CHAPTER II
TED HUGHES AND SANKHA GHOSH

The approach to violence in the poetry of Ted Hughes and Sankha Ghosh

Violence lies in the laws of nature – human nature as well as external world of nature. After the comparative study in the poetry of T.S.Eliot and Jibanananda Das, a diachronic comparative reading in the poetry of Ted Hughes (1930-1998) and Sankha Ghosh (b.1932) would show how violence remains one of the cardinal components in the poetry of both the poets. Both the poets are contemporary and started writing immediate after the chaos of the World War-II. Both witnessed and experienced the devilish dance of death and disaster caused by the Great War that virtually demolished the very basis of human civilization and culture. The immensity and vastness of the Great War- its horror and devastation; its fire and ferocity; its wounds and agonies was so profound and powerful that no soul on earth could escape the touch of its flame and fire. As individual human being both Hughes and Ghosh were deeply moved by its cruelty and brutality; its mindless massacre and butchery; its atomic fire and organized mass-murder. Both the poets tend to present their respective cultural ethos as well as universal state of disorder and violence that rocked life on earth, through their respective languages. M.L.Rosenthal, citing three stanzas from ‘View of a Pig’ tries to justify Hughes’s war-obsession:

‘Once I ran at a fair in the noise
To catch a greased piglet
That was faster and nimbler than a cat,
Its squeal was the rending of metal.

Pigs must have hot blood, they feel like ovens.
Their bite is worse than a horse’s –
They chop a half-moon clean out.
They eat cinders, dead cats.

Distinctions and admirations such
As this one was long finished with.
I stared at it a long time. They were going to scald it, Scald it and scour it like a doorstep’

A passage like the one just quoted would have been less likely to appear before the last war. Its bloody-mindedness is a reflex of recent history, the experience of the Blitz, the Bomb, and Auschwitz – an expression of them, a recoiling from them, and an approach to experience by way of their implications. Hughes resembles Sylvia Plath closely in such a passage. His nature is Nazi, not Wordsworthian.”

In the poems of Sankha Ghosh socio-political violence is presented with pungent irony. Although he started writing poems after India’s independence in 1947, his views and visions are never circumscribed by particular time and place. Like Hughes, Ghosh too, is immensely concerned with the world around which is brutal, fierce and destructive without meaning and motive. Hughes’s view of nature and God is dark, sinister, destructive and devilish. Hughes himself comments about the use of violence in his poems:

“…The poem of mine usually cited for violence is the one about the ‘Hawk Roosting’, this drowsy hawk sitting in a wood and talking to itself. That bird is accused of being a fascist… the symbol of some horrible totalitarian genocidal dictator. Actually what I had in mind, was that in this hawk Nature is thinking. Simply Nature. Its not so simple may be because Nature is no longer so simple. I intended some creature like the Jehovah in Job but more feminine. When Christianity kicked the devil out of Job what they actually kicked out was Nature….and Nature became the devil. He does not sound like Isis, mother of the gods, which he is. He sounds like Hitler’s familiar spirit…”

Both Hughes and Ghosh journey from micro to macro and try to explore the dark and deeper recesses of human psyche. Nature to Hughes is not only fierce and violent but

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dark, desolate, obscure and terrifying. The universe becomes a meaningless void, a mass of disintegrated, disjointed, demonic and destructive forces which war against each other. There is no cohesiveness, no decisive meaning, no finality and no conclusion. The nature of Hughes is more violent, shivering, terrifying than that of Tennyson’s nature, ‘Nature, red in tooth and claw’. Both external as well as inner spiritual world of man are chaotic, cruel and horrifying.

