

CHAPTER - II

SHETTY'S ANIMAL WORLD

In this chapter, I have drawn attention to Shetty's animal world. The poems under scrutiny are from both collections i.e. *A Guarded Space* and *Borrowed Time*. Shetty is appreciated for his animal poems and animal imagery by many critics.

The title term here used by me is included animals, birds, and insects as well. It corresponds to nature. The use of animals in poetry is not a complete new phenomenon. Many writers find an animal world as an apt metaphor for human life, perhaps, because of the fact that man is fundamentally a social animal, then rational or political or cultural etc. Shetty's animal world illuminates in its own brightness. To study his animal poems, I propose to divide them into two groups. The first group consists of the poems that deal with and are related to human world. The poems in the second group are descriptive verse portraits of animals. They reveal Shetty as an accomplished visual artist. I would like to account for his animal imagery that is diffused in many of his non-animal poems. Besides, Shetty is often compared with Ted Hughes, the point which cannot go unattended. I also propose to assess Shetty is a nature poet or not.

I

The poems that fall in the first group are 'Fireflies', 'Bread and Fishes', 'Foreshadows' from *A Guarded Space*, and 'Wounds', 'Game', 'Three Variation-Part I' from *Borrowed Time*. A fine comingling of human world and animal world features in these poems. Animal world is projected either as a reflection of or an extension of human world.

The 'Fireflies' is the very first poem that sets the central preoccupations of the poet in the anthology *A Guarded Space*. Having multilayered significance, the poem is mostly anthologized. The poem compares a child's innocent playworld to adult's harsh world. The game of catching fireflies is used as metaphor for adult life.

The child, along with friends, had gleefully captured little fireflies and 'caged' them. The fireflies are described as 'flashing streamers' and 'wavering lanterns'. They are objects of the child's pleasure. The children feel that they are safe in the 'grass crammed bottle, punctured for air'. They watch them with great curiosity.

However, the arrest from a freer outside world to a crammed inside space suffocates the little unsuspecting creatures. So, instead of blazing like 'burning crystals' or 'tips of emerald embers', they are found,

Soon dimming – the insects, worried
By coarse hands, the walls of glass
Baffling, their tiny wings,
Wilted to lifeless specks.

The children's play symbolises an adult's existence in a world where unknown forces are waiting to trap you at any moment. The fireflies are brought in from open and free space to the closed one. Whereas human beings are brought out from safe and closed school and family spaces to an open hostile outside universe. It is made clear in the last lines. The poet remembers this childhood play and compares his present existence.

But now,
Travelling my daily groove
In the hunt for food and habitat
I remember their trapped blank lights.

The parallelism is acute. The search for 'food and habitat' becomes 'the goal' for both animals and human beings. Ultimately, the whole game of life revolves around survival instincts and each one sooner or later becomes a trapped victim in this search.

In his analysis of this poem, Bruce King writes,

"Shetty's fireflies are the nightingales of disillusioned experience; observed closely they are found disappointing insects that soon die."¹

In my opinion, they represent common man who can not escape from ensnaring forces of life.

The similarity between the human world and the animal world is also subject of the poem 'Bread and Fishes'. Here, however, the closed space is not 'glassbottle' but the well. The poet shows an awareness of killing competition in life, as he did it in 'Fireflies' (hunt for food and habitat). As soon as lumps of bread are thrown into the water, 'Glum-faced fish' snaps the 'sinking prey' and 're-enters fray'.

The poet divides these fishes in the well into three categories – similar to that are found in human beings – the younger, who are taking training and have not yet entered into the competition, the middle-sized, who are real runners and the fat fishes, the settled for whom no competition exists. It is, however, only the middle-sized who compete. Since they hold the capacity to fight and win.

I smile when
I observe it is only the middle-sized ones
That scud towards the crumbs
Subsiding into the rippling sun.

The poet's attitude to life is of that a distant observer. He looks at it with a smile on his face. The analogy to real life becomes explicit in the last stanza,

The younger ones revel
In a little school by themselves
The fat old fish slumber at the side
Like elderly men in armchairs or satisfied businessmen.

The tone is formal. The poet tells harsh reality of life without anguish. The poem is small but meaningful. It is true reflection of the world today. Each stanza of the poem gradually leads to the fact that struggle for existence is inevitable. Shetty does not stop here. He goes on finding different sides of this general truth in diverse situation. He seeks this kind of resemblance in the life of many other animals. The poem 'Game' is one more instance of this kind. The word 'game' itself implies the central idea of the poem.

