

# ***CHAPTER***

# ***3***

## 3. Jejuri

### 3.0 Introduction :-

'Jejuri', a bunch of thirty one poems, is Kolatkar's first volume of poetry and a classic in modern Indian English poetry. Manohar the protagonist makes a trip along with his friend Makarand to Jejuri a place of pilgrimage some thirty miles off Pune, in Maharashtra and Karnataka.

Manohar is a modern educated rational man and he goes to Jejuri, but his analytical mind discovers the place devoid of any religious sanctity. He notices there ugliness, squalor, decay, dilapidation, ignorance, absurdity and materialism. So the real thematic significance of the book consists in the protagonist's sensibility and his rational attitude and reaction not only to the externality of things around him but also to a played out faith and materialistic aspects of Hinduism.

Though 'Jejuri' is a poem about the pilgrimage and God, it is not a religious poem. It offers in an objective style a consideration of contemporary Hinduism, a commentary on spiritual hollowness and a profound statement of what is dead yet alive in Indian society. Arun Kolatkar tries to show that we are still not modern through ironic description in the poem. Kolatkar's modernity is obviously a present oriented attitude, a historical, amoral, neutral and ironic which emphasizes a deep but ahistorical, amoral, engagement with the present. And this approach to reality is in the same sense Indian, Jejuri is an apotheosis of this approach. It, therefore, becomes imperative to study modernity or modern sensibility in the theme particularly in the protagonist's response of course with some special reference to some poems.

### **3.1 Theme:-**

The most important theme is of course, the very existence of life and the variety of forms it has. As rightly pointed out by E.V.Ramkrishnan Kolatkar observes the place in relation to men, animals beliefs and traditions. Jejuri is full of mongrel bitches puppies, calves butterflies, rats, horses, cocks and hens etc. Beside we have the priest , his son and an old beggar woman here it should be made clear that the protagonist visits Jejuri neither as seeker nor as a pilgrim. He is just a tourist interested in sight-seeing and therefore what S.K.Desai says is quite acceptable.

“ In Jejuri we are not aware of a personality but only of a consciousness operating in its peculiar manner upon things ‘seen’ in Jejuri on a particular day from morning till sunset.” (1980:49)

Jejuri obviously exploits an age- old poetic theme of pilgrimage. Manohar is a modern, educated, rational an average educated Indian. He is not attracted towards worship. He observes the place , in relation to men, animals and is interested in insignificant creatures and variety of forms. There are two visitor-observer figures in the poem. Manohar is obviously the protagonist through whose consciousness , the impressions of Jejuri are conveyed to us and Makarand , his companion who is perhaps his alter ego. Thus, throughout the poem all his (protagonist) 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.

For example,

The first poem ‘The Bus’ brings the tourist to Jejuri in the early rainy morning. He looks at his divided face in the spectacle of an old man sitting opposite him in the bus. The poem indicates the theme of search.

The old man with the caste mark – the man of faith and narrator are shown as contrast figures.

The poet has no faith in the ‘pilgrimage’ for he starts with scepticism and disbelief :

“you seem to more continually forward  
towards a destination.”(2001:9)

Even the priest does not have a devoted attitude. He waits for the bus wondering “ will there be a Puranpoli in his plate.” The poet further caricatures the priest’s incantation of holy hymn as

“ the bit of betel nut  
turning over and over on his tongue  
is a mantra” (2001:10)

These lines suggest a comment on the modern day priest who has lost its significance. The priest is after all the lizard ready to eat a pilgrim held between its teeth.

There are three Chaitanya poems. These poems concern the visit of famous Bengali Saint Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to Jejuri. In the first poem Chaitanya addressed the stone god in stone language. The second Chaitanya poem is bitterly sarcastic:

“ he popped a stone  
in his mouth  
and spat out gods” (2001:23).

The last Chaitanya poem written in fanciful style makes it clear that the visit of Chaitanya did not leave any impact on Jejuri. His reformatory spirit could not bring any change in the place:

“ a herd of legends  
on a hill slope  
looked up from its grazing  
when Chaitanya came in light.

the hills remained still  
when Chaitanya  
was passing by  
a cowbell tinkled  
when he disappeared from view  
and the herd of legends  
returned to its grazing.” (2001:49).

