course, hehe). And this is your condition as individual soul. You Yourself, the Sublime God, by playing the role of individual soul, act as one who is neither able to realize his essential nature nor become the gross objects. As you move over the fourteenth petal, you should come to understand that state of individual soul to be a mere role you are playing and not Your real essence. This is the purport.

There are men whose idea of life is static, who long for its continuation after death only because of their wish for permanence and not perfection; they love to imagine that the things to which they are accustomed will persist for ever. They completely identify themselves in their minds with their fixed surroundings and with whatever they have gathered, and to have to leave these is death for them. They forget that the true meaning of living is outliving, it is ever growing out of itself. The fruit clings to its stem; its skin clings to the pulp and the pulp to the seed so long as the fruit is immature, so long as it is not ready for its course of further life. Its outer covering and its inner core are not yet differentiated and it only proves its life by its strength of tenacity. But when the seed is ripe its hold upon its surroundings is loosened, its pulp attains fragrance, sweetness, and detachment, and is dedicated to all who

need it. Birds peck at it and it is not hurt, the storm plucks it and flings it to the dust and it is not destroyed. It proves its immortality by its renunciation.

In Hindu scriptures this world is considered to be an egg. If that be true, then this egg must have for its content a living being whose fulfilment is to break through its shell into a freer existence. While our world feeds us, gives us shelter, it encloses us all around. The limitedness of our narrow sensibility and range of thought build the shell of our world egg, within which our consciousness is confined. If we could widen its boundaries even by a small fraction, if some of the invisible rays could come within our sphere of perception, if a few more of the dance rhythms of creation could find response in some added strings of our senses, then the whole aspect of our world would be completely changed. To come out of the bounds of our sensibility and mental vision into a wider freedom is the meaning of our immortality.

Our desires are but focussing our will to a limited range of experience. These become jealously tenacious and combative when we fail to imagine that our experience will widen. In our childhood we wished for an unbounded continuity in our enjoyment of a particular food or game and we refused to believe in the worth of a mature age which had different interests altogether. Those who build their vision of a life after death upon the foundation of desires belonging to the present life merely show their want of faith in Eternal life. They cling to what they have because they cannot believe that their love for the present is only an indication that this love will persist through their growth, stimulating it, and not that it will retard their growth altogether.

The slumbering world is fundamental; it is the world of the mother's womb. It is the world where the grass and the trees live and find their beauty of reposefulness. Our consciousness has freed itself from its embrace, asserting

its independence. It is the freedom of the fountain which must come over and over again to its origin to renew its play. The whole depth and spread of the still water finds its own play in the play of this little fountain. In like manner, it is in our own consciousness that the universe knows itself. Therefore this consciousness has to be great in order to be true. Our consciousness is the music of the world, its dance, its poem. It has its pauses in the bosom of the original sleep, to be fed with immortality at her breast.

One should also reflect this: I have related myself infinite times with every other soul as a mother or a father, as a brother or a sister, as a wife or a husband, as a son or a daughter, as a servant or a master, as a friend or a foe. I have thought that all of them are mine and that I am theirs, that they are my dear ones or my enemies. Thus, I have created the bondage of Karma out of the sense of belonging caused by an attachment or hatred.

Tagore has wondered through every place of the Universe, but found nothing superior to that of gaining the excellent religion in a right manner. O soul! Due to the rise of religious merits of the past, at present, you have gotten the best human life, cultured country, the best family, a healthy body, a long life, unimpaired sense organs, and the company of the virtuous. There too, due to the rise of some special religious merits with the blessings of the worthy guru, you have gotten the chance to hear, understand, and develop the faith in the religion preached by the Tirthankar.

If one wants to achieve prosperity of one's soul, then now is the time to give up carelessness, shake off idleness, sleep, or sluggishness, and be vigilant, and devotedly put in practice this extraordinary religion with real love, and sincerity, because it is difficult to get such a chance again and again. From among your family members, relatives, friends, servants, none will be able to free you from the various miseries like birth, old age, death, fear, sorrow, disease, or worry. At the same time, it is quite certain that none from among these are going to provide protection or save you at the time of death. So why do you waste precious time, in the infatuation for such imaginary relations?

Farms, personal property, silver, gold, money, crops, two-footed beings four-footed beings and base metals are the nine-fold wealth. You might have held or obtained this wealth, whether more or less, whether light or heavy, whether living or nonliving, whether subtle or gross, whether open or secret. They are invariably painful, evil, and sources of sin. Therefore, they bring downfall. They encourage passions like lust, pride, deceit, and greed. They are like the wild forest fire, that burns down the wishing-tree in the form of the monk-hood. Wealth is indeed short-lived, noneternal and it will never provide protection to you or save you.

Again, this gross body is a receptacle of excretion and urine, a skeleton of bones. It is like a broken pot wrapped with leather, like an old rag, like a ripe fruit, like a bag of creatures like worms. It is afflicted with ailments like the disorder of the three humors. It is likely to be worn out with age and disease.

Praiseworthy are those great men who observe the five pure great vows, fivefold carefulnesses, threefold control of mind, speech and body, and protect their soul from sins. Sitting in the ship made of path shown by the non-attached Tirthankars, they cross the ocean of the world. Praise is due to the worthy monks and the saints, who uplift several souls. Praise is due even to those excellent, truthful, highly moral, forgiving, patient, modest, god-fearing, soft-spoken, and appreciative lay Jains of good character, who observe vows. Those who remove the misery of others and are extremely liberal, pious, disciplined, intent on doing good, obliging, mature, beautiful, straightforward, affectionate, and devoted to the fourfold community. O Soul! your task will be successful when you achieve these virtues. Adopt

therefore, the excellent religion of the Tirthankar, step back from sinful acts, and get rid of all the sins and errors by remembering and thinking about them one by one. The foregoing are probabilities which might have occurred in previous as well as this life. You might have first undertaken but then violated the Jain vows or offended against them. Year after year, you might have committed evil deeds out of anger, pride, deceit, greed, or through sound, color, smell, taste, touch, attachment, aversion, censure, false talk, obstinacy, wrong insistence, and carelessness.

One's religious preacher of this life, one's guru, deliverer, saviour of the wretched, destroyer of the worldly misery, singular benefactor, led an evildoer like me, along the path of righteousness after showing one the process of stopping the inflow of Karmas. One wishes that one had been able to observe the five major vows. There are twelve vows. If I have been guilty in respect of restraining my activities in the way of the fivefold conduct, viz., conducts regarding right knowledge, faith, character, penance, and thinking of committing sins, preparation for the commission of such sins, attempts to commit such sins, or actual commission of the sins, then keeping the Arihants, the Siddhas, the Acharyas, the fourfold community, the exposition of the principle and my soul as witnesses, I wish to repent such actions and ask for forgiveness and please all of these sins be set aside.

In the animal world, the nebula of consciousness is diffused in indistinct light. That nebula was concentrated in man and declared in the language of radiant light,' Here am I.' In the history of man there began from that day in many forms, in many ways and many languages the answers to the one fundamental question, 'What am I?' In the true answer to this question lies his joy, his glory. He has understood that he is not simple, but hides a mystery of depth within himself, and that he will finally know himself

only when the veils of the mystery have been pierced. Through centuries he has persisted in this attempt. He has founded innumerable religions and institutions. He protests against his natural instincts and tried to force on himself the recognition that, in truth, he is far greater than what he externally appears to be. He is trying to accept in his mind the idea of Being who is ideally far greater than himself and yet intimately related to him. It is by what he adores that he proves wherein, in his own estimation, lies his truth. Needless to say, that sometimes in the attempt to answer this question, the object of adoration that he imagines, reveals a mind which is blind in its intelligence, vulgar in its morality and deformed in its ideal of beauty. Such answer we shall regard as mistaken. Like all mistakes, these must also be rectified by a universal standard of truth, goodness and beauty.

# Some Short Poems of Sri Aurobindo: A Blending of Art and Mystcism

Dr. Amar Nath Prasad

Sri Aurobindo, a man of many faceted literary personality, a mystic philosopher and a yogi, is a luminous star shining brightly in the firmament of Indian thoughts and literature. He tried his hand with great success at almost every literary genre. He is today recognized undoubtedly one of the greatest poets of Indian writing in English. His magnum opus *Savitri* is an epic, the epic of the present as well as the future; if deals with the universal theme of love and death. Apart from this great epical dimension of his poetic personality, Aurobinod is also very famous for his short lyrical poems and sonnets which are pregnant with the vedantic theme of mysticism. A close critical study of his short poems shows Aurobindo's art of fusing the theme of mysticism with aestheticism.

Aurobindo thinks that there cannot be poetry without inspiration. He compares the poetry of spiritual clarity to sunlight and the poetry of mystic veil to moonlight. In his well-known critical book, *Future Poetry*, he rightly holds the view:

"Mystic poetry can strike still deeper—it can still the inmost and subtlest recesses of the life-soul and the secret inner mind at the same time, it can even, if it is of the right kind, go beyond these also to the pure inmost psyche."

The central theme of all the chief works including the short lyrics of Sri Aurobindo is mysticism which is richly influenced by our great Vedas and Upanishads, vendantas and puranas. Musticism is not a doctrine but a mood, a temper. A mystic visualizes the world of divine reality behind and within the ordinary world of sense and mundane reality. He thinks that the external universe which is open before his eyes and ears speaks to him. The mystic wants to know who is it that speaks silently and always warns his agile mind from indulging into the pleasures of body. A mystic is one who hears clearly even the unheard melody which the general ear is unable to hear. In other words, he makes his journey not in the outside world but in his inner being which is the treasure of truth and external peace and happiness. He feels that the supreme soul or God is one and the same. He finds an essential unity between God and Nature, Man and God. Sri Aurobindo observes:

"the doctrine of the Mystics recognizes an Unknowable, Timeless and Unnameable behind and above all things and not seizable by the studious pursuit of the mind. Impersonally, it is that, the existence; to the pursuit of our personality it reveals itself out of the secrecy of things as the God or Deva-nameless though he has many names, immensurable and beyond description though he holds in himself all description of name and knowledge and all measures of form and substance, force and activiy"<sup>2</sup>

But however rich and profound the thoughts of a writer may be, they cannot make a perfect and universal art. The main ingredient of art is its expression or manner, its lyrical and poetical presentation, its apt use of images and symbolism, terms and phrases. Today Shakespeare is alive not because of his rich and deep philosophy, but because of his artistic and aesthetic presentation of man and manner. It is said that the works of shakespeare is a

great river of art and truth. In Sri Arobindo's poetry we find that his mysticism is not dry and bald but it s suffused with rich artistic craftsmanship. It has 'a unified sensibility' that feeling and thinking together.

## The Tiger and the Deer

This short philosophical poem by Sri Aurobindo deals with a contrast between evil and good, innocence and experience, life and death. It also shows the bright and burning terror of the forest. It has a beautiful internal rhythm, contrast of cacophonic and euphonic sounds, symbolic pattern and an artistic design. It is a poem which deals with life and death through the symbols of the deer and the tiger.

The poem begins with the description of the tiger who is crouching and slouching:

"Brilliant crouching, slouching, what crept through the green heart of the forest, Gleaming eyes and might chest and Soft soundless paws of grandeur and murder"

These opening lines show the balanced approach of Sri Aurobindo about the tiger. Generally, people hate and neglect the tiger because it is very savage, rough and dangerous. But Aurobindo's attitude to the tiger is both positive and negative. Here, the word 'tiger' stands for death, darkness and the dull brain. The door of this poem suggests love, peace, innocence and soul. The killing of the innocent deer by the tiger suggests the death and destruction of the healthy values of life by the cruelty of modern civilization or the materialistic mind on the social and historical plane if suggests the cremation of old ideals and traditions by the fire of modern science and fashion. On the ethical and mystical plane, it suggests the mass neglect of the voice of soul by the various waves of mind.

The poet seems to be very optimistic about love and peace. He thinks that in spite of the various blows of death

and darkness, life is a thing to be enjoyed He also foretells that the day is not so far when both the tiger and the deer will drink water from the same pond:

"Still then shall the beautiful wild deer drink from the coolness of great pools in the leaves's shadow The mighty perish in their might The slain survive the slayer. (p.128)

Here the last alliterative lines suggest the strong optimism of Sri Aurobindo. The sentence has the theme of blood and murder; but the language is not cacophonic. The author has deliberately created music and melody in this sentence. It shows that in spite of death and desolation, life is a thing to be enjoyed. The phrase 'coolness of great pools' suggests love and sympathy, peace and prosperity.

Will, the poet is of the opinion that the tiger is crouching and slouching brilliantly through the green heart of the forest. He has gleaming eyes and mighty chest. He has also a 'soft soundless paws of grandeur and murder'. Here this phrase 'soft soundless paws' is very apt and suggestive. It shows how cruelty has soft sound. It reminds us of villain character Iago in Shakespeare's *Othello*, who says: "I am not what I am". It also recalls a famous English proverb: "A serpent beneath the rose". The movement the tiger has also been suggested through the Zig-Zag sentence:

"But the great beast crouched and crept, and crept and crouched a last time, noiseless, fatal". (p.28)

The phrase 'noiseless fatal' seems to be an imagistic variation of the phrase 'soundless paws'. Generally, it is seen that the fatal things are noiseless.

The poet expresses his philosophical ideas of life and death, innocence and experience through the symbolic story of the tiger and the deer. The innocent deer is about to drink the water of the forest pond. She was unconscious of her death. Suddenly, the fierce tiger leaped upon the innocent deer and torn her to pieces. The poet says:

"Destroyed, the mild harmless beauty by the strong cruel beauty in Nature." (p. 128)

It is interesting to note that Sri Aurobindo has presented here a balance picture of nature where both neetar and poison are equally essential for the existence of life. Everything which God has made has some meaning. Perhaps this is why in this poem he has praised even the cruel beauty of nature. There are some certain terms in this poem which very well show the poet's impartial attitude to both life and death, light and darkness. The poet uses the words 'strong beauty', 'soft paws', 'mighty chest', 'gleaming eyes' etc. for the ferocious tiger. On the other hand, he uses some negative words e. g., 'wild deer' two times for the innocent deer. Here this rich philosophy reminds us of the Vedas and Upanishads and also of the last poems of John Keats where the darkness has also a fruitful meaning. In "Ode to Nightingale' Keats uses the phrases like 'verdurous glooms', 'embalmed darkness', easeful death' etc. for showing death as part and parcel of life.

Thus this beautiful philosophical presentation of death and life, innocence and experience through some beautiful images and phrases shows the poetic talent of Sri Aurobindo. Here we get high intensities of word and rhythm and also an intensity of vision rarely found elsewhere. This poem seems to be just a replica of what Aurobindo observes in his book "Future poetry".

"Therefore, it is well to insist that the native power of poetry is in its right, not in its intellectual thought-matter, and its safety is in adhering to this native principle of vision; its conception, its thoughts, its emotion, its presentation, its structure must rise out of that or else rise into it before it takes its finished form."

# A Child's Imagination

The imagination of a child is pure and untainted. It is always on the wings of poesy and dream. A child is the embodiment of innocence and ignorance, purity and sanity. The felicity and enjoyment which a child gets is similar to the supreme bliss or paramananda of a great yogi who attains this divine happiness after purging his dross of desire in the fire of austerity, tolerance and other virtuous human qualities. This is what Sri Aurobindo presents in this short beet epigrammatic poem, "A Child's Imagination'. He gives the epithet 'golden image' to a child:

"O thou golden image
Miniature of bliss
Speaking sweetly, speaking mutely
Every word deserves a kiss"

Here Sri Aurobindo has a high esteem for a child. He gives two beautiful and suggestive phrases, 'miniature of bliss' and 'golden mage' for a child. As a matter of fact, the life of a child is free from worries, deep distress and the worldly affairs. He is happy both inward and outward. He is free from evils of the society, he has nothing to do with caste class and creed. 'All his activities are centred to his childhood's pleasures. His state of mind is just like a perfect yogi who has ransomed the pleasures of senses and is fully happy and absolutely satisfied with his own realm of permananda.

Sri Aurobindo says that the life of a child is not easy to be understood. It is very strange, remote and splendid. Its fancy is pure and it has an extra ordinary ability to thrill our thoughts. The in explicate happiness which a child enjoys in his childhood is very obscure and it can never be measured: in *Savitri* Aurobindo develops the same idea with a beautiful poetic craftsmanship:

"How shall the child already be the man? Because he is infant, shall he never grow? Because he is ignorant, shall he never learn? In a small fragile seed a great tree lurks
In a tiny gene, a thinking being in shut;
A little element in a little sperma,
It grows and is a conqueror and sage '7 (p-623).

This description of childhood reminds us of William Wordsworth who projects the paradoxical philosophy of childhood through a well-known paradoxical sentence: "A child is the father of the man". As a matter of fact, when a man attains manhood, his laughter begins to fade away from his life. But the life of a child is always full of laughter and sweetness. The poet rightly observes:

"When the eyes grows solemn Laughter fades away: Nature of her might childhood Recollects the Titan play"

A child whose fancy is pure and chaste always sees the Almighty God through his great power of innocence. With his blissful imagination he can fill every thought with divine joy. At times he even reflects the solemn thoughts of nature. Nature also recollects her own childhood when big things happen on earth. Even God sees those strange things that happened when he started creating this beautiful universe. The poet includes the poem by giving a high goes to the extent of comparing the child to God:

"These are coming on thee In thy secret thought God remembers in thy bosom All the wonders that he wrought."

Here this deep philosophical description of childhood is very near to William Vaughan's poem "the Retreat' in which the poet presents his childhood comparing it to the world of eternity. Vaughan says:

"When yet I had not walked above A mile or two from my first Love And looking back, at that short space Could sea a glimpse of this bright face"s

#### Transformation

This is a typical mystical poem by Sri Aurobindo who speaks in this poem as an illumined soul. It shows how it is very tedious for a body to be changed from its state of flesh and bone into the eternal stat of supreme bliss where there is nothing but joy and rapture of the highest degree. In a very lucid but metaphysical way, the poet presents the process of changing the body into the supreme world of unknown raptures. The first stanza shows this process:

"My breath runs in a subtle rhythmic stream; It fills my members with a might divine I have drunk the Infinite like a giant's wine. Time is my drama or my pageant dream Now are my illumined cells joy's flaming scheme and changed my thrilled and branching nerves to fine Channels of rapture opal and hyaline For the influx of the Unknown and the Supreme".9

This opening stanza of this poem very clearly shows the process of controlling the various thought waves of mind through continuous process of surrendering everything including the pleasures of senses for the sake of attaining the world of nothingness or the unheard melody. The phrase 'subtle rhythmic stream' is connotative. It suggests the subtle and in explicate rhythm between the mind which wanders and the soul which is in process of searching for the eternal Truth. Our great sage Patanjali says: "योगश्चित् वृति निरोध:"10 (Yoga the control of thought waves of mind). In order to control the waves, both constant practice and renunciation are needed ("अध्यास वैरागयाम्यां

तिन्ति। When the seeker of supreme bliss or the eternal Truth gets mastery over his five senses, his nerves are thrilled at the highest percipience and he begins to enjoy the divine joy and raptures beyond description.

Now the heat of the poet is transferred. He is no longer a body but an illumined soul. He is no more a vassal of flesh. He is also not slave to nature. Now he is not like the birds of W. B. Yeats' poem "Sailing to Byzantium" who are in the nests and the modern youth who are in one another arms. He now never sings the songs of sensual music but sings an immortal song of past, present and future. After mastering the five senses, the yogi is not caught in the senses narrow mesh. The poet observes:

"I am no more a vassal of the flesh
A slave to Nature and her leaden rule;
I am caught no more in the senses' narrow mesh
My soul unhorizoned widens to measureless sight
My body is God's happy living fool
My spirit is vast sun of deathless eight". (p. 125)

Well, here Sri Aurobindo does not discard the existence of the body. It is the body which is the tool for attaining that supreme bliss by awakening the great power of the soul. When the great light of the soul is discovered, then for the Yogi, there is no significance of the body. His heart becomes the vast sun of light—such light which cannot be killed by the great Death or Time.

Adi Guru Sankarcharya rightly holds the view: "अत्यन्त वैराग्यवतः समाधिः समाहितस्यैव दृढ्प्रबोधः। प्रबुद्धतभ्वस्य हि बन्धमुक्ति मुक्तात्मनो नित्य सुखानुभूतिः"।।<sup>12</sup>

Meaning: The extremely dispassionate man alone has samadhi, and the man of Samadhi alone gets steady realization; the man who has realized the Truth is alone

free from bondage, and only the soul experience eternal bliss.

The last stanza of the poem "Transformation" has both feeling and form, matter and manner. The rich philosophical thoughts have been beautifully woven into the garland of rich poetry and craftsmanship. The metaphors "narrow mesh', 'vassal', 'tool' and 'vast sun' are very apt and suggestive. A critic rightly says:

"His great manner is not a laboured affair. There is an aim of absolute spontaneity, one-touch writing, which we don't normally expect from a writer of ornate prose. The works grew out of his mind as naturally as the leaf of a tree." 13

It is interesting to note here that Sri Aurobindo's concept of poetry is central to Yoga or vedantic mysticism. He is of the opinion that there is very little difference between the seer and the creator or poet. Poetry, according to him, is a direct yogic inspiration. As it is very difficult to get over the infirmities and agility of the thought waves of mind, similarly it is also a very difficult job to compose a universal and eternal work of art. A great work of art can only be created by a well-controlled and fully disciplined mind which has an ideal vision; Sri Aurobindo observes:

"All poetry is an inspiration, a thing breathed into the thinking organ from above, it is recorded in the mind, but is born in the higher principle of direct knowledge or idea vision which surpasses mind. It is in reality a revelation. The prophetic or revealing power sees the substance; the inspiration perceives the right expression. Neither is manufactured; nor is poetry really a poiesis or composition, more even a creation, but rather the revelation of something that eternally exists. The ancients knew this truth and used the same word of for poet and prophet, creator and seer, sophos, vates kavi" 14

#### Nirvana

Like all other poems of Sri Aurobindo, "Nirvana" is also a typical poem of mysticism which calls for the deep knowledge of Vedantic mysticism of the readers. This poem comes under such category which cannot be so easily understood by all the readers. It has not the simplicity and lucidity like the poems of Wordsworth or William Shakespeare. This poem demands our basic knowledge of the yogic philosophy which says that an impure mind caught in the web of maya or worldly pleasures of the five senses cannot see the eternal bliss. In order to enjoy that supreme truth or the paramananda, the Yogi has to stop the diverse mental waves and egoism and fix his gaze on the Atman or the Supreme Reality. This is the basic theme of the poem, 'Nirvana' which means absolute liberation from the bondage of body. The poet says that all the worldly things are bound to be perished, the only object which remains permanently is our supreme soul:

All is abolished but the mute Alone
The mind from thought released, the heart from grief
Grow inexistent now beyond belief
There in so I, no Nature, known-unknown
The city, a shadow picture without tone"15

The phrase "mute Alone" in this poem is very suggestive and mystical. It stands for the immortal Soul which is never bound by any caste, class, creed and is above everything. It never dies and grows old. It is always fresh and green. It is not dependent on anything, but free, alone and independent'. Sankaracharya in his magnum opus Vivekacudamani, rightly contemplaty:

"न जायते नो भ्रियते न वर्द्यते न क्षीयते नो विकरोति नित्यः विलीयमानेऽपि व पुष्यमुष्मि न लीयते क्म्भ इवाम्बरं स्वयम्॥ 16"

Meaning: It is neither born nor dies, it neither grows nor decays, nor does it undergo any change, being eternal. It does not cease to exist even when this body is destroyed, like the sky in a jar (after it is broken), for it is independent.

When the seeker of the eternal Truth meditates on the Supreme Soul, he becomes so much absorbed in the process That it is very difficult to say whether he is a body or a soul, a dancer or dance. He gets a perfect victory over his "I" which is the root of all evils. And then he is fully merged in his own city of mirth and joy; he sees only a shadow without tone. Here the word 'shadow' has been philosophically suggested which stands for the indescribable joy even in death or darkness. The Yogi very well known that shadow has an equal meaning and significance to that of light; because both shadow and light are the two phases of the same thing, they are the two aspects of God as Sarojini Naidu says:

"Life is a prism of My Light And Death the shadow of My face"17

The last lines of the poem, "Nirvana" is even more deep and philosophical. I describe the illimitable Permanent' which seems to be just the imagistic variation upon the phrase, 'Mute Alone" of the above stanza:

"Only the illimitable Permanent
Is here A Peace stupendous,
Featureless, still,
Replaces all-what once was I, in It
A silent unnamed emptiness content
Either to fade in the Unknowable
Or thrill with the luminous seas of
the Infinite" 18

Here is these lines Sri Aurboindo, the great sage, says that however healthy a man may be, he cannot enjoy the peacefulness of soul as long as he is slave to body. The 'illimitable permanent' can only be felt after surrendering the five senses and renouncing the wealth of the world as dirt or soil. When the Seeker of Great Self dives deep into the ocean of supreme Truth, he gets a silent unnamed contentment which is beyond description. But this spiritual

salvation is possible only when the man knows the art of freeing his body which is trapped in the deserves. *Yajurved* gives us an appropriate symbol for controlling the senses:

"सुषारिधरश्वानिव यन्मनुष्यान्ने नीयतेऽभीशुभिर्वाजिनऽइव। हत्यप्रतिष्ठं यदजिरं जविष्ठं तन्मे मन: शिवसंकल्पमस्तु॥"<sup>19</sup>

Meaning: "Just as the charioteer of a chariot drawn by ten horses controls the horses by the reins, similarly, O men you also keep our ten senses and sense-organs under control through the mind".

To sum up, Sri Aurobindo's poetry is not simply rich in thought, of vedantic mysticism but also suffused with the various colours of poetic craftsmanship. His poems will always be immortal like the immortal soul or 'illimitable permanent'. His poems clearly show what Aurobindo thinks in his famous work *Future Poetry*:

"It is in effect a larger cosmic vision, a realizing of the godhead in the world and in man, of his divine possibilities and in man, of his divine possibilities as well of the greatness of the power that manifests in what he is, a spiritualized uplifting of his thought and feeling and sense and action, a more developed psychic mind and heart, a truer and deeper insight into his nature and the meaning of the world, a calling of diviner potentialities and more spiritual values into the intention and structure of his life that is the call upon humanity, the prospect offered to it by the slowly unfolding and now more clearly disclosed Self of the universe. The nations that most include and make real these things in their life and culture are the nations of the coming down and the poets of whatever tongue and race who most completely see with this vision and with the inspiration of its utterance are those who shall be the creators of the poetry of the future".20

Thus, the poetry of Sri Aurobindo has an aesthetic as well as philosophical charm which instantly appeals to the heart of the reader. The metaphors and images used in his poems are very apt and suggestive. They work like a beautiful dress to his deep and profound thoughts. Aurobindo's deep vedantic contemplation is not a mere utterance of a pedantic scholar or a Yogi, but it is artistically woven into the fabric of art and beauty.

His poetic and vedantic thought mentioned in his poetic creations is like the fragrance of a flower ever guarded and beautified the various petals and ever ready to diffuse its vast aroma to all directions without any feeling or prejudice.

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# Sarojini Naidu's Poetry: An Evergreen Plant of Vedantic Fruit and Poetic Fragrance

---Dr. Amar Nath Prasad

Sarojini Naidu is one of the illustrious poetesses of Indo-Anglian poetry. Her songs are in great tradition of Indian devotional literature, the literature which successfully and beautifully illustrates and explores the vedantic and Upanishadic philosophy of love, truth, peace, God, immortality of the Supreme soul, religious faith, self-realization soul, religious faith, self-realization etc. But what makes her poetry charming and lively is her lyrical wealth, her spontaneous overflow of her emotions steeped in Indian, ethos and culture, the vividness of imagery, her simplicity of expression, her passionate desire for beauty, music and melody, and above all, the thrilling, imagistic—and rhythmic language. H. M. Prasad rightly holds the view:

"Sarojini Naidu writes instant poetry where images and metaphors come rolling ready on the hotplates of imagination: Her poetry is intensely emotional, at times passionate to the point of eroticism and always has a spring-like lyricism."

# Village Song

"Village Song" is a mythical mystical and symbolic poem by Sarojini Naidu. It deals the natural fear of a village maiden who has gone to fetch a jay of water from the river, Yamana. The road is long and lonely and the night is going to devour the day very soon. After having filled up her pitchers, she is in a hurry to return her home. But she is detained by the song of the boatman. She is so much fascinated by the song, that she forgets to return and stays to listen to the song and so she gets late. On the other hand the shadows of night are falling:

"Full are my pitchers and far to carry
Lone is the way and long
Why, O why was I tempted to Tarry
Lured by the boatman's song?
Swiftly the shadows of night are falling
Hear, O hear, is the white crane calling
Is it the wild old cry?<sup>2</sup>

The girl who represents here the typical Indian girl of a village near the bank of Yamana river in U. P. is afraid of snake in the path as there are no tender moonbeams to light her. She is also very fearful of the ghosts or evil spirits, Have this description is very pictorial and real. In the villages, we see that the illiterate and superstitious people strongly believe in the evil spirits. They think that evil spirits wander here and there in the night. So, the fear of the girl is quite natural:

"There are no tender moonbeams to light me,
It in the darkness a serpent should bite me
Or if on evil spirit should smite me,
Ram Re Ram; I shall die.

The second part of the poem deals with the fear of the maiden through some other imagistic variations. It also shows the fear of the mother of the girl who is very sad because her lovely daughter has not returned. Say prays God for to bring her safe. This shows a typical love and affection of a mother for her child in India. The poetess says:

"My brother will murmur, 'why doth the linger?
My mother will wait and weep,
Saying, 'O safe may the great gods bring her,
The Jamuna's waters rush by so quickly,
The shadows of evening gather so thickly,
Like black birds in the sky.

Here we see the sense of fear in a maiden's heart and her love and attachment to her brother, mother and home. She is very curious to return to her home. But she is detained not only by the sweet and luring song of the boatmen but also by the natural obstacles like storm, rain and lightening. And so she devotes herself fully to the existence of God who only can save her from the dangers and guide her to her home:

"O! if the storm breaks, what will betide me? Safe from the lightening where shall I hide me? Unless thou succor my footsteps and guide me Ram Re Ram! I shall die.

The poem is rich in great vedantic philosophy of the journey of the soul from the world of materialism to the world of spiritualism. As the innocent and fearful village girl has to pass through several ups and downs of the way, similarly the body has to undergo the flows of the waves of mind, the five senses and the attachment to this temporal world. Some of the worlds and phrases of this poem are highly symbolic. The terms 'serpent', 'storm', 'boatman's song', 'shadows of evening', 'lightening' have deep connotative meaning. They have philosophical overtones.

The innocent fearful girl of the village suggests the body which is very curious to go home where her mother and brother are waiting for her arrival. 'Home' seems to denote here the home of God where everybody has to go a day or two. But it is not easy to gain the grace and grandeur of God. The way is very long and weary. There are serpents in the darkness which may bite the body. The 'evil spirit' and the 'serpent' in the darkness suggests the five senses which hinder the path of the Soul to reach the supreme truth: It reminds us of the book, "Vivekchudamani" by the great sage, Sankaracharya who says that it is very difficult to get a victory over the senses:

"दोषेण तीव्रो विषय: कृष्ण सर्पविषादपि। विषं निहन्ति भोक्तारं द्रष्यरं चक्षुषाप्ययम्"

(Sense-objects are even more virulent in their evil effects than the poison of the cobra. Poison kills one who takes it, but those others kill one who even looks at them through the eyes).

At the end of the poem, the poetess gives the hint of getting the salvation of the soul from the bondage of body. She says that the man who leads a life of austerity and renunciation follows the foot-steps of God and thus, succeeds in attaining the supreme bliss. The village girl in this poem is surrounded by the fear of darkness, storm, rain and serpent. But in the long seen, she finds a solution to devote her full faith in the existence of God so that he may succour her footstep and guide her. This reminds us of the Rigveda which rightly observes:

गूहता जुह्यं तमो वि यात विश्वमत्रिणम्। ज्योतिष्कर्त्ता यदुश्मसि॥<sup>4</sup>

(O Lord! We have fallen in a dark cave. In this severe darkness many demons are harassing us. We pray to you to destroy this darkness and bless us with the donation of brightness so that we can be liberated from these enemies).

The rhyme scheme and the structure of the poem is very close to Indian flavour of the folk song. The phrases, 'why O why' and 'Ram Re Ram' shows a poetic and conversational rhythm. The also show the swaying movement of the song as well as the way of walking taking

with a pitcher full of water on the head. Here these phrases are very near to Sarojini Naidu's other poem "The palanquin Bearer" in which Sarojini Naidu repeats the phrase 'lightly, O lightly' to denote the swaying movement of the palanquin:

"Lightly, O lightly, we bear her along,
She sways like a flower in the wind of our song;
She skims like a bird on the foam of a stream
She floats like a laugh from the lips of a dream
Gaily, O gaily we glide and we sing,
We bear her along lime a pearl of string"

# The Soul's Prayer

"The Soul's Prayer" is a divine poem which is in the form of a dialogue between soul and God. The soul asks for joy and sorrow, gift and grief, life and death. God promises to give the soul everything. He says that only the chastened spirit that only the chastened spirit that has burnt the "dross of desire" in the fire of love and pain, may be able to know the mystery of life and death. Life and death, according to the poetess, are the two phases of the same coin. Life is the reflection of the supreme light of God and death is the shadow of His face.

The beauty of the poem lies in its apt use of metaphor and simile and some other poetic devices. It is not a dry sermon, but here the philosophical thoughts of the poet have been woven into the fabric of art and literature.

The poem begins with the questions of the innocent soul about the mystery of life and death:

"In childhood's pride I said to thee

O thou, who mad'st me of Thy breath speak Master, and reveal to me

Thine inmost laws of life and death."

Here is these lines, the narrator wants to ask the question of life and death through the childhood's pride. As

a matter of fact, a grown up man whose mind is loaded with several waves of thoughts engendered by the five senses cannot be able to make an interview with God. In order to go to his devine tent, the man should at first, becomes as innocent as a child. About the innocence and purity of childhood, Sri Aurobindo has rightly observed:

"Strange, remote and splendid Childhood's fancy pure Thrills to thoughts we cannot fathom, Quick felicities obscure."

The soul is ready to enjoy both pain and joy which God has created for this world. The individual body is very well aware of the fact that both joy and pain, nectar and poison are made by the same God. So each has a separate significance for man. Perhaps this is why the soul longs for tasting the flavour of 'earth's utmost bitter, utmost sweet.' The poet observes:

"Spare me no bliss, no pang of strife withhold no gift or grief I crave The intricate lore of love and life And mystic knowledge of the grave."

It is interesting to note here that Sarojini Naidu has presented here a balanced approach to life. Life is an amalgam of both sweet and bitter, pain and pleasure. So, a man of perfect knowledge never makes any difference between poison and nectar, pain and pleasure. God has given us pain to clears the impurities of our character. It purge the grass of desire so that the mind may be able to know the truth. God replies:

"Thou shalt drink deep of joy and fame, And love shall burn thee like a fire And pain shall cleanse the like a flame To purge the dross from thy desire."

