

CHAPTER

6

6. Conclusion

Indian English poetry which began with Derozio, was under the romantic influence in its earlier stages. In the second phase of Indian English poetry, there is a growing tendency to glorify whatever is Indian. Toru Dutta, Shri. Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore and Sarojini Naidu are the remarkable poets of pre-independence period. '*Savitri*' '*Gitanjali*' and '*The Golden Threshold*' are the well known works of this time. A number of these poets wrote in a manner of imitation of the British poet.

In the wake of Independence, the mode of Indian poetry in English also changed. The writers workshop in Calcutta caused to publish a number of books in verse. The imitative tone of the earlier writers is not seen in the post-independence poets. They have begun to see the world in the new perspective of changed circumstances. The striking changes in the contemporary world are reflected in their writings. The third phase 'Modern Indian English poetry' begins with Nissim Ezekiel's 'A Time to change' in 1952. It marks a clear break from the preceding phase in respect of diction, style, themes and contents. Indian English poetry began to gain recognition in India as well as abroad.

Among the Indian poets in English Arun Kolatkar is undoubtedly the most significant and well known poet. He is a gifted poet writing both in Marathi and English. He is fond of reading. He read Indian and western literature, the history of Islam, Christ and Hindu religion. He is interested in legends and myths. His creative works include 'Jejuri' which received the coveted Commonwealth poetry prize in 1977, and became an immediate hit with the reading public. His other collections of English poetry are 'Kala Ghoda Poems' and *Sarpa Satra* (2004) appeared after a gap of 25 years. These are essential volumes for those interested in modern poetry.

This dissertation is an attempt to identify the theme of 'modernity' as it is expressed in the three volumes of Arun Kolatkar. The theme of modernity is important because of its advance in modern times, as well as it is modern literature imbibing the spirit of European modernism is a typical twentieth century phenomenon, produced between the 1930's and 1960's in different regions of India; Modernism in the literature produced since the 1930's clearly refers to the impact of the western aesthetic movement.

Modernity is one of the important literary canons/ values of literature. In fact, it is a culture specific phase of history. It requires change and transformation in every sphere life. But this change or transformation can not be achieved only by imitating or adopting or borrowing the west, though Indian modernity is now recognized as synonymous to westernization. It is the fact that modernity can not be transplanted but it should be shaped according to past traditions and present circumstances. We should create our own modernity that suits our ancient heritage. It means that western model of modernity is useless in Indian literary context. The real strength of Indian modernity will be tried in our Indian modernity will be tried in our indomitable Indian values. A meaningful Indian modernity can be developed only through creating new writing and critical awareness. Hence modernity is a process. It is a moment of realization and revelation of progressive thought, which spreads knowledge fight against superstition, narrow world-view, backwardness of society and aims of establishing new but open society. It is a process of change based on rationality which implies innovation and enlightenment.

In all the three volumes of Arun Kolatkar's verse *Jejuri* (1976) *Sarpa Satra* and *Kala Ghoda Poems* (2004), there is a manifestation of modernity.

The analysis of the poems in *Jejuri* shows that Arun Kolatkar explores the loss of faith, beliefs, the decadence, dissociation of feelings and the loss of meaning. The protagonist is a modern, educated rational man and he goes to Jejuri, but his analytical mind discovers the place devoid of any religious sanctity. All his reactions to Jejuri manifestly show him to be a typical modern urban sceptic. There is modernity or modern sensibility in the reactions of protagonist in the poem. The most important characteristic of modernist poetry is its humanism and irony. The poet is ironical throughout the volume. Murli is a female devotee of Khandoba. But like a temple dancer she too has taken the prostitution. She has become a symbol of moral corruption in the name of religion. This aspect of Murli is suggested with sharp irony in the poem. '*Yeshwant Rao*' is one of the meaningful poems. There is humour and irony in the tone of the poem. The poet is also ironical at the expense of minor god worshipped at the place who is called Yeshwant Rao. '*The Cupboard*' in a sarcastic manner shows how the god are preserved according to their status. There is humanity in '*An Old Woman*'. Though her intention is to get a fifty paise coin she is prepared to do something for it.

So the modernity and the real thematic significance of the book consists in the protagonist's sensibility and reaction not only to the externality of things around him but also to a played out faith and materialistic aspects of Hinduism.