‘ A Low Temple’ reveals the gods in the dark.

“ You lend a match box to the priest  
One by one the gods come to light.”(P:H)

They come to light when a matchstick is struck by the attending priest. But the ignorant priest fails not only to throw light on the question of the protagonist or the mysteries of the god but also to distinguish between eight and eighteen arms of the goddess. Disgusted the protagonist comes out in the sun to light a charminar cigarette.

In the poem ‘ the Pattern’ the tortoise and the pattern stand for the traditional form of worship. The children , the younger people like (the protagonist) rational , suptical materialistic do not understand the meaning of worship.

The priest’s son introduces yet another character and this time is the priest’s son who act as a guide to the protagonist. He is also ignorant as the priest himself. The poet asks him whether he believes the story about Khandoba.

“ he doesn’t reply  
but merely looks uncomfortable  
brugs and looks away  
and happens to notice  
a quick wink of movement  
in a scanty patch of scruffy dry grass

burnt down in the sun  
and says  
there's a butterfly there."(2001:26)

Murli in 'A Song for Murli' is a female devotee of Khandoba. But like a temple dancer she too has taken to 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.

"keep your hands off Khandoba's woman  
you old lecher  
let's see the colour of your money first."(2001:35)

Another character a beggar woman is introduced in the poem 'An old woman'. The beggar woman with a cracked face says,

"what else can an old woman do  
On hills as wretched as these."

This old woman acosts all visitors to her domain with offers as help. Though her intention is to get a fifty paise coin she is prepared to do something for it even if it is only to show the tourist the way to the horse-shoe shrine. This poem makes some contact with humanity.

The pilgrim is faced with the problem of worshipping god in 'Makrand'. He would much rather smoke outside than go in shirtless for the worship. His objection is not merely to the taking off of his shirt but to worship itself. There is a tone of impatience at the very idea.

"Not me  
----- you go right ahead  
If that's what you want to do  
Give me the match box  
Before you go  
Will you?"

'The cupboard' in a sarcastic manner shows how the gods are preserved according to their status. We have seen how stone gods are neglected. The bronze gods fare little better. But gold gods because of the precious metal out of which they are made are locked up for safety. The poet demonstrates his satirical ability by focusing on the chance contrastive juxtaposition of the ancient gods and modern newspaper ads.

you can see the golden gods  
beyond the strips  
of stock exchange questions.  
they look out at you  
from behind slashed editorials  
and promises of eternal youth

you can see a hand of gold  
behind onion  
stiff with starch

as one would expect  
there is naturally  
a lock upon the door." (p:44)

'Yeshwant Rao' is one of the more meaningful poems because like An Old Woman it makes some contacts with humanity. The other gods are theatrical or too symmetrical for him. Note the humour, irony and the clever irreverence in the tone when he presents Yeshwantrao.

"Yeshwant Rao  
mass of basalt  
bright as any postbox  
the shape of protoplasm  
or king size lava pie

thrown against the wall  
without an arm , a leg  
or even a single head.”(P:46)

This god has no hand , head , feet and so he happens to understand you a little better. People go to him when they are a maimed. He will be known by reputation , not by the quality of the metal of stone which he is made. That is how Yeshwant Rao happens to be one of the best gods.

The sheer passage of time and the transformation it inevitable brings about is the theme of at least ten poems. Heart of Ruin , ‘ The Doorstep’ , the Door , The Reservoir are the most prominent of them. Heart of Ruin depicts the state of utter dilapidation and neglect the temple of Jejuri has fallen into. The protagonist's general attitude and tone is ironical and irreverent. The last two lines of the poem.

"No more a place of worship this place is nothing less than the house of god."

Sound apparently ambiguous, but perhaps the poet ironically means that the temple which appears to be "no more a place of worship" is actually nothing less than the house of god as it shelters only insects and animals the creatures of god attending more faithfully on him.

The door exemplifies Kolatkar's verbal irony and develops the theme of existence in ruin. The poet's mocking tone in the last two stanzas as worth noticing as he sees 'a pair of shorts left to dry upon the shoulders of the door. Thus the dilapidated condition of the door, perhaps suggests from the narrator's point of view, the decay of religion and religious practices.