Here, the poet has taken the image of fire and flame for both love and pain. Love in a man's life is the most important gift given by God. A man of love is successful in conquering the various evils of his characters. Similarly in the hour of deep pain and distress, man's virtuous qualities are born. We all know that desire is the cause of all our evils. It has been compared here to the dross which makes the clean water dirty and impure. Sankaracharya, in his magnum opus *Vivekchudamani* advocates the purging of desires

"अतो विमुक्त्यै प्रयतेत विद्वान् संन्यस्तबाह्यार्थ सुखस्पृहः सन्। संत महान्तं समुपेत्य देशिकं तेनो पदिष्यर्थ समाहितात्मा॥"

(Therefore the man of learning should strive his best for liberation, having renounced his desire for pleasures from external objects, duly approaching a good and generous preceptor, and fixing has mind on the truth inculcated by him)

Sarojini Naidu seems to be dead against blind prayers done without any sense of devotion and sacrifice. She thinks that when the impure mind is chastened by the pain and love, it becomes fit for attaining the supreme bliss or paramananda and then the body's blind prayer disappeared from the life and the soul is pardoned by God. In that state, the soul begins to feel the simple secret of God's peace. Here the term 'simple secret' is very suggestive. It shows that it is very easy to obtain the bliss of God for an innocent man whose mind is chastened and the soul in pure. It never demands any superficial activities like making temples and cherishes, delivering ethical and religious lectures, or worshipping the temples without cleaning one's own soul. Vivekanand rightly observes:

"Religion does not consist in erecting temples or building churches or attending public worship. It is not to be found in books or in words or in lectures or in organization. Religion consists in realization, to realize religion is that of renunciation."

The last lines of this poem are very deep and profound. They explores the great truth of life through an epigrammatic way. They contain the answer of the curious soul. God gives here the secret of Truth:

"Life is a prism of my light And death the shadow of My face."

Here in these lines, Sarojini Naidu, like Tagore and Sri Aurobindo, explores the mystic philosophy of Vendanta and Upanishad. She thinks that life and death, light and darkness are one and the same. Both have been created by the Omniscient God for the welfare of human being.

These lines contain a very suggestive scientific metaphor which demands our knowledge of light, shadow and prism. When light enters through a prism, it scatters in seven colours in different direction. So the various colours of life e. g., life, death, mirth, grief, pain, pleasure etc. are derived from only one source, that is, the light of God. When the light falls on the object, the object is visible and it is called light or life. But on the other side of the object where there is no light, there is darkness and it may be called pain or death. So, the object is same but its way of seeing or falling of light on it is different. This is life and death, mirth and pain. So the implied meaning is that one should treat both life and death, light and darkness equally: So, whether it is death or life, nectar or poison, God is present in every matter and thus we should enjoy both 'utmost bitter, utmost sweet'. Yajurved observes:

> वेनस्तत्पश्यन्निहितं गुहा सद्यत्र विश्वं भवत्येकनीऽम। सऽओत: प्रोतश्च विभू: प्रजासु।<sup>9</sup> Venastatpashyarnihitam guhaa sadyatra Vishvam bhavatyekanidam Saotaha protashcha vibhum prajaasu

(Meaning:—The learned people come to know through their knowledge, thinking, contemplation and experience that God is present in every matter. He astounds everyone. The entire creation has manifested through Him. All living beings are produced by Him and go into oblivion (merge into Him) at the time of deluge)

# Songs of Radha: The Quest

It is divine love-song which excellently presents the Indian faith particularly, of Kabir, that God lives within one's own self. It also describes the passionate and frantic love of the beloved for the lover whom she is searching for hastly and restlessly. But the irony is that he is hidden neither in the 'forest glade' nor in the deep waters, but he is found in her own heart. This rich philosophical idea of the realization of Soul is the core of all the four Vedas.

The poet gives a very fine account of the realization of God. She feels that God can't be found in mountains and forests, caves and dells; but He can be realized within one's own self. So, according to the poet, it is fruitless and foolish to research for Him outside:

"Thou sadist-O faithless one, self-slain with doubt,

Why seekest thou my loveliness without" By this couplet Sarojini Naidu means to say that so long as the body has doubt about the existence of God, it cannot be able to gain the supreme bliss. It can only be realized with the help if loveliness in one's heart.

Here this interpretation is very close to Kabir and Tolstoy. Tolstoy says that the kingdom of God is not outside but within. Kabir also takes the image of fish that is thirstily, though it lives in water. Sankaracharya lays stress on the realization of one's own self which only can liberate the man from the bondage of samsara:

"ब्रह्माभिन्नत्व विज्ञानं भवमोक्षस्य कारणम्। येनाद्वितीयमानन्द ब्रह्म सम्पद्यते बुद्यै:॥"<sup>10</sup> "The realization of one's identity with Brahman is the cause of liberation from the bonds of Samsara (materialistic world), by means of which the wise man attains Brahman the one without a second, the bliss Absolute".

This poem has two parts. The first part deals with the body or mind which is desperately searching for God or Truth. The second part deals with the realization of God within one's own self. The poetess says that Radha is desperately searching for Krishna from down to dusk. She asks questions to wind—"O wind when is Kanhaiya gone"? She also makes inquiries to the moon and the forest glade:

"I questioned at moonrise the forest glade Rests my sweet lover in they friendly shade? At dusk I pleaded with the dove-grey tides O tell me where flute-player abides.

Here, through the portrayal of Radha, the poetess describes the desperate search for everyman. All of a sudden a reply arose from the very core of the soul. The voice of consciousness feels Radha that God is hidden in her own soul. Here the phrase, 'hidden laughter' stands for the laughter of the soul. It reminds us of 'unheard melody' of John Keats and the 'sincerest laughter' of P. B. Shelley

The image of chalice in this poem is also very suggestive. It is very close to the image of 'cup' by Vivekanand. The reply of the soul is very rich in philosophy. The poetess gives the epithet 'faithless' to mind or body. The phrase 'self slain with doubt' is very noteworthy. It shows how man's mind is a centre of doubt. It is the doubt which kills the worth of mind.

Words like Kanhaya and Ghanashyam show Indianess in this poem. The word 'Kanhaiya' in place of 'Krishna' is more poetic, regional and aesthetic. The phrase 'my foolish live' has both physical and spiritual meaning. On the physical plane, it shows the love of the lover for the beloved; but on the spiritual level, it shows how the love is not

outside but within her. The poem is also suffused with the figures personification and alliteration.

In short, he poem has a rich poetic device for expressing the passionate love of Radha for her Kanhaiya. But on the philosophical level, the search of Radh for Kanhaiya in the mountain and wood connotes the research of the soul for the eternal truth or spiritual bliss which lies not in the physical or external world but in the very core of one's heart. When the seeker of Truth realizes this secret of the soul, he becomes a part and parcel of God. He attains such bliss or permananda that he finds no difference between the body and the soul, the physical and the spiritual. He is just like the perfect dancer on the stage who merges himself/herself fully in his/her dance. During his dancing, it is very difficult to separate the dancer from the dancing. Sarojini Naidu rightly concludes:

"I am of thee, as thou of me, a part Look for me in the mirror of thy heart".

The process of attaining the supreme bliss or the journey of the body or mind to the spiritual world of soul has also been suggested through some powerful metaphors. The poetess takes the images of a boat that 'rocks from keel to rafter' and 'bubbling of nectar in the heart's chalice'. The word 'keel' means big flat wood under the boat and 'rafter' means big flat wood that floats. Here these terms seem to suggest the body and the soul respectively. It is body which is the cause of the divine bliss or the 'hidden laughter'. When the body is able to root out the waves of mind and attain the truth through austerity and renunciation, it has a unique sense of spiritual bliss which has been denoted by the phrase, 'hidden laughter'. After attaining this 'hidden laughter' or in Keats's term 'unheard melody', the heart of the experience begins to bubble like the nectar in his own heart's chalice. Sankaracharya, our great Indian sage also gives us details of the journey of the body to the realm of the

soul through the constant process of purging the desires of body and five senses. He takes the image of sandal wood covered with dirt and dust. But when the sandal wood is cleaned and rubbed on the rock, ti begins to diffuse its hidden aroma:

> "अन्तः श्रितानन्तदुरन्तवासना धूलीविलिप्ता परमात्मवासना। प्रज्ञाति संघर्ष तो विशुद्धा प्रतीयते चन्दन गन्धवत् स्फुटम॥"<sup>11</sup>

**Meaning**: "Like the fragrance of the sandal wood, the perfume of the Supreme self, which is covered with the dust of endless, violent impressions imbedded in the mind', when purified by the constant friction of knowledge, is (again) clearly perceived".

#### In Salutation to the Eternal Peace

This mystical poem of Sarojini Naidu tells us the ecstasy of the Supreme soul at one hand and the fret and the fever, the fear and the hate of body and this mundane materialistic world on the other. The narrator is fully satisfied with having the perfect soul which is 'sweet' and always gleams and glides in the world of peace and eternity. The poem as we'll see, is embedded with some beautiful metaphors and images which are highly suggestive and poetic. The use of alliteration at the right place makes the poem even more enjoyable.

The poem begins with the fear and hate of this world which the narrator, an embodiment of sweet soul, has to tolerate:

"Men say the world is full of fear and hate,
And all life's repining harvest fields await
The restless sickle of relentless fate
But I, sweet soul, rejoice that I was born
When from climbing terrace of corn
I watch the golden oriels of Thy morn."

These lines show a contrast between the body and soul. The body is bound to fear and hate and it is subject to death and decay; but the Supreme Soul is like a golden oriels that flies freely in the open sky of freedom and liberty, mirth and bliss. Here the comparison of the sweet soul to the bird oriels is very appropriate and suggestive. The body is bound to the earth but the soul is like a golden bird that sing the song of eternal love and peace on the golden branch. Here this comparison reminds us Andrew Marvell, a/great Metaphysical poet who imagines the soul as a singing bird of the sky:

"There like a bird it sits and sings
Then whets and clasps it silver wings
And yet prepared for longer flight
Waves in its plume the various light"
12

Well, in the opening of the poem we get the extended metaphor of agriculture. Sarojini Naidu has compared the whole changing world to the process of repening of corn in the big harvest fields in which everybody has to grow and ripe. The powerful Fate or Death has been compared to relentless man taking in his hand the restless sickle. The powerful Fate is cutting the life's repining harvest without any rest. Here this image of 'relentless fate' reminds us of Thomas Hardy who has written a number of books about the indifferent and callous attitude of death and providence. It also shows Shirley's famous poem "Death, the Great Leveller" in which "Death, lays his icy hands in kings". The 'ripening' of this poem has also a close conformity with Shakespeare's well-known lines is As you Like it:

And so from hour to hour we ripe and ripe, And then-from, hour to hour we rot and rot"13

The narrator of poem has a great power of his 'sweet soul'. This is why he never cares the world's desire and pride. He thinks that he is very safe and secure in this world of

crime and corruption. He is fully satisfied with having such a soul which gleams and glides-in happiness and liberty:

"What care I for the world's desire and pride who know the silver gleams that gleam and glide. The homing pigeons of Thine eventide? What care I for the world's loud weariness who dream in twilight granaries Thou dost bless with delicate sheaves of mellow silences?

These thought provoking mystical observation of Sarojini Naidu reveals the truth of the sacred and sweet soul. Generally man gets a great sense of enjoyment in his desires produced by the five senses. These desires give a very soothing and sumptuous touch to the mortal body. But actually speaking the enjoyment offered by our body is temporary pride also gives us a great pleasure to our mind we generally take pride on our wealth and possession, 'blood and estate'. But the 'glory of our blood and estate', as Shirley says, 'are shadows, not substantial thing'. The only thing real is the strength of the sweet soul. It is like the 'homing pigeons'. The phrase 'homing pigeons' which stands for the sweet soul, is very apt and suggestive. It shows eternal peace which the perfect soul after dejecting the body, attains at the tent of God. The narrator of this poem has attained that supreme bliss, so he has no fear at all of "He world's loud weariness' or 'the world's desire and pride'. Here the phrase 'loud weariness' recalls Keats' famous observation 'the weariness, the fever the fret'14 The alliteration in the line 'gleams that gleam and glide' creates melodious situation. The poem has a contrast between the harsh and the sweet sound. When the poetess has to describe the sweet soul, her language assumes euphonic structure: "Who know the silver gleams that gleam and glide"; but when she has to express the body or this world, her language takes the stricture of cacophonic sound: "The mute and mythic terror of the tomb", or 'dread the rumoured lonelines and gloom.

The last lines of the poem shows the eternal peace and divine ecstasy of the soul:

"For my glad heart in drank and drenched with thee

O inmost wine of living ecstasy!

O intimate essence of eternity.

In fact, when the chastened body is drunk and drenched with the ecstasy of the soul, it never wants to return to its mundane pleasures: it wants only the inmost wine of living ecstasy. The phrase 'living ecstasy' is very apt. It stands for the permanent peace and happiness of the body through Soul. In other words, when the experiencer gets that supreme bliss, the other happiness's, and cheers produced by desires, pride and earthly achievement fall flat. Here, Sarojini Naidu seems to be very much influenced by the last sloka of Katha Upanisad which holds the truth:

न तत्र सूर्योभाति न चन्द्रतारकं नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः। तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्व तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति।।<sup>15</sup>

"Meaning: In the presence of Brahman (the Supreme soul) the sun does not shine nor do the moon and stars, nor does lightening, let alone this fire. When Brahman shines, everything else follows By its light all these are lighted." (p.156).

Thus, this critical exploration of some selected poems of Sarojini Naidu shows her Indian bent of mind, her diving deep into the rich tradition of vedic philosophy and mysticism, her 'unfailing verbal felicity and rhythmical dexterity'. She was the 'Kokila' of India who sang the eternal song of life and death, love and patriotism, compassion and beauty. K. R. S. Iyengar rightly observes:

"She was, above all, sensitive to beauty, the beauty of living things, the beauty of holiness, the beauty of the Buddha's compassion, the beauty of Brindavan's Lord. She didn't specially seek out the bizarre, the exotic, the exceptional, but her poems lack neither variety nor the flavour of actuality. She didn't cudgel herself towards explosive modernity. But she had genuine poetic talent, and she was a wholesome and authentic singer" 16

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### 7

## Reading Kamala Das in the Light of Lakoff's Feminist Theory

Dr. Shibu Simon

I

In the 70s, Robin Tolmach Lakoff<sup>1</sup> virtually inaugurated the linguistic subfield of language and gender studies in feminist research worldwide with her groundbreaking article (1973) and book Language and Woman's Place (1975). These publications touched off remarkable response among linguists, feminists and common readers and ushered in the study of language and gender in related communication disciplines such studies, as anthropology. For the last many years, scholars of language and gender have been debating and developing Lakoff's initial observations and the fundamental questions (Bucholtz 3) she laid out on its pages:

- 1. What linguistic practices and ideologies are associated with women's speech?
- 2. How are gender ideologies made manifest in the ways women are spoken of?
- 3. What is the role of gender-based power inequity in these socio-linguistic processes?

4. How do linguistically based cultural systems, such as politeness, reproduce unequal gendered arrangements?

Arguing that language is fundamental to gender inequality, Lakoff pointed to two areas in which inequities can be found: language used about women (such as asymmetries between apparently parallel terms like 'master' and 'mistress') and language used by women which double bind<sup>2</sup> between places women in a appropriately feminine and being fully human. Recognising that language cannot solely determine social reality, Lakoff nevertheless encourages the linguist to take an active role in social transformation because of her understanding of how language reflects "the weaknesses and strengths of a culture" (2004: 75). Lakoff's central argument that women's language expresses powerlessness triggered a controversy that continues to this day.

Let's begin with a summary (McElhinny 130) of Lakoff's influential argument. For Lakoff, women's language has three features: (1) it lacks resources for women to express themselves strongly, (2) it encourages women to talk about trivial subjects, and (3) it requires women to speak tentatively. Lakoff argues that if a female speaker does not learn to speak like a lady, she will be criticized and isolated. If she does learn to speak like a lady, her lady-like linguistic behaviour will be cited as a reason for denying her access to power (2004: 41-42). In effect, a girl should learn two dialects and act as bilingual. Like a true bilingual, she fails to master either language and she never feels really comfortable using either. She will never be certain that she is using the right one in the right place to the right person. The extra energy she comes to expend in this linguistic game is the energy sapped from more creative work. This prevents her from expressing herself as fully and freely as she might otherwise. Lakoff states eloquently (2004:42):

It will be found that the overall effect of "women's language" — meaning both language restricted in use to women and language descriptive of women alone — is this: it submerges a woman's personal identity ....

Lakoff goes on to offer a plausible analogy between women's linguistic double binds and the forced bilingualism of many other subordinate groups. For both women and these other groups, the language associated with their most fundamental sense of identity is looked down on by dominant groups. The situation of Indian expatriates in Britain provides a classic example in this context. Lakoff s picture of women as forced to struggle with a new language in order to succeed finds its echo in many a woman's experience as well. Lakoff affirms that women's language<sup>3</sup> (WL) shows up in all levels of the grammar of English. Particularly, she enumerates these forms (2004: 78-81) she sees as comprising WL:

- Women have a large stock of words related to their specific interests. If the other sex, men presumably, employs these words, it is not taken seriously and apparently thought of as a joke.
- 2. The use of hedges of various kinds: Hedges like "well", "y'know" etc convey the impression that the speaker is tentative about what she/he proposes. To Lakoff, women's speech is likely to include more instances of these expressions, implying thereby a sense of uncertainty. Lakoff also notes another effect of using hedges in which they convey a sense of politeness by removing possible traces of unfriendliness. Hedges have the potential to blunt the force of painful assertions in conversations. Lakoff points out (79):

...the tag appears anyway as an apology for making an assertion at all. Anyone may do this if he lacks self-confidence, as everyone does in some situations; but my impression is that women do it more, precisely because they are socialized to believe that asserting themselves

strongly isn't nice or ladylike, or even feminine. Other possible manifestations of hedges are "I guess", "I think" etc prefacing declaratives, and expressions like "I wonder" attached to interrogatives. All these 'suggest' rather than 'affirm' and apparently protect the speakers from potential miscalculations later on! If used to excess, they give the impression of lacking in authority or appearing to seem less masculine.

Lakoff thus analyses the general use of hedges as part of a pattern in which women are not allowed to express power directly through language. They are used to communicate deferential involvement and to avoid potentially overbearing imperative mood.

- 3. Hypercorrect grammar: Lakoff confides that women are not "supposed to talk rough" (80). In their speech acts, they rarely drop their "g's", and they generally avoid "ain't" — thereby conforming to the norm or standard dialect. In this way, women become "preservers of literacy and culture" (80) for subsequent generations.
- Superpolite forms: Extremely polite language 4. forms are typical of WL. Women are expected to speak more politely or 'properly' than men. They are to avoid off-colour expressions and to employ euphemisms. They ought to uphold social conventions and say "please" and "thank you" frequently. Men can afford to neglect the social niceties, but in a woman, it's "social death" (80) if one refuses to go by the rules. Lakoff observes that women's politeness is principally for and "establishing reinforcing distance: deferential mannerisms coupled with euphemism and hypercorrect and superpolite usage" (99).
- Women don't tell jokes: Women generally avoid telling jokes in order to appear respectful and polite to others. This may also help them to keep

distance from others. The tendency to avoid jokes makes them fall in line with the social norm, for society often feels that 'women have no sense of humour'!

- 6. Women speak in italics: To be a woman is to speak in italics (effecting tonal or accentual variations). It enhances their feminity. Lakoff considers this as another way of expressing uncertainty with their own power of expression. Employing italics in speech provides double force; it tells listeners 'how to react' in a given context, thereby revealing the speaker's possible lack of confidence. Women seem to be afraid that they need extra directions to communicate; expressions by themselves fail to convince.
- 7. Use of the intensive 'so': Another characteristic feature Lakoff identifies in WL is its frequent use of the intensive 'so'. 'So', in contrast to an intensifier like 'very', helps to mitigate the intensity of emotions expressed. Women in general find it unseemly to show they have strong feelings or definite needs. Instead of making strong assertions, they prefer to imply that they feel 'something along those lines'.
- 8. Empty adjectives: Some adjectives are neutral as to the gender of the speaker; both men and women may use them. Some other adjectives, especially in their figurative use, are largely confined to women's speech. Lakoff records both types (45):

neutral great terrific cool neat

women only
adorable
charming
sweet
lovely
divine

A woman has a choice between the neutral words and the women's words but for a man to stray into women's territory is positively damaging to his image!

- 9. Wider range of intonation patterns: Women have at their disposal a wider range of intonation patterns than do men. Possibly this is helpful as a sort of extra signal, in case the first one is not received. That is, this extra caution throws light on how women think: they are afraid they are not being listened to, or not being taken seriously. This behaviour is akin to the more pronounced use of gestures by natives while speaking to foreigners. Lakoff also observes that women are more prone to 'gesture as they speak than are men.
- 10. Rising intonation on declaratives One<sup>^</sup> of the most controversial features identified by Lakoff as characteristic of women's language is the heavy use of tag questions<sup>4</sup> and question intonation in statements<sup>5</sup>.

rising intonation in question intonation

statement contexts

What's your name, dear? It's so hot, isn't it?

Mary Smith?

This has been interpreted by Lakoff as signifying uncertainty and insecurity. Lakoff explains that a tag question, being intermediate between a statement and a question, is used "when the speaker is stating a claim, but lacks full confidence in the truth of that claim" (48). So, if a speaker says,

Was Maya here? he/she will not be surprised if the answer is 'yes' or 'no'. But when the speaker says,

Maya was here, wasn't she? he/she will already be biased in favour of a positive answer, waiting only confirmation. As in declaratives, the speaker has much

pretty confidence in his/her knowledge when a tag question is posed.

These mechanisms provide a means whereby a speaker can avoid committing herself, and thereby avoid getting into conflict with the addressee. The problem, as Lakoff recognises it, is that in doing so the speaker also gives the impression of not being really sure of herself, even of having no views of her own. In all these cases, we find unwillingness to assert an opinion carried to an extreme. Lakoff concludes (50):

One likely consequence is that these sorts of speech patterns are taken to reflect something real abut character and play a part in not taking a woman seriously or trusting her with any real responsibilities, since "she can't make up her mind" and "isn't sure of herself.

All these features, probably, add up to give the impression that women's speech sounds much more polite than men's. This is so because one aspect of politeness is always leaving a decision open, not imposing one's views on anyone else. Turning to language used about omen, LWP6 provides a number of equally stimulating and challenging suggestions. Lakoff identified some of the more subtle aspects of the ways in, which women are constructed as inferior — "second class human beings as having an existence only when defined by a man" (2004: 57)— through the categories and association of specific English words available to name women as a group. In other words, one way in which women's inferior social identity is constructed in English is through the semantic distinctions enclosed in the lexicon and grammar of the language.

Lakoff s theory on language and gender in feminist linguistics has its applications for both linguists and teachers of languages.

Since Lakoff argues that "social change must precede lexical change" (2004: 68), it is fruitless to try to correct a social inequity by changing linguistic disparities. Instead, it

is advisable to view language as a clue to the external situation. Lakoff insists on the futility of expending too much energy on changing language rather than the society from which it comes. The linguist through linguistic analysis can pinpoint how the social discrepancy in the positions of men and women in our society is reflected in linguistic disparities. He can suggest which linguistic disparities reflect real and serious social inequalities and can thus guide feminists to channel their energies most constructively to bring about desirable social changes.

Further, the language use changes depending on the position in society— of the language user. The criterion for acceptability is not always linguistic; it may depend on the gender identity of the speaker as well. The same linguistic form may connote differently when used by a woman and by a man. The question of linguistic acceptability thus points to possibilities of hierarchical variations: it is determined not only by phonology, syntax, and semantics but also by the social context in which an utterance is expressed.

As language use is directly related to contextual situation, it follows teachers should focus on social context while teaching second languages in classrooms. It is also significant that teachers should be aware of the kind of language they use: whether it is 'men's language' or 'women's language'. Exposing male students indiscreetly to women's language and women students to men's language may prove to be socially disastrous to them in the long run. The ability of a student to conform to the appropriate gender variety of language becomes an important factor for social acceptance and mobility. It takes a perceptive teacher to notice that language learning goes beyond the borders of linguistic forms.

II

Lakoff's work launched a thousand ships in the field of variationist studies of language and gender. The key idea in

LWP is not in the details of how women as a whole speak but in the elaboration of the relation between language use and hegemonic womanhood. Can women in general be shown to be more conservative and status-seeking in their linguistic behaviour than men<sup>7</sup>? Even if it is true to a great extent in spoken language, how does the phenomenon get reflected when women write? Does women's writing, say in literary communication, display a similar uncertainty, tentativeness and careful avoidance of assertions in order to look more ladylike and feminine? Do women writers deliberately try to mitigate the intensity of their (or their narrator's or their characters') emotions and needs to appear deferential and respectful? Do they refrain from imposing their views and keep their statements openended and vague? In short, does WL as it appears in literary texts express powerlessness and show preference for trivial subjects<sup>8</sup>?

With this problem in mind, the second part of this article attempts to read Kamala Das's poetry from the perspective of Lakoff's feminist theory. Kamala Das is a popular Indian writer in English whose major poetical works were published in the seventies<sup>9</sup> — in the same period in which Lakoff's article and book on Language and Woman's Place got published. Besides, Kamala Das's poetry is essentially the poetry of a woman, her feminine sensibility finding expression in her poems most emphatically and forcefully (Satchidanandan 9). Her poetry is pre-eminently autobiographical and even labelled as confessional (Parthasarathy 22). Iyengar affirms (680):

Kamala Das's is a fiercely feminine sensibility that dares without inhibitions to articulate the hurts it has received in an insensitive largely man-made world.

Kamala Das has added a new dimension to the poetry of love and sex written by Indian poets in English language. She is the only Indo-Anglian poet to have defined the complexity of man-woman relationship and its physical aspects. Her experience of love does not revolve round the traditional ideal of the Indian woman. Instead, it revolves round the extra-marital sexual relationship which remains unfulfilled. It gives vent to the speaker's deep experience of frustration, disappointment, and loneliness in love. In "Ghanashyam" (D C Books 94-95), the narrator addresses the reader directly and confesses her disillusionment:

We played once a husk-game, my lover and I

His body needing mine,

His ageing body in its pride meeting the need for mine

And each time his lust was quietened

And he turned his back on me

In panic I asked don't you want me any longer, don't you want me

Don't you, don't you? (20-26)

She is outrageously frank in interpreting her love experience in terms of sex. In the same poem, she speaks her mind to her lover:

You lead me along a route I have never known before

But at each turn when I near you

Like a spectral flame you vanish (4-6)

She is never ashamed of her desire for love but admits it honestly in "My Grandmother's House" (Parthasarathy 24):

...I who have lost

My way and beg now at strangers' doors to

Receive love, at least in small change? (14-16)

The love theme in Kamala's poetry is multidimensional. On one plane, love is the mechanical act of bodily union as she writes in "A Man a Season" (D C Books 66):

.....You let me toss my youth like coins
Into various hands, you let me mate with shadows,
You let me sing in empty shrines, you let your wife
Seek ecstasy in other's arms. (3-6)

This obsession for physical love leads only to frustration and never to satisfaction as the speaker in "Substitute" (D C Books 54) herself recognises:

After that love became a swivel-door,

When one went out, another came in. (43-44)

Kamala's poetry protests against the injustices and the persecution to which women in India have long been subjected to. She protests against the passivity and the timidity of the Indian women and against their subservience to their husbands. In the sixties, when Kamala started writing, the Indian women had hardly any voice in society. Kamala recognised herself as one of the victims of the prevalent orthodox attitude towards the Indian women and of male domination. Her husband's illtreatment of her and his cruel neglect of her feminine needs prompted her to give vent to her grievances in her poems. She makes poetry a vehicle for the expression of her resentments and indignation. The narrators in her poems assert their feminine identity as a neglected class of Indian society. Her poems have ushered in a new kind of morality time-honoured virtues of timidity, submissiveness, and dependence are thrown overboard. In this new morality, women speak authoritatively and aggressively, trying to demolish the concept of male dominance and male egotism. In "The Freaks", the poet asks (Parthasarathy 23) bluntly:

.... Can't this man with Nimble finger-tips unleash Nothing more alive than the Skin's lazy hungers? (9-12)

Kamala's poetry is largely devoted to her candid confessions of her sex-life. She unhesitatingly and fearlessly employs certain shocking expressions which even a male writer would be reluctant to use. In the poem "The Looking Glass", the speaker declares (DC Books 55):

Getting a man to love is easy
Only be honest about your want as
Woman.

......

Gift him all,
Gift him what makes you woman, the scent of
Long hair, the musk of sweat between the breasts,
The warm shock of menstrual blood, and all your
Endless female hungers. (1-3, 12-16)

In "An Introduction" (D C Books 96), the speaker realises with surprise the 'swelling of her limbs', and the 'sprouting of hair at one or two places' as she grows up. She is also conscious of her body feeling the weight of her 'breasts and womb'. In "The Freaks", quoted already, she identifies herself as a 'freak' and reveals proudly that she 'flaunts' a 'grand, flamboyant lust'. Kamala's poetry shows several faces of women — woman as wife, mother, sweetheart, flirt, matron and middle-aged. Love too appears in several roles such as a skin-communicated thing, an overpowering force, an escape, a longing and hunger.

It is part of Kamala's strength as a woman writer that she readily recognises and intensely articulates the workings of the feminine consciousness. Her well known poem in this category, "An Introduction" (D C Books 96-97), poses the question of human identity, raising pertinent questions relating to a woman's, an Indian poet at that, identity in English. Like all her confessional poems, this one shows Kamala's candour in divulging her sexual feelings and bodily functions. At the same time, it shows Kamala's capacity for self-assertion:

..... I speak three languages, write in Two, dream in one. Don't write in English, they said, English is not your mother-tongue. Why not leave Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins, Every one of you? ...

... The language I speak

Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses

All mine, mine alone.... (5-9, 10-12)

Iyengar comments that this claim for autonomy "really flows from the felt sovereignty of her own individual existence" (678). She is sinner, she is saint; she is the beloved, she is the betrayed; she is always and uniquely, herself! Her poetry becomes the poetry of introspection, of self-analysis, of self-explanation, and of self-revelation. In her poems, Kamala appears as a feminist, indirectly advocating the liberation of women from the conventional social restraints and taboos.

Kamala subverts patriarchal myths not by revising them but by simply rejecting them stubbornly. In "The Old Playhouse" (D C Books 30), she repudiates the conventional myth of marriage. She rejects the patriarchal value system based on greed and violence. At the same time, she has to express her rejection in a language that still caries a male bias. This inevitably creates an ambivalence in her poetry and she feels uneasy about language (D C Books: "Words are Birds", 77):

Words are birds.

Where have they gone to roost,

Wings, tired,

Hiding from the dusk? (1-4)

The poet even equates 'words' to 'sin' and believes that words together with men seem to conspire against woman. They may eventually 'bind her with chains', 'rape her with bayonets' and 'hang her for her doubts' (D C Books: "Tomorrow", 61).

"In a Literature of their Own", Showalter uncovered a female tradition in English literary writing which evolved in three stages: the feminine phase (1840-1880: period of imitating phallocentric values), the feminist (1880-1920:

period of protest against injustice), and the female. Only in the female phase, ongoing since 1920, do women reject both imitation and protest — the two forms of dependency — and consider their own experience as constituting authentic subject for art. It is interesting to note that Kamala Das's major chunk of poetry, written in the seventies, belongs to female phase and imbibes its spirit of independence. Her language of assertion — of resentment and indignation as well — demonstrates not only her own sense of injustice against the male-centric social order but also the need for recognising the rights and privileges of women. Today the women in India are fairly liberated, though not comparable to their counterparts in Lakoff's America or Great Britain. But in the sixties and seventies, when Kamala Das wrote these poems, the movement for women's liberation from male domination was only in its initial stages in India. Yet, it is striking how Kamala's literary language deviates perceptibly from the language of powerlessness. Lakoff describes as typical of an average woman's conversational style. This difference, however, doesn't invalidate Lakoff's theory, rather it points to the privilege of anonymity the medium of literary communication confers on a literary writer. They correspond to two sides of the same coin — on one side, in the world of reality, the woman feels helpless to counter the claims of patriarchal society; on the other side, in the world of make-believe, the disguise offered by literary mode gives her the power to protest against this suppressed helplessness. Today's literary language thus acts as a reliable index for what is in store for women's liberation movement tomorrow.

#### Notes

1. Lakoff is Professor of Linguistics at the University of California, Berkeley. Widely regarded as the founder of language and gender studies, she writes extensively on feminist linguistics and about the relationship between

- gender and power.
- 2 Lakoff uses the term "double-bind" (2004: 85) to put across the paradoxical situation in which a person, by obeying an order, automatically disobeys it!
- 3. Lakoff gives a reason why scholars have found 'women's language' but not 'men's language' a productive field of study. Women are always the 'other' or the 'marked' group. In any specialized study, scholars take up a marked case and compare it to or contrast it with the 'norm'. Men's language can't simply be a subject of study because there is no norm with which it can be contrasted with!
- 4. A tag question is midway between a statement and a yes-or-no question. It is less assertive than a statement, but more confident than a yes-or-no question. Hence its use is generally restricted to situations intermediate between these.
- 5. This phenomenon has been recently identified in media as "uptalk". One possible reason for the use of rising intonation in declaratives is either a feeling of real powerlessness or a desire not to appear assertive because it is not a desirable social trait.
- 6. Many later discussions (Crawford) associate LWP with a "deficit" view of women's speech, in which both the language used and the women using it are seen as deficient.
- 7. If one looks critically at the distinguishing features of WL enumerated, it will be found that most of these features are likely to be present only in informal style, especially in spoken language. This is because they are personal markers, signalling to the addresser and

- addressee the non-linguistic aspects of communication.
- 8. The work of American critic Elaine Showalter ("Towards a Feminist Poetics." Women Writing about Women. Ed. M. Jacobus. 1979. 25-33, 34-36.) shows this orientation. Her concept of 'gynocritics' refers to this gender-aware reading that focuses on women who write from women's experience and on the problem of female language.
- Kamala's published works include four volumes of poetry: Summer in Calcutta (1965), The Descendants (1967), The Old Playhouse and Other Poems (1973) and Stranger Time (1977).

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## 8

# Spiritual Feminism in the Poetry of Kamala Das

D. K. Mandal

Feminism is generally defined as a movement for the recognition of women's claims for all rights equal to those of men. It is a critique of patriarchy which devoured women's identity and prevented them from realizing their productive as well as creative possibilities. It is also a voice against the male domination and female subjugation and humiliantion in our society. All these are the main concerns of physical feminism.

But as soon as these physical featurs of feminism become a means to an end — for either a perect harmony between the two opposite sexes or a constant search for real identity of the self accross the ego with a conscious transcedence into ever green domain of self-realization, enlightement, liberation and bliss—they acquire a spiritual outlook. Hence the term 'spiritual feminism' comes into existence for debate and discussion.

This paper is a new attempt at tracing the elements of spiritural feminism in the writings of Kamala Das. She is an Indian lady, so she is in favour of the integrity of women's personality. She is required to achieve such integrity and harmony at all the personal, connubial and social levels of life. Her whole literary architecture rests on

the two pillars of 'love' and 'lust'. Both are mysterious. She says:

"Love has a beginning and an end, but lust has no such faults. I needed security, I needed Permanece, I needed two strong arms thrown around my shoulders and a soft voice in my ear."