Of course, Sankha Ghosh can not be judged by the same characteristics of Hughes poetry. Neither one should try to judge. Like Hughes, Ghosh’s poetry is also psychological and cerebral. Through the mask of irony, metaphors and innovative symbols, Ghosh unfolds external socio-political violence, cultural conflicts, as well as violence within human soul. Hughes shows that nature has neither symmetry nor harmonious uniformity; rather it is an arbitrary demonic force which acts to create less and destroy more. His God is a malevolent god; a dark and sinister force that hangs over the universe and devours and destroys whatever it pleases. In profundity, suggestiveness and comprehensiveness, Hughes surpasses Ghosh. Moreover, in Ghosh’s poetry the world of birds and beasts and numerous mythical creatures do not represent the central idea of violence and energy as it does in Hughes’s poetry.

In spite of such superficial dissimilarities between the two poets, the soul of their poetry bears almost the same message. In respect of theme, form, technique and mode of presentation both differ markedly, but both conveys similar message to the readers. Both the poets started writing under the cloud of the Great War-II. Both experienced the burns of war, its huge destruction and massacre. But still the war rarely enters directly in the poems of both. A few poems of war and violence which Hughes wrote have direct autobiographical link and are related to his father’s participation in the World War-I. Ghosh, on the contrary, was deeply concerned with the socio-political crisis in post-independent India. Another important aspect of the poetry of Ghosh is that his poems are sometimes topical, but very often universal. Hughes, in the like way, is very often objective. He expresses basic laws of Nature and the awful, strange, alien predicament of human existence. Both the poets use uncommon, prosaic words and expressions, particularly, Hughes. Hughes tries to measure the unfathomable depth of the dark and sinister human psyche. His God is the evil and malevolent God. Ghosh has journeyed through the disquiet human psyche and disturbing post-independent post-war era. He is the poet of protest against
oppression and tyranny. He protests against the torture, exploitation and cruelty of man against man. He speaks of hunger and famine; of riot and racism; of atrocities and ferocities of man against man. Ghosh has been writing poems since fifties of the last century. Till now his poems are same refreshing, appealing and popular due to his acute concern for and liabilities to time and the moving events of contemporary history. Again and again, Ghosh expresses his anger and frustration for the violation of human rights, mostly by state and its police force. He denounced any state-sponsored violence, whatever may be the colour of the ruling party. His own statement against the declaration of Emergency on 26th June, 1975 bears testimony to this:

“Does not the throne of Delhi know that the number of protesters will increase day by day? Does not history teach him that power does not last long by creating pressure upon the unwilling?”

This fearless statement against a Draconian law of the govt. depicts the poet’s real character. But Sankha is not only that. Throughout his poems, along with other dominant issues violence, particularly socio-political violence remains a cardinal theme. Thus Ghosh’s imagination and concern embrace the turbulent events of Indian and more particularly Bengal’s history, like the Food Movement in 1966, Indira Gandhi’s declaration of Emergency in 1975, or so many events of human rights violation. One of the eminent Bengali critics Jahar Sen Majumdar aptly upholds the main strain of Ghosh’s poetry by referring to A. C. Bradley’s commentary on great poem:

“If a poem is to be anything like great, it must in one sense, be connected with the present. Whatever it’s “subject” may be it must express something living in the mind from which it comes and the mind to which it goes. Wherever its body is, its soul must be here and now…”

At the time of reading poems of Sankha Ghosh, it is natural to remember this comment of the English critic Bradley. That acute and inevitable contemporaneity in the poems of quite a number of poets of the forties, reaching to fifties when it becomes almost gray – at that hour Sankha Ghosh

emerges with yearning to mix up the heart- quenching failure to the collective consciousness. He learnt that there exists poison and manna in the conflicting human soul."\(^{106}\)

The long era of ‘Cold War’ which started immediate after the World War- II, lasted till the collapse of Soviet Union in 1989. Hughes experienced the ups and downs of European politics, the conflicts and tension among nations, particularly two super powers, U.S.A and former U.S.S.R which undermines the political, social and economic stability of the globe till seventies. After 1970 there was a steady progress in world economy. But the arm race remains a major preoccupation even after the acknowledged certainty that there would be no World War – III. In this regard Richard Barnet’s view seems to be perfectly appropriate:

“The war economy provides comfortable niches for tens of thousands of bureaucrats in and out of military uniform who go to the office every day to build nuclear weapons or to plan nuclear war; millions of workers whose jobs depend on the system of nuclear terrorism; scientists and engineers hired to look for that final ‘technological breakthrough’ that can provide total security; contractors unwilling to provide easy profits; warrior intellectuals who sell threats and bless wars.”\(^{107}\)

Though Hughes himself opines that his vision of violence is universal, not topical; that he is concerned more with the ‘murderousness’ of nature, the power conflicts, ideological clashes and the military supremacy of the world powers over the globe, but violence in Hughes’s poetry comes very often through symbols and images with remote suggestions. Hughes sees and experiences violence in the universal order of nature. And this violence, according to the poet creates huge energy.

Both Ted Hughes and Sankha Ghosh are keenly concerned with the cultural disintegration, moral depravity and psychic disorder and chaos of the last century. To both the poets external universe, the human world and the world within human soul

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are battle-ground, an arena where there is more darkness, death and destruction than light, peace, prosperity and life. They show not the trimmed garden but the dark, dense, gloomy natural forest where fear, ferocity, danger and death reign supreme. Hughes always tried to explore the deep-rooted instinct of man and unfolds the fundamental disintegration and chaos of human psyche. The violence depicted in the early poems of Hughes is too callous, naked and pitiless. The poems unveil the dread and fear underlying the undisturbed surface reality of human mind. In his poems we always come across a dark, gloomy and sinister cloud that hangs over human fate and when it rains, it rains blood only; when it thunders, it burns and kills. Violence in Hughes’s poems reveals the dark cosmic force which is blind, anarchic and destructive. It promises no bright, sunny days for future but annihilation only. Fear and dread is the state; battle and blood is the law; annihilation and extinction is the destiny of Hughes’s poems. He presents the incomprehensible, bizarre existence with the application of superb stylistic innovation, technical brilliance and inventive linguistic usages. He turns up his desired goal of poetic success with the use of unusual symbols and images; myths and history as well as topical references from recent cultural history. The use of such study as shamanism, ectoplasms, para-psychology and exorcism also gave new dimension to his poems. Ghosh’s world, on the contrary is limited. He catches hold of different metaphysical abnormalities and anomalies as well as the cruelty of man upon man. Violence in his poems is an essential element of violence in the universal order of nature. On the other hand, textual and linguistic violence of his poems results from the violence that lies in the laws of nature as well as human nature.

A reading of Ted Hughes’s Hawk in the Rain and Sankha Ghosh’s Dinguli Raatguli

The poems of Ted Hughes and Sankha Ghosh are not homogeneous in pattern; neither the poems can be characterized by a single trait. They bear multifarious meanings and suggestions. Although both the poets are prolific writer and have some fundamental similarities, they also differ from one another in respect of their vision and thematic presentation. Stylistically, both the poets are distinctly different. Yet the basic similarity lies in their acute consciousness of time. Both the poets endeavour to grope in the deep recesses of human psyche to discover the horror and lawlessness of
existence. At the same time, external violence of the world which has been translated into violence in their poetry encompasses time, from primitive to the present. The dissimilarities that exist between them are not qualitative but technical and linguistic. Hughes's is the robust world of birds and animals; his myth-making power; his eccentric use of obscure and unfamiliar phrases and jargon; his grotesque use of rhetoric, particularly symbols and images make him a unique figure in English literature. Hughes may be influenced by such poets as Chaucer, Shakespeare, the English Metaphysical, particularly John Donne and Andrew Marvell, William Blake, D.H. Lawrence, Wilfred Owen, G. M. Hopkins, W.B. Yeats, Dylan Thomas, and the Jacobean dramatists but as a poet, he is unique. Even he is influenced by some minor American poets. Hughes himself specifically comments on that influences:

“I read Lawrence and Thomas at an impressionable age. I also read Hopkins very closely. But there are superficial influences that show and deep influences that may be are not so visible. It’s a mystery how a writer’s imagination is influenced and altered. Up to the age of twenty-five I read no contemporary poetry whatever except Eliot, Thomas and some Auden. Then I read a Penguin of American poets that came out in 1955 and that started me writing. After writing nothing for about six years. The poems that set me off were odds pieces of Shapiro, Lowel, Merwin, Wilber and Crow Ransom. Crow Ransom was one who gave me a model I felt I could use. He helped me get my words into focus.”

He has neither any predecessors nor any followers. His anthropological allegory and impalpable symbolic suggestiveness help to bring home the essence of reality, the truth. It reveals his concern for culture. Ghosh’s poems also show same concern for culture. Both have strange fascination for presenting the world of violence. The only visible difference is in their attitude and mode of presentation. Both are born in the same decade, write poems almost in the same era and published their first anthology in one year’s difference. Both are intellectual, cerebral and anti-romantic. Hughes’s first anthology *The Hawk in the Rain* is brought out in 1957 and Ghosh’s first anthology

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Dinguli Raatguli in 1956. Surprisingly enough, in many poems of this phase both the poets are acutely concerned with the political violence and numerous psycho-social maladies. Hughes shows his genre in the very first anthology. The book is a landmark in the history of English verse. In this book Hughes explored the hitherto unknown possibilities of English verse. In technique, style, semantic and linguistic usage he gave English verse a new dimension and a dazzingly brilliant identity. In many poems of this volume violence is shown as a distinguishing feature of his poetry. The title poem ‘The Hawk in the Rain’ may be cited as strong example. Here the poet speaks of the power and the glory of the hawk; its strength and will power as well its fierceness and ferocity; its steady progress as well as its arbitrariness. The hawk is a majestic bird. It perches upon the topmost branch of the tree. It flies upward, the topmost height of the sky. It’s searching, penetrating eyes, its strong huge wings, its sinews, its strong claws and sharp beak - all are suggestive of its power. Its steadfastness is beyond doubt. The speaker lauds the hawk’s power which

Effortlessly at height hangs his still eye.
His wings hold all creation in a weightless quiet,
Steady as a hallucination in the streaming air.

The speaker is inspired by the bird and strives towards the ‘master-Fulcrum of violence where the hawk hangs still’. The line reminds Tennyson’s famous dictum-like statement in the poem ‘Ulysses’ which declares ‘To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield’. It also enunciates human endeavour and will-power which very often crumbles and fails to turn up to its goal. But the hawk’s will power is unshakable and steady. Amidst all adverse circumstances and foul weather the hawk struggles and never surrenders. Its invincible spirit and its stubborn nature have the desire to conquer and never to yield. Of course, the speaker announces the final fate of the hawk that is the death. But here too, the speaker glorifies the hawk as a tragic hero. He may die, but his majestic nature remains unblemished even in his death.

‘The Jaguar’ is another forceful poem Hughes’s early days. The hawk is the best among the birds of prey. Similarly, the jaguar is one the mightiest carnivorous animals. The poet is all to adore and praise the animal’s controlled energy, its agility and will power. The caged animal even after its imprisonment does not loose its dignity and basic instinct. His movement inside the cage reveals his indomitable and
untamable spirit. Here the beast of prey is compared to some great patriot imprisoned in a dark cell. Its majestic movement is expressed thus ‘a jaguar hurrying enraged/ Through prison darkness after the drills of his eyes. / On a short fierce fuse.’ Through these two poems of birds and beast the poet tries to explore the ferocity of nature. The eater-eaten relationship is one natural phenomenon. The stark, bare, naked truth is rarely unveiled and very often remains suppressed by the sophisticated, false pseudo-culture. Hughes unveils the underlying truth of basic ferocity of nature. Symbolically, both the ‘hawk’ and the ‘jaguar’ belong to the higher strata of power. The poems remind us of the predatory ferocity, rage, blindness and deafness of our own human nature. On the other hand, the Jaguar represents energy, agility and freedom.