The poem describes 'diamond-faced' praying mantis in posture of preying. The poet comes across it accidentally. He is foraging the lost ball when he sees it 'motionless double', 'masked against darting tongues'. The game indicates here two types of meaning – the game of prey and the game of baseball (fouls). The poet says,

Ball under my arm, I thought
Of mud-slinging boots,
Fouls, snarls, heads used
Like walls, the tangled
Race towards a goal.

The race of baseball players and the race of preying mantis both are 'the tangled race'. The goal of the sport and the goal of the prey are allied. The path of both goes through chase and fray.

Another important aspect of this poem is finely registered change that is taking place in the poet's mind. After seeing the preying mantis, the circles of thoughts arise in his mind that indicate

his growing awareness of contest – whether it is on open space (a playground) or hidden behind bush. This experience sharpens his mind.

The above mentioned poems are metaphors of human life. Not that all poems in this group are written in the same vein. His poems ‘Foreshadows’, ‘Wounds’ and ‘Three Variations’ part first’ form a variation. In them, the human world is not seen as one having similarities with the animal world, but as a natural extension of the other.

The ‘Foreshadows’ is a single stanza poem that comprises of a full and half sentence. We see in the poem a radically variant picture of a waiting lover in the upper storeyed room. The poet lover is....

Waiting for the shy click of heels
On the stairs.....

During these inactive moments of waiting, the poet – persona uses his hands to create shadow – images of animals on the wall :

Two flat palm part
And a bored crocodile yawns

Wild cats, pensive fawns, giant butterflies appear on the wall as if the whole forest rising from his hands. And when like a shrill of a bird, the door bell rings.

A faint smell of musk enters
as I lope across the wall
My mouth exposes hungry tusks
and hands reach out like paws ...

As the beloved enters, the pinning restlessness of a traditional lover is swept aside by the urgent beastality of a contemporary notion of love which becomes purely an animal act that to be followed. It is suggested by incompleteness of sentence. Yet there is no urgency in this entire ambience. The state of inactiveness is shaded off.

Meenakshi Shivram points,

‘The mood seems to be one boredom and the masterly use of word ‘lope’ (instead of say ‘leap’) emphasises this lethargic energy at work.’²

The animals produced in the poem are extensions of bored human mind– so the adjectives used to describe them – ‘bored’ ‘pensive’– are human. The forest that arises from his hands is cast artistically on the wall of a dimly lit room. The forest, deep and habited by various animals, is projection of a complex human mind – a mind where the animal and the human cannot be severed, where good thoughts, can change into beastly thoughts at any moment so the focus of the poem is on human mind. The part first of ‘Three variations’ is one more projection of human mind–forest where a deeply rooted thought subsists like a centipede ‘gnawing noiseless’. The poet describes,

It is one hundred flecked feet
Dancing in circles
In his head.
It is a whitish thing
Digging the crimson
Mud of his heart.

One may think of it as a dream, however, the poet clearly says, 'it is not a dream'. And it cannot be physically presented, although it exists in the mind.

It is there in the twitching
Of his hand, the tic
At his lip, the limp
Wormy curling of his thumb.

The poet does not disclose the nature of thought. His focus is on its 'existence'. The use of 'it-sentences' clarifies this point. The image of centipede is crucial. The poet attempts to present an abstract matter (thought) in the form of concrete detail (centipede) which is a fairly successful attempt on his part. The poem resembles with Ted Hughes' 'The Thought – Fox'. In Hughes' poem a thought enters the poet's mind as a fox enters a forest and then jumps out of it. It finds expression in the form of poem. Whereas, Shetty's thought remains where it is. If a thought is concretised in this poem, dreams are related to 'a bird' in the poem 'Wounds'. The poem describes a wounded bird (torn wing) that had made the window – sill of the poet's house its home for a year. The poet curiously observed that each night the scattered grains had gone. The effect of this co-living of the poet and the bird is positive, soon the bird became a friend and its murmuring is found rhythmic by the poet.

its dribbling
Descents intruded on my
Avian dreams : birds perched
On my shoulders, birds
Feeding out of my hand, and
Skirring about in a cold.

The bird and its descents housed his mind. They 'generated' creative power in him. However, this harmonious living did not last for long time. Soon, the bird 'fell off the sill', 'drop like a stone' and died of uncertain reason. In effect, 'a livid flash broke through' his mind that uprooted him 'From the tense mooring of sleep'. Immediately his positive dreams turned negative,

I dreamt, then, of lame dogs
Abattoirs, and pulped frogs.