(My Story, P. 163)

Here we see that her needs required both 'love' and 'lust' but 'love' was not permanent for her and 'lust' failed to provide soft voice to her. Her life remained a playhouse for such paradox of conflict till she came to realize the truth for her and pointed towards a new concept of morality which she had picked up 'like wild flowers' on her way. According to her idea 'lust' is related to the physical body whereas 'love' indicates something beyond it. In 'lust' there is a reflection of pride or ego which is a burden to the soul. So it is essential for Kamala Das to defile her body in order to attain her 'destination' of self-realization through the search of her true identity. She says:

"Physical intergrity must carry with it a certain pride that is a burden to the soul. Perhaps it was necessary for my body to defile itself in many ways, so that the soul turned humble for a change."<sup>2</sup>

(My Story, P. 163)

She is aware of the difference between body and soul which is the first step towards the realization of the self and the freedom of the soul:

"Bereft of soul

My body shall be bare.

Bereft of body

My soul shall be bare"

(The Suicide)

Her awareness of the soul and the body as two distinct identities is related to what she says the 'cages of involvement'. Her search of the narcissitic love and freedom reminds us of her final aim to free her soul from her material cage: "Breft of body My soul shall be free"4

(The Suicide)

Spiritualism is defined as a belief that there is an existence of a soul which is the immaterial aspect of a person. It is conjioned with the body during life and separable at death. The basic concept of spiritualism is the conviction that the spirit or the soul is the essence of life and that it lives even after the body dies. Spiritualism is also concerned with conscious efforts to release one's soul free from the prison of the body even in life. Though it may sound absurd for the moment, but it is in fact, the truth of life and the source of real happiness in life.

It is intersting to note that a seeker of spiritual awareness must know how the mind operates. Our conscious mind is linked to the unconscious which is as vast and limitless as the cosmos. The unconscious of the individual contains subtle impressions or 'sanskaras' which have been gathered not only in this life but in many lives from the past. However, at any particular time all those impressions do not become operative. Those that do become operative are known as 'vasnas' or subtle desires which are just like sprouted seeds. From them arise 'vrittis' or thought waves or the modifications of the individual mind. If we watch our mind, we shall see that even if nothing is happening externally, thought will still flash through our mind. We become aware of the steady movement of ideas, thoughts, sentiments and emotions. These are the results of radiations form the unconscious in which subtle inpressions of 'sanskaras' give rise to subtle desires or 'vrittis' or thought waves. Normally people allow their reason to feed their thought waves. When they go on feeding the thought waves the 'vritti' turns into desire which implies that we are involved. Then we want to act along the lines of our thought. We love or hate some one and so we want either to attract or to hurt that person. Then desire turns into

craving or 'trishna'. It forms an obsession and the craving causes actionful involvements. It puts us into various sort of experiences of pleasure and pain. These once again bring impressions. So, there is a cycle in our mind. Here the mention of the spiritual awareness of K. Das is not incongruous when she says:

"That both love and hate are involvements."5

(Composition)

In the field of spiritualism 'Yoga' is the most cherished discipline which deals with the nature of 'chit' or the pure consciousness and its various modifications. It also prescribes some useful techniques for the inhibition of those thought waves or 'vrittis' to dilute the human afflications present or yet to appear in life and for attaining trance or 'samadhi' where lives the serenity of mind as well as the bliss. The great authority on the discipline of 'Yoga' Maharishi Patanjali in his yoga sutra ennumerates these 'virttis' as follow:

वृत्तयः पंचतयः ल्किष्टाल्किष्टाः। प्रमाणविपर्ययविकल्पनिद्रास्मृतयः। १

(Patanjal Yoga Sutra, I, 5-6)

(There are five kinds of thought waves—some painful, others are not painful. These five kinds of thought waves are: right knowledge, wrong knowledge, verbal delusion, sleep and memory)

Before ennumerating these kinds of thought waves the yoga sutra says that the real self remains identified with the thought waves in the mind. If the waves remain uncontrolled or uninhibited, the self appears as the vrittis reflect it. It is only after he inhibition of the vrittis that the self or the seer abides in his/her real nature. K. Das also does the same thing while she is in search of her identity. Here memory is the last among the *vrittis* as described by Patanjali. It is more powerful than other vrittis to tie the self within its mysterious mist. Das is undoubtedly aware of her memory as a hinderance in the way of her self-

realization. She urnestly desires to get rid of her tortuous memory which continually and constantly prevents her spiritual progress to attain permanence, security, peace, happiness and freedom. She Says:

"Please end this whiplash cries the sea.

For long I have waited for the right one
To come, the bright one, the right one to live
In the blue."

(The Invitaliton)

At many places K. Das has identified her inner-self either with the 'river' or with the 'sea'. She is often tormented by her painful memory and feels disgusted as she says:

"Memory Great moody sea Do not thump so Against my shore."

(Substitute)

Memory has enslaved the real pleasure of her freedom and happiness. She can enjoy her riding on the 'white steed of happiness' only when she is able to forget the memory of a previous touch:

"... I shall ride happiness,
If I could only dislodge the inherited
Memory of a touch."9

(My Story P. 105)

The sad experiece of her first initiation of love at the night of 'the betrayed honeymoon', not less than an 'unsccessful rape' always hovered like a ghost throughout her life. It always hindered her carnal enjoyment upto the clitorid satisfaction during her connubial relation. In her old age she desires to be loved by her husband and so she does want to set aside her memory of the first sexual experience:

"I shall not remember

The betrayed honeymoon.

We are both such cynics

You and I."10

(My Story P. 181)

It is very fruitful to note that there are also some afflictions which hinder the spiritual way of self awakening and enlightenment. As has been described in the yoga-sutra we have five sorts of primary afflictons:

"अविद्यास्मिताराग द्वेषाभिनिवेशाः क्लेशाः।"<sup>11</sup>

(Patanjal Yoga Sutra, II, 3)

(Ignorance, egoism, attachment, aversion and (clinging to life are all afflictions.)

Ignorance is the first and the most comprehensive among the five afflictions. It is the seed of all the problems of life and egoism is the sprout from that seed of ingorance. Egoism contains primarily the feeling of I-am-ness, Pride, Conceit, Vanity, Aarrogance, Insolence, Obstinacy, Cruelty and Selfishness are its mutiple faces. Humility in our ego enables us to be one with the cosmic mind. Surrender to God enables us to pulsate with the cosmic harmony. We are born to adjust to the turth of non-duality of existence. Therefore, for the spirituality sake we must cultivate the qualities of universal love, humanity, surrender to God, simiplicity, self introspection, unflinching faith in Divine order and a selfeffacting spirit of serving humanity in order to adapt to the truth of universal life. K. Das had a plan for the service of humanity as a token of her universal love. She says:

"I plan to organize a campaign to collect a rupee from every middle-class house to build low-cost tenements where the slum-dwellers can be housed.... I plan to request the hoteliers to set aside one tenth of their income to feed the poor every day." 12

(My Story P. 188)

The element of surrender to God can easily be seen in one of the poems of K. Das, where nothing remains except the existence of God. This is a total surrender to God facilitating her journey towards the goal of self-realization. Yoga - Sutra says that the quality of such surrender to God helps to achieve the trance:

"समाधि सिद्विरीश्वर प्रणिधानात्।"<sup>13</sup>

(Patanjal Yoga Sutra, II, 45)

(By the total surrender to God the trance is achieved)

K. Das also feels the same when she says:

"Everything in me

Is melting even the hardness at the core,

O Krishna, I am melting, melting, melting

Nothing remains but you....?"14

(Radha)

In the way of spiritual awakening one has to learn the art of working without seeking the deluded pleasure of one's ego. We work with detachment and an increasing insight into the philosophical fact that action is the expression of the flowing stream of life. K. Das in her pursuit of selfidentity as well as self- awareness always comes across the river of emotion where the flowing of pure consciousness becomes as if the destiny of the seeker of spiritual bliss. The freedom of spiritual flowing consists in its longing to cross the limits of emotion and lust to meet the ocean of divine love. The ego and the pride of the self, reflected in the I-am-ness are just the obstacles for spiritual attainment of reawakening and enlightenment. K. Das suggests:

"When you lern to swim,

Do not enter a river that has no ocean To flow into, One ignorant of destinations and knowing only the flowing as its destiny... go swim into the great blue sea."<sup>15</sup>

(My Story, R 185)

Spiritualism says that problems do not exist in reality. The mind overpowered by ignorance, conceives problems and continues to battle against them. There are no problems when we are in deep sleep. When we wake up, we become indentified with our mind. It is this identification which is the basis af all problems:

"दुगदर्शनशक्तयोरेकात्मतेवास्मिता।"<sup>16</sup>

(Patanjal Yoga Sutra II, 6)

(Egoism is the identification of the seer with the instrument of seeing.)

It is perhaps for such reasons that K. Das desires deep sleep, a way to the consciousness of the darkness which was 'a brooding dog' for her behind her bed room. It allows her a kind of safety. She desirs that sleep should make a hole in the memory which as we have seen earlier is very troublesome and which needs to be controlled as a powerful 'vritti' of mind. The memory of the 'love-lorn' associations hinders her to enter the silent field of the soul:

"Being human clumsy
With noise and movement, the soul's mute
Arena,
That silent sleeping inside your sleep."

17

(Luminol)

Led by ignorance we impose values upon the objects of the world. We think of them again and again. Constant thinking of an object from an egoistic point of view creates internal attachment which in turn becomes the source of manifold desires which intensify ego and in turn fed by egoistic involvements. K. Das expresses such involvements in the image of hunger and lust. We may remember some phrases from her poems as 'skins lazy hunger'; 'the wombs blinded hunger'; 'hungry roar of the sea' etc. at this moment. Being disgusted with such involvements, she desires to escape form cages of involvements and so she feels:

"Ultimately
I will feed only the hunger
To feed other hungers......"
18

(Composition)

She desires a complete uninvolvement. Let us see her strong will power to walk into the sea for the solution of her torments and attaining rest:

"All I want now
Is to take a long walk
Into the sea,
And lie there, resting
Completely univolved."19

(Composition)

We move forward when our mind is relaxed and taking rest. The energy of the mind is conserved and not wasted. Moving forward on the path of spritualism is a process of transcending our limitations, transcending our waking dream and sleep, transcending the physical, astral and causal planes, transcending the mind, body, senses, intellect and ego. The real goal before us is to go beyond all these and to realize that we are one with the Divine Self. Achievements do not come from the ego. When we efface the ego, we discover the innate majesty and power of our soul. Then our life becomes joyous and free from all sorrows; we are then bathed in the light of the bliss. Such is the love that K. Das needs in her life and she prefers death if such a divine love is not attained:

"If love is not to be had,

I want to be dead....."
20

(The Suicide)

Ego-sense in an individual is the source of all troubles because it acts as barrier between the soul and God. People who are not spiritually enlightened or who are not inclined towards philosophical thinking are enmeshed in a life that is predominantly egoistic. They ignore the world beyond their ego. But the real world or the realm of spiritual freedom lies beyond 'I' and 'Mine'. The secret of such a spiritual life is to draw our self away from the ego-centre, so that we can be centred in the big 'Self'. K. Das has realized the significance of world which lies within the individual and not outside him. She says:

"One's real world is not what is outside him. It is the immeasurable world inside him that is real. Only the one who has decided to travel inwards, will realize that his route has no end."<sup>21</sup>

(My Story, P. 98)

It is the internal journey of the mind which leads to the vast and blissful realms of spiritualism. When we consider our ego to be the most important thing in the world, we allow our mental peace to be disturbed. Its continuance creates action for the sake of the ego and a chain of desires and actions to fulfil them begins. K. Das was well is conscious of such hungers when she says that she will feed only the hunger to feed other hunger, she becomes at once vigilant and wants to be thoughtless and desiresless for the serenity of her mind:

"Let me be still Without thought or will."22

(Substitute)

Such a state of desirlessness is essential for the attainment of spiritual peace as has been told in the Gita:

"विहाय कामान्यः सर्वान्पुमांश्चरति निस्पृहः। निर्ममो निरहंकारः स शान्तिमधिगच्छति।।"23

(The Gita, II. 71)

(He who lives devoid of longing, abandoning all desires, without the sense of 'I' and 'Mine' attains to peace)

The feeling of desirelessness opens the gate of spiritual awakening. Such a development in our self enables us to discover the transience of our physical body and filial as well as social relationships. K. Das was always in search of a permanent relationship in her life. She knows that only God can afford such a permanent relationship. She say:

"We are burdended with perishable bodies which strike up bonds which are also unreal and perishable. The only relation that is permanent is the one which we form with God. My mate is He.

He shall come to me in myriad shapes. In many shapes shall I surrender to His desire"24

(My Story, R 166)

Her such statements are really in tune with what has been told by Lord Krishna:

> "सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणंव्रज । अहंत्वा सर्व पापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामिमाशुचः । । 1º25

> > (The Gita)

(Relinquishing all acquisitions take refuge in Me; I will liberate three from all sins; grieve not)

Kamala Das was well aware of the immense resources and the unilimted power of her soul as she says:

"Only the soul knows how to sing at the vortex of the sea"26

(The Suicide)

She is able to draw upon these resorces with great patience to elevate her spiritual life. There is no limit to what she can elevate herself with the help of her will power. The sky is the limit or spiritually speaking, God is the limit. People encounter both positive and negative situations every day in their life. Positive situations cause fewer problems than negative ones which create problems such as despair, frustration, worry and anxiety. So it is better to prevent them wherever possible. If they cannot be prevented, then, we should endure them with patience and insight as the secret of develoing will power lies in endurance. If we coninue to pursue our goal even in the midst of adversities, we shall develop will power. We must understand that if things are completely comfortable we shall never develop any will power. All greatmen in every walk of life have the ability to cope with adverse situations that arise in their lives. They bear insult and injury with patience and they do not become demoralized when other people criticize them. K. Das also is not an exception when she says that she can endure everything by yielding to it:

"We were the yielders, Yielding ourselves to everything."<sup>27</sup>

(The Descendents)

We should develop will power not for petty things but for tuning ourselves to God. Then we begin to discover the immense power of will within ourselves. Our mind becomes a reservoir of energy and we realize that we are not limited personality because we have discovered universality within ourselves. This is the goal of developing our will power which is our spiritual strength enabling us to tolerate all situations of love and hate. It helps us a lot to be united with God for attaining our freedom and liberation. Kamala Das says:

"I shall be fondled by Him. I shall be betrayed by Him. I shall pass throught all the pathways of this world, condemning none, understanding all, then become part of Him. Then for me there shall be no return journey..."<sup>28</sup>

(My Story, P. 166)

It is interesting to note here that simple living and high thinking is the foundation of all mystic or spiritual movements. Most people like K. Das, live a life of complexity when there is disharmony at home, false promises are given to family members and to friends. They have many unnecessary involvements with associations and unhealthy dealings. They feel constant craving for more and more. The external world seems to sparkle with many showy objects and society of glittering perssonalities. This is just a general picture of the complex living most people become involved in. When there is a complex living, there is pety thinking. Thoughts stoop to their lowest level. Mind continues to harbour anger, hatred, avarice and lust day by day. Life becomes stagnant. The future becomes dark and dismal. On the other hand simple living arises out of an integral development of personality, for one who has interest in unfolding the deeper potential; who has an appreciation for spiritualism; who knows that

external possessions mean a little and mental peace and contentment mean a great deal. He, who understands that spiritual values far surpass the desire for lust and hunger, tends to a life of simplicity and sublime thought of the immortality of the soul. K. Das Says:

"The ultimate discovery will be That we are immortal, The only things mortal being Systems and arrangements..."29

(Composition)

Here K. Das is quite right in crossing over the veil of ignorance which is the root of all wordly afflictions. The nature of this ignorance or 'avidya' has been well described in the following aphorism of the great seer, Patanjali:

"अनित्याशुचिदुःखानात्मसुनित्यशुचिसुखात्मख्यातिरविद्या।"30

(Patanjal Yoga Sutra, II.5)

(Understanding the non-eternal as eternal; the impure as pure; the painful as happy and the non-self as self or soul is known as ignorance)

Since ignorance is the seed which produces all the subsequent afflictions such as ego, attachment, hatred and the fear of death, it has a great spiritual significance. K. Das has really undone with all these afflictions when she shuns the covering of ignorance.

Simplicity is a means to an end. It is not the end in itself. It helps to attain many spiritual qualities. People who are aware of the Divine Scheme and the harmony behind creation, do not assert themselves. They have an inner urge for being utterly simple. So, Das desires:

"O sea, I am fed up I want to be simple."<sup>31</sup>

(The Suicide)

It is quite essential to say that a spiritual aspirant must practise self-introspection. It is the most important

practice for progress in spiritual life. One should be deeply interested in looking within oneself to discover where one needs to improve and what aspect of one's personality one must reject. Self introspection is always helpful to overcome a negative thought and to develop the sublimated spiritual energy in ourselves. It has been the secret of success for all great men. They looked into their minds, noticed their defects and went on to overcome them. A spiritual aspirant or anyone who wants to discipline his mind, must have a sense of deep adventure with the mind, as it is the greatest form of energy. It works wonders. History reveals again and again how social traditions and political values are all influenced by a few minds that had power. K. Das was also well aware of the importance of self-introspection and confession for the attainment of self-realization and the liberation of her soul. She says:

"I also know that by confessing By peeling of my layers I reach closer to the soul."<sup>32</sup>

(Composition)

Her writing of an autobiography is really a bold step in such direction towards her spiritual awakening as she furter says:

"I must let my mind striptease Autobiography."33

(Composition)

K. Das was really in search of a spiritual love ever since she was in the prime of her youth. She was an embodiment of the spiritual quality of gift. She discharged her connubial responsibilities completely and made a gift of her love whether her partner asked for it or not. She was a vessel overflowing with emotions. The only truth with her was that her love was like alms looking for a begging bowl. She believed that at the time of worship even a stone becomes an idol. It was just a matter of fate that she got deviated, but she did never forget her destination of true love:

"I was perhaps seeking familiar face that blossomed like a blue lotus in the water of my dreams. It was to get closer to that bodyless one that I approached other forms and lost my way. I may have gone astray but not once did I forget my destination..."

34

(My Story, P. 105)

She says that she was a great entertainer holding forth on the exalted subjects of divine love and 'nirvana'. Her confession along with 'constant complaining voice' against male domination is very important. She regards that women are worthless and contemptible. They are 'paltry creature' and 'utter snobs'. When her life becomes miserable, she feels like a 'trapped animal'. She wanted that she should be loved as men love their women. Still she yearned for a change, for a new life. She was looking for an ideal lover who was none but Lord Krishna who forgot to return to his Radha. She was obsessed with such divine lover that she did not get her peace in the arms of her husband. In such a state of meditation she feels that her ego is really a curse for her spiritual realization.

At such moment she says:

"Subconsciously I hoped for the Death of my ego."35

(My Story, P. 153)

Further we find her saying that she has attained the goal of divine love:

"The Sea was our only witness. How many times I turned to it and whispered, oh sea, I am at last in love, I have found my Krishna."36

(My Story, P. 161)

Kamala Das was very well aware with the supernatural qualities attained by human being while observing meditation. Her honest practices of prayer and meditation helped her to become telepathic. She says:

"My prayers and its corollaries of silent meditation helped me to become vaguely telepathic. If someone walked into my drawing room who did not like me, I sensed the secret hostility and refused to see him or her."37

(My Story, P. 183)

The fear of death or the love of clinging to life is the last among the five human afflictions which are detrimental to the self realization of a person. Let us see how K. Das is bold enough to face death. She knows that death can release the soul. So it is not a thing to be horrified at. It is delightful for her and she has 'ceased to fear death'. She feels that death is a 'longer sleep'. Normal sleep breaks the contact of ourselves with the outside world, in like ways in our death the outside world dies and our immortal soul remains free:

"when I
Sleep, the outside
World crumbles, all contacts
Broken. So, in that longer sleep
only
The world
Shall die, and I
Remain, just being
Also being a remaining...."38

(Contacts)

K. Das says that the tragedy of life is not death but growth with too much of emotional involvements. Death is a means for her to achieve freedom from worldly as well as physical and emotional involvements. It is the only reality which gives a new significance to life. Let us see the contrast between dream and reality on one hand and between life and death on the other:

"I have come to believe that life is a mere dream and that death is the only reality. It is endless, stretching before and beyond over human existene. To slide into it will be to pick up a new significance. Life has been despite all emotional involvements, as ineffectual as writing on moving water. We have been mere participants in some one else's dream."39

(My Story, P. 195)

Death is a place where K. Das finds peace and happiness of her soul. 'Some one else's dream' is perhaps God's spiritual universe. She compares God with a tree which has the leaves, the bark, the fruits and the flowers as its different parts. Though they are unlike in appearance and texture, yet they all have the essence of treeness. In the same way all the animal and the plant kingdom are the embodiment of the same omnipotent, ompnipresent and omniscient Soul. K. Das Says:

"Each component obeys its own destiny. The flowers blossom, scatter pollen and dry up. The fruits ripen and fall. The bark peels. Each of us shall obey that clossal wisdom, the taproot of all wisdom and the source of all consciousness"40

(My Story, P. 195)

Thus we see that the writings of K. Das contain a spiritual feminism which is not less important than her physical feminism and which transcends all the male and female antagonism in the harmony of awareness of the self. It is that feminism which the world requires now.

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# Feminism in the Works of Kamala Das, D. H. Lawrence and Walt Whitman

Dr. M. H. Siddiqui

The literal meaning of feminism is equal rights for women. The lexical meaning according to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary is the belief and aim that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men'.1 The Constitution of India enjoins upon every citizen of India the duty "to promote the common brotherhood of all the people of India and renounce any practice derogatory of the dignity of women". According to Julia Elliott as defined in Oxford Dictionary & Thesaurus, feminism means "advocacy of women's rights and sexual equality".2 And according to Britannica "feminism means social movement that seeks equal rights for women. Widespread concern for women's rights dates from the Enlightenment; its first important expression was Mary Wollstonecraft's A Vindication of the Rights for Women (1792). Milestones in the rise of modern feminism included Simone's De Beauvoir's The second Sex (1949) and Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique (1963) and the founding in 1966 of the National Organization for Women".3

Women have launched organized efforts to prevent all discrimination against them in a male dominated society on

grounds of sex and in the fields of social, political and economic rights. The painstaking research and field work of anthropologists like Lewis H. Morgan on the ancient society and primitive people, led to certain startling disclosures in the last 19th century. It has discovered that in most primitive tribes woman was the head of the family and the lineage was determined from the mother. Woman was engaged in economic activity of earning a livelihood as much as man. Besides being a loving and caring mother of children, she provided stability and protection to men. According to a German proverb women are only suited for "Children, the Kitchen and Church".4

The sentiments like "woman for the home and man for the world—All else confusion" were voiced by celebrated Victorian poet like Tennyson. Rumbling of discontents against the maltreatment of women were heard in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Women found champions of their rights in the great humanist thinker like J. S. Mill and the great scientist, F. Engels. Then emerged a series of social thinkers and political reformers who took upon themselves the arduous task of agitating for women's rights.<sup>5</sup>

Apart from the developments in different spheres of life, in the realm of literature, the pioneers of Indo-Anglian literature were men of western education who assumed the role of interpreting the ethos of Indian culture to the west through imaginative literature. At that time there was a self consciousness about it. Poetry was first to come and it was associated with the cultural Renaissance in Bengal where the assault of English on the citadel of Indian culture first took place. The first Indo-Anglian poets like Henry L.V. Derozio, Toru Dutt etc; hailed from Bengal. It was here that literary awakening dawned. Indo-Anglian literature underwent the period of gestation and pangs of birth to reach the period of fruition and fulfilment.

Like Modern Poetry in English literature, mot of the Indian poets in English have attempted to capture the true picture of the day-to-day reality; mora! and spiritual upheaval corroding the vitals of rich tradition and culture; a sense of alienation, frustration and desolation in a fractured society; and so on and so forth.<sup>6</sup>

Keeping in view all the vicissitudes, death and destruction, tyrannies, immoral activities, maladjustment, malpractices, marital and extra-marital relationship, morbidness and weakness for love and lust, Kamala Das emerged as a great poetess to advocate the problems of the present age.

Kamala Das has consolidated her image as a poet who is feminine yet forthright, unconventional yet honest, ebullient yet tragic, impetuous yet insecure. Her poetry is famous for its openness, frankness and lyricism. As a poet, Kamala Das is celebrant of the human body, therefore her poetry is glutted with images and symbols of love and lust. Kamala Das records her personal concerns and predicament in her poems. There is a strong autobiographical touch in her poems. She is confessional poet who hides nothing from readers. There is nothing ugly and forbidden for her. She is the only woman poet of India who has attained world-wide recognition.

She started writing poetry while in school, but before contributing to Indian poetry in English, she had won fame as a Malayali writer. In 1963, she won the PEN's Asian Poetry Prize. Her first volume, Summer in Calcutta, appeared in 1965, and The Descendants in 1967. The playhouse and other Poems, published in 1973, brought her wide popularity and recognition. Collected Poems Volume I was published in 1984. "Summer in Calcutta" opens with her famous poem, "The Dance of the Eunuchs" which objectifies the poet's strangled desire within. "The Freaks" deals with the lack of human communication, the failure of man-woman relationship. The poetess thinks that today

man-woman relationship is only confined to bodily pleasure or to quote her 'skin's lazy hunger'. Men and women living under the same roof feel a sense of separation, frustration and desolation due to the lack of spiritual bondage. The man with his nimble finger-tips' can awaken only sensuous desire. Das has beautifully illustrated this idea in the following lines:

".....Can't this man with
Nimble finger-tips unleash
Nothing more alive than the
Skin's lazy hungers? Who can
Help us who have lived so long
And have failed in Love?"

The poem "An Introduction" expresses the poet's innermost thoughts and feelings. It is not only a candid piece of self-revelation but also statement of her poetic credo.

"The Descendant" is the second volume containing twenty three poems of Kamala Das. Most of the poems in this volume are further variations on her favourite theme of sexual love. This volume is characterized by the emotional frustration and defeat of the poet.

The poem "The Old Play house" is highly figurative, feminine and natural. It deals with the plight of the women, her agony for the loss of her naturalness, her predicament of loneliness. The poem begins with the image of a swallow, a small bird with long pointed wings and a forked tail. It stands for the early life of a girl-child in her parental home. The poetess is of the opinion that man tames a swallow so that she would-forget her natural activities, like flying and singing freely in the open sky of liberty. When this little child develops into a grown-up woman, she becomes the delicious food for the hungry man:

You were pleased

With my body's response, its weather, its usual shallow

Convulsions. You dribbled spittle in to my mouth you poured Yourself into every nook and Cranny, you embalmed My poor lust with your bitter-sweet juices.

You called me wife.9

In her day to day domestic life, the woman has to undergo many ups and downs. The monstrous ego of man dwarfs the honour and modest of a woman to such an extent that she loses all her power of will and reason and to all the questions of the man, the woman begins to utter 'incoherent replies'. She becomes the cut flower of the vase of the man's bedroom:

The cut flowers in the vase have begun To smell of human sweat. There is No more singing, no more a dance.10

Exploring a brief survey of her poems, I would like to switch on and concentrate on her poem "An Introduction" which is related with my research paper. Kamala Das's best known poem, "An Introduction", presents the two significant and inter-related themes of the isolation of the self and its attempts to express itself in full human terms. In the small room flat of Kamala Das there is place for her alone. Even though she tries, in "An introduction", to ask, who are you, I ask each and every one, the 'you' turns into 'I' and there are only echoes of one shouting in a hall of mirrors, looking at one's single self multipled a thousand times and listening to one's own reverberating to the point of making one mad.11

The image used for the self is very apt: Everywhere, I see the one who Calls himself If in this world, he is tightly packed like the Sword in its sheath 12

The use of 'Self' is no different from the philosophy of 'Self by Whitman the philosophical description of "I" by Kamala Das has a close conformity with what Walt Whitman observes:

"I celebrate myself, and sing myself
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good
Belongs to you."13

There are at least five possible ways of interpreting the pronoun "I" in the poem. The "I" in the first place, refers to the poet himself. In the second place it includes all the Americans in their social context and with their heritage. Thirdly, it refers to the natural man who loafs and invites his soul to loaf with him, and who lies down with animals since they, like him, are guided by instinct. Fourthly the "I" refers to everyman, represented by the poet. Finally, it symbolizes up the biological race of man. 14

Apart from the philosophy of the self there is love and lust which is the domain of Das's poem. We also find an air of love, amorousness and sexuality in her poems but her poems are no defences for promiscuity and adultery. She unravels in her poems the mysteries of love and sex. Love is for her the Citadel where all her predicaments and delimas are anchored. So there is a candid expression of sex and lust:

"For, he drew a youth of sixteen into the

Bedroom and closed the door. He did not beat me.

But my sad woman-body felt so beaten.

The weight of my breasts and womb curshed me. I shrank pitifully."15

These lines beautifully present the agony of a woman craving for the joy of the soul rather than the bliss of the body. Whitman regarded love to be "the Kelson of the universe", and called his *Leaves of Grass*, "the song of sex".

As regard the sexual love, Whitman spoke veryfrankly about it.

"Song of Myself" his most celebrated poem Contains many flashes of this type of love. In section third of the poem, "Song of Myself", he speaks of a woman spending a

#### night with him:

"I am satisfied—I see, dance, laugh, sing;
As the hugging and loving bed-fellow sleeps at my
side through the night, and with draws at
the peep of the day with stealthy tread...."
16

In section eleven of the poem "Song of Myself", he describes the desire of a lonesome lady for the twenty-eight bathers:

"Which of the young men does she like the best? Ah, the homeliest of them is beautiful to her". 17

Like Kamala Das's overt expression about sex, Whitman had no inhibitions regarding sex and he said that no man or woman should be ashamed of sex and its pleasure. A very interesting poem is "Spontaneous Me" which, again shows Whitman's uninhibited treatment of sex. These lines illustrate his frankness:

"Love-thoughts, love-juice, love-odor, love-yielding, loveclimbers, and the climbing sap,

Arms and hands of love, lips of love, phallic thumb of love, breasts of love...."18

But "A Woman Waits for Me" is the most revealing poem of the sexual type. In it the poet asserts that "Sex Contains all". There should not be any shame in matters of sex:

"A woman waits for me, she contains all, nothing is lacking,

Yet all were lacking if sex were lacking, or if the moisture of the right man were lacking Sex contains all, bodies, souls, Meaning, proofs, purities, delicacies, results,

Descriptions

Promulgations, .....

Without shame the man I like knows and avows the deliciousness of his sex,

Without shame the woman I like knows and avows her". 19

It is interesting to note that Kamala Das's attitude towards sex is akin to Freud's discovery of the theory of sex and dream. D. H. Lawrence felt that sexual harmony was an essential condition for the attainment of happiness in life. Infact, he regarded sex as a great spiritual passion that could lead even to the realization of God. Bhagwan Shri Rajnish also opines the same philosophy in his famous book "From Sex to Super Consciousness".

Like the romantic poet Shally, Lawrence was a revolutionary, a destroyer and creator, prophet of new religion which was calculated to redress the wrong done to the human race by our scientific, industrial civilization which has subordinated the heart to the head. The essence of this religion can be put in his own words:

"My great religion is a belief in the blood, the flesh, as being wiser than the intellect. We can go wrong in our minds. But what our blood feels and believes and says, is always true. The intellect is only a bit and bridle. What do I care for knowledge. I conceive a man's body as a kind of flame....and the intellect is just the light that is shed on the things around.....It's a flame because it is itself. And we have forgotten ourselves".<sup>20</sup>

"The body's life is the life of sensations and emotions. All the emotions belong to the body, and are only recognized by the mind, where the active emotional self has no real existence, but is all reflected down wards from the mind, the higher emotions, are strictly dead. And by higher emotions we mean love in all its manifestations, from desire to tender love, love of our fellow men, and love of God". 21

Lawrence's work is saturated with sex. Even when it is devoid of sexual incidents, the word and its derivatives incessantly recur in the novels The white Peacock, The Rainbow, Women in Love, Lady Chatterley's Lover—all these novels employ sexual themes. The depiction of sex was so frank and uninhibited in The Rainbow and Lady Chatterley's Lover that the English sensibility, bred mostly

on the Victorian prudery of the nineteenth century, instinctively revolted against it. Lawrence was condemned as a voluptuary or rather as a sex-maniac, and both of these novels were proscribed as obsecene and pornographic. Lawrence, however, was not put off by this adverse criticism and he strongly defended himself against what he thought was a very unjust accusation. It has now been conceded that he dealt with sex not because he was a pervert but because he felt that sex was an undeniable fact of life and as a novelist, he must give its due importance. In Lady Chatterley's Lover he stated very frankly, "I want men and women to be able to think sexfully, completely, honestly and cleanly." He believed sex to be a great life source and its consummation a great spiritual experience that leads man towards the attainment of perfection.

Like Lawrence, Kamala Das never presents sex in a dry, monotonous and vulgar way, which we generally see in pornographic literature. Her sexual portrayal is always tinged with verbal overtones, metaphors and symbols:

"I met a man, loved him, call
Him not by any name, he is every man,
Who wants a woman, just as I am every
Woman who seeks love. In him....the hungry taste
Of rivers in me.....the Oceans' tireless waiting."22

It is here worth noticing that "Introduction" by Kamala Das is a fine blending of both feeling and form, matter and manner. It is autobiographical in tone, which very beautifully explores the crust of the poet's soul. T. S. Eliot says that 'poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion. It is not the expression of personality but as escape from personality". Judged on this critical comments Kamala Das's "An Introduction" seems to be a bit different from the phrase, 'escape from personality'. Here we get a threadbare analysis of the poet's psyche, her inner outpourings, her unshaded and unexplored ripples

and upheavals of the agile mind, her acidic satire on patriarchy, her exposure of does and don'ts of Categorizers.

But what matters most in Das's poetry is not simply her truthful explication of foils and foibles, shams and hypocrisies of the male dominating mind but also her artistic presentation of the things concerned through some beautiful poetic devices e. g. words and dictions, images and symbols, connotations and aestheticism. When Das has to describe the patriarchal domination or the conservative frame of mind of the people, she writes her language in a very straightforward inaner with abundance of imperative sentences:

"Dress in sarees, be girl
Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,
Be a quarreller with servants. Fit in Oh,
Belong, cried the Categorizers. Don't sit
On walls or peep in through our lace-drapped windows".<sup>23</sup>

Here the phrase sentence (they said) is very suggestive. The term 'they' in this sentence stands the conservative, fanatic and the categorizers of the society, who do not allow the woman to peep in through the window, "lace-drapped windows". One this more this passage is heavily punctuated mostly with full stops. As a result the rhythm and rhyme of the stanza is entruppted and obstached by the unwanted uses of full stops and commas. They create a gap or bridge which in literature is generally known as Caesura. The breaking of rhythm by the deliberate use of unwanted punctuation marks clearly shows the deliberate interference of the conservative people in the freedom of woman in the society.

