CHAPTER – V

CONCLUSION

It is true that Modern Indian English poetry particularly after nineteen sixties has acquired a distinct character of its own. The poetry of our time has proved to be varied, modern and enjoyable. It has discovered its own nature and voice. Indeed, Indian poets in English have discovered their own voices and developed their Indian sensibilities. Arun Balkrishna Kolatkar (1932-2004), a bilingual Mahashtrian poet is one of the most important and influential poets in the post-Independence Indian poetry in English.

Arun Kolatkar's vision is mainly a modernist vision which is an ironic vision. It ridicules the contemporary life and culture. In Kolatkar's poetry we find a very realistic picture of our society, so the themes of 'decadence' and 'disintegration' of modern life are recurring themes in his poetry. But his poetry also shows a deeper influence of Surrealism. This surrealistic concern connects him to modern British poets. The world of his poetry is mainly the world of the poor and the miserable common people as well as urban people.

Arun Kolatkar is influenced by modern Marathi poets like B.S. Mardhekar and P.S. Rege and also the Marathi saint poets like Tukaram, Namdev, Janabai etc. and among the Europeans by Rilke and Eliot. The single strongest influence on him, however, seems to be the famous American poet William Carlos Willaims.

Dilip Chitre and Arun Kolatkar are often compared with each other, since in the first place both are bilingual poets writing in Marathi as well as in English, and in the second place, both show certain common themes and techniques. This is especially so with regard to their

Marathi poetry, for example, both have shown keen interest in translating into English the poetry of Marathi saint poet Tukaram.

Kolatkar's poetry is something of a trendsetter in both the languages. In Marathi, his poetry is the quintessence of the modernist as manifested in the 'Little Magzine Movement' in the 1950s and 60s. His early Marathi poetry was radically experimental and it displayed the influences of the European avant-garde trends like Surrealism, Expressionism and Beat Generation Poetry. These poems are oblique, whimsical and at the same time dark, sinster and exceedingly funny. Some of these characteristics can be observed in *Jejuri* and *Kala Ghoda Poems* in English , but his early Mararthi poetry is far more audacious and takes great amounts of liberties with the language of poetry. However, in his later Marathi poetry, the poetic language is more accessible and less radical compared to his earlier works. His later works *Chirmiri, Bhijki Vahi* and *Droan* are less introvert and less nightmarish.

Kolatkar uses three poetic devices effectively in his poems. These are structural devices , sense devices and sound devices in his poetry. He goes on playing with words and sometimes introduces graphic designs achieved through arrangement of words. Kolatkar avoids punctuation marks and capital letters in many poems to suggest the narrator's felt sense of chaos and lack of interconnectedness. The poet's ability to present visually precise, cinematic details of the movements is impressive, for example, stanza one in the poem 'The Temple Rat ' in *Jejuri* suggests the movements of rat effectively.

In the poem 'The Butterfly ' in *Jejuri* the image of butterfly indicates life and sheer joy of existence, something that can be accepted for what it is without a legend or myth to explain it. In this poem

Kolatkar typographically shows the quick movements of the wings of butterfly in the word "o" (opens)

In another poem 'Between Jejuri and the Railway Station' we see the typographic representation of words "up and down" to suggest the dance of the cocks and hens. Thus, Kolatkar uses the structural devices like contrast, illustration, repetition ; sense devices like simile, metaphor and personification and sound devices like alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhyme/rhythm and assonance in his poetry effectively.

In the past ' image', 'metaphor' , 'symbol' and 'myth' were regarded as decorations or rhetorical ornaments and were studied as detachable parts of the main work. But modern critics regard them as inseparable part of literature. They make the poem meaningful by changing it with metaphoric and mythic thinking. They regard imagery as revelatory of the unconscious. T.S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land' (1922) is based on three old myths. These are the myths of the Holy Grail, Fisher King and King Oedipus and in modern circumstances, ' The Waste Land ' stands for the whole world and grasps its every aspect.

Myth is a favorite term in modern criticism. It covers an implicit area of meaning related to religion, folklore, anthropology, sociology, psychoanalysis and fine arts.

In a wider sense, a myth is a story dealing with originals and destinies of community. It offers explanations for some of the happenings in nature and various rituals in man's life. The images of Second Coming or the Last Judgment in the Christianity are the best examples of myths that express man's moral and spiritual evaluations. Upto eighteenth century, the myth was a mere fiction but since its use by Coleridge in his poetry, it gradually became dominant poetic device.

Kolatkar is a poet of Indian sensibility who has employed several experimental trends in his poetry. One of the most striking experimental

trends is visual images, expert use of myths and legends and surrealistic techniques. All these features are reflected in his poetry.

Decadence of modern life and culture is the main theme of *Jejuri*. The poem also suggests the decay of 'faith'. It gives an ironic description of a place of pilgrimage. The poem shows a tension between the traditional faith and the modern faithlessness. It is a dilemma of many modern Indians. Influenced by the European view, they are more or less secular, while the common people are still religious.