“Perhaps it is no surprise that he should write of the first rather than the second world war, and be obsessed by such warfare (bayonet charges, trench fighting) as belong to the pre-hydrogen age…The quality of violence he writes of, however, is sufficiently up-to-date; one can not write off his achievement as mere nostalgia for good old days of meaningful slaughter.”

In the poem Hughes succinctly presents three distinctly different types of grieves; all of which come out from the death of the young soldiers who have died in action. Three grieves are the ‘secretest’ grief of the widow, ‘truest’ grief of the calm grave diggers and ‘mightiest’ public grief at the cenotaph. Here both pity and heroism for the death of the soldiers are expressed with utmost sincerity and heart-felt sorrow. These grieves are caused by brutal, violent action in war that kills young soldiers. The violence in war and death depicted in all the war poems of Hughes bear the absolute truth of the meaningless massacre in the name of heroism, patriotism and courage. Like Wilfred Owen, Hughes echoes the ‘pity of war’; its pain, agony and pathos. He

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presents the bare, stark, naked truth of foolish, meaningless wastages of human lives and human property in action.

In ‘The Casualty’ the violent death of the doomed air force fighter is described in details:

Farmers in the fields, housewives behind steamed windows,
Watch the burning aircraft across the blue sky float,
As if a firefly and a spider fought,
Far above the trees, between the washing hung out.
They wait with interest for the evening news.

(The Casualty, *The Hawk in the Rain*)

The whole nature, along with the human beings who watch the burning aircraft falling from the sky are utterly indifferent to the death of the soldier. The last line of the quoted stanza reveals the futile death of the airman. The onlookers- farmers, housewives who watch the event, watch it with curiosity and keen interest. Their waiting for the evening news shows the death of the airman as a casual event. It is neither glorious nor frivolous but only a casual event and nothing more. At the same time, it shows how human emotion is dried up that even the death of a soldier does not touch the heart of the country men. The birds and the animals are bewildered by the sudden fiery fall from the sky. The corpse of the charred pilot is terribly twisted. The spine of the airman is broken and his heart is like any other man’s heart with complete contentment and absence of any fear or agitation. The horror of the scene is so intense that the onlookers who stood around him became petrified. The description of the body is given thus:

Now that he has
No spine against heaped sheaves they prop him up,
Arrange his limbs in order, open his eyes,
Then stand helpless as ghosts.

(The Casualty, *The Hawk in the Rain*)

‘Bayonet Charge’ is another striking war poem of Hughes which graphically draws the picture of horror and fear of a soldier in the field. Dread of death and fire of guns and cannons and screams of fighting soldiers reveal the picture of terrible
violence in the battle-field. The title itself is suggestive of physical violence in the
field. It penetrates into the soul and psyche of a soldier who is engaged in a mortal
combat. The poet does not superimpose any romantic idealism of war that celebrates
the bravery, patriotism and self-sacrifice of a soldier. He consciously excludes such
false, sham, meaningless idealism which tries to justify martyr’s death in the battle-
field. Rather he shows the fear and terror of the soldier who is stupefied at the dread
and ferocity of the war and for the time being becomes bewildered. After gaining
consciousness his sole concern becomes how to save his life. He thinks neither of the
‘king, honor, human dignity’ nor the false propagation which inspired him to come to
the field. The very first line of the poem set the tone and posture of the soldier’s duty,
urge and action that one feels in the battle-field: ‘Suddenly he awake and was running
– raw’. This urge and feeling of the soldier and his subsequent action is further
consolidated in the concluding few lines which reveal the true nature and not the
nature ‘methodized’. Through this revelation of the truth of war and unfolding the
soul of a soldier in the war, Hughes in one way, depicts violence and ferocity of war
and other way, exposes the false idealism of war propagated by the war-mongers.
Here follows the last few lines:

He plunged past with his bayonet toward the green hedge,
King, honor, human, etcetera
Dropped like luxuries in a yelling alarm
To get out of that blue cracking air
His terror’s touchy dynamite.