Here we see that Kamala Das has achieved what T. S. Eliot means by his famous phrase (unified sensibility) that is feeling and thinking together. Here Das not simply writes with the core of her heart regarding the feelings about feminism but she also presents those feelings with the help of suitable poetic devices. There in lies the

greatness of Kamala Das, as a poet, as a matter of fact. She is not simply the poet of lines and statements, facts and figures, but a poet in the true sense of the term. She knows it very well how to pick and choose the beautiful flowers of words and dictions and wreathed together in the form of a garland to adore her god of poetry; the garland which she has presented is not an ordinary garland woven together with ordinary flowers but they are flowers of eternal values; the flowers which will go on spreading its perennial aroma to every corner; flowers which cannot be crushed by heavy weights of thorns; flowers which will continue to bloom and blossom even amidst the thorns and brambles.

Thus, the main object of this research paper is to highlight the transcendental philosophy of Kamala Das that through love and unbridled sex, she has reached the acme of feminism. Kamala Das has begun to transcend her marginal self and it is hoped that there is adequate expression to translate the human bondage into a poetry of transcendence. In order to express the feeling of feminism in Kamala Das's poetry and especially in "An Introduction", this research paper takes the help of the great poet of America, Walt Whitman and the great British novelist D. H Lawrence. The woman in Das's poems is the sweat her, the wife, the flirt Love is for Kamala Das an overpowering force, a longing, a hunger, and an escape. The feminine sensibility which Kamala Das has raised boldly in this poem is a good retort to the male dominated conservative society which seldom allows a woman to come out from the veil or to open the gate of freedom and free flight.

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## **10**

# The Other Themes of Kamala Das

Dr. Shibu Simon

Kamala Das is arguably one of India's most outstanding women poets who write in English today. She is also India's most controversial woman writer who was shortlisted for the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1984 along with Marguerite Yourcenar, Daris Leasing, and Nadine Gordimer. A bilingual writer, she writes stories and memoirs mostly in Malayalam, her mother tongue, and poems in English. Her published works include four volumes of poetry: Summer in Calcutta (1965), The Descendants (1967), The Old Playhouse and Other Poems (1973) and Stranger Time (1977).

To be famous is to be categorized and labelled. And Kamala Das¹ has not been an exception. She has been evaluated by the literary world as "aggressively individualistic" (Iyengar 677) whose favourite theme always rested on the boarder line between fulfilment and unfulfilment in love. She has also been thought of as "distinctively feminine" (Parthasarathy 22) whose poems epitomize the dilemma of the modern Indian woman who attempts to free herself, sexually and domestically, from role bondage sanctioned by the past. She is also considered quintessentially a confessional writer whose poetry "by virtue of her candidness and disarming quality" (Amga 165)

stripteases her mind and exudes autobiography. It is true Kamala Das's poetry captures the subtle hues of all these traits and she may be justly remembered for the uninhibited frankness with which she talks about manwoman relationship in her poems. But what is disappointing is the critic's obsession with her poems of love, marriage, and sex to the point of excluding a few but sensitive poems which she wrote on varied other themes like motherhood, decay and death, grandma's love and affection, and spirituality. Nair remarks (111) in this context:

Although it must be admitted that many of her well-known poems deal with memories of adult relationships at various levels including that of love and sex, it is pertinent to note that some of the most poignant, effective, and least controversial passages in her poetry are those in which she skilfully conjures up images of childhood, grandmother, great grandmother and ancestral home.

As a poet, Kamala Das responds sharply to the social and sometimes even political stimuli emanating from her immediate environment. She draws the Indian rich in "Sepia" (D C Books 139) and their counterpart, the poor, in "The Flag" (D C Books 50). The squalor and poverty all around prompt the speaker in "The Flag' to equate the national flag with "meaningless pride", "crude postures of honour", "lies" and "false hopes". And the swaying of the flag in the wind brings to mind "macabre dance in the blueness of the sky". Kamala makes fun of her great grandmother, who represents aristocracy, in her poem "Blood" (D C Books 72). The aristocratic lady believes that they have the "oldest blood in the world" while in the veins of the poor and the new-rich flowed "a blood thick as gruel and muddy as ditch"! The poems "Nani" (D C Books 76) and "Honour" further indict the aristocracy for their selective forgetfulness. Two years after their pregnant maid Nani hanged herself, the child enquires about Nani to her

grandmother and she asks: "Nani ... Who is she?" The poet consoles herself:

With that question ended Nani. Each truth Ends thus with a query. (18-19)

It is implied that Nani's second death — of oblivion — is more shocking than her first one, the biological death. Sachidanandan traces (9) the social awareness in Kamala to her "inheritance of many traditions" which include poetic², matrilineal, regional, cultural and even the pan-Indian tradition.

Kamala Das's obsessive preoccupation with the theme of body is in evidence in her poem "Advice to Fellow Swimmers". Using the powerful image of the sea, she intimates the treasured freedom of living which emphasises the importance of one's own body. In her poetry, the theme of body is related to her perennial theme of love. Her attitude to her own body is ambivalent: she both likes and dislikes her body. The poet confides her physical unattractiveness for she is dark with ordinary features. In liking the body, she emulates Nissim Ezekiel who accepts whole-heartedly its demands. Kamala's protracted illnesses, her lack of physical charm, and her feeling that she was not properly cared for either by her parents or by her husband — all contribute to the complex attitude latent in her theme of body.

For Kamala, her childhood reminiscences at Nalapat, her ancestral home, are indelible, educative, and "tinged with nostalgia" (Parthasarathi 22). "My Grandmother's House" (Parthasarathi 23-24), "A Hot Noon in Malabar" (Parthasarathi 24) and "Blood" (D C Books 72-74) are ruggedly autobiographical in tone and structure. They bring out vividly the splendour of her memories of the old house and its matriarchal figure. Her nostalgic reminiscences, especially in "My Grandmother's House", intimately reveal the contrast between the abundance of love she once received and its paucity in marital life now:

There is a house now far away where once
I received love .... That woman died,
... you cannot believe, darling,
Can you, that I lived in such a house and
Was proud, and loved... I who have lost
My way and beg now at strangers' doors to
Receive love, at least in small change? (1-2, 12-16)

Kamala does not always idealise her childhood memories but keeps "an ironic distance between her felt experiences and their actualisation" (Amga 175). In "Nani", "Honour", and "Blood", the poet insinuates the evils of feudal times, eager to "exorcise the ghosts of her past and purify her blood of the malignant cells of sin gathered over generations" (Satchidanandan 15).

A theme as important as grandmother's love and affection for Kamala Das is the theme of motherhood. Her "Jaisurya" (D C Books 56) frankly conveys the feelings of a mother during childbirth. It rained on the day Jaisurya was born and the rain kept her company — "sighing, wailing, and roaring". The first tinge of blood seemed to her like "another dawn breaking" and Jaisurya was born like "sundrenched golden day" out of night or as "out of the wrong is born the right". She realizes the insignificance of love, lust and man in childbirth; what matters is the "foetus growing". Like the insignificance of lightning and rain beside the formation of 'Toadstool' and that of 'blue tides' beside the treasure washed ashore! Kamala Das has written only a few poems on the theme of motherhood but the intensity of feeling "Jaisurya" conveys makes its theme stand out.

Old age, death and decay are a recurring presence in Kamala's poems. If "Lines to a Husband" brings out the poet's obsession with physical decay and death, "Women's Shuttles" (D C Books 84) firmly declares, "I see only those faces/that have returned to dust" She recognizes (D C Books 83) "life's obscure parallel" in "death" and wonders if what she does is "living/ Or dying" (84). In "Death Is So Mediocre (D C Books 52), the poet charts the profile of her final goodbye: "Like an elephant not bidding goodbye while taking off' for forests, she shall go "in silence leaving not even a fingerprint on this crowded earth." Her disenchantment with life and love prompts her to assert the emptiness of both in "A Request" (D C Books 83):

When I die
Do not throw
The meat and bones away
But pile them up
And let them tell
By their smell
What life was worth
On this earth
What love was worth
In the end. (1-10)

In Kamala's later poetry, there is a sea-change in her attitude towards life and death. Here it comes very close to accepting life in spite of its traumas and self-inflicted pains. She writes in "Composition" (Das 8):

I have readied the age in which one forgives all. I am ready to forgive friends their loving, forgive those who ruined friendships and those who forgave and stayed on to love. (91-97)

Over the years, Kamala's poetry has gradually distanced itself from its over-riding concern with self to a concern for humanity. She confesses that her fixation for body is a mistake. She begins to look beyond death into spirituality and, like a convict studying his "prison's geography", begins to study the trappings of body in order

to find "an escape from its snare" (D C Books, "The Prisoner": 102). She even seeks emotional and spiritual sustenance from lovers. She realizes that "getting a man to love is easy" but "living without him afterward" is unbearable (D C Books, "The Looking Glass": 55). Amga observes:

"Kamala Das regards sexual relationships as the basic component of the love experience. Sex to her, is not only the biological urge, but also the only exclusive means of achieving spiritual equipoise" (177).

Kamala Das's poetry contains a wide range of themes, yet they are largely confessional<sup>3</sup> in tone and tenor. Her poetry reveals different feces of woman: woman as sweetheart, flirt, wife, mother, mistress, and as matron. Love too appears in several roles such as 'a skin communicated thing', an escape, a longing, an overpowering force, and a hunger resulting in satiety. There are other women poets like Gauri Deshpande, Mamta Kalia and Monica Varma who also wrote about love experience. But Kamala is unique in that her poetry encompasses a wider range of themes and exhibits a bold, ruthless honesty tearing passionately at conventional attitudes to reveal the quintessential woman within.

#### Notes

- Kamala Das is variously known as Amy, Madhavikutty (her pen-name), and Kamala Suraya.
- Kamala is heir to both Malayalam and Indian English poetic traditions. Besides, there are two poets in her family: Balamani Amma (her mother) and Nalapatt Narayana Menon (her maternal uncle).
- 3. In this respect, Kamala Das may be regarded as an outstanding Indo-Anglian poet comparable to the American Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath. Her

confessional mode of writing poetry is probably derived from the American poet Robert Lowell.

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## 11

# The Poetry of Nissim Ezekiel: A Fine Fusion of Feeling and Form

Dr. Amar Nath Prasad

Apart from many other things, literature is a truthful and aesthetic expression of life through the medium of language. Its primary business is to give us delight with the help of its various tools e.g., words and phrases, images and symbols, feeling and form. Howsoever great or well-designed the form may be, it cannot be called a great piece of work of art, if it fails to slake the aesthetic thirst of a reader or if it is bound by any political, social and individual boundry or if it expresses the thoughts in a dry and monotonous way. Its success lies in fusing both art and morality, feeling and form in such a beautiful way that art, in the long run, becomes the thought. This is exactly what we find in most of the poems of Nissim Ezekiel. The poet, in one of his critical musings, rightly observes:

"Good poetry is not always clear and lucid; never the less, the amateur poet ought to aim at clarity and lucidity. Concrete and relevant images are usually superior to vague immensities. Simple, disciplined forms, within which much freedom can be exercised, help the poet to discover what he feels, more than sprawling accumulation of lines. Rhyme and other devices may be discarded only if structural compensations and very special effects are provided instead. Development within a poem is a sign of maturity in the poem."

Well, Ezekiel's critical observation regarding the maturity in the poem bears the stamp of his great liking for the aesthetic significance of an art. In almost all the poems, Ezekiel has tried his best to upgrade the position, of art and has fused both art and morality, form and feeling in such a happy proportion that the one has lost its entity in the other and vice-versa.

The poem "Island" presents a very fine blending of feeling and form. It is not a turning loose of emotion of the poet's nostalgic feeling of the city Bombay where he 'was there to find his way in it.' The poet tries his best to search for his identity in the din and bustle of this great metropolitan city. The poem opens with a contrast between the song and the sense, the flowers and the slums:

"Unsuitable for song as well as sense the island flowers into slums and skyscrapers, reflecting precisely the growth of my mind. I am here to find my way in it."<sup>2</sup>

If these lines are minutely observed, one can get both feeling and form completely merged in each other. These lines deal with the realistic picture of modern city life where flowers are changed into slums. They also contain contrast between art and science, city and village, mind and soul. Some of the images and symbols of these lines are highly symbolic and they connote a lot in an epigrammatic way, though the poet's tone is a bit autobiographical.

The poet says that the development of his poetic career is very near to the gradual development of the city. Bombay. On the first scale of meaning, the poet describes the picture of the metropolitan city, Bombay. In this city, the poet observes, there is neither song nor sense. It is a city of 'slums' and 'skycrapers'. The word 'song' here stands for art while 'sense' for science. They also stand for soul and mind respectively. The poet is of the opinion that the city

has neither heart nor mind, neither science nor art. So, it is unsuitable for people especially the people like Nissim Ezekiel. The phrase 'flowers into slums' is very suggestive. At first it shows how nature is being encroached upon by science. It also shows how good values of man is giving way to the worst values. The word 'skycrapers' implies the meaning of metropolitan atmosphere of modern materialistic world. Perhaps this is why in this din and bustle of the metropolitan, the poet is suffocating. The poet's mind is fractured with some unbecoming thoughts. He has lost his way in the maze of modernity. He is in the constant search of his lost identity.

The poet likens his mind to that island-turned metropolitan where he hears the distorted echoes of his own ambiguous voice:

"Sometimes I cry for help but mostly keep my own counsel. I hear distorted echoes of my own ambiguous voice and of dragons claiming to be human."

"The Night of the Scorpion" is a very fine example of 'unified sensibility'. The poet realistically presents the incident of an Indian village woman stung by a scorpion in a rainy night. The poem is suffused with the realistic portrayals of superstitions of the people of rural villages. It also contains, the motherly love for the child and the helplessness and a lack of education among the poor peasants of the Indian villages.

The poem opens with a prosaic, dry and monotonous language:

"I remember the night my mother was stung by a scorpion. Ten hours of steady rain had driven him to crawl beneath a sac of rice."

Here the language is prosaic, straightforward and there is a dearth of lyrical lilt and tint. The second line is obstructed by a full stop which impairs the rhythm. Like T. S. Eliot, Ezekiel has deliberately distorted the language and punctuation in order to make the poem 'objective' and 'escape from personality'. The poet describes the sad picture of the narrator's mother who is stung by a scorpion. So, conforming exactly to the feeling, the poet has consciouslydiscarded the rhymes and rhythm and other figures of speech so as to create a special effect of grief and pain. The poet gives the pronoun 'him' in place of 'it' for the scorpion. It shows the superstitious mind of the half-wit villagers who think that the Devil has come in guise of a scorpion. The term 'him' and its variations come again and again: They searched for him: he was not found; His poison moved in mother's blood; May he sit still, etc.

The most striking thing which attracts the attention of the readers is the supertitous guess works made by the villagers who came to see the mother of the narrator 'like swarms of flies' and they 'buzzed the name of God a hundred times to paralyze the Evil one':

"With every moment that the scorpion made his poison moved in mother's blood, they said may he sit still, they said. May the sins of your previous birth Be burned away tonight, they said May your suffering decrease The misfortunes of your next birth, they said."<sup>5</sup>

The last section moved the heart of the reader with pity and pathos. It shows the natural love and affection of an average Indian woman who consoled herself by saying that she was fortunate, as the scorpion has not stung her children:

"My mother only said Thank God the scorpion picked on me, And spared my children."<sup>6</sup> In brief the poem presents a very truthful portrayal of the average rural people who are credulous and simple enough in developing a strong faith in superstitions and neglecting the logical, objective and scientific attitude of judging a thing. In other words, the poem is a contrast between the scientific temperament and the superstitious mind.

Though the father of the narrator has the sceptic, rational approach, but his views are buried deep into the ground of superstitions:

"My father, sceptic, rationalist
trying every curse and blessing
powder, mixture, herb and hybrid
He even poured a little paraffin
upon the bitten toe and put a match to it
I watched the flame feeding on my mother
I watched the holy man performs his rites
to tame the poison with an incantation."

The poem, 'Philosophy' shows the mystry of infinite. The range and depth of the Infinite is so vast that Philosophy is unable to unravel it. Philosophy, according to the poet, is a blinking star which can only illuminate the truth for a short time:

"There is a place to which 1 often go
Not by planning to, but by a flow
Away from all existence, to cold
Lucidity, whose will is uncontrolled."

Yes, to go to the realm of Infinite or the Eternal truth of permanent bliss, one cannot go through the planning of the, mind. The mind, which only revolves round the physical and outward enhancement and glory of man can never achieve that Eternal truth. It can only be achieved by the spontaneous flow of the water of the soul. Here the word 'planning' suggests the world of mind and intellect and 'the flow' the smooth movement of the soul. The poet is of the

opinion that the mundane language of the senses sings the glory only of the common things. Common thing 'dies of cold to find the truth it brings'. The land of the soul is always illumined by its own inner light which is more dazzling than the outer one:

"Here, the mills of God are never slow
The landscape in its geologic prime
Dissolves to show its quintessential slime,
A million stars are blotted out. I think
of each historic passion as a blink
that happened to the sad eye of time."9

Here the phrase 'landscape' and 'geologic plain' shows the evergreen land of soul where there is nothing but happiness and prosperity, love and truthfulness. 'A million stars' suggests the various types of knowledge attained by the continuous and rigorous work of mind. It reminds us of Emerson who is also of the opinion that a mind may ponder its thoughts for ages and cannot get so much self knowledge as the moment of love can teach us in a moment. These lines also remind us of John Keats' poem Lamia:

'Don't all charms fly

At the mere touch of cold philosophy."10

The contrast has also a very close parellel to the poem "Ode to a Nightingale' where the poet contrasts between the 'viewless wings (soul) and 'dull brain':

"Away, away for 1 will fly to thee Not charioted by Bachhus and his pards But on the viewless wings of poesy Though the dull brain perplexes and retards."

Shakespeare has written a poem, "The Lunatic, the Lover, the Poet." Similarly Ezekiel has also composed "The Poet, Lover, Bird Watcher." He puts all the three into one category because they are highly imaginative and their actions are not voluntary. The poet thinks that the best poet always waits for words:

"The best poet waits for words
The hunt is not exercise of will
But patient love relaxing on a hill.

In brief, Ezekiel's art of writing is a perfect blending of feeling and form, theme and technique. His expressions are not complex and pedantic but lucid and clear. He sometimes takes some Biblical and mythological allusions; but they never impair the flow and receptivity of the readers. They, on the other hand, enhance the beauty and the theme of the poem and turn the poem into an organic whole. The poet himself observes: "I am at clarity, above all, claim never to have written an abscure form. I like to make controlled, meaningful statements, avoiding extremes of thought and expression." 12

It is interesting to note here that genuine poetry is born out of a delicate balance between a perfect theme which is beyond caste, class and creed and a conscious mastery of words and phrases mastered in such a way that the outer structure, the style and the technique is enough to suggest the sense. This is exactly what we find in the poetry of Nissim Ezekiel chose his phrases and dictions with care and handled them with balance.

Thus Ezekiel's poetry is a conscious presentation of the theme. It is neither 'a turning loose of emotion" nor a nostalgic affinity with the golden past and the rosy future, but it is an impartial, objective and conscious description of the everyday reality of modern world where an Indian mother prefers her death to the lives of her children; where 'the peasants buzzed the name of God a hundred times to paralyze the Evil one'; where the world is 'unsuitable for song as well as sense; where dragons claiming to be human.'

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# **12**

# "Vikram Seth: A Liberal Humanist"

Dr. Gauri Shankar Jha

With his 'Two Lives' as the hot cake of the day, Vikram Seth, once again, is in the news. We fail to decide what should we call him, a poet-novelist or a novelist-poet, for he is successful in both the generes. He steps into the poetic world with 'Mappings' (1980), and then came 'All You Who Sleep Tonight (1990), 'Beastly Tales from Here and There' (1991), The Humble Administrator's Garden' (1985), 'Three Chinese Poets' (1992), etc. Seth's name came into prominence with his second volume of poetry. 'The Humble Administrator's Garden' that was awarded the Commonwealth Poetry Prize for Asia. Seth, though, designated variously, bases his poetic talent on the exploration of the element of humanism and this paper focuses on the same.

His first poetic work 'Mappings' establishes him as a transnational poet caught between the two: India and the rest of the world, their culture, values, etc. The dual feelings of nostalgia for his own land and fascination for the rest of the world tortures him. Like all important creative writers Vikram Seth's writing is molded by his wanderous nature, having no particular inclination towards any specific trend. Like all diasporic writers his writings suffer from the common lapses, at the same time his tendency to

dwell on all sorts of flowers to make the sweetest honey is evident in his bulk of writing.

M. K. Naik calls it "a bright young men's attempt at self scrutiny, the 'mappings of his diverse selves' (171)

'The Humble Administrator's Garden', the award winning book, has three distinct sections of his poetic experience of India, China and America revealing his aesthetic sense, his Wordsworthean thirst for beauty, Keatsian perception of beauty as joy and above all, his rejection of Coleridgian day dream of idealism; that is why he questions "What do scruples know of beauty anyway?" (HAG) and establishes his final verdict, "This is the loveliest of all gardens." (HAG) This collection of poetry is a land where strangers meet in the beginning and in the end, and discloses his diasporic dislocation, though he denies it vehmently. He strolls in the garden of ideology as a true socialist, perhaps in search of larger humanity, and the old man of 'A Little Night Music' like the old mariner of Coleridge's 'The Ancient Mariner' gathers maturity in the end "as if all men/were brothers within the enclosing seas. In 'The North Temple Tower' and 'The Gentle Waves Pavilion', the two meet, the young boys and the lovers. In 'The North Temple Tower', we have,

"Sudden delight: they point upwards and scowl One imitates a baby elephant The other glares and totters like and owl

Then stomping through flower-beds with glee".

In 'The Gentle Waves Pavilion', the two lovers meet and behave as they should, yet their unintentional acts are fatal to trees,

'Two lovers come

To gaze at fish and foreigner in the park
With a pen-knife hack their names through bark,
For posterity."

As we know Seth undertook a trip to China when he was a student at the Nanjing University, China (1980-82) and this visit has a substantial impact on his career of creativity; it could produce 'The Humble Administrator's Garden,' 'Three Chinese Poems' and a travelogue 'From Heaven Lake'. In the present collection of poems under discussion, the title poem has the portrayal of the Chinese art, in all its manifestations. It does not matter whether the creator of the garden is a corrupt administrator or a maligned character, what matters is his humility that could create such a beautiful garden: "He may have got/The means by somewhat dubious means, but now/This is the loveliest of all gardens." (HAG. 11) Seth is of the view that the purpose of art is to provide pleasure, as Keats says, beauty is a thing of joy for ever'; in the same way we should enjoy the beauty of the garden caring least about its source of creation; the output is important not its resource; it is like redefining the concept of art. Yet he feels himself 'an amateur' in 'From a Traveler'. "Though of course my professional opinion is not what you require/so much as an explication of my status/As amateur" (HAG, 22); to achieve 'a balanced power', he amalgamates 'obvious', 'obtruse', and 'obscene' with a bit of humour and irony; it is a sort of defining his own poetry and craftsmanship. Seth's concern for culture and heritage, history and mankind, education and administration, religion and art is enormous and its status in communist states is available in 'The Great Confucians Temple, Suzhou', where renovation of temple, concern for culture, call of heritage, education of students and life-style of common is dictated by leaders and so ridiculous, and "Proclaims the oppressive heritage is dead." 'The Accountant's House' has Seth's soft corner for aggreived individual and his astonishment at crafted smile, and his 'Research in Jianasu Province' is simply 'facts and facts'.

It is remarkable to note that "The Great Confucian Temple, Suzhou" surveys the bottleneck in the progression

of humanity, 'The Accountant's House' sympathize with the bereaved family and 'Research in Jianasu Province' has the marring effect of emotional section of self by the overpowering influence of factual world. He laments over 'the luxury of not needing to compromise'.

His liberal world view can be read in his opening poem 'Profiting' of the Indian section 'Neem' where he dissolves his own self and becomes almost a non-entity, being swayed away to tragic nothingness: "In wreathes of ache and strain/The bent rheumatic potter/constructs his forms from pain."; it is how the process of formation of art goes on; art is the name of continous sacrifice, prolonged surrender and unbrearable pang. Seth's diasporic self cries for homeless Indian middle class and thereby anxious for belongingness in his poem "Homeless": 'I envy those/who have a house of their own—when night comes, to lie down in peace/To know that I may dies as I have slept'.

In 'All You Who Sleep Tonight (1990) we have some more instance of Seth's liberal attitude and human endeavour; for instance in the poem 'In Other Voices', he goes back to history, and like a perfect post colonial talks of the subalterean, the suppressed voice from the histoty, those who suffered in Auschwitz, Lithuamia, etc., in the World War II and in the violence and horror of the West; in the guise of Doctor he articulates and rushes to the Almighty for rescue, in 'Lithvania'. "Beasts of the forest and voracious wolves / Who hasten to spill innocent blood and kill./ The pious and the upright. Read these words./ But think of Moses' words, the man of God / Sign aloud, O you nations of His people;/ For he avenges the blood of his servants, and / Renders revenge upon His adversaries." (AYWST, 164)

As a sound philanthropist, his disquietude lies with Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Jews and German, and the entire humanity in general; his Work and Freedom'. 'A Doctor's Journel Entry for August 6, 1945' and 'Ghalib' Two Years After the Muting' bear the same scare—

'The children of high lords go begging in the street...

That some strange thing has stripped us of our cloths...

How could she know what lay so heavily on me..."

This horrible design of the world ushers him to the world of loneliness, "As if aloneness were a sign/Or greater wisdom in design/To bear the torque of me and mine." (208) However, their solitude does not deter him because he ascertains it as a begetter of self-discovery and self-knowledge: 'Above all, to my heart I'm true' (211); and he captures the certitude that he should not groan long for the fact, 'Know that you aren't alone/The whole world shares your tears.' (213). Seth retrieves an explication in Forster's 'connect' and Coleridge's 'love'; his 'Golden Gate Bridge' connects man to God, artist to art and lover to beloved 'Across God's natural world' (189). Love enables one to survive in this dreades world; in the poem 'Soon' he says,

"Stay by my steal word bed And hold me where I lie Love me when I am dead And do not let me die." (AYWST, 173)

P. Dhanaval in his paper titled The Humanistic Vision of Girish Karnad' compiled in the book titled 'Contemporary India Literature in English' defines humanism as,

'Certain cherished human ideals and values such as understanding, benevolence, compassion, mercy, fortitude, judgement, prudence, eloquence, love of honour, kindness, liberty, equality, fraternity, democracy, social justice'. (77)

And Vikram Seth's poems cover all these connotations.

As we know, ours is an age of interrogations: interrogations of all human ideas which is an essential aspect of all humanists dealing with the question of man in the universe. And so is Seth, afraid of relationship, afraid of friendship, afraid of life and afraid of death - where to get the penacea? Where to get the shelter? Where to get solace? He wanders from post to pillar as a loner, 'They have left

me the quiet gift of fearing /1 am consumed by fear, chilling and scaring /1 shiver at night. I cannot sleep. I burn/By night, by day. I tremble." Our life has become a trial of tribulations: no love and no hope only fear and despair. To him, the most comfortable relationship, that is, friendship also appears to be under threat, 'melting us into stores'. In The Golden Gate his protagonist asks 'If I died, who'd be sad?" Despite his long *quistionairre*, he goes back to the shelter of the four lettered word' love'; as L.L. Narayan opines—

"The book is a lyrical composition with variations on the theme of love, its forms, degrees and dimensions.... both love and its definitions are elusive. Is love a chemical affinity? lust? Or is it concern, respect, trust, understanding and friendship? Certainly all these are part of love, but love is the perfect round to these broken arcs this multidimensional emotion both in historicity and its contemporary. Love is a reaching between man and man......" (178)

This love is fragile and can be found everywhere in the form of parental love, maternal love, romantic love, friendship, generosity, devotional love, etc.; at the same time it is the only bond that keeps us alive, and will be so in future. The novel presents characters who initiate their life with 'rigidity, mistrust and selfishness and culminates in 'greater ambience of courtesy, 'kindness, concern and caring', a move towards greater love; "A man must have someone to love" (6:13); the general consensus is "Anyone will do/For love and who may love us too (1:36); an impossible demand for a rationalist"......love's whole /or else in nothing' (8:35)

Precisely, Seth's poetry stands for his liberal humanist approaches though contradictory reactions prevail in the literary world: Khushwant Singh predicts him 'to be in the Nobel laureate's race'; C. D. Narsimhaih dismisses him as 'Seth has only confirmed on the *astheric* plane, the growing

menace of Americanization of the Indian intellectual in life and its values' (120). It is the ambivalance of Indian situation that torments such poets and we have Nissim Ezekiel encapsulating 'boring miniature of suburban and urban existence' (Entertainment'), Daruwalla's displeasure, 'Sorry, we can't lay on these days/a suttee — display in the flesh for you' (To Writers Abroad') and Mahapatra's (Endless crow noises'-Dawn at Puri'). K.C. Baral is of view that Seth's 'endeavour of concerned humanism characterizes not only good poetry, but great poetry'. S. Prasannranjan in his article 'Intimately in History' opines—

'Seth is worthy of that literary space currently occupied by writers like Elie Wiesel, W. G. Sebald and Primo Levi...... If we cannot eschew hatred, at least, let us eschew group hatred. May we see that we could have been born as each other. May we, in short, believe in human logic and perhaps, in due course, in love History may not answer the last prayer of the humanist as the lives lived and killed in this genre....still the world regains a little more humanity — and lirterature a lot more." (IT. Sept. 19, 2005)

Seth is the only artist who brings personal and historical to perfect textual harmony and 'soap operatic variety in life and manners', called as 'some kind of Tolstoy and his work a Taj Mahal in print'.

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# **13**

# A Framed Sand-Dune: Form and Imagery in O.P. Bhatnagar's Poetry

R.S. Pathak

I

O.P. Bhatnagar has established himself as a leading Indian poet in English. He has published six volumes of poetry—Thought Poems (1976), Feeling Fossils (1977), Angels of Retreat (1979), Oneiric Visions (1980), Shadows in Floodlights (1984) and the Audible Landscape<sup>1</sup>—besides three anthologies of poetry and two volumes of criticism. His distinct and independent approach to poetry represents a significant trend in Indian poetry in English. The present paper aims at considering certain important formal linguistic features of his poetic language.

Bhatnagar considers meaning to be the most essential element in poetry. "Poetry is meaning," he remarks in his poem "Round and Round" (TP, p. 5). It is to him nothing but 'a quest for meaning' (PSK)<sup>2</sup>. It is meaning, he says, that imparts relevance to poetry: 'Meaning makes the medium/And not medium meaning' (SF). Bhatnagar has, however, a fine sense of form in poetry. He regards poetry to be 'an open form'. According to him, form of a poem is a design of an idea or an experience as it shapes in its urge to

be expressed. He views poetry as a state of arrest and likens it to a framed sand-dune which one say keep on making and remaking until it is found or lost:

A poem is a vision
Which one can make
And unmake it
Till it is lost.
To find it
One must go
To the desert
With wide-eyed wonder
Looking for shapes:
For a poem is
a framed sand-dune.

(OV, p. 15)

Form in poetry, simply defined, is the manner in which a poem is composed. It is the unifying factor in a work and "represents the final unity of a work......, the successful combining of all parts into an artful whole". Maintaining an unnecessary dichotomy between form and substance in poetry, Bradley observes that "the form means a measured language" and that a successful expression in poetry depends upon a unified "significant form". Mark Schorer's concept of poetic from or technique, on the contrary, suffers from overinclusiveness. "When we speak of technique," he remarks, "then, we speak of nearly everything." Form in poetry comprises features pertaining to its language and the way a poet manipulates them.

Bhatnagar is highly conscious of the potentialities of his poetic language and is eager to make the most of the resources of his idiom. According to him, when the formal properties of poetry become fused into its content, they become meaningful (KD). He is a competent poet, to whom the English language and its nuances pose no problems. He maintains: "The barrier to any poetic expression is not the medium of language but modes, patterns or forms of visualization and expression." These modes, patterns and forms "cannot be borrowed" but "arise from culture, tradition, and history". He is in favour of naturalization of idioms, syntax, poetic forms, metre and rhythm to Indian ethos and sensibility. He has thought deeply on the nature, form and function of the Indian poetry in English. It would be worth while to analyse his form and imagery in the context of his pronouncements.

#### II

Bhatnagar defines poetry as "an alert tenderness of the self to the non-self pursuing forms and expressions proper to this contact" (PNM). Elsewhere he calls it an inner and a tangible conversation'.9 Poetry is to him "emotions in a state of thought: a tenderness become articulate" (NS). He conceives of it as a very serious concern of the poet: it is nothing less than the engagement of the finest faculties of man at their highest with the most vital in life (KD). Answering to a questionaire on the role and nature of poetry in modern times, he is reported to have remarked: "The most artistic and poetic problem before the poet of today is not of evoloving new techniques of expression or forging new imagery or form but developing a perspective suited to the complex ethos of war-renewed existence supported by the conviciton that man is his own consolation."10 It is his 'perspective' that is the basal principle behind Bhatnagar's form and imagery. Poetry, he adds, being a very human product, must derive its form, structure, syntax, logic and vision from man and for man alone.

Bhatnagar's poetry uses language characterized by simplicity, variety and freshness. It attempts of find out befitting poetic expression for multifarious social and individual problems and contradictions affecting present-day life. Bhatnagar's is an unpretentious poetry, simple,

relevant and communicative. What renders it so simple and straightforward is the clarity of his thought and precision of his language. A short poem called "Saint" represents his poetic style at its best:

He preached abstinence

All his life

Keeping women away

At a fight's distance

In an absolutely purity of thought.

People ensainted him;

And when he died

More prostitutes came

To mourn the loss.

(OV, p. 45)

Bhatnagar de-emphasizes the role of 'style' in poetry. Any undue insistence on it, says he, will only minimize the possibility of communication (KD). He is all for directness and clarity in poetry. A good poem, in his opinion, is the one which develops an instinct for 'rich simplicity'. All good poetry must be, according to him, a dialogue between man and man and not an attempt to confound man or prove him inferior to his art. Bhatnagar's poetry possesses, on the whole, an austerity, directness and freedom from emotional Only his Oneiric Visions slither. contains experimental poems like "Future Today" and "Of Death and Life". A few poems from his forthcoming volume Shadows in Floodlights are also somewhat different in technique. He does not, however, regard poetic language as a 'compulsion'. 11 To him poetry "must be as direct, clear and accessible as light and air" and must have an active involvement with its times and its concerns. He repeatedly affirms that it is not different from life and that "life revealed through literary confectionary has no creative perspective and artistic integrity". 12 Maintaining the value of simplicity and naturalness of poetic language, he observes:

Simplicity above all. A good poem must develop instincts for rich simplicity. Simplicity is precise imagery. It is an artistic attitude towards life. Simplicity crystalises poetic thought and establishes harmony of form and content. Simplicity crystalizes poetic thought and establishes harmony of form and content. Simplicity is immediately related to directness which results from an extraordinarily condensed clarity of thought and vision. The very majesty of both language and poetry is its simplicity and directness. A good poem must be a dialogue between man and man and win man both by its content and style. A good poem is always written in a conversational style. Any breakdown of communication due to complexity, obscurity, lack of human content, clarity and simplicity will alienate the reader from poetry (A. Ram).