While visiting the shrines on the hill at Jejuri the narrator and his companion come across a water reservoir built by the Peshwa. This short poem - only two stanzas of two lines each- tersely records the sight of a



reservoir gone dry. "There isn't a drop of water 'contrasts sharply with 'the great reservoir'. The second stanza with the words nothing except a hundred years of silt, expresses the narrator's attitude. This feeling of narrator is heightened when he sees things gone to seed in Jejuri like the dry water tap, the reservoir, the shop with shabby, dilapidated furniture etc.

On the whole, the poem is a negation of tradition bound Jejuri. What fascinates the narrator is the pure existence of things the " isness of things in nature. " There are three poems in Jejuri which celebrates this aspect of nature. The Butterfly, Ajamil and the Tigers and Between Jejuri and the Railway station. All the three poems reveal a subtle awareness of the Jejuri world and after an oblique comment on it.

The Butterfly describes one of the most common Indian butterflies. What the narrator likes about it is that there is no legend behind it and it has neither future nor past to bind it so. Through its lively movements it celebrates its freedom which the legend ridden hills have not been able to trap. By calling the butterfly just a pinch of yellow the narrator celebrates the butterfly as a living miracle.

Ajamil and the Tigers is a poem in which Arun Kolatkar has modified the original story from Jayadri Mahatmya. So as to suit his propose. In a way it is a legend retold so as to fit the modern reader's taste and perhaps advocates the policy of 'live and let live'. Instead of accepting Ajamil as a great devotee the narrator suggests that like any shepherd with a lot of common sense Ajamil allows the tigers to have their food occasionally and thus gains leisure and peace of mind.

'Between Jejuri and the Railway Station' is a central poem thematically. At the beginning of the poem the narrator is in no man's land as it were, where neither Jejuri nor the world of the railway station dominates his sensibility. What he sees in the Jawar fields is the mating

dance at the cocks and hens - the fertility dance in its most natural state from which all the fertility rituals seems to have originated. This is the most incisive comment on the deadness of the Jejuri world with its god Khandoba the family god - Kulswami of Millions of Maharashtrians who want to enjoy all the blessings available to the Grihasth - householder.

The theme of youth and age is very subtly, dealt within 'An Old Woman, The Priest's son, and ' The Pattern'.

'An Old Woman' is a very beautiful poem, which offers a portrait of an old woman on the hill. It captures very poignantly, the plight of the old and the helpless. The old woman does not have even the protection of the tradition as the priest and Vaghya and Murli have. But the woman wants to retain her dignity by offering to render some service in returns.

The legend of the two demons that Khandoba killed which was starting point of the previous poem. Hills is recounted briefly by the priest's son, a young boy. He accompanies the narrator as a guide, for his school has vacation. The young boy easily move from one domain to other. The boy narrates the legend sincerely. His 'shrugging' (line 9) and looking away (line 12) show that he is disturbed by inability to reconcile the legend and his education.

The Pattern speaks of how a pattern drawn by the old men is wiped away by the bare feet of the children. The stone tortoise and the pattern drawn on it stand for the traditional pattern of worship. The meaning of worship is not understood by the children and soon the meaning will be wiped away.

The most important recurring theme is Time. The entire sequence is framed between sunrise and sunset, the sun appearing in the poem from time to time as a significant central symbol. Even God Khandoba is associated with the sun, Martand, who is the central god among the three

gods who are fused in Khandoba Mallari Martand Bhairava i.e. Siva, Surya, and Bhairava.

In Jejuri we get the enactment of a particular kind of consciousness with reference to a particular place full of legendary associations. The poet accepts these associations as they are. His primary concern is the relationship between his consciousness and its immediate object.

Thus the Jejuri world is God's world - it is a real house of God with its gods, its men, and women, its animals, its insects, its ruins and hills, its buses and trains - all co-existing under the 'sun' who, too, has his own movements and ways of behaviour. The simultaneous existence of various forms of animate and inanimate phenomena along with the existence of man's consciousness is one of the basic themes of Jejuri.

### **3.2 Language :-**

Arun Kolatkar is a major experimentalist with diction, structure and imagery. His poems are striking in themes as well as in style. In his poetry, he uses a variety of styles and a number of poetic devices. His poems are full of startling usages and structural foregrounding. He is experimentalist both in form and vision of reality.