The death of the bird heralded the disappearance of the creative energy and harmony. The poet is left with empty mind, ...

Now several nights, have passed,
And I have no dreams at all.

The poet perhaps wants to suggest the harmonious co-existence between human and non-human being is beneficial to both. It is congenial to creativity.

We notice that his animal poems— 'Fireflies', 'Game' and 'Bread and fish' correspond to external human world while later three poems project human mind. All poems are Shetty's masterpieces.

II

The second group consists of the poems 'Spider', 'Pigeon' from *A Guarded Space* and the poems 'Domestic Creatures', 'Bats', 'Arts', 'The Elephants', 'Migratory' from *Borrowed Time*. In these

poems, Shetty's descriptive power ascends to the top of his art. The poems present a new perspective on these creatures. They are thumbnail drawings of these creatures. Shetty skillfully manages to lift them to unbearably beautiful level of expressiveness. What is particularly remarkable is the humility of the poet's vision.

See for example in the poem 'Spider', how attractively he pictures the spider, 'Head bobbling on delicate legs', while the net is described as 'meticulous architect', an apt metaphor. Threads of the web are 'sticky walls and ceiling', that ensnare the flying insects Spider is 'A regal sphinx'. It waits patiently for its prey entrapped and smothered to death, ...

Before ambling forward
On the clean path
To receive the reward.

With the same pressing vein, he depicts the 'Pigeon'. It is 'a swaddled silhouette in an aloof multitude', that 'tut-tut strut and fret among friends'. Image is lively and auditory. The description of the flock of pigeon continues to follow in the next alliterative line – 'A proud crowd of jerking jewelled neck'. The slow rhythmic lines match the graceful movements of the pigeon.

Many critics, however, do not find these poems appreciative. For Daruwalla, they are nothing but straight-to-earth cinematic visuals. He depreciates, "'Spider' is replete with flat lines 'Never

resorting to direct force or outside help’.” There are also cliches : ‘it reigns / supreme in the center’. ‘Pigeon’ fails because in the first two stanzas the rhyme is very obtrusive, and then disappears unaccountably in the second half of the poem.”³ Whatever he or other critics say, Shetty is undoubtedly a remarkable visual artist. And in my opinion, these poems should be approached for their pictorial quality, not for their technical accomplishment. Shetty’s aim is clear. He is creating pen pictures. He does not conceal the meanings to be discovered by the reader. Yet, to compensate for these weaknesses, he presents them again in the series entitled ‘Domestic creatures’ in a quite improved way. The series reveals Shetty’s aptitude to pin down almost everything into exact words and his fondness for creating a visually lettered world. The section on the spider reads,

Swaddled cosily, he
Settles by the window,
Burping softly;
Eyelids half-closed,
Head sinking
In a fluffy
Embroidered pillow.

The metaphor in the last line is excellent. The pigeon’s soft body is a ‘Fluffy/Embroidered pillow’. In a sentence’s space the picture of pigeon comes before us. The best section in the series is on the spider. This female species of the spider is ‘swollen – headed’. The lines read,

Tenuous threads of her tales
Glitter like rays
From the fingertips of a saint.

The striking comparison between spider and a saint is a kind of metaphysical imagery. In a moment she is still, the other moving.

She weaves on, play along.
Hangs from a hoary strand,
Roll, unrolls: a yoyo,
A jiggling asterisk: a footnote:
Little characters transfixed
In the clutches of her folds.

The briskness of her action is captured in the most matching words, especially image of jiggling asterisk is unequivocal. These are insignificant domestic creatures, once touched by the poet, their delineation becomes more real than reality itself. It provokes the reader to crosscheck the description with reality. The microscopic precision in the description of 'Lizard' instigates me to quote the whole section on her,

Tense, wizened,
Wrinkled neck twisting,
She clears
The air of small
Aberrations
With a snapping tongue,
A long tongue.

Shetty doesnot haste to tap all physical details or activities of the creatures. His art is exclusive. He prefers to be selective

highlighting the central as 'wrinkled neck' and 'snapping tongue' important to clear the air. The third section is on cockroach. It reads,

Open the lid, he tumbles out
Like a family secret;
Scuttles back into darkness;
Reappears
Leaves tell-tale traces:

These lines describe pacy movements of a cockroach. The use of verbs in simple present suggests that this is not description of 'a specific cockroach' but it is applicable to all of them. Shetty is master of simile and metaphor. He describes the cockroache's 'feelers like/miniature periscope', 'Wings flacky as withered / Onion skin'.