Notwithstanding his advocacy of simplicity and naturalness of style in poetry, Bhatnagar takes considerable pains to forge and perfect his idiom. His method of working on a poem is not inspirational. He claims to write in two ways: "Sometimes a thought or an idea spurs me on to writing a poem. Other times, a scent or an image" (AND). To him 'effort and hard work remains the essence of writing poetry', and mere moods, fancies or inspiration would produce figures of speech, lifeless images, and styles totally isolated from harmony and vision (NS). Once talking to a group of lady teachers at Wani, he remarked that poetry comes as naturally to a poet as cooking to a woman and that only constant practice would make them wellversed. Echoing Walter Pater, he, again, maintains that "the art of poetry is as difficult as the art of music". "Poetry," he observes,

Poetry is not a spontaneous creation for me. I maintain that it has to be worked on and worked after, and sweating does make it more organic. I don't write from inspiration but from contemplative reflection. I regard poetry as a self-conscious craft which emerges from prolonged contemplation and concentration on an idea, a theme or a subject. Moreover, it shapes and reshapes itself in the process of writing it down on the paper (GPB).

Bhatnagar keeps on revising his poem until he is satisfied with its form and content.

T.S. Eliot is of the view that every revolution in poetry is apt to be a return to common speech. The truth of his remark is testified to by the colloquial style of most modern British and American poets. Bhatnagar, too, would like poetry to 'get common, natural and conversational', and the best way to attain this ideal would be to 'write poetry in a conversational style and syntax'. He does not take any undue liberties with the syntax; he makes occasional use of transformations employed by poets commonly, such as extraposition, cleft, pseudo-cleft, and so on. He is, however, definitively innovative in his diction.

For a modern Indian poet in English, the best way of exploiting the resources of the language is the effective, invigourated and free use of words. It is diction that helps him in externalizing and articulating his inner self. Composing a poem amounts to, as Bhatnagar suggests, 'words upon words the edifice built' (TP, p. 5). The power and capacity of words enables the poet 'to describe the unspeakable', "in a poem," Bhatnagar observes, "a poet goes to the very root of the communicative identity of language and reveals the life-style of words and their vocality". 15 Making of every new poem expands and refines the poet's perception and artistry with words. After coming into confrontation with words, the poet realizes, like Bhatnagar, that bending words from their rigidity and toughness of meaning to the malleability of one's poetic vision and meaning is the test of a poet. As Bhatnagar's poem entitled "Ending a Beginning Before its End" (SF, p. 13) puts it,

When words do not tell more

Than for whom the bell tolls

They're like monuments made to dead

At deadly costs:.....

Not knowing life in words Denies creativity its basic core.

The act of selecting and fostering words for poetry is, in fact, like bringing up of one's own off springs. There is nothing, Bhatnagar says, that cannot be expressed through

the available resources of language, and the success of a poet would depend, to a very great extent, upon his choice of right words. He remarks:

Since words are man's own creation he loves them like his family. The poet has a greater affinity and intimacy with words and he mothers them with tenderness and gives them personality unique enough to be engaging. This tenderness is the strength in poetry. Whenever poetry fails it is due to ineffectual use of words. Poetry is growing up with words (A. Ram).

Bhatnagar employs, as far as possible, common words. But when he finds them inadequate, he does not hesitate in using infrequent, archaic and even semi-technical words and resorts to neologisms and other tried ways of innovation. Some such words are: ekprastic (TP, p. 22), happenstance (TP, p. 28), unfreed, un-kind (i.e. not of the same kind) (TP, p. 7), unbelled (FF, p. 27), fumigating (AR, p. 35), apodyterium, apomixis (AR, p. 37), irenic iridescence (AR, p. 18), mudatorio (AR, p. 28), prelapidarian (AR, p. 46), unassumption (OV, p. 17), sit-in (OV, p. 21), liffy (OV, p. 38), tecktite, gematria (OV, p. 58), soapy (SF). Bhatnagar also coins coins new verbs, some of which are very expressive: mooned (TP, p. 3). eved (AR, p. 20), fire eat (AR, p.40), arked (FF, p.20), dynamite (FF, p. 9), escheated (FF, p.27), salinated (FF, p.25), embattled (FF, p.28), ensainted (OV, p. 49), brittled (OV, p. 9), striptease (OV, p. 51), uncooled (OV, p. 58), decolour, prostitute, enfleshed, gang-raped (SF), cockcrow (OV, p. 19), retailor (OV, p. 17), and remote control (OV, p. 16). Sometimes he creates interesting blends: insinuendoes, attractivating, lifenik, aggranoying, anecdotage, fictioneer, vertiports (OV, p. 8), multilation (SF), though this feature is restricted to a couple of poems only. In the same class of words may be kept his analogic fromations such as: winterloged (TP, p. 4), hopelogged (AR, p. 26), unyears, afterjoys (TP, p. 14), un-kind, unfreed (TP,

p. 7), irrational-highs (AR, p. 44), wnte/W (FF, p. 27), embattled (FF, p. 28), wonderment (FF, p. 33), faith-struck (FF, p. 25), endainted (OV p. 49), wncoo/ed (OV, p. 58), decolour, enfleshed (SF).

Another more remarkable feature of Bhatnagar's style is his wealth of collocations— "the syntagmatic association of lexical items". 16 His collocations, like those of Dylan Thomas, aim at producing stiking effects by juxtaposing elements from various spheres: arope span (TP, p.6), a makeshift roof (TP, p. 27), joy-unconscious dreams (TP, p. 12), runway dawn (TP, p. 14), joyous-green dreaming (AR, p. 10), money-green bodies, procelain glazed nobabs, cathedral cold [AC trains] (AR, p. 18), a greeting's distance (AR, p. 29), dandy-decadent ease (AR, p. 39), several light years, a sorry-go-round (AR, p. 40), a celluloid seal (AR, p. 44), print fragrant poems (AR, p. 47), transparent doubts (OV, p. 16), the heady splendours, fistful memories (FF, p. 16), tear-light bodies (FF, p. 26), salinated water (FF, p. 25), a light's distance (OV, p. 49), a discotheque flourish, a stereophonic satisfaction, electronic sleep (OV, p. 57), quietquestioning Brutus (OV, p. 20), petrol-cool men (OV, p. 21), leaf-strained sunlight (OV, p. 58), enfleshed satyrs, rainbozv truths, and castration anxiety (SF). The collocational clash in Bhatnagar's poems helps him produce uncommon poetic effects. All these features have imparted an individual character to his idiom, enabling him to bend the language to his will to exploit its resources to the full.

### Ш

It was thought desirable to test the veracity of what have been called *sylistic* intuitions<sup>17</sup> in respect of the *fomal* features of Bhatnagar's poetry by undertaking a detailed sylistic analysis of his representative poems. Style, for purposes of this analysis, refers to "a function of the aggragate of the ratios between the frequencies of its phonological, grammatical and lexical items, and the

frequencies of the corresponding items in a contextually related norm". <sup>18</sup> Five poems were selected for stylistic analysis, one each from his five volumes of poetry. These were: "Of Beauty and Truth", TP; "A Poem for the Pantheists", FF; "Death by Law", AR; "On the Cross-Road", OV; and "The Walls of Prisonhouse Remain", SF. Bhatnagar called "On the cross-Road" his best poem'. The other poems chosen for analysis represent a variety of subjects treated by him and are of sufficient length to contain most distinctive features of his style.

Table 12.1: Average Sentence Length

Spec- imen from:	S1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Total words	Ave- rage
TP	18	29	38	20	_	_	_			_	_			105	26.25
FF	9	38	54	30	49	36	25	15	14	34	_		_	304	30.4
AR	33	24	18	25	41	41	21	23	_	_	_	_	_	226	28.25
ov	10	7	9	9.	7	8	14	5	27	18	9	7	20	150	11.54
SF	11	19	12	14	17	16	17	50	24	22	26	18	43	289	22.23

Grand Total: 1,074 words Average: 22.38 words

Our analysis, besides corroborating the features discussed above, reveals certain significant qualities of Bhatnagar's poetic style. The frequencies of certain distinguishing stylistic features are given here in tabular form. Table 12.1 shows the break-up of each specimen in terms of sentence length. The average sentence length for all the specimens taken together is 22, 38 words. About 60% of the sentences are medium length sentences, each having 10 to 30 words. There is no sentences which runs to more than 54 words.

The average word length for Bhatnagar's sentences is given in Table 2. Almost half of his words are monosyllabic. Next come disyllabic words (16%). Trisyllabic words (4.4%) and words of four syllables (1.9%) are rare. Bhatnagar's

purpose seems to be adequately served by monosyllabic and disyllabic words. In the following lines, for example, almost all the words are monosyllabic;

But, Oh! I not a kind God to see

What God has made of man!

Or:

But who v/ill wake them up

From the dead

And put the living to peace.

Or:

So that we have atleast a stick in hand

To beat the waters with.

(FF. pp. 26-27)

Another important aspect of Bhatnagar's poetic style is his use of various word classes (of Table 3). Most of his sentences are simple sentences, which communicate directly and effectively. Only 2.6% sentences belong to the category known as 'complex-compound' sentences, each consisting of two clauses and at least one subordinate clause. A little more than two-third of these sentences contain embedded sentences. Very few connectives, signalling intersentence and interclause relations, are used. For cotextual cohesion, the poet relies upon words performing deictic functions in the language, i.e. articles, possessives and pronouns.

Bhatnagar uses far more nouns (26.7%) than verbs. He seems to be fond of compound nouns such as: lost-truth (TP, p. 13), faith-struck, annointed-Gods, miracle-man, singboard, sea water, paddy fields, human carcasses, metchsticks, cocoanut trees, human warmth (FF, pp. 25-27), signposts, milky way, concentration camps (OV, p. 18), foundation stones, paper plans, drawing rooms, air-conditioned halls, newspapers, gang-rape, circus lions, prisonwalls, neocolonials (SF). On a careful analysis, Bhatnagar's style turns out to be the 'nominal' style. More than once he employs

constructions of the type: A be (not) B. The 'nominal' style, though 'easier to write' and helpful in maintaining 'impersonality', is somewhat 'static' and 'less vivid and less comprehensible' and allows less 'diversity' to the poet. <sup>19</sup> It is creditable that Bhatnagar is able to communicate his thoughts so successfully through it.

Table 12.2 Average Word Length

Specimen from	Monosyllabic words	Disyllabic words	Trisyilabio words	Words of 4 syll.	Total	Average	
TP	78	24	2	1	136	1.3	
FF	197	78	20	. 9	449	1.5	
AR	167	48	6	5	303	1.3	
ov	106	30	11	3	211	1.4	
SF	181	66	.30	12	452	1.6	
Total	729 (47%)	248 (16%)	69 (4.4%)	30 (1.9%)	1551	1.44	
Mean	Score	145.8	49.2	13.8	6.0	310.2	

The adjectives in English form an open set and the possibilities of their selections and occurences are various. They add liveliness and picturesqueness to a poet's language. R. S. Thomas, himself a notable poet, observes: "The true test of a poet is to be seen in his use of adjectives".20 Marjorie Boulton, too, is of the opinion that adjectives and adverbs are those words which 'can easily be altered in polishing a poem'. 21 Voltaire, however, regards adjectives as the greatest enemy of nouns, and F.L. Lucas holds that an unnecessary adjective invariably affects brevity.<sup>22</sup> Bhatnagar seems to endorse the latter viewpoint. We do not find in his poetry a generous sprinkling of epithets. In all, the use of this form class comes to 6.4% of the total number of words, which is, incidentally, less than even one-fourth of nouns used. He employs adjectives sparingly. Two points emerge from his use of adjectives. One, he coins new adjectives when he finds" the old ones ineffective for his purpose: marbled, entombed (TP, p. 13),

2.6

4.3

%

100

11.6

6.4

26.7

Speci- men from	Total words	Deictic	Adj	Nouns	I	erbs ntr. ans.	Copula	Conn.	Complex- compound S
TP	105	18	7	26	1	6	3	2	2+0
FF	304	24	25	83	19	23	1	7	16+3
AR	226	25	11	56	6	18	8	9	9+6
ov	150	19	5	38	4	9	9	4	3+2
SF	289	"39	21	84	12	24	6	6	4+1
Total	1074	125	69	287	42	80	27	28	46

11.4

2.5

**Table 12.3 Distribution of Word Classes** 

salinated (FF, p. 25), tear-light (FF, p. 26), half empty (OV, p. 18), long-caged (SF), and so on. Secondly, he employs occasionally hyphenated adjectives such as: twice-blessed (AR, p. 14), joy-unconscious (TP, p. 12), Joyous-green (AR, p. 10), money-green (AR, p. 18), procelain glazed (AR, p. 18), makeshift (TP, p. 27), dandy-decandent (AR, p. 39), print fragrant (AR, p. 47), sun-flavoured (OV, p. 25), sea-bathed (OV, p. 17), cock-crow (OV, p. 19), quiet-questioning (OV, p. 20), petrol-cool (OV, p. 21), leaf-strained (OV, p. 58), and so on. At times the poet attributes human feelings to nonhuman things and is therefore obliged to use adjectives of a particular type: powdered tranquility (TP, p. 3), oscitant indecision (AR, p. 46), runaway dawn (TP, p. 14), restless calm (TP, p. 3), jeering desolation, invading vanity (AR, p. 22), dangling emotions (AR, p. 24), wayward ways (AR, p. 26), the beguiling boldness (AR, p. 44), glamorous tricks (AR, p. 40), wayward roads (OV, p. 31), uneasy silence (TP, p. 14), dead cheers (AR, p. 30), weeping waves (OV, p. 58), amazed silence (FF, p. 33), still gaze (FF, p. 33) the hoary Himalayas (FF, p. 16) and so on. These adjectives are generally characterized by [+ human] feature.

As mentioned earlier, Bhatnagar uses less verbs (11.4%) than nouns. Of the verbs used, 65.6% are transitive verbs. Ernest Fenollosa opines in his essay on "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry" that transitive verbs go to make a composition more poetic and that they facilitate 'the transference of force from agent to object' and also 'getting back to the fundamental reality of time'. The transitive sentence, he maintains, is the uniquely truthful, syntactical form for poetry. A good poet, he thinks, will use, wherever possible, the full sentence employing a transitive verb.23 Bhatnagar does use more transitive verbs and quite a few of his lines are remarkably poetic. But Fenollosa's Theoretical stance does not seem to lend much and intransitive verbs (ef. Table 3), which Fenollosa would dismiss as 'unpoetical'. If we take Fenollosa seriously, we shall have to reject as 'unpoetic' a greater part of Bhatnagar's (and others') poetry. The poeticalness of Bhatnagar's poetry depends upon his themes, his diction and his imagery and their creative manipulation.

## IV

Among formal means of poetry, Bhatnagar places irony very high. Modern writers are making use of irony out of sheer necessity, for it is "a means, one among many, of enduring the gratuitous burden of existence".24 With these writers irony is neither a fashion nor a fad but 'a philosophy; a way of facing the cosmos'. 25 Irony is used as an integral ingredient in Bhatnagar's poetry. It is the result of contemplation at the three levels, i.e. personal, national, and universal (GPB). Ever since his childhood he has been intensely aware of the irony in life. He told one of his interviewers: "Little ironies of life attract me most" (PNM). He finds irony a useful device to contend outmoded attitudes guided by catchphrases and aphorisms. Unlike Nissim Ezekiel and others, Bhatnagar does not make use of irony to take a dig but to reveal the essential nature of human lot. Irony is used by him "in a serious way, different

from the humorous light-heartedness in Indian poetry in English so far" (PNM).

Bhatnagar views irony as a mode of refinement of visions. He holds that it is a kind of truth one arrives at from perceptions made and experiences shared in human predicament (GPB). His poem "An Artful Jest" asserts that there is 'Irony/In a body/ With a soul' (SF, p. 16); The significance of an ironic vision has been considered in detail in his essay "Times for Irony". He regards irony as an essential nature of existence in which man has to participate. Irony owes its inception, in the Indian context, to an unprecedented collapse of ideals and values leading to an utter disillusionment. "But who, other than a poet," asks he, "can vocalise the dialectic of this predicament and point out irony implicit in the situation?"26 An ironic approach to Indian situation, he feels, is necessary because it alone can refine the poet's perception and free him from the narrow confines of his self. Bhatnagar values irony so highly because it is "both a mode of emotional involvement with intellectual freedom and an intellectual involvement with emotional freedom working towards an ideal synthesis of time and expression, life and art".27 The kind of irony that he recommends he calls 'active irony' which is capable of stirring people to indignation and to protest against explotitation at various levels.

Irony permeates Bhatnagar's entire creative writing. It "operates like the gazzle of lightning lighting up the dark, the gap between human beliefs and reality". Bhatnagar is acquainted with different aspects of Indian life and is able to see through corruption in them. He frankly criticizes, for example, the way elections are held:

The ignorant voters in their routine)
Queue up day-dreaming
And in a passion of a second
Get rid of their oscitant indecision
Stamping symbols for men.

Ignorance being accepted as bliss, the percentage of the poll is worked out proudly:

With a handful of literates

Sealing illiterate favours to steel boxes

And recording a proud percentage of the poll.

(AR, p. 46)

His humanism prompts the poet to take rich, aristocratic; political leaders to task, who exploit the poor and downtrodden:

After the saints have shed their blood like dew

The coup-leaders walk the carpeted lawns

Dismantling hard souls of all their bones.

The fanatics erect marble statues

Of their transient heroes

On the evanescent route of times —

Some whispering revolution

Others proclaiming peace —

Leaving the common man

To elbow sun with sun-shade.

(OV, p. 17)

His poem "Striptease" exposes our vanity over a rich spiritual past and high morals, which we fail to realize at all in actual life:

We may buy tickets in black market

To see women raped in films

But our ideals honour-women and values more

Than our morals can cast.

(OV p. 51)

He also attacks the alienated Indians settled abroad, who are given to look down upon India and Indians:

The country that once brought them up

Splitting water with sunrays

Now scorches and repels

Their skin and sentiments

Like a step-son borrowing the ill-name Of his guilty father.

(AR, p. 38)

Bhatnagar' outlook is so intimately geared to his ironic vision that he perceives the essential nature of things in terms of paradoxes, antitheses and so on. He talks of, for instance, 'shadows of restless calm', 'hollow serenity', 'visions mooned by sun' (TP, p. 3), 'true lies' (AR, p. 12), 'unseeing eyes' (AR, p. 19), 'smokeless burning of dreams' (AR, p. 26), 'relax with anxiety' (AR, p. 46), 'the beguiling boldness' (AR, p. 44), 'a sun-flavoured dark' (OV, p. 25), 'death/of sun' (OV, p. 26), 'dark ..../Generated by light' (OV, p. 29), 'half-seen visions' (OV, p. 33), 'presence lighted only with dark' (OV, p. 56), 'flames of sea water', 'seeds of fertile destruction'(FF, p. 25), 'the holiness of unreason'(FF, p. 31), 'sounds of amazed silence', 'their still gaze' (FF, p. 33), 'unwalked goals,'(FF, p. 13), 'the twilight mood of liquid clarity' (FF, p. 17), 'a warm sense of defeat' (OV, p. 25), 'the still heartbeats', 'heated discussions/ In the air-conditioned halls', 'dying the live in exuberant decay', 'speak in silence', 'a charm of ending a beginning/Beforeitsend' 'a convex glamour of concavity', 'righteous acts of misfits', 'disordered harmony', and 'pain of amusement'(SF). Occasionally, contradictory expressions are pitted against each other: 'floods of tears'; 'floods of emotions' (FF, p. 15), 'white courage': "purple grave' (OV, p. 20), 'sounding British everytime': 'showed and Indian', 'expecting less': 'living ....with more' (SF) and son on. Such expressions highlight the essential dichotomy between the appearance and the reality. This way of looking at the world is, virtually, an attempt on the part of the poet to look at things, turning upside down, to get a clearer view.

Moreover, we come across in Bhatnagar's poetry reminiscences and echoes from his reputed models. These echoes from well-known British and American poets tend to produce at times the effects of parody. The sources of phrases like the following are not difficult to locate: 'measuring life in value spoons' (TP, p. 15), 'a twice-blessed man' (AR, p. 14),/wine delved deep in earth', 'warm affluency', 'slow maturing' (AR, p. 17), 'living soul' (OV, p. 11), 'I have promises to keep'(FF, p. 12), 'Crossing the bar' (FF, p. 13), 'dust into dust' (FF, p. 15), 'She was born of love/ A lily, she grew ....in grace and snow' (FF, p. 16), Water, water everywhere/With all the water to drown' (FF, p. 25), What God has made of man!' (FF, p. 26), 'I know these streets' (FF, p. 27), 'Something is fair in love if not in war' (FF, p. 28), 'Till imagination joins the parted ends' (OV, p. 22), 'To be and not to do/or to do and not to be/ Is a question ...' (OV, p. 46), 'Sea returning upon itself in naked folds', 'There is more than meets the eye', 'shouldn't a poem mean? And only be?" "That's why the poetry is/In the pity of it' (SF). All these expressions are used in contexts different from their original environments and produce, by frustration expectations, the effect of a gentle shock. The exploitation of well-known phrases and sentences from earlier poets for this particular purpose is in consonance with the poet's ironic view of life and all its problems.

#### V

So far as the metrical form is concerned, Bhatnagar recommends the use of free verse. Indian poets in English like Nissim Ezekiel and Shiv K. Kumar generally use stereotyped metrical forms borrowed from abroad. This is not the case with Bhatnagar. He is in favour of naturalizing the metre and rhythm of poetry to suit Indian needs. He finds free verse quite handy for his purpose. Free verse has been spoken of highly by its great practitioners like T.S. Eliot and G.M. Hopkins and others. Its greatest advantage is that it provides the freedom so ardently needed by the poet. To Bhatnagar it is "the only way of liberating the long enslaved sensibilities" of the poet. He further maintained that it is not metre or rhyme which provides form but

thoughts, emotions and vision of the poet that determine the form of poetry. Let the content make its own metre, says he, "and ideas find, their own rhyme" (GPB). Bhatnagar is not very fastidious about rhythm in poetry either. Patterns of poetic rhythm are, according to him, part of the pattern of the way a nation feels and thinks. He is convinced that it is the exactness of thought and expression and not of notation or rhythm that is important (KD).

Bhatnagar's poetry reveals nevertheless a remarkable sensitivity to sound-effects like alliterations, assonances, puns, and so on, as would be evident from the following illustrations: 'floating flakes', 'invading vanity' (AR, p. 22), 'unwalked wayward ways' (AR, p. 26), 'the dull, dragging dramatic shows' (AR, p. 29), 'the beguiling boldness' (AR, p. 44), 'feelings made dull by dollars', 'ideals impounded by pounds' (AR, p. 38), 'the proud percentage of the poll' (AR, p. 38)p. 46), 'dream demolishes divisions' (OV, p. 23), 'dubious discordant roles' (OV, p. 42), 'a degraded prisoner of dusty dreams' (OV, p. 56), 'weeping waves and windy wars' (OV, p. 58). This tendency of exploiting sound-effects is, in general, helpful to the poet in achieving his desired ends. But when it is carried a little too far, it tends to succumb to a useless wordplay. No gneuine poetic purpose seems to have been served by the use of such expressions as: 'to dazzle the already dazed' (AR, p. 40), 'crushed to crushing silence' (AR, p. 40), 'plucky political dreams', 'pert political pandits' (AR, p. 46), 'the wondrous wcmb' (FF, p. 16), 'the velvet void' (OV, p. 54), 'plastic prescience' (OV, p. 56), 'the self-enslaving slaves ...ruled by glad ghosts', 'a revolution/ Undreamt of in dreamt undreams' (SF). Fortunately, the weakness for an unhealthy wordplay pops up very rarely.

### VI

I. A. Richards defines a word as "a permanent set of possibilities of understanding". To a large extent, imagery, which is the central core of poetic language, is responsible for

this life in language. Bhatnagar's use of imagery is typical of his poetic genius. To him an image is 'a fusion of the intellectual and emotional content', image-making being an outcome of a continuous poetic process (PSK). He is not in favour of an excessive use of deliberately Obscure images. A line from his poem "To Wear Images" is expressive of his attitude: 'Addition to images leaves/ A bitter hangover' (TP, p. 17). Bhatnagar is of the view that "any deliberate search for images would ambiguate communication" (NS) and that an image should be condemned if it is out of place in a poem or hampers the poem's enjoyment (GPB). Images, however, properly fused in poetic utterance, says he, 'may appear now and then'—particularly 'when words fail to be poetic or serve the poetic function' (NS).

Image-making is an essential part of the poet's craft. Caroline Spurgeon uses the term 'image' to "cover every kind of simile as well as every kind of what is really compressed simile — metaphor". Fogle refers to it as 'the sensuous element in poetry'. C. Day Lewis, however, remarks that "it is a picture made out of words". Poets have different ways and patterns of creating images, and, as Sir Francis Galton has discovered, they significantly differ in their image-making habits and capabilities.32 The poet's choice of imagery reveals not merely the sensory capacities of his mind but also his interests, tastes, temperaments, values and vision. Brown rightly suggests that the poet using images does not primarily aim at 'clearness of logical statement' but rather desires expression that in its vigour and intensity will 'bear some resemblance and proportion to the inner frame of mind'.33 Moreover, in poetry recurring images occur as tone-setters and structural devices. They also perform the task of explaining, clarifying and making vivid what the poet has to say. "If poetry is language at full stretch," remarks Nowottny, "the stretching must help us to see more clearly the nature of the fabric stretched".34 This can be best seen in a poet's use of images.

Bhatnagar's poetryis strewn with similes of a remarkable variety and brightness. They add colour and movement to his poems and reflect the continuity of their patterns. Bhatnagar's fertile brain picks up similes from various walks of life, but most of his most characteristic similes are from the realm of nature. His adolescence, as we know, was nurtured on the lap of the Himalayan Almora. Then, endowed with a keen sense of perception, the poet is able to detect hitherto unexpected relations between objects and presents his point of view in an original way. His poem "Fish Pond", for example, asks the question if man is 'as static as a fish' and comes to the tentative conclusion that 'in any idiomatic barter' one is most likely to 'feel like a fish out of water' (TP, p. 8). "Drying in the Memory Jars" shows parents remembering their children's tragic lot, whose limbs were 'severed from their bodies /like trunks from their roots' (TP, p. 26). In another poem, Indian widows are depicted 'like strangers .../ Forever peeping out of the window/In an indistinct anxiety to go'. They are also compared to 'bats hung upside down/To see the world in right perspective', and

Their feelings grow like caterpillars
Flying out as butterflies
Flitting from flower to flower
Eluding the fingers of man.

(TP, p. 16)

A series of original images convey the pathetic plight of Indian widows. Words describing the predicament of flood-stricken people are 'as wet and cold as water' (FF, p. 15). The devastations caused by the cyclonic waves in Andhra left lush paddy fields littered with 'human carcasses'

Like rice spluttered by an angry infant And coconut trees fallen like matchsticks And dwellings like houses of cards Perishing some fifty thousand faith-struck Like fishes drawn into a net Thrown by a desperate fisherman To lay his last lucky chance.

(FF, p. 25)

In the autumn trees become bare casting their leaves one by one. The poet says that the trees perform 'sati' leaf by leaf 'like proud Rajput maidens /plunging down the flames of fire' (AR, p. '22). Another poem "Kashmir Autumn Scene" records how

The quiet trees shed All their belingings Like

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(AR, p. 13)

The words in this poem are arranged in a particular way so as to enhance the intensity of the simile. "To Discover Truth" begins with a fresh simile:

Like dying stars

Men pursue thruth

Nagging life on earth —

Like firelies lighting up

Only in the dark.

(AR, P. 12)

The poet's dreams of a bright future make him look different from the common man Tike trees growing different/ In different lands' (OV, p. 13). The children wave at him 'like paddies whirled by winds' (OV, p. 27). The captive native, on being insulted and kicked by the

whiteman, groaned 'like fire volcanoes' and 'leapt like a panther' (OV, p. 30).

Bhatnagar also selects his images from common life—from objects and sights which are part and parcel of the daily experience of the average man. The poet realizes to have wandered 'like a ghost, On the ramparts of desolate times' (TP, p. 4). Human beings, too, are said to be afraid of themselves 'like pale ghosts' (FF, p. 11). The sense of loss caused by death is like 'breath melting in frost/Losing cold'. Death, says the poet, deserves to be 'treated/ As an abandoned child/Confecting fancies of after joys' (TP, p. 14). Trees falling Tike matchsticks' and corpses floating Tike long deserted ships' (FF, pp. 25-26) are not unknown sights. So are old cars frisking 'like Country dogs' and men coming back from work 'like homeward bound hay waggons' (AR, pp. 28-30). Who does not know what it is to face time like a man ..../Stopping by shades

Some of Bhatnagar's images are from the realm of art and literature. The streets, for example, look to him 'like a crowded metaphor' (TP, p 3) A young maid looks at her bare body reflected on a mirror 'as an artist/Possessed by the glosry/And the grandeur of nature' (TP, p. 19) In his last three volumes, references to literary or artistic figures keep on coming more than once. "Memory Frescoes" is an excellent example of Bhatnagar's use of literary similes. Orpheus, unlike the common men 'struck dead like Laius by the Swolen Foot', is said to have 'acted bold like Tiresius to Zeus and Hera', and scorned, 'like Theseus', the easy way to Athens, and

.....lived to love his body like Hercules
In the care of an athelets trying Twelve Labrous
Or an astronaut to land on moon or mars
Or like Icarius jump
To Wrench sun for discuss-throws.

(AR, pp. 34-35)

Most political leaders, says the poet, 'evolve like a Sphinx' (AR, p. 40) and answer 'like a Sphinx', too (OV, p. 20). He further points out that in the trial of the 'new quest' they emerge 'like Phoenix risen from the ashes' (AR, p. 41). They have also been compared to Satan, who continues to 'fight like Laertes/ To regain his seat' (OV, p. 16) and to Shikhandi shielding 'the shadow of sin' (OV, p. 20). Indian immigrants working at heathrow help the British Empire hand 'like a painting from Gaugin' (SF), the shadows of the old Empire keeping them captive 'like vampires' (SF). The poet would like the common man to be 'as bold as any negative positivist' (SF). The whole situation, however, is grim. Even poets are now weary of their dreams and are 'ready like Caligula to depart' (SF). These images bear witness to Bhatnagar's erudition, but they might pose problems of communication to uninitiated readers.

As for the functional efficacy of Bhatnagar's imagery, it serves the poet's purpose very well. One of his main tasks was to expose the growing corruption pervading all walks of life. According to him, it is the pious duty of the poet, wielding a sensitive medium like poetry, to "explore the tensions and displacements that are agitating the soul of a nation" and to "spell out the contradictions that are besetting the progress of the people".35 Bhatnagar's images almost invariably come to enhance his expressive poetential for this and for other purposes. His poems effectively reflect the 'maule and mutilated' contemporary social and political life. Morals, which should be 'as firm as mountains' (SF), have become 'as loose as clothes/Ready to fall' (SF). The corrosive 'cancerous corruption in bones' has turned 'morals, values and virtues to icereams/Licked by fun-loving children in cones' (TP, p. 4). Most people are today 'like deserters/fallen out of creed' (TP, p.7) and

....love to wear images
Like perfume charming thoughts
Fixed like mountains
Unable to move.

(TP, p. 17)

Their social relations have become so formal and follow that they meet each other 'at a greeting's distance/Like Germans divided by the Berlin wall' (AR, p. 29). Political corruption culminates in 'floor crossing' by politicians, whose dense morals 'As thick forests/Let no light in' (FF, p. 13). The poor are left to 'sweat out the heat' and their woes trickle out 'like moon bled by cactus', making them in their misery 'like a valley sunk in its seat' (TP, p. 27). Charity and alms to them are in no way different from 'the Japananese invitations to sun gazing at night' (AR, p. 43). All 'tortured ideals' are hung 'On trees like dew/Drawing empty centuries' (OV, p. 58). The dregs of society throng thepilgrimages 'like the decaying ghosts of death' (SF). They are being protected 'like orchestral players/In a rigid harmony of humiliation' and are destined to 'suffer injustices like babies full of tears' (SF).

Bhatnagar employs metaphors sparingly. Metaphor has been called "the major repository of poetic power and vision".36 As the New Critics have pointed out, it is not a rhetorical device but rather a mode of apprehension. "Metaphor," says I. A. Richards, "Is a semi-surreptitious method by which a greater variety of elements can be wrought into the fabric of experience." Metaphoric process, Bhatnagar holds, can be applied to any discipline of thought and made part of our sensibility. To him metaphor is "not a device or a technique but a pursuit of or the apprehension of the variety and extension of meanings and significances involved in the contemplation of subject" (KD). He cites the authority of Martin Foss in support of his contention, who maintains that "metaphors break up instead of fixing, keep us on the move instead of letting us down".37 The intellectual process, suggests Bhatnagar, throws the whole language into a motion towards creation whereby poetic language comes to acquire a metaphoric function.

The metaphors that Bhatnagar uses are by far ingeneous and unique. Death, for example, is nothing but

'the rhetoric of sleep' (TP, p. 4). Life has been called 'the museum of death' (SF). Windows are 'windows/To shut the past from the present' (TP, p. 16). The poet designates the Indian farmers as 'Stars on the firmament/Of our tattered economy' (FF, p. 24). Our freedom is a 'scarecrow' (FF, p. 20). The Taj is 'the entombed vanity/Of a royal romance' and pyramids, 'bits of yellow rocks'. In fact, all lovers of wealth are 'pyramids' (AR, p. 16). The Rashtrapati Bhawan is a 'surrealist design' and

A pathos of the weak
Wresting with a nightmare
Of fiction in search of reality.

The poet conceives of himself as 'a unvisted' and 'a well unused' (SF). His home ton Amaravati is a 'purgatorio missed by Dante'. He takes his dreams to be 'diamonds/That can stand ......sternness' (FF, p. 7) 'A poem is a smile/That spreads/From eyes to heart' (FF, p. 29). Elsewhere it is called 'a framed sanddune' (OV, p. 15). The poet describes Orpheus in terms of a 'berry tree badly placed' and his body, of 'Achilles' heel' (AR, pp. 34-35). The reflections in mirrors are thought of as 'a wedding ring' and tricky questions regarding them are 'a whore/That flirt with realities' (OV, p. 46). A lover of values today is doomed to be 'a diseased man' (TP, p. 18).

Most of Bhatnagar's images are visual and organic. They are the products of a well thought out mental posture, and there is almost invariably a ratioinative touch about them. Occasionally, we find in them an unnerving candour similar to that of Donne's poems. Bhatnagar's images bespeak a sensitive mind and a minute observation. For example, some 'dying recognition' returns of the expatriot 'like waves dashed back from rocks' (SF). An alienated person would feel 'like a man behind on opaque glass', his fading figure looking like 'realities receding at dark' (SF). Poetry recording impressions alone 'serves like a view/From a running train' (SF). Bhatnagar's images, however, are

squarely placed on a solid, realistic basis; they rarely run after recondite effects. They convey his thoughts and feelings in a simple, but forceful, way. He equates, for instance, slaves looking upon themselves as martyrs with 'hippies helping themselves to hashish' (SF). The poet achieves some of his rarest effects by employing cinematic images:

A poem is a smile
That spreads
From syes to heart
Using words
That have laid their meaning
To rest to become beautiful
Like femininity of a woman
Emerging from a happiness
Locked in blue waters
Revealing the unconscious beauty
In parts. (FF, p. 29)

Bhatnagar's images, generally speaking, are dynamic in nature. 'the eyed distances/Like shooting stars/Attracted us towards/Each other' (FF, p. 32). The children wave at the poet 'like paddies whirled by winds' (OV, p. 27). Most of his images are fresh and vivid. 'Hunger', says the poet,

....wears out spirit
Like light sliced by rains
And stars looking for asylum
At dawn.