Jejuri poems are mostly written in free verse. His use of language is non-conventional and experimental, colloquial expressions and conversational tone are used by poet in Jejuri. Most of the poems have no stanza pattern and no rhyming scheme as such though they make a certain poetic effect. On the mind of the reader. In some of his poems, there is a stanza division. After reading the whole poem the three line stanza pattern seems to be his favourite pattern. Starting with the three line stanza form the experiments with other verse forms too as the poem progresses. In Jejuri three line stanza poems are more frequent than two or four lines. Such as --- The Bus, The Priests, The Cupboard, The Door,

Manohar , An Old woman, Chaitanya , A song for Murli, Makrand, The Indicator and The Station Dog.

The structure of the three line stanza poem ' Manohar' is prosaic but the use of imagery makes the poem attractive. The third stanza is one prosaic sentence.

For Instance –

He quickly turned away  
when a wide-eyed calf  
looked back at him

The last stanza

It isn't another temple  
he said  
It's just a cowshed. (2001:20)

reveals the irony in the poem this prosaic style.

'Makrand' is a short poem consisting of four stanzas. The formal structure is conventional. The first two stanzas express Makrand's refusal to perform ritual in Jejuri. There is a use of imperative sentence to show the firmness of the narrator. The poem is full of modern colloquial expressions.

Take my shirt off  
and go in there to do Pooja ?  
No thanks  
Give me the match box  
before you go  
will you ! (2001:39)

In the whole poem of 'Jejuri' there is only one poem with a five line stanza. 'A Little Pile of Stones' This poem is a good example of formal structure. There are six stanzas in the poem. Structurally the first four stanzas describe how the newly married girl succeeds in putting up a

pillar and last two stanzas give good wishes to her which is satirical. The formal structure and the content go together beautifully. In the first four stanzas there are instructions for which imperative sentences are used.

find a place  
where the ground  
is not too uneven  
and the wind  
not too strong

Put a stone  
on top of another  
find a third  
to rest on the two  
and so on

choose each one  
with the others in mind  
each one just  
the right size  
the right weight [P: 37]

Thus the structure of Arun Kolatkar's Jejuri poems is very striking , attractive and experimental, which helps the reader in getting into the poem.

One more important aspect of his experimentation is the absence of punctuation marks. He is an experimentalist both in form and the vision of reality. He goes on programming through various kinds of experimental verse. He changed his style from highly imaginistic to anti poetic. One of the experiments in the use of language is that in some of his Jejuri poems, he does not use the punctuation marks are more frequent. Such as

- water supply, Chaitanya, The Pattern, Chaitanya , Hills, The Priest's son, A scratch, A song for a Murli, A Little Pile of stones, The cupboard, Chaitanya and The Railway Station.

what is god  
and what is stone  
the dividing line  
If it exists  
is very thin  
at Jejuri  
and every other stone  
is god or his cousin (2001 : 28)

The noticeable absence of punctuation in this poem causes one line to run on to the next in an unbroken breath, slight pauses being indicated by the space between the stanzas. If the constant are of full stops makes the line jerky the total absence of punctuation brings about a monotone. The crucial line in this verse is "if it exists" suggesting that stone and god are one and god are one and no one looks beyond the stone to understand the real nature of truth.

The poem "Chaitanya" is written in a conversational style and it concerns the visit of the famous Bengali Saint, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu to Jejuri. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu did not like the stone image of god lying neglected-even without flowers. He says

"i'll still bring you flowers  
you, like the flowers of Zendu  
don't you  
i like them too." (2001: 16)

Kolatar's flat, colloquial , sceptical tone complements his focus on particulars. The doorstep is a pillar on its side. A pair of shorts dries on a temple door. The goddess has too many arms. The poem shows reality

as it is, both in its deadening normality and in the divine life. Kolatkar's use of language is non-conventional and experimental. He used conversational tone and colloquial expressions. Jejuri is written throughout in a language that is remarkably chiselled and honed, displaying Kolatkar's commendable capacity for verbal structure.

### 3.2.1 Metaphor :-

Metaphors are beautifully employed in Jejuri poems. Through companion the poet is able to communicate the most complex material, more effectively and more meaningfully to the reader.

Metaphors are aptly employed in the poem 'The Priest.