His poems on 'Ants', 'Bats', 'The Elephants' or 'Migratory' present a new view on these creatures. The 'Bat' is a poem of two stanza. The novelty of description immediately catches the readers mind. The image of bats as 'hung umbrella' is impressive. Before they fly at night, they are 'shut as catatonic', but as darkness enters,

they swept
Through moon-gilded windows,
Gliding across the walls,
Like giant bowties;

The kinetic imagery in these lines is unequivocal. See how Shetty creates a mirror-image of 'Ants' in the following lines,

Bodies like puffed rice,
Jaws grinding busily,
The swaying swollen head,
Blistering with dreams

This is graphic picture of blistering ants. These 'Infinitesimal frenzies' carry their prey,

They have banded into gangs
Mobbling an upturned insect,
Lifting in flanked procession
The palanquin of flesh.

Animal whether small or big, close or remote, under the telescopic gaze of Shetty become lively and vigorous. Here is the stately picture of marching 'Elephants' once seen by the poet in the street, the memory of the scene is still fresh in his mind,

They undulate down the street
On ponderously mincing feet,
Ears flapping like fronds,
Trunks uncoiling for coins,
Tusks beaming.

The elephants are tamed. The word 'The' specifies them. They carry their ambling majesty into Shetty's solemn lines,

Face to face, their mouths
Are hot viscid caves.
Their beady eyes transfix
Each nervons twitch;

These docile and peace-loving animals create respectful fear in the minds. The fact is registered indirectly by Shetty. The onlookers are

Amazed by their vegetarianism,
Alarmed by their gaping memories.

The feeling of respectful fear is intensified by the syntactically parallel lines of almost same length.

The 'Migratory' is a beautiful poem that juxtaposes the migratory birds and settled birds. The migratory birds are,

Flapping like white flags
They teeter on the trees's
Threshold, crests tinged
Between yellow and black;

The alliteration in the lines moves with the buoyance of the birds. Energetic and active, they camp on the launching pads. They are wary 'of the old-timers' who 'squat/and nudge in rows' and 'weave in garrulous circles'. Their sounds are 'infectious crescendos', while the old-timers' cries, and even colours, are 'gutteral'. He describes,

While the travellers flutter and lift
In electric clouds, dim
Like filaments in the horizon.

Shetty's imagery comes from modern world. The words 'electric' 'filaments' are technical. It shows his modern sensibility.

The second section in the poem 'Four Comic Strips' is a little deviant of this group. It sharply describes a woodpecker. Woodpecker is a common bird. It is often seen in the environs but, as Shetty describes her eyes as 'dripping aureoles' and her beak as 'scintillating scissors' that make it uncommon. The poet describes

her contentful posture after drilling the hole in the trunk of the tree.

She is in fancy, in her self-circled world, as

She dreams she's tunnelled
Through the earth;
Her luminous eye stares
From the end of the world.

This is the first time that Shetty goes beyond visual art and attributes a feeling to the woodpecker. She is proud of her work. The act of drilling a hole is dreamed as an act of tunnelling the earth. The attitude of self-complacency is shown in her nature. The poem is an exercise in anthropomorphism.

Shetty's animals wear the beauty of novelty, for each has a unique individuality and comeliness that do not escape Shetty's discerning eyes—fireflies, lizard, pigeons, spider, cockroach, bats, ants, the praying mantis do make lasting impression.

III

The feature of Shetty's animal images is that they do not occur strictly in animal poems. They are scattered in other poems in the volumes which are not on animals. Their subjects are different. The animal images occur in them so naturally that they become inseparable in their context. In fact, thematic concerns of these poems center on them. For example in a poem like 'Departures', he employs the image of moth, which is as 'pale as woodshaving', 'a pinned

specimen', 'sticking a lonely to one inch of space' for sixteen hours. It is central image in the poem. It contrasts the act of departing from a place and the sticking to it hours together. The poem is about lonely and disorienting bus journey.

In the poem 'Bored' the poet accounts how his mind turns into the devil's workshop when it is bored. The image of mice is fitting. He says,

My mind opens a drain
For white mice to ferret
Around in sewage

Boredom is a common phenomenon of the modern city life. The animal imagery in the 'Morning Tea' is also related to city life. Day in the city begins with morning tea, the image of ants occur naturally in the following lines,

Today I poured out
Another bedraggled
Sea of dead
Ants in tea dregs.

The daily activity of having tea is a routine in city life. The comparison between ants and particles of tea-powder is unexampled. It is humorous and jolting.