Kolatkar uses myths and legends in *Jejuri* to show the existence of two levels, literal or physical and the mythological level or level of legend. For a true devotee of Khandoba the two levels interpenetrate so that he is able to look at the hills as demons transformed into geological forms and also as hills. His behaviour also seems to express his awareness of the two levels existing simultaneously. However, the narrator with his westernized outlook can see hills as hills only. When the priest or the guide says that they are really demons transformed by Khandoba – thus a testimony to Khandoba's prowess, the narrator's sensibility rebels and denies this legend. Kolatkar also refers the myth about the origin of Vaghya – a servent devotee of Khandoba, then proceeds to 'A Song for Vaghya' and offers real flesh and blood porotrait of Vaghya. He also narrates the myth of Murli in the poem 'In a song for Murli' and then he throws light on the material life of Murli. Though she is married to Khandoba, she does't hesitate to have physical intimacy at the sight of 'Colour of Money'.

Kolatkar uses variety of myths, legends and imagery in his poetry to bring the subconscious into view and play and so their study becomes a good measure to understand his poetry in the proper perspective. Thus, myths, legends and imagery in the poetry of Kolatkar play major role for the poet to express his ideas, thoughts and emotions.

Sometimes Kolatkar invents a legend to give moral. The entire story in the poem, 'Ajamil and Tiger' in **Jejuri** appears to be the poet's invention, since there is no mention of Ajamil in any version of the Khandoba's legends. Kolatkar's Ajamil is a shepherd and a wise man. He defeats the tiger king but sees it that tigers don't starve for want of sheep to eat. He thus presents Nature's balance and underscores the principle of harmony in creation. Through this self-invented legend, Kolatkar gives the message of 'Live and Let live'.

What we get in the poems of Kolatkar is enactment of the particular type of consciousness with reference to a particular type or object or event which is full of mythological and legendary associations. The poet accepts these associations as they are, allows his imagination to be stimulated by them. The myths associated with Jejuri stimulate the mythopoetic power of the poet's mind to such an extent that at the Railway station, the tea-stall boy, the booking clerk and the station – master are looked at through the myth-coloured eye.

In **Jejuri** Kolatkar uses various archetypal and surrealistic images aptly and effectively. Kolatkar's technique of expressing emotional anxieties and juxtaposition of these images lend his poems the aura of mysticism, surrealism and deliberate opaqueness. For instance, Kolatkar offers a striking illustration of surrealistic imagery in the poem "An Old Woman" when the old woman insists to show the horseshoe shrine to the pilgrim in an exchange of a fifty paise coin. Her eyes are like the bullet holes and the poet looks at the sky through the cracks around her eyes. He begins to think of the destruction of ecology.

The poet imagines :

> And the hills crack
> And the temples crack
> And the sky falls (22)

If *Jejuri* is a journey to religious place, where the world is dehumanized and faith is lost, **Sarpa Satra** is a journey towards a mythological past where the human world is obsessed with vengeance, violence and urge for devastation. In **Sarpa Satra** we find Emperor Janmejaya performing the serpent sacrifice to exterminate the race of serpents, because a snake (Takshaka) killed his father. This 'slaughterhouse ritual' from the ' *Mahabharata*' becomes an action replay of wholesale decimations by generations, through the centuries. Intellectuals, artists, sages, statesmen relish the stench of burning flesh as writhing snakes fall into the flames, still clutching at their wives and children.

Kolatkar reinvents the myth of **Sarpa Satra** in a modern context. He tries to find out the traces of chaos and disorder in the contemporary human world. On one level, Jaratkaru, Takshaka and the serpent race represent the oppressed class and Janmejaya, Arjuna and Krishna stand for oppressor's class. The colonizers always looked down the native culture and the native language. On the another level sufferers in **Sarpa Satra** can be visualized as Jews, the Afghanis, the Iraquis, the Vietnamese, the Koreans and several others who proved scapegoats and fell prey to the political ambitions in the last century.

The ritual bath in **Sarpa Satra** is what it is a mere ritual. It only symbolically rids evils that men do. They still persist long after their death. Human greed for wealth and power is virtually limitless, so is the human drive for aggression and revenge. They have resulted in a bloodbath innumerable times in history, still, people have not renounced them. Insatiable human greed and the senseless instinct for violence are historical and still, there is something trans-historical about them. By rewriting the mythological idiom, the poet makes it possible to perceive

the antiquated human myth in present-day terms and thus succeeds in making the antiquated narrative extremely relevant to today's time.

Thus the antiquated myth in *Sarpa Satra* becomes an allegory of human history of terrorism. The recent terror attack on Mumbai on 26/11 testifies the preceding statement.