In respect of style and structure of the poems, the poet employs the technique of absence of punctuation marks which is significant deviation from the poetic norm. The structure of Jejuri poems is very striking attractive and experimental. Kolatkar describes what he sees and experiences during the journey. His impressions or rather perceptions expressed in ordinary language. he defies the narrow confines of the finite world to emphasize the total freedom and form of human expression

by using the present tense. He also employed American expressions and modern colloquialism. The structural experimentation reveals that the narrator has thoroughly absorbed the westernized literary and art culture. He makes use of the structural and stylistic patterns of the cartoons in the phantom series, the gangster war story and of the graphic designs. Images used in the volume are starkly modern and international cosmopolitan, so images and theme is universal. There are many references of myth in the volume. But from mythical point of view Ajamil and the Tigers is an important poem in the collection. This poem is modern rendition of a traditional legend.

Sarpa Satra is a typical Kolatkar narrative poem like Oroan mixing myth, allegory and contemporary history. It is based on the snake sacrifice performed by king Janamejaya. Though it is based upon the myth from Mahabharat, it is applicable to modern human history. There is a clear manifestation of modernity in theme or thoughts of the poem.

The most important recurring theme in Sarpa Satra is a story of revenge motif. It is also a story about ending the duty to revenge which breeds further hatred more battles and continual death. This thought is universal all over the world. The seeds of this revenge are rooted in the burning of Khandava forest by Arjuna and Krishna with the help of their divine weapons. Then the snake Takshaka took revenge of his wife's death in the Khandava forest by killing not Arjuna but Arjuna's grandson Parikshita. Then this revenge reappears in the form of Parikshita's son Janamejaya who dignified the shake sacrifice in the high sounding name of 'Yajnya'.

From another point of view ecological devastation in another theme of the poem and it is shown through the burning of Khandava forest, by Arjuna and Krishna. It is a great Sanctuary and god's own

laboratory on earth. The destruction caused by the burning of Khandava forest is tremendous and horrible.

Satire, sarcasm is the theme of the poem *Sarpa Satra*. There is a satire on the great thinkers, rishis and maharishis as 'the finest minds of our age, who supported the 'Yajnya' for their vested interests. Arjuna and Krishna are described sarcastically with their divine weapons and petty jobs. The final section of the poem 'The Ritual Bath' is a sarcastic comment on the final outcome. This poem is a satire on politicians and rulers. The characters in the poem are not caricatures but real people easily identifiable with today's politician. The murder of the snake people is no different from the genocide of ethnic group of today.

From another point of view, this poem expresses a woman's suffering. Jaratkaru is a snake woman and mother of Aastika. In this poem Jaratkaru tells Aastika the history of destruction from Khandava forest to Sarpa Satra in three parts. She tells Aastika about Sarpa Satra. The snakes are drawn helplessly into the fire. Many innocent snakes are killed in sacrifice before her eyes. She is disappointed at the thought of how to stop this festival of hatred. Thus throughout the poem Jaratkaru's suffering and sorrow is shown through her talking with her son Aastika.

There is modernity in language and structure of the poem. It is a narrative poem its nature is like a epic poem. Arun Kolatkar uses very contemporary language when he deals with legends and myths. *Sarpa Satra* modernizes the Sanskrit into colloquial English. The poet has used skillfully rhetorical questions in the narration and narration becomes dramatic. It is written mostly in free verse. The poet reported in a contemporary terms, gossipy, detailed events unfolding in front of television cameras. The poet's intention in writing this poem is to relate this story to the contemporary world, so the poet used words, phrases which applicable to modern world, 'politically incorrect', 'the future of the

country in question', 'a blank cheque', 'an extremist', 'all terrorists', etc. such words or phrases are used by the poet. The poet has used myth in the poem. He is not retelling this story. *Sarpa Śatra* retells from an alternative perspective the snake sacrifice by Janmejaya. Employing this myth Kolatkar tries to bring out disorder vengeance in the contemporary human world.

Kala Ghoda Poems is a collection of poems which focus on the triangular island opposite wayside inn. He had been watching various people, objects and actions for a long time. He celebrated their lives from dawn to dusk and right round, the year in this volume. So '*Kala Ghoda Poem*' celebrates the history and especially the street life of Bombay.

The analysis of the poems in the volume shows that there is a modernity or modern sensibility. He is modern in his approach. He describes the street life of Bombay. We find his modern sensibility in the poems, choosing subjects for his poems, theme or thought of the poems. He is humanistic in presenting the street life of Bombay. This is essential volume for those interested in modern poetry.