For example :

" With a quick intake of testicles  
at the touch of the rough cut dew drenched stone  
he turns his head in the sun." (2001:10)

Metaphor is seen again in the same poem. The Priest in 8th stanza.  
and under his lazy lizard stare

it begins to grow  
slowly like a wart upon his nose. ( P : 10 )

The most effective metaphor is seen in -

"A catgrin on its face  
and a live, ready to eat pilgrim  
held between its teeth" (1974:11)

Metaphors in this section relate man's world to that of the animal, Kolatkar here creates the image of predator and prey suggesting thereby the gullibility of superstitious people who are easy victims in a religious organization.

A memorable simile is to be had in the following.

" The sun takes up the priest's head

and pats his cheek

familiarly like the village barber "(2001: 10)

In 'Water Supply' Arun Kolatkar compares the 'pipe' in a brass mouse with a broken neck. Perhaps the key of the tap is missing and it gives an appearance of mouse with a broken neck.

a conduit pipe

runs with the plinth

turns a corner of the house

Stops dead in its track

shoots straight up

keep close to the wall

doubles back

twists around

and comes to an abrupt halt

a brass mouse with a broken neck. ( 2001 : 14)

'The Door' begins in a metaphorical way.

" A prophet half brought down

from the cross

A Dangling martyr" (2001: 15)

The Door is metaphorically compared to Christ and crucifixion. The metaphor shows the decay of religion and religious practices. In the first stage the poet makes use of christian symbolism. These two are more similes in this poem.

A graphic in detail

as a flayed man of muscles who can not find

the way back to an anatomy book. (2001 : 15)

This simile brings out the irreparable decay and damage. The feeling of degeneracy is evoked in another simile.



"and is leaning against  
any old doorway to sober up  
like the local drunk, " (P : 15)

In an old woman a metaphor is used in last stanza.

' And you are reduced  
to so much small change  
in her hand . " (2001: 22 )

The poet uses the metaphor of 'small change'

The poem An old woman is more remarkable for its sweeping rhythm and masterly composition than for its imagery but it is not totally devoid of images.

For instance ,

she won't let you go  
you know how old woman are  
They stick to you like a burr. (P.21)

The comparison here is made between an old irresistible woman and the sticking 'burr'. And the deep hollow eyes of hers are precisely captured in the expression of the bullet holes.

In the last poem, the forth section . The station Master makes use of a fine simile in the lines -

" Finally he nods like a stroke  
between a yes and a no" (2001: 56)

### **3.3.2 Images :-**

The Priest's son is easily one of the most vividly realized of Kolatkar's poems. The images are clear and the language is precise. The images suggest sight and movement in the fleeting moment.

" a quick wink of a movement  
in a scanty patch of scruffy dry grass

burnt brown in the sun. "

This where the butterfly rests. (P : 26)

What provides structure to Jejuri is not only the protagonist Manohar, the seeker- tourist, but also the repeated images which are extended from one poem to the next. The hills of the poem An Old Woman are given a more extended treatment in "Hills' the butterfly of The Priest's son is the focus of attention in the butterfly. The image of the hills and the butterfly come together in a significant way in the following lines.

It's a little yellow butterfly  
it has taken these wretched hills  
under its wings. (P:27)

The poem The Door is full of inconsequential images which are playful and yet they help to create a vivid picture of the ever-unfolding landscape. There is a feeling of time as well as timelessness in the imagery of the door which is compared to a variety of people : - a dangling martyr, a flayed man of muscles, a local drunk.

" A prophet half brought down  
from the cross  
A Dangling Martyr  
A graphic in detail

as a flayed man of muscles who can not find the way back to an anatomy book. " (P: 15)

The first reference to draught appeared in 'Water Supply' . And in The Reservoir the imagery of draught is carried forth. In the reservoir that the Peshvas built there is no water, "Except a hundred years of silt."

The irreligious irreverent attitude of the protagonist which we have been watching throughout the volume continues even in "A kind of cross

" where the poet concentrates on the metal-plated body of the holy bull calf in the temple courtyard. The dominant imagery in the poem is of metallic objects, 'a metal plated body', spikes and hooks, 'brass rump'. In contrast to these are images of animals: - bull calf, tortoise, vultures. The overall impression is of lifelessness.