(TP, p. 12)

There's no point, says he, in arguing 'Our life into rustic logic/Like envelopes pasted/With cancelled stamps' (TP, p. 15). The paddy fields hit by the cylone become littered with corpses' like rice spluttered by an angry infant' (FF, p. 25). The streets, doors and windows, once full of life, are now 'dumb/As faded paper' (FF, p. 27). Eyes are 'as open as a camera' (FF, p. 30) They, again, 'like horizons part'

(OV, p. 27), and youth is 'like colour/Steling the skies' (FF, p. 31). In hotel Hilton, the tribal girl with city longings 'looks like a cactus/Dreaming of rain' (OV, p. 10). Bhatnagar's images are brief but integral part of his poetry. They lend charm and expressiveness to his poems and bird nests' (AR, p. 28). In most towns 'to be drunk like a fish' is a common fancy and sight (AR, p. 31). The rivers in Punjab 'jostle like jolly friends/Rolling waves of joy' (AR, p. 32). 'The political leaders' feet 'bum like camphor cubes' (AR, p. 41), and the election agents 'flit like gay birds' (AR, p. 46). Other such common experiences are: 'roads pointed like needles' (OV, p. 10), saints shedding their blood 'like dew' (OV, p. 17), the queen's men burning 'like Dassera effigies'" (OV, p. 19), 'ideals folded like umbrella' (OV, p. 43), pity from above gathering weight 'like cotton/Soaked in water' (OV, p. 52), and so on. Men with weak sprits are like hair waiting to fall' and 'circus lions', 'weak and frail like flags' (SF). Indian immigrants walk in Britain 'with all the pride as majestic/As craters on the moon' (SF). Revolutions in India are 'Distant and unreal like high clouds' and hopes for its betterment are 'like chandeliers in streets' (SF). The common man is doomed to live in fear crouched like a defaced man'; he cannot 'swell like a dam' and has lost his identity 'like smoke' (SF).

Bhatnagar's use of mental images is infrequent. The poem called "The One I Loved", for example, describes the poet as settled in his feelings 'like thoughts preserved in rains'. His love for the third woman has overstayed 'like the holiness of unreason/ After the act' (FF, p. 31). Anthony's request to shoot him rather than hang him on the gallows is similar to the moonlight's 'dreaming of sunshine' (AR, p. 14). The poet claims to have 'a desire as dense and deep/ As dark' (OV, p. 10). The visions 'merge and emerge' in the morning 'like dead men dreaming fragrance of sight' (AR, p. 26). The poet is convinced that man 'dies only as thoughts/ In an image' (OV, p. 12). The innocent persons can have

only 'misted-dreams/Like dead men dreaming fragrance of light', for facts seek no answer like stars being perfected in dearkness' (OV, p. 17). An expatriot in Britain walks with confidence and 'airs as pious as incest' (SF). The parched earth regains its creativity like refinement in effacement gained' (SF). Only lifeless people long for death:

Like flesh cursing bones And moon dreaming death of sun.

(OV, p. 26)

Such abstract images are, however, rare in Bhatnagar's poetry.

He often conceives of the abstract in terms of concrete natural phenomena. Poetry, says he, is meaning, Like deity enshrined' (TP, p. 5). The future looks to him 'faded/Like the blossoms of cacti after dawn' (TP, p. 4). He visualizes desires on death sitting 'like amused sparrows' (TP, p. 7) and hunger sapping vitality 'like light sliced by rains' (TP, p. 12). A rabbit's feelings are said to be 'thin as air' (FF, p. 33), and human beings are Like water reflecting/ Every ray of light' (AR, p. 9). One's durable dreams are 'like logs' (AR, p. 10) and strong emotions 'well-up like the sea' (AR, p. 27). The poet's senses are 'silent as a coffin' and his hopes, 'scattered' Like salt strewn of foam' (FF, p. 7). He clears his mind 'like birds cleansing their wings white' (AR, p. 33). "Memory Frescoes" delineates Orpheus returning from the underworld like light lengthening at sundown', whom the poet can still see in his memory like the last rays of sun spread on still water'. Orpheus is presented as carrying his heavy soul 'like a dead body gaining weight'. Sick of it, he bears the burden of it

Like a bough bent with bitter fruit

Or a maiden carrying an illegitimate child.

(AR, pp. 34-35)

Children playing on the grass possess 'motifs like carpet/Rolled on the floor' (OV, p. 27). The British retreated

from India 'with morals as loose as clothes/Ready to fall' (SF). Thoughts 'consume life/like sun evaporating water' and would not 'vanish away/ Like stars at daybreak' (OV, p. 24). One's impressions are 'like a rainbow steady for a while' only, whereas experiences are Tike a rainbow steady for a while' only, whereas experiences are 'like a shiver of cold' (SF). Emotions barred from thoughts Took like fishes quivering/ In an acquarium' (OV, p. 34). They are, in fact, 'as thin as a fluid', while illusions are 'as old as sheep' (SF). Death, as the poet puts it, is

Like a shadow
Thinning itself out
Of light
Without a mark.

(OV, p. 8)

A living soul, on the contrary, is 'As white as a crane/ Flying off the arresting water' (OV, p. 11).

Bhatnagar sometimes uses symbole and myths also, although he would not approve of an inordinate use of them. Writing in symbols where ordinary language will do, is to him a clever way of evading real issues of life and truth and isolating poetry from life.38 A poem is, according to him, 'a symbol of a symbol, that is one whole experience or vision symbolized', and therefore 'creating symbols' is 'more creative than using symbols' (PSK). He would not permit the import of ready-made symbols from alien soils. He also disapproves of a profuse use of myths in poetry. He maintains: "When facts are dehumanised, they become myths. Myths are a function of religion, not poetry" (KD). Poetry in itself being a myth-function, using myths disproportionately would be 'thieving labour of expression'.39 Bhatnagar suggests that the new Indianpoetry in English should create its own myths independent of mythology, for the old myths, being profoundly religious, have become inoperative and incapable of meeting new challenges (GPB). The use of symbols and myths in

Bhamagar's own poetry is infrequent. But when he puts them to use he does so most effectively. Some of the symbols and myth-figures met with in his poetry are: chair (FF, p. 21), sun (OV, p. 12), the Great-Bear (OV, p. 54), Qrpheus, Icarius, Hercules, Achilles (AR, p. 34), Circe (AR, p. 39), Beckett (OV, p. 56), Janus (OV, p. 20), Sancho Panza (OV, p. 22), Kama, Solomon (OV, p. 53), Shikhandi (OV), p. 20), and so on. His poems like "who is Afraid of Fear" (OV, p.p. 19-21), "The Territory and the Road" (OV, p. 31), "Like Phoenix Risen from the Ashes" (OV, pp. 4-45) are excellent illustrations of putting symbols and myths to creative use. Bhatnagar's earlier poems rarely use symbols and myths. The tendency of using them, however, seems to be on the increase with his Oneiric Visions.

### VII

Bhatnagar is thus a poet of considerable merit. His is the most potential voice among Indian poets of English of the second 'generation. He has been called 'the poet at the cross-roads<sup>40</sup> He seems, however, to have found out the most suited idiom and form for his poetry and there is no reason to believe that he will shilly-shally about the manner and modes for communicating his thoughts and feelings. As a committed poet, he is in favour of a simple, straightforward language for poetry. He does not, of course, always follow his principle of 'Simplicity above all' and there is no complete correlation between his theoretical tenets and practice as a creative poet. But this tendency is not restricted to the poetry of Bhatnagar alone, and should be taken to be another proof of the freedom of creation from criticism. Bhatnagar's poetry is based on a strong substratum of intellectual content, which imparts a commendable maturity to his form. Nowhere does his imagery smack of rhetoric or bookishness. "As a matter of fact," he remarks, "experience does not create a natural insight on its own unless followed by a desire for

expression. The very act of expression illumines, clarifies and crystallizes experience into a metaphor, inner imagery or form...... That which is inexpressible does not concern literature or literary expression. It is only when something by its intensity struggles to be expressed that language figures as a medium of external expression."<sup>41</sup> One may find it difficult to endorse what Bhatnagar has to say about poetry, but his poetry, its content and form, will leave rarely unaffected. He has no intention of composing 'pure poetry', but the purpose for which it is written is adequately served. The verve and virtuousity and the poet's intense participation with the common problems are really commendable.

Bhatnagar deserves due credit for making timely efforts to work out a much needed deliverance from an unhealthy obsession with poetic formulae blocking true creativity. Indian poetry in English at present 'suffers from a kind of stagnation'.42 Amiya Chakravarty complains that he has "not read a single poem written in English by an Indian writer which is great poetry".43 The situation may not be as dismal as that, but it is certainly not very satisfactory. A great deal of Indian poetry in English these days seems to be aiming at 'expressive strategies rather than communicative goals'.44 Nissim Ezekiel, fully aware of the chaotic situation, condemns these 'seducers of experience' and asks: 'when did you last write/A real poem?' Bhatnagar has reminded us of the significance of content in poetry and has tried to restore the vitality and simplicity of poetic language at a time when most poets' search for an appropriate idiom tends to degenerate into a game of words ending in 'image-hunting and word-hunting'.45 Bhatnagar's poetry is admirabley frank and sincere, characterized by composure and balance amidst contemporary confusion and chaos. His poetry eschews all posturing and attitudinizing. In our age, when most poets' intensity and authenticity are doubtful, he possesses a new seriousness which lies, as

Alvarez puts it, in "the poet's ability and willingness to face the full range of his experience with his full intelligence; not to take the easy exits of conventional response or choking incoherence". Bhatnagar's genuine convictions, winning intimacy and his competence in handling his form and imagery leave his readers deeply impressed whether they agree with him or not.

#### REFERENCES

- 1. All textual references to O.P. Bhatnagar's poetry are given parenthetically. The following abbreviations are used:
  - TP = Thought Poems (Aligarh: Skylark Publications, 1976)
  - FF = Feeling Fossils (Dehradun: Paul Jacobson & Co., 1977)
  - AR = Angels of Retreat (New Delhi: Samkaleen Prakashan, 1979)
  - OV = Oneiric Visions (Jaipur: Rachna Prakashan, 1980)
  - SF = Shadows in Floodlights (Aligarh: SL Publications, 1984)
  - AL = The Audilde Landscape (Aligarh: SL Publications, (N.D.)
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# 14

# The Poet as Social Chronicler and Reformer: A Study of Basavaraj Naikar's (Trans) *Musings* of Sarvajna

S. John Peter Joseph

Good translations can and should recreate an inner music and inner form in a new medium and while doing so, there is a surrender and a synthesis, a deviation which is extension, but still pointing to the archetypal idea and form common to both (K. Chellappan 168).

Of all the forms of literature, poetry is considered the most magnificent form of literary expression. As an art form it manifests man's emotions and aspirations in a musical cadence. Good poetry is not only a 'finer spirit of sublime knowledge' but also a great and valuable source of inspiration and aesthetic pleasure. Despite different interpretations offered by eminent people, poetry is fundamentally imaginative and an interpretation of life. The poet with his poetic vision and creative imagination not only "sees eternity through the limiting veil of time" but also undertakes "a cosmic adventure undeterred by geographical boundaries imposed by time and space" (Sadani, 445). Poets depict human

experiences, thoughts and emotions in rhythmic cadences in their immortal poetic compositions. The musical quality and melodious nature of poetry expresses the imaginative depths of man's true and essential being. Though poetry has the intrinsic qualities of inspiring and illuminating the readers, it never fails to communicate certain fundamental human values. The moral and aesthetic values conveyed in great poetry never cease to touch the very core of humanity. What is more precise and significant is that splendid and exquisite poetic compositions portray the universal dimensions of life. The noble thoughts and inspirations of poets leave behind a rich heritage and legacy not only for their nations but for the whole mankind. Undeniably poets with their immortal thoughts and eternal notes of wisdom are the apostles who put together the hearts and souls of human beings all over the world in a bond of common brotherhood. What Dr. S. Radhakrishnan has stated holds good in this context. According to him, "Poetry is the echo in the human heart of the melody of the universe" (quoted in Sadani 465).

Kannada is one among the Dravidian languages which have an ancient and a very rich literary history. The literary history of Kannada not only depicts the political, the social and the religious history of the Kannadaspeaking people but also reflects the cultural greatness and the resplendence of the respective periods. Available works of early period indicate clearly that literary activities in Kannada might have begun from the beginning of the Christian era. The tenth century is considered to be a remarkable and a splendid period of Kannada literature. Pampa who lived during this period truly represents the spirit of the age. During the twelfth century Karnataka bore witness to a momentous socio-religious reformation initiated by Veerashaiva Sharanas like Basaveshwara, Chennabasaveshwara and Prabhudeva who envisaged a society based on values such as liberty, equality and

brotherhood. They had a strong notion that people should not be discriminated against one another based on caste, creed and religion. These Shiva Sharanas began their movement through literature which was distinctly known as vachana literature or lingayata literature. They propagated through vachanas their doctrines of the unpredictable nature of life, the vanity of affluence and ostentation, the meaninglessness of rites and rituals either domestic or religious. They also urged the people to abandon the desire to hoard riches or wealth, to live a life of sobriety and finally to attain the spiritual enlightenment of Shiva. Apart from these poets with their socio-cultural and spiritual ideologies and viewpoints Kannada language abounds in the literary works created by Pampa, Ranna, Nagaverma, Basavanna, Mahadevikka, Harihara, Raghavanka, Naranappa, Lakshmeehas, Sarvajna, Ratnakaravarni, Kempunarayana, M.K. Srikantesha Gowda and Muddanna. The works of these literary giants are comparable to the works of the illustrious and eminent writers of other literatures in the world.

Musings of Sarvajna (1990) is a pioneering work of Basavaraj Naikar who happens to be a front runner in popularising Sarvajna, one of the genuises of Kannada poetry to the English-speaking world. Though there are plenty of books and scores of research articles and erudite commentaries on the poems of Sarvajna in Kannada language, they have failed to make the fame and the stature of Sarvajna known to the people outside the State of Karnataka. Basavaraj Naikar, a well-known novelist, an accomplished short story writer and a renowned critic, introduces the poetic genius of Sarvajna not only to the oriental literates but also to the learned in the West. Naikar, known for his bilingual scholarship and profound knowledge in the fields of culture, philosophy, religion, music, mysticism and literature of different kinds, has endeavoured to bring to light the enlightened spirit, the

encyclopaedic knowledge and inimitable wisdom of Sarvajna. Commenting on the erudite scholarship of Naikar, S. R. Gunjal rightly observes:

Mr. Naikar's attempt to offer a sustained and systematic critical picture of Sarvajna's poetry is very commendable because it requires the critical skill of selecting the salient thoughts, rejecting the repetitive ones and yet retaining the native imagery employed by the poet. His discussion of Sarvajna's varied themes, images and language is ideally matched by his sharp analytical approach, clarity of thought and lucidity of style. One might say without any hesitation that Mr. Naikar has built a cultural bridge between the East and the West and given the right place for Sarvajna in the world-literature (Sarvajna: The Omniscient Poet of Karnataka, preface).

Kannada literature is simply desicreated and spiritless without the incomparable poetic works of Sarvajna. As a unique and exceptional phenomenon, he has been enthralling and enlightening readers for centuries together. What is quite significant is that one cannot easily find a similar stature of poetic genius in other literatures. The universal appeal of his poetry is so great and tremendous that it cannot be easily restricted to any particular race, caste, creed and sex. The vachanas of Sarvajna have become quite familiar with both the educated and illiterates in every home in Karnataka. Kannadigas believe that without imbibing the edifying and illuminating principles of Sarvajna they can never become truly cultured and refined. The influence and the impact of Sarvajna are so great on Kannadigas that Kannada poetry without Sarvajna is "like Telugu poetry without Vemana; Tamil poetry without Tiruvalluvar; Marathi poetry, without Ramadas; Hindi poetry without Kabir; Sanskirt poetry without Bhartrhari; English poetry without Ezra Pound; Italian poetry without Dante; and Japanese poetry without the Haiku" (Naikar, Sarvajna: The Omniscient poet of Karnataka 1). Though Sarvajna happens to be a regional

poet of the Indian subcontinent he shares certain universal concerns with the poets of the world who belong to different regions, climates, time and *milieu*.

The biography of Sarvajna like the great poet-saint of Tamilnadu, Tiruvalluvar, is quite fascinating and interesting. He is believed to have belonged to the later half of the 16th century and to have lived during the regime of Sri. Krishnadevaraya. He is supposed to have hailed from a small hamlet namely Madagamasuru of Hirekeru taluk of Dharwad district in Karnataka. Though the exact date of his birth is not clearly known one could get details of his parentage and the place where he was born and brought up from his own vachanas. Born to Basavarasa and Mali of the potter community Sarvajna was a self-taught man. He not only remained a bachelor but also led a life of a sanyasi. Furthermore, he was a strong proponent of Virasaivism though he loved the positive aspects of other religions. His own vachana describes the kind of life led by him:

A begging bowl in hand and a large country to wander forth

And a God like Hara to depend on Who is there richer than I?

(Musings of Sarvajna 2)

The traditional portrait of Sarvajna illustrates a man in "a loin cloth and wollen blanket across his shoulders, chappals under his feet, a distaff in his right hand and a begging bowl in his left, horizontal triple ash-marks on his forehead, an isthalinga tied in a cloth and a rosary of rudraksi around his neck" (Naikar, Sarvajna: The Omniscient Poet 2) To Sarvajna, life was nothing but journey. As a holy pilgrim, he went in search of knowledge and wisdom. Emphasising Sarvajna's thirst for knowledge, C.N. Hiremath observes:

He had also the insatiable hunger for knowledge and learning. From house to house, from door to door he went, gleaning golden grains of knowledge and wisdom, accumulating, digesting and assimilating whatever he gathered. He went on gleaning and garnering grains of wisdom with the diligence of a squirrel and the assiduous industry of an ant (Musings of Sarvajna xi-xii).

While answering the question whether the readers consider him as a man of conceit, Sarvajna himself observes:

Thinkest thou Sarvajna a conceited man?

Nay! Learning a word of wisdom from one and all

Lo! he became the veritable mountain of wisdom (2).

As a poetic wayfarer, Sarvajna sang songs extemporaneously. His songs undoubtedly reveal his pensive, reflective and analytical bend of mind. His poems abound in humanism, melodiousness and soothing features. As a moral teacher, he does not fail to give the readers and the listeners the ideals to be followed in one's life. As the greatest personification of freedom of thought, expression and deeds, Sarvajna exemplifies truth in his songs which were actually a source of inspiration and moral guidance to both the learned as well as the laity. His songs were composed in the form of tripadi or triplets i.e. "a three-lined form which roughly corresponds to the terza rima of Italian poetry". Every tripadi consists of "twenty mantras or digits in the first line; eighteen in the second; and thirteen in the third. The second syllable of each line rhymes with the corresponding ones of the other lines and contributes to the alliteration". (Naikar, Sarvajna: The Omniscient Poet 3). Illustrating the effective use of the poetic form by Sarvajna, Naikar states:

Although Sarvajna was not the originator of this poetic and metric form, he gave a new currency to it by his exclusive and powerful use of the same in the manner in which Dante gave a new currency to terza rima although he was not the originator of that metre" (3).

Since the tripadi form is short, it is always easy for people to remember the songs and sing them whenever they want to. Moreover, its musical cadences and epigrammatic nature enable people to treat them as valuable quotations. Because of the forthright manner, relevance and memorableness of the poems people recite them spontaneously on various occasions.

Though Sarvajna is believed to have sung 70707070 triplets, only a few hundred of them are available now. Musings of Sarvajna is an English translation of 188 triplets from the Kannada language. The poems included in the collection illustrate the universal perceptions and the variegated themes of Sarvajna. While translating the poetical compositions of Sarvajna, Naikar took into his consideration the translatability of the poems into English language. The author himself admits that he has not attempted word to word translation. What he precisely aims at is literal translation. apart from placing special emphasis on the imagery, metaphors, similes which are specifically related to the North Karnataka region.

The poetry of Sarvajna is distinctly known for its allencompassing and comprehensive nature. True to the
meaning of his name i.e., the all knowing or the omniscient,
Sarvajna is endowed with a vast knowledge of human
experience. With his exalted wisdom and phenomenal
vision of life, Sarvajna happens to be an extraordinary poet
who could sing songs on any theme under the sun. The
heterogeneity and multifariousness of his themes are not
only remarkable but also quite incredible. In his poetry he
dealt with themes ranging from "the mundane to the
metaphysical; politics to religion; sexology to astrology;
agriculture to alchemy; prostitution to mysticism and so on"
(Naikar, Musings of Sarvajna xviii).

While talking about alms and charity, Sarvajna makes it clear that alms and things given in the form of charity to the poor and the needy will certainly be reserved for the almsgiver himself. And he does not hesitate to say that the riches hoarded by self-centered rich people are meant for others. He continues to say:

Those who feed the hungry and speak the truth

And love others as themselves

Are indeed invitees to Kailasa (3).

Emphasising the true spirit of giving alms to the needy Sarvajna observes:

Say not 'come tomorrow' or 'the day after'.

Give alms to the needy today

And that indeed is true religion (4)

Feeding the hungry and helping the needy, according to Sarvajna, will enable one to find a place in heaven. The concerns shown by the poet for the poor and the needy finds a parallel in the 'Sacred' Kurral of Tiruvalluvar. While illustrating the essential features of domestic virtue Tiruvalluvar observes:

Call that a gift to needy men thou dost dispense,

All else is void of good, seeking for recompense.

('Sacred' Kurral 31)

I've nought' is ne'er the highborn man's reply;

He gives to those who raise themselves that cry (31).

Let man relieve the wasting hunger men endure;

For treasure gained thus finds he treasure-house secure (32).

Tis bitter pain to die!

Tis worse to live

For him who nothing finds to give! (32).

Describing the significance of enlightenment Sarvajna observes: Why should the one who has realised The light within himself bother about The business of living? (Musings of Sarvajna 5).

Differentiating the enlightened from the benighted Sarvajna sings:

Enlightened indeed is he who has realised his own self,

But the one who knows not

Is like a dog of a deserted village (5).

Sarvajna sang about the sagacity of the men of illumination. He states:

The enlightened man is supremely silent

Though blamed and criticised by the worldly fools

Like an elephant regally moving along the path unmindful of the barking dogs (6).

He continues to say:

The enlightened man laughs at the benighted one

Like an adulteress laughing at her own husband

Who thinks the lover's child his own (6).

Speaking more about the benighted man the poet observes:

A benighted man eats only the husk

And tastes not the core of Truth

Like a sheep nibbling at the leaf but not tasting juice in the cane (7).

While bringing out the distinction between the men of knowledge and the ignorant Sarvajna remarks:

The face of the learned is pleasing to watch

And that of the illiterate is detesting

Like a kite of a deserted village (9).

Like a true philosopher, Sarvajna has written much about the significance of the Guru and the essential nature of spirituality. In Virasaivism the Guru is a living manifestation and epitome of God himself. Being aware of the importance of the Guru in one's life Sarvajna says:

Guru's grace can transform

A log into a wish tree and a barren cow into a milch cow And benighted fools into enlightened reciters of Pranava (15).

Your kith and kin will come and dine with you at home, But will they release you from the cycle of birth and death?

Realize, oh ignorant one!

The Guru alone can free you from the chain of Maya (16).

If you fall at the feet of the Guru

Your accumulated sins would dissolve

Like a mountain of camphor touched by the spark (16).

Sarvajna points out the meaninglessness and futility of worldly prospects and material accomplishment which are devoid of spirituality. According to him, the Guru is an exemplary and ideal human being who illuminates the entire cosmos. Man can understand the essence of God or the divine principle only with the help and the guidance of the Guru. For disciples the words of the Guru are quite indispensable to tread the path of spirituality.

Pointing out the advantages of associating oneself with the righteous and noble men the poet says:

Friendship with the virtuous is like tasting honey
But the company of the vicious
Will bring you the excruciating pain of breaking your
kidney bones (13).

Several poets both in Kannada language and other languages have written much about *karma* which is one of the fundamental beliefs or doctrines of Hinduism. *Karma* is a precept and the doctrine of causes and consequences of human action. It also indicates the retribution received by a person as the fruit of the good or evil deeds he has done. Sarvajna has written a number of poems about the inevitable and the inescapable consequence of karma. He reflects and philosophises:

The karma of your past life will chase you Be you in the heart of Varanasi or at the bottom of the sea Or even by the side of Lord Virabhadra (17).

You cannot escape from the clutches of death even if you visit The sacred shrines or hide in the rocky caves Or seek shelter with the wise (17).

Does the tick in the udder taste the frothing milk?

Much worse indeed is the lot of the person

Who does not savour the fruit of his past merit (19).

Tiruvalluvar also has written ten couplets on karma. Some of the couplets which find similar veins of thought are:

Wealth-giving fate power of unflinching effort brings;

From fate that takes away idle remissness springs.

(Sacred Kurral 52)

The fate that loss ordains makes wise men's wisdom foolishness;

The fate that gain bestows with ampler powers will wisdom bless (52).

What powers so great as those of Destiny? Man's skill Some other thing contrives; but fate's beforehand still (53).

While talking about the inevitable nature of destiny the poet of *Naladinanuru* observes:

To avoid those things which are to happen or to detain those which are to depart is alike impossible even to saints; even as there is none who can give rain out of season, or prevent its falling in season (quoted in F.W. Eills 12).

Sarvajna strongly believes in the true spirit and the essence of religion. He openly criticises the meaninglessness of the external rituals of religion especially the ritual of taking bath in the holy rivers without realising the significance of God. Hindus firmly believe that bathing in holy rivers will dissolve all their sins and purify them. The poet asks:

Why you dip and leave into the flowing waters of the Ganga

The Godavari, Tungabhadra and the Krishna Without realising God deep down in your own heart?

(Musings of Sarvajna 20).

Religions preaching violence and bloodshed! Throw them all into the fire.

Lo, I would place on my head Jaina religion forbidding violence of any kind (22).

Sarvajna does not fail to glorify Jainism which gives importance to peace and nonviolence in life.

While trying to describe the unique and the phenomenal significance of Linga which is obviously a Virasaiva equivalent of the absolute or Lord Siva, the poet draws the attention of his readers to the idea that God is one who has genuine concern and veritable compassion for the all the living beings in the world. His illustration of such a difficult concept through simple and vivid metaphorical language will be understood by both the educated and the uneducated.

Immanent and omnipresent is the *Linga* in all things conceivable.

Rocks, breasts, measuring cans and even sheep's droppings!

Do the nigamas realise this? (23).

Who could put inebriating aroma in asofoetida; Milk in coconut, music in the throats of the bumblebee and the cuckoo?

Tell me if ye know (23).

Invisible like ghee in milk, Like particles of dust in water Lord Siva dwells in our hearts (25).

Like Sivaratri among all nights,

Like Srisaila Fair among all others, like Srikasi among all holy places

Our Siva-doctrine is the crown and glory of all doctorines (27).

One and only one is the Lord for the Universe, One and only one is the creator for the cosmos. Know ye fool, there are not two (27). To Sarvajna, inner purity is very important for people in this world. He teaches that one cannot achieve spiritual bliss without inner devotion and purity. He also advocates the devoted practice of yoga for the accomplishment of spiritual enlightenment. For him, to attain inner purity, self-discipline or inner discipline is very important.

Though the poet is a staunch upholder of the values of Hinduism, he gives special importance to the Virasaiva method of salvation namely Sivayoga. He is of the view that a Siva yogi should conquer the negative feelings like lust, greediness, desire, anger, covetousness, self-centredness and cruelty. About the Sivayogis the poet observes:

He is indeed a Sivayogi

Who shuns food and water;

Woman and gossip (35).

Burning himself the Sivayogi enlightens mankind

Like the oil of a lamp burning itself

To illumine the world? (35).

Sivayogi renouncing the world.

What need has he for pelf or a female;

Pomp or power? (33).

The poet states that it is not easy to comprehend the complex nature of Brahmarandra but a Sivayogi can become Lord Brahma if he dispenses with his egocentric self.

None could understand the secret of Brahmarandhra overnight.

Could a Sivayogi become Lord Brahma?

With his self smothered with the smoke of egotistic vanity! (36).

While criticising the Sivayogis who lack noble qualities Sarvajna observes:

What use is anger for a recluse?

Divine principle for the wicked, sight of other men for a faithful wife

And scandal mongering for a yogi? (36).

The poet warns that if the Sivayogi is lustful and enjoys the company of women, he will be certainly ruined.

The butter melts in the vicinity of fire,

How could the Sivayogi remain inviolate

In the company of a woman? (40).

Sarvajna emphasises the point that inner discipline is more important for a yogi than the external one. He is of the opinion that a yogi should be able to control his senses rather than indulge in smearing his body with sacred ashes and boasting about his saffron garments.

Reading countless books, smearing the body with *vibhuti* Donning saffron robes, nay, you will not be a yogi! He alone is a yogi who has conquered his senses (41).

The poet reveals the frivolous nature of the fradulent yogis. He digs at the incongruity and discrepancy between the true ideals of spirituality and the sensual nature of false yogis. He questions the integrity of the yogi who dresses himself in a tiger skin, sits upon a rock, chants mantras but lives a lustful life.

Clad in a tiger skin and sitting upon a boulder Chanting mantras, the yogi Is still obsessed with the vagina (31).

The poet continues to question the probity and the truthfulness of the yogi who, despite his external appearance, has not understood or realised the true meaning of the divine principle. He makes it very clear that such a one is similar to a fig tree burdened with several unwanted fruits.

What does it avail if you wear *rudraksa*Knowing not the principle!
You have become a fig tree saddled with numerous fruits (30).

Pointing out the potential nature of the yogis the poet rightly observes:

Yogi is he who leads the swan

From the eight petals

To the focal point of the lotus (38).

Could one riding an elephant be ever frightened by a dog?

The Sivayogi enlightened as he is,

Is not frightened by worldly fools (40).

Making pertinent observations regarding the difficulties in conquering one's senses and desires, Sarvajna states:

One can braid one's hair, wear saffron robes, reside in a temple,

But most difficult it is

To control one's senses (37).

Similarly,

One could be a recluse in the forest, forsake the spouse

And meditate all through the night and day

But lo none could conquer desire! (34).

The poet continues to say that one will find heaven on earth if he is able to conquer his desires. Otherwise, the present life will become a hell to him.

When one renounces desire one attains heaven here and now

When one nurses desire

One suffers hell here and now (31).

Sarvajna always appreciates people with noble qualities. Comparing the virtuous and men with pure conscience to pearls the poet never hesitates to criticise people with false pretensions and attitudes. Commenting on the Brahmin who spends a lot of time in arguing about Vedas without realising the experience of God, the poet states:

If by dipping in water a Brahmin could ascend to Heaven

Why not then a frog always in water Go to Heaven? (42).

If a Brahmin wearing a triple thread could rise to Heaven Why not a shepherd swain wearing a blanket Of countless threads go too? (43).

Why do you argue the written Veda is great? What, after all, is Veda If not an experience of God? (42).

Sarvajna talks about sex in a frank and uninhibited manner. He seems to believe that sex plays a dominant role in one's life and says that even gods are no exception to this.

The entire animate world is born

In the fleshy palace of Lord Smara

Located at the meeting of thighs (44).

The slushy hole between the thighs is the centre of the world.

That is the reason why

Nandivahana, Aja and Hari cling to it (44).

When the gods themselves are drowned Head over heels into the big tank of the City of Desire What shall we say of poor mortals? (45).

Sarvajna has sung excellent riddle poems which are said to have enriched the already existing riddles of the folklore of North Karnataka. He even challenges the learned readers or the poets to interpret his riddles.

Three hundred and sixty nuts are there and twelve fruits;

Three bunches and a stalk.

Let the learned then elucidate the meaning (48).

Horn has it but no legs, a tail too and flies in the sky But bird it is not.

Let the poets tell us what it is (48).

The poet's acquaintance with the knowledge of astrology is highly extensive and encompassing. His picture

of mathematical astrology is quite accurate and comprehensive. He points out:

The moment the Jupiter enters the House of Taurus Countless clashes, famines and homicides

Will be the consequence in the world (50).

When the Jupiter enters the House of Acquarius

Wells and tanks will overflow,

A rich harvest and the joy and jubilation (51).

Sarvajna is unquestionably a staunch critic of caste discrimination and the practice of untouchability. He strongly believes that the deeds of a person should be judged not by his caste but by common ethics. To him caste discrimination is only manmade and is the result of the degenerated and evil intentions of man. He feels that God has no hand in the creation of castes which eventually has set one against another. He, therefore, astutely asks whether the yogi has any caste or the spiritually enlightened man has arrogance or the sky has beams and columns. He also states authoritatively that the untouchables do not have separate places in Heaven. He further insightfully questions the origin of caste when basic instincts like thirst, hunger, sleep and sex are universal to all men, birds and beasts. He also wonders how the light in the houses of the untouchables is inferior to the light found in the houses of others. He finally concludes that those who are virtuous and dear to God are indeed superior human beings.

Has the yogi any caste; the enlightened, obduracy;

The sky, beams and columns?

But Heaven has no castaway untouchables (52).

Common are hunger and thirst; sleep and sex

To man, bird and beast.

Where, then, did caste originate? (52).

The earth we tread, the water we drink, the fire we use,

Are they not one and the same?

Why then caste and subcaste? (52).

Is the light of the lamp at the house of the lowcaste damnable?

Discriminate not among castes.

Only he dear to the almighty is indeed highborn (53).

Though a bachelor Sarvajna has sung several songs about woman and sexology. His knowledge about subtle matters of sex and sensuality is quite thrilling and exceptional. While talking about man's inability to understand woman and trust her fully the poet remarks:

The music of the ocean, the mystery of clouds and the sublime grandeur of Sambhu

And the heart of woman

Is there anyone who has understood them? (56).

When ginger and neem become sweet And statues begin to dance Then dost thou trust woman (56).

When woman is pleased

She would help and pave the way for Heaven

But rue the day she frowns, she will bring ruin to all (56).

Sarvajna strongly believes that woman plays a vital role in man's life. Man enjoys peace, happiness, harmony, pleasure and spiritual enlightenment only through woman. A home without woman is empty and useless. Even gods cannot exist without women. That is why gods take different forms to attain the women of their liking.

A cozy house, gold for expenses,

An understanding wife responding to the will and wish of her lord

Set fire, then, to Heaven (54).

Woman and gold and a tree with juicy fruits Is there anyone who desires not When he sights them? (55).

A thin string bending a string bow of bamboo.

Woman though helpless and weak

Bends the powerful man, nonetheless (55).

Harmony here, happiness hereafter

All wealth and prosperity are possible only through woman.

Is there anyone who wants not a woman? (55).

One may find similar views about woman in Tirukkural also Tiruvalluvar discusses the role played by a woman in man's life quite extensively.

If wife be wholly true to him who gained her as his bride, Great glory gains she in the world where gods in bliss abide (Sacred Kurral 11).

If woman might of chastity retain,

What choicer treasure doth the world contain? (10).

Sarvajna's ideas of about adultery and prostitution are indeed candid and forthright. He elaborates on the susceptible and vulnerable nature of the prostitutes and adulterers in the most striking and uninhibited fashion. Commenting on the typical characteristics of harlots the poet aptly remarks:

A woman wearing immaculate pearls and big earrings Letting loose the hem of her saree

Is willing for amours (Musings of Sarvajna 58).