The most important and recurring theme of the poems is stark reality of contemporary life and predicament of ordinary people and anonymous. So his realm is the poetry of ordinary and reality. This approach is modern. The another thought he expressed in the poems is dynamism of life. In both these thoughts the poet is modern. He chooses subjects for his poetry as street objects, very common and ordinary. For example the poet wrote on a ordinary subject like a street dog. Then the poet addresses to a crow in his another poem. Street cleaning is unpleasant very common or ordinary event, but the poet describes this incident beautifully talking about garbage coconut frond and street cleaners in the poem. The poet wrote a poem on baby bather in 'The Ogress', The woman washing the baby, and the boy in ogress emerge as

complete human beings. He wrote poems on very common object like old bicycle tyre and potato peeler.

The long thirty one part 'Breakfast Time at Kala Ghoda', is at the centre of the volume. In this part the focus is on an old lady selling from a jumbo aluminium box 'full of idlis'. It is the street picture of Bombay. When she comes at the place with idlis all people gather there in a moment. She has motherly smile for everyone and she shares her breakfast with locals of Kala Ghoda.

The poet presents here the darker world than the one we saw in Jejuri. It is an unjust embattled world. In Parmeshwari the old lavatory attendant with her contract vision sees the new day for the clever forgery it really is. At Kala Ghoda there is a keen awareness of another world, where Dalits are being force-fed on shit by high-cast Hindus. It's a shameful incident. The poet wants to focus this another world through this poem. It's a horrible incident but its a reality. Then the poet presents a picture of drunks, delinquents, crooks and usual suspects in jail. They are interested more in horseplay, fisticuffs, insider trading and charas pills than in listening biography of Jawaharlal Nehru. It is other symbol of Bombay.

The another important theme of the poems is that the dramatic personae described in the volume are again humble folk. They are very common, ordinary which come across on the street regularly. The dramatic personae in the poems are - the one eyed baby bather, the dog, the crow, the tart, the leper, the blind man, the rat poison man, and the hash seller. Other characters referred in Breakfast time at Kala Ghoda are the laughing Buddha, the old pirate, the shoeshine boy, a scruffy looking stranger.

So Kala Ghoda poems concentrates on the street life of Bombay. While reading the poem his focus is on the ordinary and anonymous. He

present the street scene in Bombay. This approach of poet to the life is modern. Sometimes the poet is realist in present the life and sometimes he is ironical in his description. He tries to show through these poems that still we are not modern.

In respect of language and structure of the poems, we find modernity and anti-poetic trends. His use of language is non-conventional and experimental. His later poetry became narrative allegorical and mythical and Kala Ghoda poems belongs to this group. Here his poetry is a poetry of third voice. Because the poet creates an imaginary dramatic character addressing another dramatic character. In Kala Ghoda poems the poet has created imaginary dramatic characters like - pi-dog, An Old Bicycle Tyre, David Sassoon and Man of the year. The poet looks at the incident through these characters. The poet is neutral in this situation. These characters narrate about themselves. So this narration is very effective and dramatic. For example David Sassoon begins his monologue with a vague worry at to what will happen when the lease of the library expires. He gives a short history of Bombay.

Kala Ghoda poems are mostly written in true verse. Most of the poems have no rhyming scheme, though they make a certain poetic effect on the mind of the reader. Street talk colloquial expressions and conversational tone is the predominant characteristic of Kolatkar's writing in the poems. One of the experiments in the use of language is that in some of his poems does not care about the punctuation marks. Generally he uses three line stanza pattern in the volume. In Breakfast Time at Kala Ghoda 4th part is a poem divided into three line stanza pattern into 13 stanzas. This poem means one long sentence. The thought in the poem continues with the stanza without using punctuation marks or capital letters. The poet has only used commas and there is full stop in the end.

The poet has used skillfully rhetorical questions and sometimes question tags in the poems.

The poet has used various images such as image of clock, a dog, images of food, images of characters, images of birds, animal and other species. These all images are starkly modern and cosmopolitan images. Using all these modern cosmopolitan images the poet has presented an urban street like in Bombay.

Arun Kolatkar had a distinctive style of his own. His style is descriptive, colloquial and chatty, a style which might have developed from his advertising day.

Thus Arun Kolatkar's modernity is obviously a present oriented attitude, a historical, a moral, neutral, stoic and ironic which emphasizes a deep but a historical, a moral engagement with the present. And Kolatkar's this approach to reality is in some sense Indian. Kolatkar's poetry in English is apotheosis of this approach.