

CHAPTER - IV

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF  
THE ANIMAL POEMS OF  
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The study of animal poems of Manohar Shetty and Ted Hughes has always prompted the researcher to compare these poets in their treatment of animal world and the vision of life emerging out of it. The forgoing chapters make analysis of the animal poems of these two poets and it naturally leads to the researcher to underline the similarities and dissimilarities and the perception of these two poets while dealing with the animal world and their search for identity.

Ted Hughes is known for his poetic achievement, his style, ideas and for his prolific and versatile writing. His poetic output displays the strength and vitality of his creative genius. When other poets of his generation were writing social verse of the Movements, Hughes has engaged with the natural subject matter going against the contemporary writings.

The study of Ted Hughes three volumes *The Hawk in the Rain*, *Lupercal* and *Wodwo* reveals a lot of Hughes immense creative power, and also his experimentation. *The Hawk in the Rain* has written in the initial phase of his career reflects new themes such as animal world, nature, war, death, love, hatred and violence. The second volume *Lupercal* is notable for its depiction of animals which are known for their violent and savage nature. *Wodwo* contains a large number of

poems and most of them show the imagery of the fear, turmoil, blood and death, and some of it shows emptiness and silence. In an interview to *Guardian* (1965), Hughes said, "My poems are not about violence but vitality".<sup>1</sup> He meant vitality of elemental life. Man's increasing alienation for that vitality is a major concern of Hughes. In the same interview, Hughes described the animals in his poem as "living the redeemed life of joy."<sup>2</sup> It is joy that man is deprived. This joy can only come as a result of man's genuine contact with his instincts. In practical terms it means perfect adaptation to the needs of life and total absorption of being in action.

Animal world is predominantly reflected in three volumes. Hughes adopts animals to expose ruthless nature of human beings. His animals present the modern disillusionment and choose more effectively than the human beings. Hughes finds a sort of solace in the company of nature. Human world appears to him useless where life is full of violence, hatred and frustration. Animals are portrayed happy with their simplicity. He tries to depict nature as a great inspirer. Hughes is one of the few modern poets who accommodate nature to its full extent in their poetry.

Hughes chooses animal and bird imagery to present modern chaos. He has also used animal and bird imagery to bring out the simplicity of animal life and the complexity and crooked nature of human beings. His poetry tries to bring out the truth that man is pompous animal whereas other animals are quite innocent, simple and full of love.

Hughes interest in the animal world dates back to the days of his boyhood which he spent in Yorkshire amid rural scenes in the company of his brother, who was a hunter of foxes and other animals, greatly encouraged his interest in animals. He talks about childhood passion for capturing animals. He describes the birth of his animal poem as :

"An animal I have succeeded in keeping alive is the Fox. I was always frustrated twice by a farmer, who killed cubs I had caught before I could set to them and once by a poultry keeper who freed my cub while his dog waited. Years after those events I was sitting up late one snowy night in dreary lodgings in London. I had written nothing for a year or so but that night I got the idea I might write something and I wrote in a few minutes. The Thought Fox, the first animal poem I ever wrote".<sup>3</sup>

Impact of some eminent writers and poets like John Donne, Dylan Thomas, Lawrence, Yeats, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Hopkins is quite visible in Hughes's poetry. He admires Donne's satires, epistles and gently moved by Dylan Thomas's *Death and Entrance* and writings of Lawrence. His basic philosophy of life is based on Buddhist metaphysics. The other influences can be cited as : Indian and Chinese philosophy, religious writings and the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. He was deeply influenced by philosopher like Schopenhauer. The other influences of some western writers like

Holub, Pilinszky, Vasko Popa and Zbigniew Herbert are seen in his poetry.

He has interpreted modern life and modern man in terms of myth and symbol and indicated the paths along which mankind should strive to go forward in order to attain the mental tranquility and poise so woefully lacking in the present state of chaos and disequilibrium in the world. Hughes's work has considerably enriched English poetry and enlarged its scope and its bounds.

Manohar Shetty's animal poems are his private projection on domestic creatures. His poems show his belief in man's attitude to proceed despite innumerable impediments, the necessity of which arises from struggle for survival. In a nutshell's the key-note of his animal poetry is positive. The study of animal poems reveals that the ultimate concern of Shetty is to perceive human being in the light of animal images. It is not that Shetty is the first to write animal poetry or to use animal imagery in order to comment on the human condition. He is very sharp and reflective. His animal poems serve as a meditative parallel between the world of men and that of animal.