Kolatkar uses imagery quite appropriately in *Sarpa Satra*, for instance, he uses Nature Imagery while depicting the flaura and fauna of the Khandava forest. Five thousand kinds of butterflies alone, a golden squirrel found nowhere else, a wealth of medicinal plants and people whose language sounded like the burbling of a brook, their songs like twittering of birds become extinct in the burning of the Khandava forest. Here, Kolatkar hints at the ecological imbalance by the appropriate use of Nature Imagery.

Kolatkar makes an apt use of myths and legends in *Kala Ghoda Pomes* to take an oppostional stance against political and social establishments in Indian. For instance, his noncorfirmist approach is seen in the use of myth in the poem 'Pi-dog'.

The pi-dog claims his descent from the dog in 'Mahabharata' who remains with Yudhisthira long after Arjuna, Bhima, Nakul, Sahdev and their wife Draupadi had fallen by the wayside. Yudhisthira, the noble prince refused to get on board of chariot brought by Indra to take him to the heaven unless the dog accompanied him was allowed with him. This mythological story is linked by Kolatkar with Harlan Ellison's 1969, science fiction short story (a new myth) to illustrate the man's devotion to dog. The choice of science fiction is not just for the sake of entertainment. Here, Kolatkar shows the similarity between the ancient Sanskrit literature (mythological literature) and modern day science fiction. In doing so, he exposes the falsity of allegorization and spiritualization of ancient Sanskrit literature.

Kolatkar feels empathy for the downtrodden and the poor who play major role in the well-being of the society. So he refers to the legend of Meerabai to compare her with modern 'Meera' who cleans the street with her broomstick. He finds similarity between the lute of Meerabai of Medieval Age with the broomstick being used by Meera of Modern Age. He says :

> like a Meera before her lord
>
> a Meera
>
> with a broomstick for a lute (32)

Arun Kolatkar has used various animate, inanimate and abstract images like ' the old fisher woman' , ' the hash seller', 'the rat poison man, 'the goon lover' , 'the one-eyed baby bather', 'the bicycle tyre', the crow', the pi-dog', and 'the rubbish' in **Kala Ghoda Poems** . Kolatkar's treatment of these social outcastes or left-outs in their impoverished world is colloquial, unsentimental and of course full of compassion that borders on empathy rather than sympathy. However, even the cursory reading of these poems makes it crystal clear that the poet does not allow his compassion to blunt the edge of his poems.

In the poem 'the boatride' the poet narrates the tourist's journey from and to the Gateway of India. Metaphorically, it may be interpreted in terms of journey of man's life. The image of 'vast sea' stands for life and during his journey man faces hurdles of rough waves and strong wind. Being a graphic artist the poet succeeds in presenting visual images.

The other three poems, 'Irani Restaurant Bombay', 'Three Cup of Tea' and 'The Hag' were originally written by the poet in Marathi and then he himself transcreated them into English.

In the poem 'Irani Restaurant Bombay', the dirty, filthy restaurant is contrasted with picturesque and beautiful bungalow. The poverty of

the loafer is pitted against the high-flowing beauty of his imagination with the effect of visual and tactile imagery.

In the poem 'Three Cups of Tea' the sharply chiselled images of arrogant servant, a lecherous brother–in–law and a rude vagabond are good examples of technical skill of the poet . The poem 'The Hag 'is a pen picture of an old woman who creates an impression that she is a witch. The poet deliberately uses the words showing actions of the woman like 'pawing, 'clawing' 'tearing' etc. and creates kinesthetic as well as onomatopoeic images.

By studying the myths, legends and imagery in the Kolatkar's poetry, we notice that the hard core of his poetry is starkly political, non-conformist and anti- establishment. The architectonic accuracy, beauty of imagery, use of relevant myths and legends and remarkable originally of treatment are important features of his poetry.

Kolatkar does not merely use various myths, legends and images as poetic devices of defamiliarisation for entertaining his readers but he creates complex and multi-layered meanings with its use. He gives richer insights into Indian culture through myths and legends. His technique of defamiliarisation helps his readers to discover some hidden truths.

One hand Kolatkar tries to demystify myths by exposing its hidden facts and on the other hand he attempts to mythicize the common place situation, event or object and gives some message indirectly. His poetry has the quality of defamilarisation possessed by the poetry of two great romantics i.e. William Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge in English literature. Like Wordsworth Kolatkar makes familiar situation unfamiliar by mythicizing it and like Coleridge He makes unfamiliar situation, familiar by demystifying its mythical strangeness with his imaginative power.

Kolatkar's poetry makes his readers conscious of many socio-political problems without giving any direct solution but at the same time compels them to think and ponder over them. His use of variety of myths, legends and imagery stimulate the creative and critical faculties in the minds of his readers also and they become reflective at least for some time. Consequently, Kolatkar's poetry becomes thought-provoking without sacrificing its aesthetic values. It becomes an eye-opener for the world blinded by religious fanaticism, castism, racism etc.

Thus, from the study of myths, legends and imagery in the poetry of Kolatkar, one can predict that poetry of Kolatkar has the power to inspire young generations of budding poets and it can also work like a guiding star for future generations of poets as well as readers.