Hills and temples dance around  
Bull calves & tortoise swim around  
Constellations wheel overhead like vultures  
in one mad carousel. (P: 43)

The succeeding poem 'The Cupboard' contains not merely an incisive irony but also the modernity of imagery.

For example

You see a hand of gold  
behind opinion  
Stiff with starch . (P : 44)

The short poem The 'Pattern' is an exquisite poem in which symbol and imagery suggest what the temple poems fail to say.

a checkerboard pattern  
Some old men must have drawn  
yesterday

with a piece of chalk  
on the back of the twenty foot  
tortoise

smudges under the bare feet  
and gets fainter all the time as  
the children run. (P: 18)

The stone tortoise and the pattern drawn on it stand for the traditional pattern of worship. The meaning of the worship is not understood by present day men (the children) and soon the meaning will be wiped away.

The various images in the volume - e.g. - the sawed off sunbeam, (The Bus) , the conduit pipe and the brass mouse (water supply), a flayed man of muscle out of an anatomy book (The Door), vertebrated rock cut steps (Hills), forks and knives (Ajamil and the Tigers), blood firebrigading down (A kind of cross), the stock exchange quotations, the slashed editorials (The cupboard) bright as any postbox, the shape of protoplasm, seat on the next rocket to heaven (Yeshwant Rao ) and to cap it all, the 'electrical' image of short circuit in the first stanza of The Blue Horse

" The toothless singer  
Opens her mouth  
Shorts the circuits  
in her hay wire throat  
A shower as sparks  
flies off her burnt tongue". (P : 47)

All these images - and perhaps many more are starkly modern and international cosmopolitan images. Though the landscape and setting is Indian, images and theme is universal and modern and international in its modernity of approach and technique.

### **3.2.3 Symbols : -**

Kolatkar has employed few symbols effectively in Jejuri poems. One symbol he used is A cross.

A prophet half brought down  
from the cross

A Dangling Martyr (P: 15)

In these lines the poet used Christian symbolism to point out the hanging of the door on its hinges. The image of the door is unquestionably that of Jesus Christ hanging 'from the cross' and later becoming 'a prophet). This symbolism is against resorted to by the poet in 'A kind of a cross'.

In A kind of a cross, the poet concentrates on metal plated body of the holy bull calf in the temple courtyard. The poem is fine piece of artistry and paints before us a living picture of the calf along with its horn, hump, strong instrument of torture, tail and two cross bars for its resting. The first half of the poem is actually structured around the symbol of 'the cross' and the protagonist images himself swinging round this cross.

'The Butterfly' is actually intended as a contrast to the general chaotic situation obtaining in Jejuri. Though it is fragile and split like a second - what a beautiful use of simple here! As it is full of life, beauty and energy it is taken as a symbol of the Life - Principle. The butterfly is a traditional symbol of life force.

There is no story behind it  
It is split like a second  
It hinges around itself.

It has no future  
It is pinned down to no past  
It's a put on the present.

It's a little yellow butterfly  
It has taken these wretched hills  
under its wings.

Just a pinch of yellow  
it opens before it closes  
and closes before it o  
Where is it (P : 17)

The Butterfly is an important section for it contains in greater detail the poet's concept of Life Force.

The next section Ajamil and the Tiger is a delightful parable that brings our Hindu concepts of good and evil, sin and good deeds in the form of a simple story. It is a narrative about a shepherd named Ajamil and his relations with the tiger king. Ajamil's new sheep dog protects his sheep so well that the tigers are reduced to starvation. In his hour of total victory however Ajamil wisely signs a long term friendship treaty with the tiger king.

" Like all good shepherds he know  
that even tigers have got to eat meat sometime.

A good shepherd sees to it they do." (P : 32)

Thus this poem reveals one more significant aspect of the Life Principle in Nature.

Prof. S.K. Desai thinks that, of all the symbols used by Kolatkar, the sun is a central symbol, in the poem because Khandoba is associated with the sun. Besides the entire sequence is framed between sun-rise and sun-set, and the sun is undeniably associated with glory and power.

The concluding section of Jejuri describes the setting sun, and the sun is an apt symbol of the Life Principle itself. It is the setting sun and not the rising one but the last two lines :-

The setting sun  
Large as a wheel (P: 58)

Clearly suggests that with the turning of the wheel at time, the setting sun is bound in due course, to become the rising sun. So that life goes on.