(Bayonet Charge, The Hawk in the Rain)

In the poem ‘Six Young Men’ there is a panoramic presentation of the
photograph of six young soldiers who died in action some forty years back. The
pathos of war and death is the central theme of the elegy. The poet does not lament as
in a traditional elegy, but the narrator’s subdued pain and sense of loss is suggested
through contrast between the vigour, vitality and freshness of the six men in the
photograph and their sad, pathetic consequence. Here too, the poet’s oblique message
regarding war and death is conveyed to the readers. Interestingly enough, Hughes
attaches no tinge of glory for the soldier, neither their death has been immortalized.
He maintains ambivalence, the romantic notion of immortality of a soldier’s death and
paradoxically, the faded and worn out photograph that belies the demand for immortality.

Two other poems of the anthology ‘Two Wise Generals’ and ‘The Ancient Heroes and the Bomber Pilot’ deal with topical event of war and death. ‘Two Wise Generals’ deals with James, Lord of Douglas, known as Black Douglas fought for Scottish independence at the side of Robert Bruce, on whose death in 1329, he was entrusted to carry his monarch’s heart on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and bury it there, but was killed fighting the Moors in Spain en route to Palestine in 1330. This historical event is metamorphosed in a fine poetic mould. The suggestion is again meaningless slaughter and death. Of course, Hughes here maintains ambivalence between heroic sacrifice for a noble cause and meaningless bloodshed and violence. The historical reference indicates the continuity of violence from dim and distant past to the contemporary time. ‘The Ancient Heroes and the Bomber Pilot’ also bears same message. Few lines from the poem may be quoted:

With nothing to brag about but the size of their hearts,
Tearing boar-flesh swilling ale,
A fermenting of huge-chested braggarts

Got nowhere by sitting still
To hear some timorous poet enlarge heroisms,
To suffer their veins stifle and swell –

Soon, far easier, imagination all flames,
In the white orbit of a sword,
Their chariot-wheels tumbling the necks of screams,

When archaeologists dig their remainder out –
Bits of bones, rust –
The grandeur of their wars humbles my thought.

(The Ancient Heroes and the Bomber Pilot, The Hawk in the Rain)
The poet depicts the finality, the outcome of war where there is neither anything to glorify nor to give eternal praise to fighting soldiers in the name of heroism, but remains feelings of terrible mortality, ‘bits of bones, rust’.

Sankha Ghosh has no equivalent to The Hawk in the Rain. But his very first anthology bears the stamp of his originality. In Dinguli Raatguli, Ghosh struggles to come out from the Tagorean influence. In theme, form, technique and language he tries to explore the hitherto unexplored possibilities of Bengali verse. As a natural consequence he has to encounter agony, pain, hopelessness of the post-independent India and the numerous social ills and evils as well as the atrocities of the state. Linguistically, Ghosh endeavoured to establish his own poetic expression. Although, no such poems of Ghosh in the first anthology can be found which gives graphic expression of war and its terrific brutality as we find in such poems of Hughes as ‘The Casualty’, ‘Bayonet Charge’, ‘Grief for Dead Soldiers’, ‘Six Young Men’ ‘The Ancient Heroes and the Bomber Pilot’ and two poems of birds and animals, ‘The Hawk in the Rain’ and ‘Jaguar’, his concern for socio-political violence, atrocities of the state, human rights violations and the anarchic universal natural force that tend to disintegrate and destroy the stability, peace, harmony and integrity of all human endeavours, is well expressed in many poems like ‘Kabar’, ‘Shihu Surya’, ‘Yamunabati’, etc. He gives a vivid account of the source and origin of the poem ‘Yamunabati’ in his Kabitar Muhurto. Ghosh writes:

“That was the year of 1951. One morning, opening the news paper, I see the news of Coochbihar, printed in bold letters on the first page; death of an adolescent girl by police firing...How effortless that death of an independent girl of an independent nation by independent police.”