Another poem that falls in this category is 'Mirror'. Mirror is mind – clear and truthful. Animals that dirty it are symbols of forces that impair the mind,

A crow flapped and bit
On the summit, a sparrow
Snatched a hanging morsel,
Flies circled dead eyes.

As a result,

The reflection would not dwindle.

The poem 'Neighbourhood' centers on the weariness in human life. The languid activities of 'dog' and 'cow' scantily try to invigorate the dull afternoon in the neighbourhood.

A slumped dog its paws
Cycling slowly in the air,
Jaws grinding wide a yawn,
A cow gazing with baleful eyes

Several examples of this sort can be cited. They show what a great extent his verification is occupied by the animal imagery. They form his major concerns. These images are not mere external ornaments. They originate from the force of the themes in the poems. They are typical of Shetty's ingenuity. His similes and metaphors also originate in animal world e.g. 'You unfold, like starfish / on a beach' (Gifts), 'ribbed carcass of the terminus' (Epitaph), the 'Malaise' is 'soft as maggots', creepers are 'scaleless snakes' that round the trees (Creepers) etc. In a short, Shetty is master of striking simile and metaphor.

IV

It is this fascination with animal imagery that tempts critics to compare Shetty with the 'zoo-laurate' Ted Hughes. Shetty was influenced by Hughes volume *Hawk in the Rain*. Vilas Sarang notices 'the primitive and violent aspect of human existence'⁴ in his animal poems on the line of D.H. Lawrence and Ted Hughes. He also makes a passing comment that they 'shine with an individual luminosity'. While Meenakshi Shivram comments,

"Shetty's animals remain 'object' of description, they are not invested with the ability of independent action. Hughes animals are characterised by their latent 'potent', unleashed power while Shetty's animals are powerless. Nowhere can find in Shettys poems any replication of Hughes Hawk having this absolute control over the human world."⁵

In my opinion, both of these critics have misdirected the criticism. They have simply forgotten that Shetty's animals are 'domestic' creatures – lizard, pigeon, cockroach, spider, ants, or creatures that are easily found in the environs of the household – Bats, Fireflies or Migratory birds. Even the mob of 'the Elephants' is tamed. They are not 'wild' or 'fierce' like 'Hawk' or 'Jagular' because they are not undomesticated. It doesnot mean that they are 'flat' and 'featureless' or mere 'objects' of description. To me, they indicate the process of domestication, necessary to civilization. From this perspective, the small boys attempt to catch the 'Fireflies', can

be looked as an innocent act, although unsuccessful, of domestication, a failed act of providing them protective place.

Hughes animals are 'violent', because they represent the cruelty of nature towards man. Hughes shows 'violence' as an unrestrained natural instinct in animals, that is why though caged, a jagular remains a jagular,

Hurrying enraged
Through prison darkness after the drills of his eyes.
On a short fierce fuse.

Whereas Shetty reveals a propensity for gentleness in them, so, his 'elephants', locked yet calm, as the following lines describes,

We remember them as still,
Gilded silhouettes locked
Away in game sanctuaries,
And standing woodenly
Inlaid with their own ivory.

Violence can never become a crucial link between human world and animal world. Shetty's animal pomes are more truthful, since they indicate general current of human life. Occasionally occuring acts of violence have no place in it. They are not complete truth either about nature or about human life.

V

Ted Hughes is called a nature poet not only for his animal poems but for his poems on nature such as 'Wind', 'October Dawn',

'November', 'Snow Drop' etc. His animal poems and poems on nature reveal his Tennyson like conception of nature. Shetty is animal poet but 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 animals per se."⁶

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. In my opinion, they indicate compassionate aspect of nature. Nature is viewed from one side. The other side of nature as caring and loving her children is not considered. In this section, I would discuss his poems on fog, trees and creepers. Although they are presented not in romantic vein, they are emblematic of his descriptive power. They impressively describe different aspects of nature.

The poem 'Fog' describes the fog and its effect on the mind. The poet and his companion are travelling by bus mountaining 'serpentine road' at dawn. The fog is 'dense white space', a fitting descriptive phrase. The poet notices growing fear on the face of the companion,

Nudged awake, you watch
the writhing veil slither
and roll over the gaping
void below.

The lines present beautiful description of fog that is saturated in the valley. There is a fine blend of the drifting fog, the movement of the bus and pace with which these lines run. The fog is 'cold shroud' that engulfs the town. The companion is frightened by the density of fog, and holds arms of the poet. As the bus comes to safe place, the companion is out of fear,

and you return,
to the old masquerade,
forgetting again that
innocent terror sinking
away in your brain.