Manohar Shetty is a serious practitioner of the craft of poetry. Poetry as an art requires skill with words and language tempered by imagination. He shows a disciplined and rigorous adherence to form and structure. In this sense, he is much more of a formalist. He says,

"There should always be an inherent 'meaning' in a successful poem, though it may not be directed towards righting in the wrongs in society. But a poem is, above all, about the use of words, about skill, about "memorable speech", the ability to craft something with words, with only a pen as your tool to enchant the reader".<sup>4</sup>

Shetty's poems are well - organized. They are not the outcome of loose thoughts and feelings. They are chiseled several times before they come into existence. Out of this consideration, perhaps emerges Raj Rao's comment :

"Shetty's aesthetics are modernist. In his love for tangible objects and particulars, in the decorum and high seriousness with which he approaches his subjects, he belongs to that generation of poets that draws its inspiration from Eliot and Auden, I.A. Richards and new critics. Not for him, the parody or anti-intellectualism of a Rushdie or a Derrida, nor the concessions to pop culture that are found in the poetry of Mehrotra and Kolhatkar".<sup>5</sup>

Here Raj Rao intends to put firmly Shetty in the line of modernist poets and critics. Modern Indian English poetry is influenced by modern British poetry. He was influenced by the poetry of Hughes, Gunn and Heaney.

The graphic description of the animals is presented in minute details with keen interest by Manohar Shetty. He is an animal poet, however, he is not dubbed as nature poet. M.K. Naik and Shyamala A. Narayan remark, "Shetty is a poet deeply fascinated by animals, big and small from elephants to ants and cockroaches; but he is no nature poet; he is not interested in animal's perse."<sup>6</sup> On the contrary, Ted Hughes is called a nature poet not only for his animal poems but for his poems such as "Wind", "October Dawn", "November", "Snow Drop" etc.

This is so, perhaps, because nature is not direct subject matter of his poems as are animals. Yet, his animals are not separate from nature. They indicate compassionate aspect of nature. Nature is viewed from one side, the other side of nature as caring and loving her children is also considered by Shetty in his poem "Fog".

Shetty's poetic style shows the influence of Ted Hughes. As in the poem of Hughes, there is an abundance of simile and metaphor. The use of alliteration and personification is spontaneous. These qualities, however, do not outshine the issues involved in the poem by him is well-knit, compact and succinct. Greater awareness of poetic form is a general feature of the post-eighties poetry as it is found in Shetty's poems.

Violence and brutal violence is certainly one of the dominant themes in the poetry of Ted Hughes. The poet is fascinated by all kinds of violence but in Hughes's eye violence though painful and very often fatal is also a guarantee of energy and of life. His all poems

depict the cruelty of fierceness and the violence, which are inseparable from the world of nature. Shetty's animals are domestic creatures losing their originality. They are natural but at the same time metaphor of human being. Graphic and realistic imagery is a striking feature of both poets. Hughes expresses a rapt fascination with animal energy and independence, Shetty's fascination with animal is an awareness of the affinities between animal and human life. Human aspirations to freedom and power and natural instinct of animal are core subject of Hughes. He goes to the deeper level of the animal instinct, its life of primitive energy. His depiction of the animal is remarkably vivid, startling and yet truthful. But it is not just the original kind of description of animals which makes unique is that symbolic significance, he discovers in the animals. Shetty's treatment of the animal is different, it is highly symbolic, significant and highly expressive. Both poets use numerous metaphors and these metaphors relate a particular animal to all the creatures and also to human experiences.

Hughes use of language shows his marked preference for dense and tough vocabulary. He used combination of odd and compound words. He completely ignores the rules of punctuation. Shetty's language is straight and simplest language. Vocabulary is common but in third collection more mature and tough phrases are used very attractively.

The symbolic significance of the animal imagery can not simply ignore. It is the symbolic significance which imparts to this animal imagery a certain depth and profundity. Hughes does not



write about animals as if he regarded them as mere animals. But Shetty's animal's imagery are the part of domestic creative, losing their originality. Both poets find in them certain qualities which link them to human life. The animal imagery thus yields a significance which can enhance our understanding of ourselves. Hughes believed that the strength of animal lay in their instinct and precise function. The animals, according to both are much more adapted to their environment than human being.

Hughes's animal poems have been described as "a modern bestiary". It has also been remarked that his poetry fastens on to the animal world a cartoonery of human struggle and destiny. It means that Hughes purpose in writing these animal poems is to ridicule and to mock at, all the struggle and strife which are going on in the human world. Hughes is interested in animals as a creatures deserving of our attention because of their own inherent qualities. The animal represents one of the important aspects of God's creation and each kind of animal has its own identity and its distinctive character. At the same time, Hughes indirectly and symbolically depicts the contrast and sometimes the similarity, between animals and mankind. As for struggle and strife, these are as much in evidence among the animals as among human beings and in the world of animals; a pike - fish eats another when hungry and the shark in its brutality bites its own tail, snatching a bit of its own flesh. As for the style which Hughes has employed to describe the animals, it has rightly been described as 'unnervingly' apt. For instance :

"Skinful of bowls, he bowels them,  
The hip going in and out of joint ...  
At every stride he has to turn a corner  
In himself and correct it ..."

It is thus he has portrayed the caged Jaguar on the whole, his animal poems are a formidable, awful, spectacular and fascinating of God's creatures in a universe which is mysterious and inscrutable.

Both these poets enlarged the scope of poetry by their inquiry into the animal world. Though their shaping is in different cultures - one in Hindu and other in Christian - their depth of perceptions have similarity. They comment on the struggle of human nature through the images of animals and it enriches our understanding of life on wider plane.

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6. Walder, Dennis. Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath. Milton Keynes : Open University Press, 1976.