He further adds:

A woman doffing and donning her saree on and off

And scratches her teeth

Is an easy and willing lay (59).

Smiling and giggling, showing the teeth, leaning against a pillar

With style and display

Is an open invitation to meet and mate (59).

The poet describes the professional art of the prostitutes by employing similes and comparisons. He

compares a prostitute to a boat which is boarded by a new customer as soon as the old one gets off.

A boat and a whore are of the same stuff The moment a passenger disembarks Another boards (58).

The poet seems to suggest through various similes how dishonourable and unsavoury for men to have association or acquaintance with women of ill reputation. He states explicitly that the prostitute has no mercy just as a fig tree has no flowers, the monkey has no curls and death has no medicine.

The bunyan tree has no flowers and the monkey, no curls; Death has no medicine to conquer And the whore has no mercy (65).

The poet has sung several songs on miscellaneous themes. He exhorts men not to borrow money from others. The borrower will find it hard to face the consequence in case he is unable to pay back the debt in time.

Borrowing money from others is delectable like rice and curds, But when repaying the loan

You smart under the scorpion sting on your buttock (61).

Similarly the poet is quite outspoken about the merchants in general. He asserts that the oil-maker knows fully about the sesame; the tailor the knack of telling lies; the watchman the stealthy movements and activities of thieves but the merchant is an adept in all these activities.

The oil-maker knows the sesame; the tailor, the art of lying;

The watchman knows the thieves,

But the merchant knows all these three (69).

Sarvajna as a poet of common man expatiates the truth of life admirably through simple and understandable metaphors and analogies. He enumerates certain things to be deliberately spurned and avoided in life.

A mind with evil thoughts, a soldier not killing the enemy

And a wife who is frigid in bed.

Shun them all forever (62).

Flee from the house that leaks,

The whore that has no teeth

And the king who lies (65).

The poet also renders a list of things which should be detested and abhorred by people in general.

Detestable indeed like a cot with tattered strings,

A monastery without a Guru; a family without elders

And a capital without a king (62).

Similarly, he points out frankly:

A meal without savoury dishes, sex without love;

A king not loving his own subjects

Are as detestable as camping in a cave with a tiger (63).

Undesirable indeed are blemishes on one's reputation;

Sagging women's breasts and loose beams in a house

And surely parting from the virtuous (66).

Sarvajna's songs not only describe common human experience impressively but they also acquire epigrammatical status. His forcible and convincing explication of moral truths and absolutes which are experienced by people everywhere are quite striking and admirable. For example, while talking about filial son, homely wife and a virtuous Brahmin he observes:

A son with filial piety, a wife humble and courageous;

A Brahmin who is the embodiment of virtue

Are indeed the lights of the world (67).

Likewise, when he talks about the causes for painful experience in one's life the poet remarks:

Blackmailed by people and cheated of peaceful slumber,

Scoffed at by your own people and children

You will surely experience death (66).

Sharing his thoughts regarding the role played by gold

and money in the lives of people the poet observes:

Gold could bring friends together

Gold could drive a wedge between cronies

Gold again makes friends bitter foes (60).

You are resplendent like the sun with gold and money.

You will be a dog of the deserted village

The moment you lose your wealth (61).

While stressing the need for acquiring the company of the noble Sarvajna says:

The humming of a bee is good to hear; the jay, pleasant to watch;

Heartwarming words are good to hear;

The company of the noble is indeed good for the soul (69).

Illustrating the evil and the poisonous things in life Sarvajna points out:

The fangs of a snake, the tip of a sword;

The words of the ruthless and the life of the vicious

Are surely all poisonous (67).

The poet expounds on the transcient and the ephemeral nature of life in this world. What he has said about the meaninglessness of accumulating wealth, gold and money is quite convincing and acceptable to one and all.

Delude not yourself that riches will last long.

Life is but a big fair lasting for a while

And vanishes thereafter (69).

What Sarvajna has stated about the fleeting and the impermanent nature of life can be compared with Shakespeare's philosophy of life which is shown in *Macbeth*. Philosophising over the futility and the hollowness of life Macbeth sums up:

Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player

That struts and frets his hour upon the stage

And then is heard no more: it is a tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, Signifying nothing.

(Macbeth Act V Sc v lines 2529)

Sarvajna is thus a social analyst and critic. As a chronicler and reformer he censures human foibles and fallibilities with unflinching determination and undaunted courage. He expresses his ideas effectively by using striking imagery, suitable metaphors and impressive analogies. The use of colloquial language, interrogative sentences and aphorisms make his poetry more illustrious and unforgettable. Being aware of the true dimensions of the social evils of his times the poet with his unswerving resolution and commitment to mankind strides to bring about healthy transformation in society. As a poet with a genuine catholicity of mind Sarvajna not only strove hard to establish the principles of love, peace, communal harmony, secularism, and religious tolerance but he also practised them in his own life. The values of life preached and practised by Sarvajna truly reflect the long-cherished traditional, social, cultural, religious, moral and the ethical standards of India. Like the immortal poets of India such as Tiruvalluvar, Kamban, Vemana, Ramadas and Kabir Sarvajna has carved a niche for himself among the renowned poets of the world. Commenting on the universal appeal and immortal fame of Sarvajna C.N. Hiremath pertinently remarks:

Such bards and ministrels like Sarvajna are not of one age, clime, country or community. They belong to all ages, all countries and all mankind. They are citizens of the world. They are not only 'the uncrowned legislators of mankind' as Shelley claims but also the unanointed mentors of mankind (Musings of Sarvajna xv).

Translation is, no doubt, a commendable art. A good translation is a proper understanding and appreciation of the original text of the source language by the translator himself. It is also "a recreation and reincarnation of the poetic experience" (Chandrashekhara Patil 177). While

talking about the essence of translation J. P. Postgate in his work, Translation and Translations aptly observes: "Translation of literature is the art of rendering the writing of one language into another language. The art of translation lies not merely in translating the literal sense of one language into another but of translating also the feeling, thought and character of the work, so that the finished translation is equal in quality to the original" (qtd in Mallikarjun Patil 12). In the words of K. Chellapan the translator's "originality lies only in an 'original' recreation of the original" (159). Moreover, good translations assume the status of creations or transcreations.

An expert in the art of translation Basavaraj Naikar has successfully endeavoured to introduce the immortal songs of Sarvajna to the English knowing global community. As a bilingual mediator, Naikar reveals his remarkable ability as a translator by maintaining the poetic essence and the spirit of the original text. Known for his dynamism Naikar brings out in the translation the creative impact and the aesthetic unity of the original text. The difficulties of translating poetry are undeniably enormous. While discussing the problems in translating poetry Mohit K. Ray rightly points out:

Poetry, we know, is notoriously untranslatable. While the semantic content of a poem can be translated into another language, its sonic content can never be transferred. Every poem has a definite sound-pattern and in good poems the sound-pattern is integral to the poem. It contributes to and reinforces the *poieisis* of a poem, because a good poem is always an organic whole in which the music and the meaning, the sound and the sense, the images and the metaphors, in fact, all the poetic elements are inextricably interlinked (iv).

The translation of the imperishable and everlasting poems of Sarvajna must have posed several problems to Basavaraj Naikar. Moreover, translating the Kannada poetry itself involves several obstacles because it "abounds in recurring sound patterns which have definite lexical

meanings. These sound patterns evoke sensations of sound, sight, touch, movement etc., in addition to creating internal rhyme pattern" (Chandrashekhara Patil 175).

As a committed writer with deeper roots in the basics of translation Naikar has followed the original text carefully and rendered the translation in English in simple and effective prose. Though he understands that "it is impossible to transmit the subtle shades and nuances and the inimitable idiom of one language into another language which is nurtured in a different clime and a different culture (Hiremath, (Musings of Sarvajna xvi) he with an exceptional imagination and true scholarship tries his best to recapture the rhythmic design, the music and the melodious structure of the Kannada language in his translation. As a true promoter of cultural and social synthesis, Naikar reveals his unique ability to carry the message of Sarvajna and to spread the social, the cultural and the literary wealth and heritage of Karnataka through his translation to the entire globe. Undeniably, his translation with his appropriate language proprieties and subtle nuances and artistic integrity and unity will certainly have an appeal to various minds with different social, cultural and historical backgrounds. On the whole, Basavaraj Naikar's book, Musings of Sarvajna in translation is undoubtedly a rich and valuable addition to the corpus of Indian Poetry in English Translation.

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### 15

# "Nature" in the Poetry of D. C. Chambial

Dr. D. Murali Manohar

The poetry has emerged out of nature. The nature consists of the sun, the moon, the sky, the stars, the earth, seas, rivers, waterfalls, forests, hills, mountains, earthquakes, volcanoes, islands, deserts and so on. The poets had to depend on nature in order to test their creative ability and talent; and see to it whether they have an aptitude in writing poetry. Thus, the nature has gained significance. The Romantic poets have also all dealt with the nature such as William Wordsworth, John Keats, S.T. Coleridge and Lord Byron to mention only a few. Ever since of the human evolution, the humans are overwhelmed with the beauty of nature and at the same time, the humans have been perturbed, puzzled and worried about the strength of nature. Nature is the supreme of all evolutions.

The Indian English poets have also used and described the nature in their poetry such as Toru Dutt, Rabindranath Tagore, Manmohan Ghosh, Sri Aurobindo, Sarojini Naidu, Nissim Ezekiel, Kamala Das, A. K. Ramunajan and Jayanta Mahapatra to mention only a few.

Among the young Indian English poets, I find yet another young poet D. C. Chambial who has been attracted by nature and writes several poems on nature in his recent book entitled *Before the Pearls Unfold (A Collection of Poems)* (Maranda: Poetcrit Publications, 2002).

Chambial lives in Himachal Pradesh. As a tribute to his own place, he writes a poem on the nature of his own locality. All poets talk of their own surroundings first in their work.

The water in the stream below the tree holding the tree in its bowl. The imagery of holding the tree "in its bowl" is brilliant. As she is on top of the other trees, she can be seen by any one who is passing the road as our poet has noticed and has decided to catch hold of the picture and present it to us in his poem. He says:

One gazes and gapes
Beholding her atop the tree
That dances in the wind
And she, like a fairy,
Fills the valley with her sonorous song (15).

The poet is perhaps reminded of William Wordsworth's "The Solitary Reaper" where the woman, who is alone, reaps and sings the song. He is of the opinion that one can gaze and gape the woman that tree is atop beholding her. The tree looks like dancing due to the wind and the woman like a fairy reaches out to the valley with her sonorous song. The movement of the tree branches and leaves make a kind of sound that is heard as a sonorous song in the valley.

After describing the beauty of the tree and the woman, the poet now moves on to the holy marriage of earth and sky in his poem entitled "The Nudging Present", he says:

At horizon

Eyes stroll to watch

The holy marriage of

Earth and sky (20).

In the previous poem, he finds only the woman standing between the earth and the sky but in the above lines, he wants to see the holy marriage of earth and sky at horizon. He wants to say that it is not just he wants to see this marriage every one's eyes watch at horizon the holy marriage of earth and sky that is a nature's gift. He is reminding all the readers to have a look at the holy marriage and enjoy the scene.

In the above lines, he is not telling us directly and not using the words of rainy and summer seasons. For the word summer, he uses the phrase "the fire for the months". The fire is nothing but hot summer. Perhaps he is not happy with the summer season, therefore, he first introduces the rainy season with the word "rained" and calls it "the first pleasant rain".

Having criticized the sun of summer, in the following poem entitled "Momentous Moments" the poet celebrates the sun rising, as we have seen the poem of John Donne entitled "The Sunne-Rising", and makes him melt and forget many things and it is worth quoting full poem:

Sun's steady shake up

Form the sea of slumber

Lets loose

An ocean of music

From the founts in mountains,

The hearts of woods deep,

Down to the expansive plains;

The sun's golden glimmer

Washes the vast expanse.

One gleefully gazes

And ears regales

With symphonies of Nature

Seized from the halls of heaven.

In these momentous moments melt:

Personal pains,

Politicians' pranks,

Man's devilish manoeuvres (33).

A bolt from the blue! (16).

The nature does not give any reason for its aggression on human lives. Therefore, the poet says for "some queer reason" the river, which has been giving life and livelihood through its water, has suddenly lost its temper. As a result, of losing the temper, the river gets excess of water. The imagery that the poet uses is very interesting. He says that there is a swelling in the river. When there is a swelling in any part of the body, there is water. So the river has excess of water and that excess of water "roars" with huge sound and makes the water run down. When the excess water runs down on to the fields then there is a scene of drowning of a lass working in her fields. Thus, the poet says: "a bolt from the blue, the sudden flood in the river. The poet further says:

Down she goes borne on boiling waves to the realm of Yama (16).

Here "she" refers to the river water that is going down to kill human life who ever is coming under her realm. The poet also uses the image of waves. In front of the flood waves, the humans cannot resist. Moreover, the poet says: "boiling" waves. In fact, they are not boiling in the literal sense; however, the implication is that the waves are in such a force that they are equivalent to the boiling. The force of the water is such that the humans have to reach the realm of Lord Yama and comes to an end of human life.

If flood is one part of destructive nature, the other is the storm. The poet has dealt with the terrible storm in his poem entitled:

The sun and the earth in close communion.

A terrible storm:

a boisterous wind blew and blew, dark clouds roared and roared and heaven continued

to pound the rocky earth.

After the rain:
the earth satiated,
sky cool, calm and clear;
tears of pleasure,
the happiest hearts ever shed,
flowed down rosy cheeks
bright with the sunny glow (38).

Can any control nature whether it is destructive or constructive? Definitely a strong "No". The poet suggests that with the communion of the sun and the earth is the result of a terrible storm. The result of this communion is a boisterous wind blowing and blowing in an uncontrollable fashion and if one tries to go into the storm it will take him/her along with it. Even the dark clouds are threatening with roaring sounds and indicating that there is going to be a terrible storm on the earth. The wind and clouds of heaven are continuing to threaten and pound the rocky earth. Interestingly the poet is not suggesting that the storm is taking place at one particular place. However, it is an indication of nature that storm can come at any part of the world. He is talking of universality of terrible storms.

After floods and storm, the poet now moves on to the earthquake and volcanoes that are the most natural disasters. In the floods, there may be few lives and a little property is lost; and out of storms, there may be the loss of agricultural fields at the time of harvesting especially. However, the earthquakes and volcanoes loss to humans is not only dwelling units even the lives of children, women, men and old people die in such a cruel manner. The poet in his poem entitled "When I Was Green":

When I was green never bothered about the summer red and blazing hot sands.

There was a quake, the earth vomited fire; there was smoke and smoke, the wind blew and blew, the trees clashed the wood.

I stood a silent spectator staring at the fury of nature (73).

The poet is identifying himself with the poem and addressing the reader that when he is in a happy mood he has never bothered about the summer red and blazing hot sun. He felt it was a normal summer season. However, he never thought that there would be an earthquake along with volcano. Suddenly he found there was a quake as a result "the earth vomited fire" out of its stomach. Perhaps the fire was under control for many years but on one day when the poet was feeling and finding everything all right, suddenly he finds earthquake with fire emerging out of earth. There was fire with "smoke and smoke" and the wind was also blowing to the extent that "the trees" clashed "in the wood". This is all part and parcel of nature. Neither poet nor anyone prevent the earthquake. Therefore, the poet says that he "stood a silent spectator". One ought to become a silent spectator before nature's wrath. Moreover, the poet was "staring at the fury of nature".

Floods, storms and earthquake do not occur frequently. However, they occur suddenly. The humans are affected a lot with this sudden and unwelcome natural disasters. On the contrary, the humans are placed in such a manner that they cannot leave their destination or the place of fate. The poet is interested in sympathizing with the people who live at desert places such as in Rajasthan. In his poem entitled "Sand-Smell Spreads (for Rajasthani Women)" the poet says:

Sand-smell spreads in sunburnt desert, Squeeze every drop of water; Fire, the volition of earth.

Shadowless opacities,

Pagodas on heads, miles of hellish-fire

For ambrosia of life.

Sink into, emerge from vast wilderness

Ploughing the sands

Mirage metamorphoses into reality.

Pagodas of ambrosia

Poised on blushing heads

The bitter sun feels defeated (61).

Water is very crucial in human life. If the water is in scarcity, then the life will be miserable. This is most prevalent in deserted areas such as in Rajasthan. The poet is genuinely showing his concern for the Rajasthani women who may have to walk miles together to get a pitcher of water. The poet says that the "sand-smell spreads" like anything in the sun burnt desert. Moreover, if at all there is water, it is squeezed "every drop of water" into the desert sand. Moreover, the absence of water adds to the fire kind of heat on the desert sand. Sand is nothing but earth there. These women wear "pagodas" on their heads and walk on the sand for the miles on "hellish-fire" in order to get water and live a life on the desert. In the absence of water on the surface, they "plough" the sands in order to find some water. Ploughing the sands on the desert for water is strange for the other part of Indians. If they are lucky the water will emerge from the vast wilderness, the poet calls it as "mirage metamorphoses into reality". Once they get water from the desert sands then the pagoda women walk down to their places with "blushing heads" then the bitter sun as though the enemy of the Rajasthani women "feels defeated".

In conclusion, I would like to say that the poet has balanced in writing his poems on both positive things and negative things of nature. The positive things of nature such as describing the tallest tree and the woman's sonorous song, the holy marriage of the earth and the sky, the beautiful site of rainbow, the monsoon rains, the pleasant sun rising. The negative things of nature such as floods, storms, earthquake along with volcano and the drinking water for the deserted areas such as Rajasthan.

### **16**

## Niranjan Mohanty's Poetry and Desire: An Appraisal

Dr. Ashok Kumar

Assortments of creeds of Hinduism dominate the panorama, as Hinduism, more than being a single religion, is a system of life encompassing a variety of faiths. The stories and legends concerning various Hindu Gods and Goddesses provided the raw material for the largest part of the Indian art and literature. Thus the most vital impulse that had conditioned the character of Indian Literature was religious: How impoverished the literature of modern Indian languages would be, if the literary works inspired by the religious ideals are removed from the common stock! Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, Islam, and Christianity have contributed substantially to the diffusion of devotional thoughts, ideals and principles. This has in turn added a spiritual dimension to all our languages.

The limelight of religious consciousness stimulated by the great Gods and liturgies coupled with polytheism, to the one God and his incarnations, especially Krishna and Rama. A new approach to God — a passionate devotion replaced the old approaches of sacrificial rite and monistic meditation. The Vedic Literature, too, not only served the purposes of religion, but also provided a common literary foundation. Saivism, Veerasaivism and Vaishnavism are certain off-shoots of Hinduism which twisted literature both of contemplation and commitment.

The devotional notion has been established and cultivated by all the religions. And when devotees of creative talent were moved by feelings of adoration to a personal God, it resulted in a lyrical overflow, which other writers of the same persuasion appreciated and accepted with great zeal. Niranjan Mohanty's path of devotion too, conveys these spiritual impulses more passionately and effectively. Hence, his works have become more and more captivating and popular among the masses. Metaphysical abstractions are too difficult for common people, but they easily understand and realize the values of devotion to a personal God. Mohanty's poetry is of the highest calibre possessing at the same time the qualities of high class devotional poetry. His version is a fascinating recreation resulting from his fertile imagination. The dramatic situation he creates almost on every page is a challenge for any creative writer, the word magic superb and lyrical flow delicate.

Mohanty's poetry exhibits a considerable high degree of religious tolerance and happiness resulting from an experience of divine grace. His poems bequeath an inspiring message of love and hope equally to the high and low. Emotional devotion dominates intellectual devotion, and emotional devotion is more often than not Virha Bhakti (devotion while alienated). In this form we get a continuous overflow of emotional religiosity.

Niranjan Mohanty initiated his writing career as early as 1977, with his first collection of poems Silencing the Words (1977), and since then he has published five more collections: Oh This Bloody Game (1980), Prayers to Lord Jagannath (1994), On Touching You and Other Poems (1999), Life Lines (1999), and Krishna: A Long Poem (2003).

In his Oh This Bloody Game —the second volume of poems — Mohanty has made an endeavor to comprehend himself, his life, art and reveals intensely the human in him with apprehension for the down-trodden, prostitutes, victims of flood and drought, and so on. Mohanty has tried to emulate quite meditativeness, slightly touched with sorrow and nostalgia, the ubiquitous religious and cultural ambience of Orissa, which gives its distinctive quality to his verse, and even his resources of expression, involving the creation of a poetic strength field, by the use of imagery and phrasing, which replaces conventional poetic argument, so that connotation is always oblique at but not directly conveyed nor fully grasped. All these features are most obviously apparent in his, Prayers to Lord Jagannath.<sup>1</sup>

In his verses he exposes to a lot of compassion and his soul survives in spite of great difficulties for an affluent endurance. His kinship with the Oriyan culture and traditions, and his enriched prolific perception with Lord Jagannath, and his responsiveness for various changes taking place in society day by day, he himself as a poet continue to achieve triumph in all his imminent collection of poems.

Mohanty experiments with ancient incidents and exposes himself in anticipation of lost world, anguish, throbbing, annoyance and sense of irrelevances. His works—lyrical and contemplative—give the impression of being to sensationalize the self rather than to explore some greater truth, or verity. We get an idea of the paradox of Infinite Power and Infinite Tenderness also, and for the devotee this gives real happiness. His first long poem, Prayers to Lord Jagannath, is paradigm of his experiments with meditation, exploration, devotion, and celebration of humanity and divinity simultaneously. Indeed, this exposes life and existence in its timeless continuity, in a mode of exercise which is different from other and exceptional to his aesthetics.

Mohanty's triumph, excellence and dexterity are revealed in his socio-human analysis which redeems, sanctifies, and enobles. As a poet of high calibre, talking to Lord Jagannath so intimately that he can seed, love, abhorrence, reduce and esteem him, though, for the moment, philosophy appears conceited the devise of the whole story. He accepts, "Sometimes....I'm not clear in what I write/I fail to grasp the meaning of what I chisel." In his verses, Mohanty has specified an incredibly challenging place of the Lord Jagannath, whose enormous arms signify His affection for the whole universe, never vacillating or disappointing the underprivileged or passionate disciple. In His abode, nobody is untouchable and gives harmony to the fretful soul and cools down one's earthly woes. He is the culmination of man's quest for joy, love and peace. Mohanty exposes himself as a poet of reliance, without being critical, or building any daring proclamation. Even then, he confronts the presiding divinity of Orissa as an entity of flesh and blood who is not devoid of human failings, he puts question mark on every bustle performed by the Lord Jagannath that to the human judgement is not foolproof:

Whose turn is it now to sleep,
Whose turn is it to weep? Whose turn is it
to murmur goodbye, to become silence? 3

Mohanty surprises us occasionally with an unusual image or a lapidary phrase: "the heart.../restless like the sea". But otherwise he is prone to lapsing into solecisms: "procession of cavalries" and "Lord of tendrils... tambourine....Telegrams", (Lord Jagannath must be connected with the post office, because alliteration demands it).

Mohanty's Krishna: A Long Poem is an endeavor to explore the Divine Game and devotion to the Lord Krishna. This is also a means of self-searching, self-understanding, or knowing intellectual powers more warmly.

Here poet's cogitate is embedded in the vigilantly and dexterously sophisticated dedication towards the antique ethnicity and splendid times of yore. He has applied the mechanism — kinds of restricted access to himself — with a shrewdness of detection, pledge, and collapse. He states,

I searched you here, there
and almost everywhere.
Nowhere I found you.
Woe-struck, I sculptured my loneliness
on the sleek back of darkness.
A voice from the dark told me
to look within. As I looked
within myself, I found you there, sleeping
like the trail of dreams
of my own making.6

In his poetry, Mohanty has made an exertion to settle the reliability of his own delicate self concerning the outline of communal cohesion, decent hallucination, and metaphysical puzzles that the myths and legends of the Lord Jagannath and Krishna customarily invent accessible to show one a way through the dimness of a hectic way of life.

His dedication is for the Saguna stream of poetry—primarily correlated to the Vaishnava poets—who had two different but allied schools: Krishna Bhakti and Rama Bhakti. Both Krishna and Rama are two incarnations of Vishnu and therefore there need not be any serious conflict. Krishna bhakti is the central source of inspiration for him. In this poem Mohanty desires to clear the depiction to the masses that both Radha and Krishna, physically and spiritually are deficient without each other even in prayers, he further writes,

Can we contrast a silence, when I'm all fires and you, all ashes?

Mohanty is extremely committed worshipper of Krishna, who has composed a number of verses, which are mostly lyrical. He uses the metaphor of 'prayers' and love to refurbish the troubled equilibrium, both superficially and inside. His insurgent psyche continues to be overwhelmed by "the storm of irrelevance/blowing past the fence/of my benign bones chanting ever/the songs of my morality," to quote from one of his earlier poems, A Winter Evening<sup>8</sup>. Indeed, Krishna, is his "intimate friend," an alter ego, experiencing and sharing love as a human. Krishna, himself the narrator of the poem, celebrates his affection for Radha as a corporeal, mythically implying the plunge of divine to cultivate all that may emerge overwhelming.

Mohanty reveals Krishna immersed in Radha, in respect of the union of husband and wife as the novel couple. His emotional and conjugal advice coursing through the mind-body complex disseminate outwards to be converted into love or bliss of devotion, which is adulation. Krishna adores Radha, exposing the divine energy in human as the sexual advice. The revelation of God as love/devotee adds a reminder of theology, which may also be treasured in requisites of the devotion of Vaishnavism. His compositions as a full time devotee of Krishna are poems of love par excellence. His adulation for Krishna would move anybody, who is kindhearted, and his poems are really evocative to those who find their ultimate truth in love.

Mohanty reveals the various phases of Radha's love for Krishna in an imaginative comportment. Here are some lines that bring out the obsession of Radha's love after she has surrendered to the fascination of Krishna. He adds,

I'm the gardner of her dreams.

I'm the dream of her sleep.

I'm the gist of her silence and song.9

Consequently, his poetry provides a portrait of the lyrical grandeur and spiritual radiance of the devotional writings. And extols the physical magnificence of his adored and articulates the powerful yearning for substantial amalgamation with her without being erotic, and he sees no sagacity in conceiving affection as "abstract, distant, or dizzy," rather love radiates inviolability.

In his poems, Mohanty appears to have established the ancient Hindu observation that the magnetism for conjugal affection in human being is natural. He further seems to blend this heavenly power within, and try to make the individual and humanity in close proximity by focusing on a society with strong sexual associations. In this regard Niranjan Mohanty says, "Kirshna unhesitating, nobly, humbly, honesty, goes on narrating, sculpting his love for Radha. The startling fusion of the mythic, the divine and the human in these two archetypal personalities subverts, dissipates and dissolves the archetypes and creates a space for the human, the mortal. Because of the gravitational force of the element of mystery attached to the divine, the poem subverts the divine and celebrates what is human through love as the central metaphor." 10

Thus, as we identify that bhakti literature in India has extensive practice of over ten centuries, the peak period being the four centuries after the 13th. It is widespread, as devotion, is an integral part of every religion and India is known for its receptivity to all religions and faiths. So whatever may be the source of inspiration for the various poems of the divine devotion, as literary pieces, Mohanty's works have incredibly ample demand.

Accordingly, triumph achieved by Niranjan Mohanty is not so much to what he says as to how he says it. Each expression of his is a center of attention of persuassive force in which his loving devotion is transformed into the vibrations of the human voice. As a connoisseur of the human heart, he can reveal the most surreptitious springs of human accomplishment. He can defuse the stiffness of

the Epic with the suppleness of Drama and suffuse both with the glow of his lyrical intensities.

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# 17

# Tapascharanam and Gitanjali: A Comparative Study

Mahendra Singh

Indian English poetry originates from the Vedas and the Upanishads. Aurobinodo's Savitri and Tagore's Gitanjali are the two masterpieces of Indian English Poetry. This paper aims to analyze thematological concerns of Tagore's Gitanjali and Charu Sheel Singh's Tapascharanam¹:- The first part shall comparatively focus upon the organization of Gitanjali and Tapascharanam. The second part shall analyze some of the songs chosen from both the collections. The third part will gather the findings and make necessary generalization.

# PART I

The poems are organized in accordance with architectonically aesthetic. The book is divided in two major parts. The first one is the quest of God and second one is the realization of God. These two parts are further arranged logically. Each succeeding poem throws light on the previous one. The first seven poems sing the immensity of God. They deal with the infinite, mystic relationship of man and God and express the feeling of gratitude for the Supremo, God for his immortal gifts to mortals. The next

poems feel the presence of the Almighty among the low and humble. Poem number 14 starts singing the pangs of separation for Great Father. The feeling of joy takes place from poem number 37. The joy of union is boundless. Then comes the phenomenon of *Maya* which is there till poem number 17. The later part deals with the truth of Immanent Will, the realization of Almighty. The ultimate truth of death then dominates the end part of Gitanjali. Poet welcomes death in poem number 89 and sings of its might till poem number 100. Last three poems are the offerings of his own self in the feet or all-caring, affectionate inscrutable spirit.

Tapascharanam is the latest classic creation of the great metaphysical Indian English poet of modern age. It is needless to point out that it is sublime in structure and unique in the delineation of details of his philosophy. This may be called song or psalm. It is noteworthy that the number of song is 108 which is equivalent to the number of beads in the rosary with which devotees particularly Hindu carry on jap incessantly to meet their Supreme Being. It is significant that the number of beads among other religions is not much dissimilar. The book is divided into nine chapters. In the first chapter, the poet evokes the creator and prays to Him for the creation of infinite. Chapter second deals with the immortal gifts of Nature — the river, the fountain, the sunlight, the bridge all serve mankind, showers their love to mankind and return back to God's abode. Chapter third deals with the theme of nothingness. Chapter fourth depicts the very dark picture of anathematized and agonized soul caught by the bilabial plosives. Chapter fifth reflects on man as a prisoner who could not see Supreme Being in himself. Sixth chapter is abundance of concrete sensuous images and myths. The wealth of imagery and symbols is inexhaustible. Chapter seventh discusses the theme of mysticism that believes in renunciation, detachment from worldly affairs and in

ascetism. Chapter eighth deals the theme of eternity in which poets seeks God with songs and the songs in turn lead him into secret paths. The ninth chapter discusses the theme of union, shows the belief of poet that man is a part of God and as he comes from Him the ultimate end is he will come to Him again.

### PART II

Bring the pearl of O God!
On the mythic geography
Of linear constellations
And let the sea-shells
Sing hymns primeval.

If prayer is meant to express the soul of things is the divine element in them, then certainly spirituality, the discipline of coming in conscious contact with the spirit, the Divine must be accorded the *regal* sit in the hierarchy of prayers. Prayer is the greatest and most effective piece of the arts, for it is the art of life to make of life a perfect work of beauty, pure in its lines, faultless in its rhythm, replete with strength, iridescent with light, vibrant with delight—and embodiment of the Divine, in a world—is the highest ideal of spirituality that poet practices-is the *ne plus ultra* of the creation of Pearl.

These words can only be uttered by a person who has transcended the physical world to explore what lies beyond it. Every single utterance of the poet is soaked in gratitude felt towards that Supreme Being without whose will, a poet would never have been born. Tapascharanam is an embodiment of prayer that poet has offered at the feet of the divine giver of inspiration. His stanza soothes, consoles and strengthens, because it is an expression of his firm faith in the principle of unity, rhythm and harmony. His Pearl is the pearl of prayer, poet's prayer Immanent Will. Sun is the source of enlightenment and illumination which

breaks the zone of darkness (ignorance) where' the whole humanity is wandering. As a finite being, God objectifies himself in the countless objects of nature. In the visible world, the morning comes bearing the wreath of beauty to crown the earth so that the pearl could write the human story. Here

pearl serves the purpose of fertilizing humanity.

Seeking my bride in these

Silent, sullen, empty areas

Of the tombs of my identity

Am I become old, and

From the realms of Gold

O God! Come and make me

Thy companion soul.

The poet clearly admits that in the quest of a bride; the man or human being has become aged and completely lost in the vagrancy of the Universe. He is quite helpless. Despondent man is left with the only recourse of prayer to Almighty for lending him a helping hand.

There is no way out left. He is thus compelled to surrender himself completely. As a matter of fact, self surrender is the unique opinion of all great devotees of major religions of the world.

When you with an immensely ruddy glow

Rise over the mortal walls, light to throw

And illuminate the pearls under the river

I-a silent watcher and mute spectator Only thinks when you shall open Your ear to my musing hear.

The man looks around himself the beauty and the magnanimity of the universe. There is rosy illumination all round the matter. The pearl sends upwards its light and enlivens the worlds with its glamour. The poet looks upon the sight mutely and praises it. He further praises the great Being to turn His ear to musing of the song. It would be a day of enlightenment for the poet. According to this

Immanent Will is achieved through this world of Nature that is not a illusionary one. He believes earth is finite aspect of God. He has manifested himself in different aspects.

This is humanity crippling fast here and there in search of her lost serenity and the centre of her own heart.

The world is like a mirage. All the living creatures are getting attracted by it and hot pursuit. The more they cry the more they fail. The man though a conscious being, is also being deceived. The longer the pursuit and remoter the goal. He is a part of that infinite power. He can never be away from this creation. The world of illusion, Maya makes him forget the ultimate truth. One true nature of soul is enveloped by narrow finite self in him, which is egoistic, impulsive in nature. To make self the ultimate aim of our life, we are doomed to disappointment like the man who tries to reach his destination by firmly clutching the dust of road. The soul of man is being imprisoned within his body. This soul gives him true nature but in imprisoning deeper and deeper he comes to forget his true nature. The poet says that his soul, his inner true being was trapped inside the body that is known by his name and his soul was crying in the deep dungeon that the physical body was.

Sing again those eternal melodies from thy eternal lyre that have given life to many generations' hungry fire but in this summer O Lord that fire lit years before has given me inextinguishable feel of a hovering death.

The poet prays to Almighty to play upon his strings the eternal song of life, which has given life for millions of years to the despairing humanity. This song has sustained life to the burning universe. He prays that there should be respite in this burning process. Last summer the fire that was awakened still glows and burns. The poet prays the great Melodist to extinguish the fire that spreads death all around. On the whole death is the great truth which opens the door of salvation.

I looked not on Thee till I found
'You' and 'I' were a mental wall
I were bride and husband, one and all.

The poet is in quest of God since birth, it appeared to him at the outset that God is an outside Being. Whereas, the truth is that God and man are one. There is no dividing wall between them. 'You' and 'I', 'Mine' and 'Thine', are false mental projections. 'I' and 'You' are both one, merged in unity and eternity. The man searches for the spiritual power. His quest of God is endless. He cries for Union with divine soul. Poet's concept of salvation is very similar from the Advaita conception of salvation, where the individual merges into Braham and loses its existence. The state of salvation is for poet the state of complete absorption, complete merging of the one in the other.

"Thou hast made me endless, such is thy pleasure.

This frail vessel thou emptiest again and again, and fillest it ever with fresh life."