The poem is graphic picture of fog, the bus, the road and the companion. The fog is a means that makes the sunk feeling of fear to appear. It is suppressed and primitive feeling. However, the whole ambience created by a bus and head lamps and the fog on the frightening road is much more real than the head-on attempt at the end, to depict his companion's terror. The phrase 'innocent terror' is oxymoron. The poem evokes the beginning of Kolhatkar's *Jejuri*.

The 'creeper' is a taut description of the creepers – a piece of art itself. The creepers tell about themselves in their own word and voice,

We start in brown
elemental dampness.
Our veins take root in
the rich snug womb.

With well-focussed detail, they describe themselves upgoing

Smile
greenly when we
meet : embrace posts,
trees, stainless rails.
Upright, straight, they
do not mind us.

With their sole objective of climbing to the top, they are perfect metaphor for the social creepers who similarly climb up for a place in society.

Sparing
no one we aim
for the sun.

In his review, Shama Futehally appreciates the poem, but also remarks, “it is spoilt because the creepers speak in the first person – the ‘we’ of the poem sounds, like the chorus of a child’s song.”⁷ In my opinion, only with such personification, truthful details can be communicated which is what exactly the creepers do in this poem. The poem reminds Seamus Heaney’s poem the ‘Brook’ in which the brook speaks for itself.

The same device of personification is used in the poem ‘The Banyan Tree’. The poem reminds us of Dilip Chitre’s poem ‘The Felling of the Banyan Tree’. In Chitre’s poem, the banyan tree is symbol of cultural heritage whereas in Shetty’s poem, it is symbol of nature. The tree proudly talks about its solidarity. Its roots are ‘its

feet'. They are its 'prehensile fingers' that strongly hold the earth.

The tree praises its aerial roots,

My faithful trails tap
The same ground, spread
My word, my legacy under
The long arms of my laws.

The alliteration in the words ' legacy', 'long' and 'laws' is important. These words educe the image of a large kingdom. Again the tree announces,

My palms stir outward to bless
All who flourish from me; and so
My crown grows, grows
Beyond the wind's conspiracy.

The tree takes pride in its part that embellish it. Its hugeness and stoutness can not be shaken by the blow of the wind. There is no egoism or vaingloriousness. The tone is proportionate to it image.

Tree appears as a subject in another poem entitled 'Familiarities'. However it doesnot carry the unshakable image of the banyan tree. It is axed, left bare headed, for creating nuisance to the ignoramus protagonist,

It's presence unsettled him :
Branches like tentacles nagged
The window bars, unwrapped a shower
Of insects that nestled under his skin,

The presence of the tree in the courtyard generates many troubles to the protagonist. They are enlisted in straight prosaic lines,

Screened away the sunrise, tossed
Shadows that worried the walls,
The room darkening like a vault.

The whole incident is narrated with mild irony. For the protagonist the tree is good for nothing. He orders that it is to be axed and left bare. He doesnot understand its significance until, he discovers,

Strange homeless birds dripped
On the sill; the fixed summer sun
Scorched the floor, planted sharper shadows

A whole state of mind of the protagonist is beautifully and doggedly recreated in the detailed description of the whole incident. Once the familiarities between the protagonist and the tree are lost, they can not be recovered,

Now as each morning he wills the halved
Boughs to reach out to him,
He remembers the leaves' shifting shades.
The birth of birds and fruit,
Green drapes against the rain.

A protective image of the tree recurs here. It is a nature poem because, in my opinion, it shows Shetty's word on nature and man, harmonious co-existence (as in 'Wounds') is the theme of the poem. The poem reminds us of Gieve Patel's 'On Killing a Tree'.

VI

The resurring motif in Shetty's output are animals. These acquire human countenances in his poems. They symbolise human suffering and joys. However, the keynote in Shetty's poems is positive and assuring. Experience helps people learn and gives them an opportunity to see life with greater profundity and scope. His poems assure us of the process of humanization of the animals. The activities of animals and people are part and parcel of the great movement of nature. His verse reflects concern for the preservation of nature, but also a confidence in its ability to heal itself and recover from damage inflicted by man.

Shetty's poetic style shows the influence of Ted Hughes. As in the poems of Hughes, there is an abundance of similes and metaphors. The use of alliteration and personification is spontaneous. These qualities, however, do not outshine the issues involved in the poems. His true skill is superb organization of the poems. Almost every 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.

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