The three lingas standing for Khandoba, his wife Mhalasa and his second wife Banai, are symbolic of Life and its variety. Again the pattern of the poem emphasizes the simultaneous existence of apparently irreconcilable things like gods and demons, superstition and science, tradition and modernity.

The use of symbolism is found in the first line of 'A Low Temple'

'A low temple keeps its gods in the dark;

'Here gods in the dark' (P : 17)

has a symbolic meaning. Dark gods are symbolic gods of the primitive non-rational people.

### **3.2.4 Myth : -**

Arun Kolatkar skillfully used myths in the poems. Jejuri is a poem about the pilgrimage Jejuri situated about 30 miles from the city of Pune. At Jejuri there is a holy shrine of Khandoba.

Khandoba's career as a deity passed through various stages. Perhaps he was a folk hero, protector of cattle, sheep etc. After his death he had been raised to the status of a protector god. Soon afterwards he was being in the form of a linga. Some people sought his protection and raised him higher in the hierarchy of folk gods. Legendary accounts at Khandoba appeared in Sanskrit which is the language of high or great tradition in India. Soon one legend begot another and there was a sizable corpus of them. Khandoba is said to be a reincarnation of Shiva the destructive aspect of the Indian trinity. Brahma- Vishnu- Shiva. It was he who destroyed the evil demons and protected the stages. There are other stories explaining the presence of his wife Mhalasa, his second wife

(Banai) his horse, dogs etc. Thus Khandoba, Mhalasa and many expressions derived from the legendary accounts his life and deeds have entered Marathi language.

Every thing at Jejuri seems to exist on two levels : the literal or physical level and level of a legend or mythological level.

There is a reference of myth in the poem Hills. For a true devotee of Khandoba with his holistic outlook able to look at the hills as demons transformed into geological forms. But the narrator with his westernized, atomistic outlook can see hills as hills, rocks only. When the priest or guide says that they are really demons transformed by Khandoba - thus a testimony to Khandoba's prowess, the narrator's sensibility rebels. The 'protect' and the confusion are beautifully expressed by the way the pair 'hills', 'demons' is presented. In stanzas 1, 3, 5, 7 we find hills / demons while in stanzas 2, 4, 6 and 8 (only one line ) we find demons/ hills. This arrangement seems to express the doubt, the confusion and the protest.

The poet has used legend or myth in the poem ' The Horseshoe shrine'. The narrator is obviously recounting the account of the horseshoe shrine given by a priest or a guide. The narrator omits 'says the priest'. But it is quite obvious that he can not digest the fantastic legend. The legend says that Khandoba carried Banai from her father's house on a blue horse. The horse, in a big leap, jumped across the hill and hit it so hard that the mark of the horseshoe dug into the side of the hill. The last stanza -

Fleeing from flint

To a home that waited

on the other side of the hill like a hay stack. (P : 19)

In these lines the reference ' To a home..... stack', is to the Banai temple on the other side of the hill. 'Hay stack' could as well be a snide remark alluding to the relationship between Khandoba and Banai, or an



actual reference to the legendary story in which Khandoba met her in a haystack in her father's house.

Another poem 'A scratch ' recording the narrator's bewilderment. The narrator through the use of 'that giant hunk of rock / the size of bedroom'. brings out the preposterous element in the legend .

that giant hunk of rock  
the size of a bedroom  
is Khandoba's wife turned to stone  
the crack that runs across  
is the scar from his broadswords  
he struck her down with  
once in a fit of rage (P: 28)

In this stanza the narrator once again repeats the legend narrated to him by the guide, his sardonic tone suggests his exasperated scorn for the story. And it is a story of a harsh husband in a patriarchal set up.

From Mythical point of view Ajamil and the Tigers is a important poem in the collection. This poem is a modern rendition of a traditional legend.

This section is a narrative named Ajamil and his relations with the tiger king and the tigers. Ajamil's new sheep dog protects his sheep so well that the tigers are reduced to starvation. In despair they complain to their king. In his hour of total victory, however , Ajamil wisely signs a long term friendship treaty with the tiger-king.