The very opening line of Gitanjali reflects the inner harmony that the poet has experienced. 'Thy' here becomes poetic inspiration itself and 'thou' the one who inspires. We see the poet here starting at the peek of inspiration. In the life of every genuine poet such a moment does occur when he experiences endlessness. Tagore begins his "song-offering" with a beautiful conceit of human life. The human soul is eternal whereas his body is perishable and mortal, but God wills it so that man is in reality immortal. His mortality is an illusion. The reality is that God blows his spirit into him and thus lives on ever after, though the body

may die again and again. The limited and bound human heart expands into limitless joy and thus poetry is created out of divine inspiration. Man is a frail vessel, a breakable being, and he is a little being, but he is endowed with endless, everlasting life as God continues to pour his blessings on man and God's gifts are in such bounty that it is never exhausted.

Tagore here conveys the theory of re-incarnation, human life may end in death but if it is God's pleasure, then God may impart life again and again.

"My poet's vanity dies in shame before thy sight. O master poet, I have sat down at thy feet. Only let me make my life simple and straight, like a flute of reed for thee to fill with music."

The poet here confesses his own vanity or pride dies in shame when he realises that there is a poet more powerful than himself now before his sight. There is no way in which he can surpass the 'master' poet, and it is only within his capacity to surrender at his feet and endeavour to emulate him. The Supreme Being who bestows poetic inspiration upon man is a poet himself, his creation being the universe. Here we get the idea of eternity and oneness of experience. The master poet, who is the creator of universe, is one single entity. The music that emerges from the master poet is responsible for the creation of this universe. The poet is only an instrument, like a flute and it is the divine giver of inspiration who fills it with music.

Tagore's reference to the master poet's music and his own music also relate to 'musica munadana', the harmony of the elements of the spheres and of the seasons, and 'musica humana', the harmony between body and. soul in singing respectively.

"The night is nearly spent waiting for him in vain. I fear... forbid him not."

The poet has spent the night waiting for God to come

when he had fallen asleep due to his exhaustion. Poet has used the imagery of his beloved waiting for the lover through night and the beloved's longing for her lover symbolises the poet's intense longing for his God. The extreme anxiety and weariness she experiences and her feeling that her lover may come after she has fallen asleep and thus may not heed, aptly indicates the degree of anxiety in the poet's heart that he may miss meeting God.

The idea of Union, the longing for salvation is conveyed in terms of the beloved waiting for lover to come and awake her in the darkness of midnight.

A poet can never completely transfer his experiences into words and the relationships that he shares with the divine forces remains a mystery forever:

"I put my tales of you into lasting songs. The secret gushes out of my heart. They come ask me, "Tell me their meanings'. I know not how to answer them I say, 'Ah, who knows what they mean!' They smile and go away in utter scorn and you sit there smiling."

The lines here depict another truth about God. We can't define Him and His love in words. We need a pure, devoted heart to understand Him. The heart with humanity can only grasp the reality behind Him. He doesn't exist in words but the poet feels Him in the core of his heart and soul. The dominating spirit of the poems is beyond their understanding and the poet himself feels irritating and shameful when he is unable to answer them. His songs sing the glory of God's abode, mystery of His ways, eternity of path and ecstasy of the mystic union but when people come and ask all about the meaning he is wordless. Here poet has depicted the truth of mysticism beautifully.

### PART III

In Tapascharanam, I see a poet's gratitude finding

expression. The very fact that God has appointed him to accomplish a poet's task is elevating. And when the recess of poet's mind impregnated with divine feelings reach the state of maturity, it is but a moment's labour for a poem to be born through the channel of language. At the level of experience, everything is in state of unity. But the moment a poet descends to the ordinary mode of existence and tries to express in finite language his infinite experiences, the contradictions emerge. The poet's constant reference to music and singing must be commented upon. Apart from both being forms of art, the aspects of metre, rhyme, and coherence of thought in poetry relates it to the rhythm found in music. Music suggests euphony as against cacophony which can be related to the assonance in poetry; as against the dissonance of the world. Musicalization of the poet's thought would result in harmony in his poetry, which is an essential attribute. The poet is creative and. creates art and gains inspiration from the master forever emulating Him. The poet experiences meditative immersion in music always in the consciousness due to fateful participation of the celestial sphere; His sensitivity is integral. We see that when a poet transcends his mortal being and merges with the divine, even it is only for brief moment, the apparent discordance dissolves, there is clarity of vision and he is able to see the 'Uni' verse as opposed to the 'multi' verse.

Lastly, Charu Sheel Singh's poetry is in its essence transfiguration, interpretation, and a very personal reflection of reality which calls forth a response from the sensitiveness of everyone. This blend of powerful individuality and of general human interest is an essential feature of Charu Sheel Singh's poetical creation and closely linked to his fundamental concept of the harmony existing between the individual and the universal, a concept which is the foundation of Indian culture and which Charu Sheel Singh brilliantly set forth in his Sadhana. A poet is like the legendary white swan which is believed to take only the

milky portion from the milk leaving behind the water in it; he offers to the world pure truth which is soiled by the world otherwise.

In Gitanjali, the poet who experiences true inspiration is an enlightened soul. He doesn't shut his doors to the outside world but refines the world through his imaginative capacity and offers the world an antidote for its melodies through his works. For both the spiritualist and the poet Deliverance lies not in renunciation of the world but in such bondage: "I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight." This line of Tagore directly appeals to his master convey what a struggle it is for a poet to be able to express satisfactorily in language what he has experienced at the spiritual level. Through Tagore's Gitanjali we get a glimpse of the poet's true nature and his spiritual feelings. Embodied in this work is his. very soul; it will continue to give out sparks of truth to the world. This pious poet's prayer will continue kindle in generations of poets the desire to lead a life of humility and self oblivion. The atmosphere of Gitanjali is characterized by the very first verse of the first poem, in which Tagore says that he worships his creator in the dust of the earth. Humility, devotion, and love are the key which determine the tone of his work.

In both Tapascharanam and Gitanjali the narrative sequence is flawless. Whereas in Gitanjali most of the images are somewhat abstract and transcendental, image in Tapascharanam presents the best possible combination of modernity and antiquity. The division of Tapascharanam into nine chapters gives us a vision of inferiority within us; Gitanjali is a flow and the stream does not stop. It is difficult to say where Gitanjali begins and ends. Tapascharanam decidedly makes a beginning as the first poem devoted creation. After a mystic's journey through various stages the protagonist sees the outside as the inside, as the inside as the outside in the last poem.

Sansara is Nirvana, Nirvana is Sansara. Such poetry in post modern India has become some kind of museum piece. Most of the Indian English poets have lost touch with the mystical tradition and are not able to continue Aurobindo-Tagore tradition anymore. In such a scenario poetry collection like Tapascharanam is a redeeming feature of the Indianness that spans a period of five thousand years.

### REFERENCE

 Tapascharanam (Varanasi: Sheel Publication, 1987) is a combination of the first and second collections that Charu Sheel Singh, the poet wrote. Tapascharanam (New Delhi; Samkalin Prakashan, 1982) contained 37 poems in English when first published. M. K. Naik and Shyamala Narayan, Indian English Literature from 1980-2000 (New Delhi Pen Craft International 2000).

# 18

# Secular-humanism in Indian Women's Poetry in English

Seemin Hasan

Poetry by women is as old as time itself. It may not be presumptuous to claim that perhaps one of the first poems ever written was a lullaby sung by a mother to rock her child to sleep. Toru Dutt, an Indian poetess, who wrote in English in the nineteenth century, captures a moment potent with mother-child affinity when she recollects a story told in her childhood by her mother—

Absurd may be the tale I tell,
III suited to the marching times,
I loved the lips from which it fell,
So let it stand among my rhymes.<sup>1</sup>

The female experience of reading and writing is rooted in response. Helen Cixous writes:

Women's imaginary is inexhaustible, like music, painting, writing: their stream of phantasms is incredible<sup>2</sup>

Women's poetry in English, both in pre-Independence and post-Independence India, reveals the growth of feminist poetic consciousness that takes into account not only the traditional roles of women in being daughters, wives and mothers but also projects new interpretations of life through poetry. Women's literature in English is a marginalized area of critical study. The path of women's literature has neither been linear nor easy. Women's marginalization has socio-historical roots.

Women's literary voices have been silenced on account not only of their gender but also of their class and race. However, it is no longer irrelevant or immature to claim that women's literature is a document of honest and secular social and national life. It is an acknowledgement of the truth, beauty and intensity of the feminine world.

Women have always played an important role as first educators for their children in inculcating values in most societies and cultures. Traditionally, this has been behind the scene work, within the confines of the home and has not been treated as news worthy. Teaching spiritual, moral, social and cultural values that develop awareness and selfknowledge, teaching principles which distinguish right from encourage positive relationships, wrong, understanding of citizenship responsibilities, cultural traditions, participation in communities have long been included in the forum of women's responsibilities. Indian women's poetry in English has given a formal definition to this task. Secular values like honesty, courage, humility, kindness, generosity and patriotism are frequent and recurrent themes and issues.

Indian women's poetry in English is a both stimulant to and equalizer of secular values. Rhyme and rhythm, music and magic, imagery and inspiration invest poetry with great instructional power. Thoughts are conveyed in a poem through themes, depicted by images and metaphors that build intensity, foreshadow epiphany, universal truths or even higher truth. Poetry is a form through which nations races, cultural groups and communities recognize themselves. Nations are imaginative and cultural artifacts rather than empirical and scientific entities. Poetry is a

secular form capable of containing and representing the impossible diversity that is the nation.

In order to understand and interpret Indian women's poetry, we need to take into account dominant social cultural and historical narratives, urban and rural Indian values, benefits of modernity as well as the role of tradition. Radical rethinking has resulted in feminist strategies, which women poets have adopted to reform masculinist values and practices of culture that once dominated the scenario. The apparent conformity to cultural narratives in the works of these poets must not be read as conventional women's submissiveness to patriarchal nationalist norms. Eunice de Souza writes:

What I am as a poet is a result of what I am in all the aspects of my life... women's experience and socialization as a whole is different. So it is expected that what they write will be different. The battle is to validate the material lives, women's experience, not to transcend being a woman<sup>3</sup>

Turu Dutt, born in Calcutta in 1856, was the first Indian woman to write poetry in English. Her poem *The Casuarina Tree* is an emotional piece dealing with the deaths of her brother and her sister. *Jogadhya Uma* refers to her relationship with her mother. The traditional concept of primary relationships providing stability, solidarity and strength to an individual is one of her favourite themes. The termination of the relationship by the cruel hands of death is treated as a tragedy but the poetess continues to find her memories a feeder to her individuality. Toru Dutt's poetry represents the timeless inner self of womanhood. The readers step out into historical time and view a value-based family tradition spiritually superior to the materialistic westerner's conception of it.

In the second quarter of the twentieth century, we find two women poets who were reasonably well known but were under-estimated and dismissed. Zebunnisa Hamidullah published two volumes of poetry entitled *Indian Bouquet*  and Lotus Eaters. In her poem entitled The Call she instigated women to 'cast back' the veil of centuries and move ahead. Another poem The Harijan Boy exposes Gandhian social idealism. Thus Begum Hamidullah nurtures essentially human values. Racially disparate citizens are bound together in sentiments of togetherness in both these poems. Bharati Sarabhai's The Well of the People discusses the new identity of India as a country regenerating itself under Gandhi's leadership.

Sarojini Naidu (Feb 13, 1879-March 2, 1949) was known as Bharat Kokila and was a freedom fighter and a poet. Her poetry highlights her allegiances to modern as well as traditional, urban as well as rural values that prepare new generations for the responsibilities of citizenship. She says—

When there is oppression, the only self-respecting thing is to rise say this shall cease today because my right is justice.4

In her poem entitled Song of a Dream she writes—
Once in the dream of the night I stood
Lone in the light of a magical wood,
Soul-deep in visions that poppy-like sprang,
And spirit of Truth were the birds that sang,
And spirit of Love were the stars that glowed,
And spirit of Peace were the streams that flowed,
In the magical wood in the land of sleep.

Peace, truth and love are essential human values needed for the growth and development of responsible and balanced human beings. Naidu used her 'politically enabling' position to rouse women out of their apathy. She brought them out of the kitchen. In a poem entitled To India she writes—

The future calls thee with a manifold sound To crescent honours, splendours, victories vast Waken, o slumbering Mother and be crowned, Who once wert express of the sovereign past. This group of women poets have often been accused of being imitative and romantic. Their language, in the then prevalent requirement of imitating the native speaker in both writing and speaking, may be so. Thematically, their poetry extends no valorization of the white-is-beautiful aesthetic, which was a part of the colonial discourse. At this time, the western writer promoted a canonical notion of beauty within which white women and men were the only objects of desire. However, the women poets cited above populate their poetry with a cross-section of coloured people both from rural and urban settings. They frankly eulogize the brown skin, resisting any essentialist stereotyping along 'colour' lines.

Poetry of the 1960s breaks away from the narrative of the 'nation'. English was by now adopted in India as a language of education and literary expression beside being an important medium of communication amongst the people of various regions. The processes of liberation, urbanization and westernization created new anxieties that the women poets had to confront. The Indian women poet of the 1960s and 1970s break away from their patriarchy defined roles as dutiful daughters and mothers. Their poetry attempts to reconcile a wide range of perspectives and values and at the same time stresses the values of diversity. It stakes a legitimate claim for dignity and equal opportunity. She writes—

One learns to live with
All the misconceptions
about oneself-the lewd snigger
cold eye, charge of betrayal
indifference, can only be met
with, hurt bewilderment protests
of I'm not like that...

# (A Self Portrait)

She believes that a question can be answered negatively by saying what we are not; however it is really impossible to find out what we are.

The works of post-independence women poets like Gauri Deshpande and Margaret Chatterjee reconstruct female identities and roles and experiment with conducing positive change. Gauri Deshpande values honesty and openness.

Both Gauri Deshpande and Margaret Chatterjee recognize humanistic values as the basis of a healthy reasoned compassion and commitment to justice values. Margaret Chatterjee, in her poem entitled 15th August writes about the new-found freedom, both national and individual—

Until the day came
When we stood bareheaded
Under a cloudless summer sky
The brown land ready for ploughing
And none to prevent usAnd the pageant of the past
Pushed us and left us
Standing on the edge of opportunity
With dreams in our hearts.

The brown land ready for ploughing serves as a metaphor for the human being's eternal attachment to his land. The happy-go-lucky naivete of the rural people untroubled by the rush for materialism is celebrated here. The long and grim battle of freedom is over and the poet looks forward to the emergence of a homogenous new society. The image of the woman tied to her land represent a strong feminine force. Monika Verma believes in joy as the basic principle of life. Her female protagonist, in her poem entitled *In This Loud World* declares—

.. .why should I grieve.

There is laughter in a silver thread of breeze.

The poet struggles to come to terms with human suffering. She does not turn to poetry as a means of cathartic release but as a medium for conveying her response.

Women's writing in English in the beginning was relegated to women's magazines and dismissed as the whims of the over protected, upper class English-speaking women uttered as a diversion. The early women writers were charged with constructing an imaginary community. As Indians wrote their own histories, renamed their own images, spoke in their own voices, and redefined colonialism and its implications, extensive re-mappings took place and women's literary identities were discovered. The radical feminism of the west is alien to the majority of Indian women writers. Their writing reveals attitudes that are not premised in global sisterhood but in ethnic, racial and even regional locations. The third-world revolutionary praxis once treated as discordant with the larger aims of women's movements in the world addresses and recognizes not only women with higher education but also neoliterate and underprivileged women. Questions of gender, caste, class and state have been articulated in the works of poets like Malathi Rao, Meena Alexander, Bina Agarwal, Vimla Rao, Rohini Gupta, Eunice de Souza, Melanie Siligardo etc. their works consider the need to recognize and analyze multiple identities to introspect and to criticize.

Increased trade, consumerism, globalization, nuclear proliferation, media-invasion etc. in the post 80s has evoked a new genre of post-modernist poetry by Indian women. Mamta Kalia defines the phenomenon of the educated, urban workingwomen. She believes in honesty in the writing of poetry. The quest for a sophisticated life sometimes results in an artificial construction of happiness. Marriage as the ultimate and sole destiny of women is not acceptable to her. She feels that a happy marriage is a desirable ideal but not at the cost of individuality and selfhood. In a poem entitled *Compulsions* she protests against restrictive social norms.

Contemporary women poets often recycle national inter texts like oral narratives, folklore and community

experiences. This has resulted in the enlargement and the reorganization of the literary canon by rediscovering and redefining neglected values and reforming underlying ideologies. Women now select suitable values and ethical precepts to empower themselves and their communities. Women's poetry responds to and appropriates new knowledge and new values. The cross-reading and crosswriting between multi-lingual authors and multi-lingual readers who share the urban resources of electronic media. information technology and communicate in a flexible brand of English has created a new intellectual terrain. The altered perspective has created more space for the Indian secular-humanist traditions like self-discipline, ability to work hard, respect for the law, self-esteem, respect for the rights of others, courage of convictions, consequences of one's actions. Women's poetry draws its energy from a vast resource of inspiration. It has defined its space. Women's poetry represents a decentralized medium, which draws attention to new spheres and new negotiations and new values. The future of women's poetry will be ensured by the dynamics of the poetry itself.

### Notes and References

- All citations of poetry are from AT umiacs. Umd. Edu. (Last modified 11th March '04)
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# 19

# Diasporal Life in Indian Poetry in English

Sharad Rajimwale

Indian English writers in prolonged contact with the west can be broadly divided into two categories: (a) those who have settled in foreign countries for good, and (b) those who came back to India after spending a long period of time. In both the cases Indian reality figures prominently in their writings. It is difficult for an Indian to ignore the country of his/her birth, rather life in an alien country appears to lend a particular intensity to their writing. These writers are generally regarded as 'expatriates' who appear to be floating adrift turning their eyes nostalgically to the land they have left, and seeking new roots in a land of adoption. These so-called 'exiles' (Bruce King's term) are different those African and Palestenian writers who have not voluntarily left their motherland, but were 'exiled' or evicted by particular political regimes out of their country. Indian intellectuals have had no such experience, their 'exile' is by choice. That of course makes a lot of difference in the quality of their writings and that of the former.

Yet these Indian English poets depict a different situation:

with never a challenge, neither friend nor foe in the no-man's land of the nothing done; and were weighed into acceptance... This is a situation where loneliness is the most natural thing to experience and memories of back home create a thousand different responses, and where the new land is difficult to adjust to. As Bruce King observes, "Indian expatriate poets do not write from the position of a distinct foreign community, such as the exiled black or West Indian novelists, but their writing reflects the perspective of someone between two cultures. They may look back on India with nostalgia, satirically celebrating their liberation or asserting their biculturalism, but they also look skeptically and wryly on their new homeland as outsiders, with a feeling of something having been lost in the process of growth. The ability to tolerate, accommodate and absorb other cultures without losing the consciousness of being Indian marks the expatriate poets."

The tension generated by the 'inner' and 'outer' worlds is quite evident in A.K. Ramanujan and G.S. Sharat Chandra. The former harks back to his South Indian Brahmin background in which the appeal of a close-kint set-up with a fine sense of security and affinity is as strong as the repulsion of having to carry the dead burden of conservative practices and senseless orthodoxies. Futility of continuing with this sterile tradition haunts the poet.

But there she stood
upon that dusty road on a night lit april mind
and gave me a look ... Commandments crumbled
in my father's past. Her tumbled hair suddenly known
as silk in my angry hand, I shook a little
and took her behind the laws of my land

-- 'Another view of Grace'

Though Ramanujan's poems are filled with the city, temples, shrines, rivers and streets of his memory his poetry is limited by an inability or unwillingness to embrace some larger assertion of an Indian ideal or tradition, or is limited by a failure to express a fuller or more comprehensive vision of Indian society. These poems

comprise vignettes of events and descriptions that too from memory. The other kind of poems is embedded in his observations of the life in America, such as 'Snakes and Ladders', 'Highway Stripper', 'Chicagozen'. An expatriate, he live in, two different worlds—the one within, the one without.

G.S. Sharat Chandra also has his roots in South Indian family life. But his sense of being uprooted in his new country, the U.S.A., makes his self feel insecure. But he is less nostalgic about India than critical and often fantasizes about a third world where he would find comfort. His discomfort at being rootless in America is evident in these lines,

No one wants your where abouts no one worries your mail
If you changed your mind and returned there no one wonders if it was appropriate whether you acted hasty or with taste.

'While having in disgust washed his hands off India, Sharat Chandra appears rootless and undefined in his American surroundings'.

There are scars instead
of lines on my palm
I've no biography
only remembrance...
I'm not their man
I assure them
Walking away
my hands squirm
in my pockets like fish
gasping for air...
—'Self-Portrait'

Ramanujan's self-portrait is similarly self-effacing.

I resemble everyone
but myself, and sometimes see
in shop-windows
despite the well-known laws
of optics,
the portrait of a stranger,
date unknown,
often signed in a corner
by my father.

However, one important feature that distinguishes his poetry from Ramanujan's is his frank and open criticism of India. There is no nostalgia about his memories of the land of his birth. He consider it as a land of moral, financial and cultural corruption, a place of social injustice, and poverty except for those in, power and positions of influence. 'Beggar', 'Indian Miniatures', Death of the Second Division Clerk', 'At the Burning Ghats', 'The Black Deity', 'Tirumalai' are some of the poems expressing the poets' critical observation abent condition in India.

Meena Alaxander in her 'Art of Pariah' carries the palpable mementos of Indian or oriental affinity to her home in America.

Back against the kitchen stove
Draupadi sings.
In my head Beirut still burns
The Queen of Nubia, of God's Upper Kingdom,
The Rani of Jhansi transfigured, raising her sword
are players too. They have entered with me
into North America and share these walls

-- 'Art of Pariahs'

H.O. Nazareth in his collection entitled *Lobo* (1984), sees the Indian settled in England against the racial background. He voices a strong sense of displacement,

prejudice and lack of adjustment. His Lobo is an autobiographical persona, a portrait of the continuing effects of Colonialism 'which resulted in fragmented, rootless, westernized individuals from the Third World'. In the first section the poet takes opportunity to mock at pseudo-moralist attitudes of the Indian.

A people that once sculptured deities in erotic tangles. frowns on celluloid kisses now. The technological revolution jogs beside the wooden plough

In the second section he arrives in London to experience racial alienation. 'F.X. Lobo's boy has become 'You black bastard'. This feeling of isolation grows as he grows old and empty. In the final fragment, he feels old/and something of a failure. Life seems 'barren'. 'He knows he's stuck in London'.

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# Index

A	Bhatnagar, OP, 241, 242, 244-
Abhinavagupta, 70, 134	<u>247, 250, 251, 253, 254, 257-</u> <u>259, 262, 264, 269-271</u>
African Writers, 337	Bhatnagar's Images, 265, 266
Akbar, 82	Bhatnagar's Poetry, 243, 256,
Alexander, Meena, 340	<u>260, 262, 270</u>
Alvarez, 272	Bhatnagar's Poetic Style, 249, 250
Americans, 212	Bhatt, Sujata, 1
Anandavardhana, <u>66,</u> <u>76,</u> <u>77</u>	Bhushan, VN, 41
Andrews, CF, 89	Boulton, Marjorie, 251
Anglo-Indian Poetry, 156	British Literature, 27
Aurobindo, 1, 3, 5, 8-12, 38-43,	British Poetry, 20
<u>46, 52, 57-62, 141-146, 148-</u>	Brown, 259
<u>153, 163, 301</u>	Bruce, King, 338
В	Buddhism, 309
	Byron, Lord, <u>4,</u> <u>301</u>
Bangladesh, <u>80, 81</u>	
Baral, KC, 240	$\mathbf{c}$
Bengali Literature, 9	Chakravarty, Amiya, 271
Bhagavadgita, 121	Chambial, DC, 301, 302
Bhamaha, <u>76,</u> <u>77</u>	Charu Sheel Singh, 326
Bharata, <u>66</u> , <u>67</u> , <u>77</u>	Charu Sheel Singh's Poetry, 326
Bharatas Theory of Rasa (Rasa	Chatterjee, Bankim Chandra, 102
Theory), <u>66</u> , <u>67</u> , <u>76</u>	Chatterjee, Margaret, 334
Bhartrihari, 123, 278	Chellapam, K, 298

Christianity, 309 Fogle, <u>259</u> Cixous, Helen, 329 Forster, EM, 88, 89 Coleridge, ST, 301 Foss, Martin, 264 Constitution of India, 207 Friedrich, 85 D G Dante, <u>278</u> Galton, Francis, 259 Daruwalla, Keki N, <u>1</u>, <u>17</u>, <u>18</u>, <u>25</u> Gandhi, MK, 11, 83 Das, Jibonanand, 102 Ghosh, SK, 41, 48, 53 Das, Kamala, 301 Ghosh, Kashiprasad, 3 Derogio, HLV, 1, 2, 208 Ghosh, Manmohan, 5, <u>301</u> De'Souza, Charmayne, 1, 34 Goel, Vijaya, <mark>35</mark> De' Souza, Eunice, 1, 34 Gokak, VK, <mark>34, 44</mark> Deshpande, Gauri, 224, 334 Gokhale, 11 Dhanaval, P, 238 Gordimer, Nadine, 220 Dharker, Imtiaz, <u>1</u>, <u>33</u>, <u>34</u> Greene, Graham, <mark>80,</mark> <mark>81</mark> Donne, John, 303 Dutt, MM, 3  ${f H}$  ${f E}$ Haiku, 278 Hamidullah, Begum, 332 Eliot, TS, 215, 216, 229, 246, 257 Hamidullah, Zebunnisa, 331 Elliot, Julia, 207 Herbert, George, <u>52</u>, <u>124</u> Emerson, 231 England, 85, 87 Herder, 85 English Literature in India, 1, 3 Hindu Civilization, 81 English Poetry, 278 Hindu Scriptures, 136 Ezekiel, Nissim, 1, 12, 13, 16, 17, Hinduism, 81, 284, 287, 309 221, 226, 228, 229, 231, 253, Hindus, <u>285</u> 257, 271, <u>301</u> Hiremath, CN, 279, 297 Ezekiel's Art of Writing, 232 Hopkins, GM, 257 Ezekiel's Poetry, 232 Ι F Indian English Poets, 301, 337 Feminism, 189, 207 Indian Literature, 309 Fenollosa, Ernest, 253

Indian Poetry in English (Indian Lakoff's Theory on Language & Gender, <u>178</u>, <u>185</u> Eng. Poetry), 24, 30, 35, 209, 241, 254, 271, 299, 318 Lal, P, 1, 16 Indian Poets (Poets of India), 2, 3, Lawrence, DH, 214, 215, 217 34, <u>123</u>, <u>180</u>, <u>297</u>, <u>328</u> Levi, Primo, 240 Indian Women (Indian Village Lewis, C. Day, 259 Women), 220, 228, 229 Lyrical Poetry, 123 Islam, <u>105</u>, <u>309</u> Italian Poetry, 278 M Iyenger, KRS, <u>5-7</u>, <u>12</u>, <u>23</u>, <u>24</u>, <u>54</u>, Mahaptra, Jayant, 1, 22, 301 <u>170, 180</u> Malhotra, AK, 1 J Marathi Poetry, 278 Marvell, Andrew, <u>124</u>, <u>168</u> Jainism, 309 Metaphysical Poetry, 124, 125 Jaysi, Malik Muhammad, 105 Modayil, Sujatha, 35 Jinnah, MA, 11 Mohanty, Niranjan, 310-315 K Mohanty's Poetry, 310 Moral & Didactic Poetry, 118 Kabir, <u>59</u>, <u>105</u>, <u>124</u>, <u>164</u>, <u>278</u>, <u>297</u> Kalia, Mamta, 1, 32, 34, 224, 335 Moran, Lewis H, 208 Kamala Das, <u>1</u>, <u>14</u>, <u>182-186</u>, <u>189</u>, Muslim Civilization, 81 192-199, 203-205, 209-211, Musticism, 142 215-217, 220-222 Kamala's Poetry, <u>180-183</u>, <u>217</u>, N **220**, **223** Naidu, Sarojini, 1, 10-12, 152, Kamban, 297 156, 157, 160-163, 166-169, Kannada Literature, <u>276</u>, <u>278</u> 170, 301, 332 Kannada Poetry, 227, 298 Naidu's Poetry, 156 Kannadigas, 278 Naik, MK, 3, 4, 29, 235 Karnataka, 277, 279, 299 Naikar, Basavaraj, 277, 298, 299 Keats, 4, 9, 145, 231, 301 Nair, Rukmini, 35 Kolatkar Arun, <u>1</u>, <u>23</u>, <u>24</u> Nandy, Pritish, 29 Kumar, SK, 1, 18, 257 Narayan, LL, 239 Narsimhaih, CD, 239

 ${f L}$ 

Lakoff, <u>172-179</u>, <u>186</u>

National Organization for

Women, <u>207</u>

Index 345

Nazareth, HO, 340	Ramayana, <u>66,</u> <u>131</u>
Nehru, Jawaharlal, <u>83,</u> <u>84</u>	Rasa, 66-69, 76-78
Nowottny, 259	Ray, Mohit K, 298
	Richards, IA, 258, 264
О	Rigveda, 92
Orissa, 312	Romantic Poets, 301
Oriyan Culture, 311	
Owen, Wilfred, 89	s
Owen, Susan, 89	Sachidananda, 221
P	Saivism, 310
	Sankaracharya, 151, 162
Pal, Bipin Chandra, 9	Samskrit Literature, 9
Palestenian Writers, 337	Sarvajna, 278-292, 294, 296-298
Parthasarthy, R, <u>1</u> , <u>20</u> , <u>23</u>	Sarvajna's Poetry (Poetry of
Patanjali, <u>148,</u> <u>192</u>	Sarvajna), 281
Patel, Gieve, <u>1</u> , <u>24</u>	Schelling, 85
Pathak, RS, 28	Schlezel, 85
Philosophical Systems of Vedanta, 49	Schopenhauer, 85
Piper, Raymond Frank, 48	Sebald, WG, 240
Postgate, JP, 298	Seth, Vikram, <u>234</u> , <u>236</u>
Pound, Ezra, 278	Seth's Poetry, 239
Prasad, HM, <u>5</u> , <u>11</u> , <u>16</u> , <u>22</u> , <u>156</u>	Sethna, KD, <u>42, 51, 53</u>
Prasannaranjan, S, 240	Shakespeare, <u>7</u> , <u>142</u> , <u>143</u>
Puranas, <u>102</u> , <u>142</u>	Shakespeare's Philosophy of Life.
${f R}$	Sharat Chandra, GS, 338, 339
Radhakrishnan, S, Dr., 276	Sharma, RP, 67
Rahim, 105	Shelley, 4, 61, 165
Rajasthan, 306, 308	Sikhism, 309
Ram Mohan Roy, Raja, Ramadas,	Silgardo, M, 1, 34
278, 297	Sivayoga, 287
Ramanujan, AK, <u>1</u> , <u>14</u> , <u>15</u> , <u>301</u> ,	Spiritualism, 191
338	Sufi Poets, 105
Ramanujan's Poems, <u>338</u>	Sufism, 58

${f T}$	Vaishnavism, 310
Tagore, Rabindra Nath, 1, 6, 7,	Valmiki, <mark>66</mark>
38, <u>41</u> , <u>42</u> , <u>54</u> , <u>58</u> , <u>60-63</u> , <u>70</u> ,	Varma, Monica, 224
78, 79, 81-89, 94-97, 117, 123, 124, 130, 301, 327	Vaughan, William, 147
Tagore's Poetry, 103, 124	Vedantas, 142
Tagorean Philosophy, 8	Vedas, <u>66, 142, 145, 318</u>
Tamil Nadu, 279	Vedic Literature, 309
Tamil Poetry, 278	Veerasaivism, 310
Telugu Poetry, 278	Vemana, 297
Tennyson, 61, 208	Verma, Monika, 30, 334
Thomas, Dylam, 248	Virasaiva, 286
Thomas, RS, 251	Virasaivism, 283
Thompson, Edward, 58	Vivekananda, <u>1</u> , <u>162</u>
Thompson, Francis, 52	W
Tirthankars, <u>138</u>	Whitman 911 919 916 917
Tirthankars, <u>138</u> Tiruvalluvar, <u>279, 282, 293, 297</u>	Whitman, 211-213, 216, 217
*	Wiesel, Elie, 240
Tiruvalluvar, <u>279, 282, 293, 297</u>	Wiesel, Elie, 240 Women's Poetry in English
Tiruvalluvar, <u>279, 282, 293, 297</u> Tolstoy, <u>164, 240</u>	Wiesel, Elie, 240
Tiruvalluvar, <u>279</u> , <u>282</u> , <u>293</u> , <u>297</u> Tolstoy, <u>164</u> , <u>240</u> Toru Dutt, <u>1</u> , <u>4</u> , <u>208</u> , <u>301</u> , <u>329</u> , <u>331</u>	Wiesel, Elie, 240 Women's Poetry in English (Poetry by Women), 329-331,
Tiruvalluvar, <u>279</u> , <u>282</u> , <u>293</u> , <u>297</u> Tolstoy, <u>164</u> , <u>240</u> Toru Dutt, <u>1</u> , <u>4</u> , <u>208</u> , <u>301</u> , <u>329</u> , <u>331</u> Tulsidas, <u>123</u>	Wiesel, Elie, 240 Women's Poetry in English (Poetry by Women), 329-331, 336
Tiruvalluvar, 279, 282, 293, 297 Tolstoy, 164, 240 Toru Dutt, 1, 4, 208, 301, 329, 331 Tulsidas, 123 Tyagi, Prem, Dr., 40  U Upanishads, 57, 59, 61, 108, 124,	Wiesel, Elie, 240 Women's Poetry in English (Poetry by Women), 329-331, 336 Women Poets, 35 Women's Literature in English,
Tiruvalluvar, 279, 282, 293, 297 Tolstoy, 164, 240 Toru Dutt, 1, 4, 208, 301, 329, 331 Tulsidas, 123 Tyagi, Prem, Dr., 40  U	Wiesel, Elie, 240 Women's Poetry in English (Poetry by Women), 329-331, 336 Women Poets, 35 Women's Literature in English, 330
Tiruvalluvar, 279, 282, 293, 297 Tolstoy, 164, 240 Toru Dutt, 1, 4, 208, 301, 329, 331 Tulsidas, 123 Tyagi, Prem, Dr., 40  U Upanishads, 57, 59, 61, 108, 124,	Wiesel, Elie, 240 Women's Poetry in English (Poetry by Women), 329-331, 336 Women Poets, 35 Women's Literature in English, 330
Tiruvalluvar, 279, 282, 293, 297 Tolstoy, 164, 240 Toru Dutt, 1, 4, 208, 301, 329, 331 Tulsidas, 123 Tyagi, Prem, Dr., 40  U Upanishads, 57, 59, 61, 108, 124,	Wiesel, Elie, 240 Women's Poetry in English (Poetry by Women), 329-331, 336 Women Poets, 35 Women's Literature in English, 330 Wordsworth, William, 147, 301  Y
Tiruvalluvar, 279, 282, 293, 297 Tolstoy, 164, 240 Toru Dutt, 1, 4, 208, 301, 329, 331 Tulsidas, 123 Tyagi, Prem, Dr., 40  U Upanishads, 57, 59, 61, 108, 124, 142, 145, 163, 318  V	Wiesel, Elie, 240  Women's Poetry in English (Poetry by Women), 329-331, 336  Women Poets, 35  Women's Literature in English, 330  Wordsworth, William, 147, 301  Y  Yajurveda, 153