"Like all good shepherds he knew  
that even tigers have got to eat some time  
A good shepherd sees to it they do. " (P : 32 )

This entire story appears to be the poet's invention; since there is no mention of Ajamil in any version of the Khandoba legend. The 'Ajamil' here also seems to be intended as a contrast to the well known

Ajamil of the Puranas, a Brahmin sinner, who married a Shudra wife but was redeemed on his death-bed, because with his last breath, he called for his son named 'Narayan' and uttering of this divine name immediately qualified him for entry into heaven. Kolatkar's Ajamil is a shepherd and a wise man, he defeats the tiger-king but sees to it that tigers don't starve for want of sheep to eat. Thus Arun Kolatkar has modified the original story from Jayadri Mahatmya . So as to suit his purpose and preserve Nature's balance. In a way it is a legend retold so as to fit the modern readers taste and perhaps advocates the policy of 'live and let live'.

### 3.3 Style :-

While discussing the style of the poem two important aspects to be discussed are

i) The Mode of Narration -

The ~~Mode~~ Mode of narration is highly experimental. The most significant poems from the point of view of the narrative mode are 'The Pattern, A kind of cross' 'A Little Pile of stones' Ajamil and the Tigers', The Temple Rat, A song for a Murli, ' Yashwantrao ' and 'Between Jejuri and the Railway station.'

The structural experimentation reveals that the narrator has thoroughly absorbed the westernized literary art and art culture. He makes use of the structural and stylistic patterns of the cartoons in the Phantom series, the slapstic comedy of Laurel and Hardy, the gangster war story and of the graphic designs.

For example -

In the poem 'Ajamil and the Tigers' the poet has used American expression and modern colloquialism.

The poem is full of American underworld slang used in the 'hard

hitting' American particularly those given to the tigers and the tiger king are parodies of the gangster speeches in such novels.

The poet has used examples of modern colloquialism.

For examples.

" He cramps our style" - Modern colloquialism.

And this time there will be no hitch. (recent colloquial expression )

The poet has used American expressions in this poem.

For example

" I'm gonna teach'.....,

American expression.

Nice dog you have got there,

(American expression)

'Son of bitch'

an Americanism and also a pun on the word 'bitch' - Ajamil's dog is, indeed, a son of a bitch.

Another significant poem from the point of view of narration is The Temple Rat. The poet's ability to present visually precise cinematic details of the movements of the rat is most impressive. The narrator watches the rat as it slides down the trident. He is not interested in doing Pooja. The movements of the Rat's tail are precisely recorded. In stanza 1 the words 'oozes---- like a thick gob of black blood' is an accurate representation in words of the rat's slow descent down the trident. Justaposition of mighty shoulder / of the warrior god and the rat produces a comic effect again the justaposition of 'rat' and the fierce eyes and the war paint ' produces the comic effect. It is a brilliant example of Kolatkar's ability to present accurate word pictures.

A kind of a cross is again a brilliant example of Kolatkar's virtuoso word-play. It begins with a description of the traditional nandi. The poem then goes on to a very fine, graphic and vivid picture of the crow -

the bagad instrument of self torture. That the narrator should look out at it as 'a kind of across is an indication of his secular mind.

'A song for a Murali' this poem is rendered by the narrator in his own style and tone after a Murali spoke to him. The poem begins with lovely lyrical description. The moon that touches the top of the hill is transformed into Khandoba's horse. It is obvious that the Murali is deftly tempting the person she is talking to.

The poet has used a colloquial expression as –

" Keep your hands off "

'Let's see..... first'

Slang expression is used.

Looking at the mode of narration of these poems, he is highly experimental . He makes use of structural & stylistic patterns.

The general tone of the narration.

The general tone of the poem ranges from irony, satire, aloofness, amusement at the incongruity, compassion, exasperation after the confrontation between his own rationalism and the irrationalism of others. It can be seen in the argument over the eighteen arms or the song for the Murali. The greatest strength of the poem lies in his peculiar-use of largely surrealist visual imagery in the poems like 'The Door', 'Hills', 'A kind of a cross' etc.

Thus Kolatkar's Jejuri expresses the tangible form and content of modern life. According S.C. Harex -- "Jejuri can be read as a modern, slightly ironic version of bhakti poetry, a version especially appropriate to an age in which scientific rationality and religious faith are sceptical of each other. " (1981 : 173 )