He writes in details the background of the girl’s death; how huge number of hungry people gathered before the government office demanding food; the cordon of police; the patience of the mob and the final desperate move and the firing of the police. The poet shows the inhuman, mindless mechanism of state machinery which is callous, cruel and brutal. The terror and violence sponsored by the state power is clearly an instance of human rights violation. The last few lines of the poem follow thus:

Yamunabati swarasati kaal yamunar biye

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Yamuna tar basar rache barud buke diye
Bisher topor niye.

[Yamunabati, Saraswati’s wedding will be held on tomorrow. She decorates her wedding room with ammunitions, wearing poisonous crown]

(‘Yamunabati’, Dinguli Raatguli [The Days the Nights])

Although the poem has no specific similarity with the above mentioned poems of Hughes, the sad and brutal killing of innocent people, the meaningless and mindless murder of human beings is the theme of both the poets. Both the poets lament over violence and death which is unnecessary, unwanted and uncalled for. There is neither any glory nor any heroism in the death of the bomber pilot. Hughes expresses the pathos and sorrows of the death whereas Ghosh protests against the brutal state machinery that can kill hungry people demanding for food. In Hughes’s poems there is an ambivalence which sometimes glorifies the nobility of human endeavour. Of course, he does not support violence, but as it occurs as a natural event resulting from the interaction of a natural process of nature, Hughes records it as a natural phenomenon.

‘Kabar’ is another poem of Ghosh which is an objective presentation of the violence-ridden physical world as well as the turmoil, agony and pain of the soul of the persona who experiences the bloodshed, butchery, and tyranny of the state power as well as the dictator representing the state power. In the poem Ghosh seems to lament over the wound and agony of the earth, although he has not specified any particular incident whatsoever. Violence-ridden earth is presented thus:

Rakta bhara bibhatsatai bhorechhe tar shirna mati
Rikta sudhu amader ei ga-ta
Tanatana chakshu chhire upche pade sukno kada
Thamlona ar morubalur hanta!
Ye path diye surya gelo chhayapatho tar pichhone
Hariye yai lukie yai mishe

Ghorar khure thintalo buk alojjo- se alor dhara
Dipta daho bharechhe chokh kise.

[Her decayed soil is filled by blood and horror. Only my body is a destitute one. She walks along the desert sand and mud overflows her long torn-off eyes. The milky-way follows the path of the sun and disappears. Her breast is trodden by the hoof of the horse and the sun-ray is without shame. And the bright burnt eyes are filled by something.]

(‘Kabar’, [The Grave] Dinguli Raatguli [The Days the Nights])

Violence of the world is well expressed by the phrase ‘raktabhara bibhatsata’ and ‘ghorar khure thintalo buk’. How earth’s soft soil is quenched by the horrible bloodiness and how the chest of the bright earth is smashed by the hoof of horse is well presented by the poet. Although Ghosh has not specified, ‘Kabar’ resembles the soul of those poems of war and violence by Hughes which too, describes, at least rhetorically, the sufferings of the earth.

‘Shishu Surya’ is another poem of Ghosh which directly criticizes the indifference and callous attitude of the state to its people. Immediate after independence, the country witnessed the huge crisis of food production as well as the distribution of that food through public distribution system. Illegal hoarding, black-marketing, inept governance and corruption of the politicians led the country, particularly West Bengal to hunger and famine. The poet is bewildered by the ordeal of hunger and death through which the motherland passes. The country seems unknown to him and he raises the question:

E kon desh?
Mrityu tar skhalito anchal dhale doith mukhe
Sishu tar janme pai durbal duare hakahar
Khinokai sibirer bajra alingane hutasi janosanghe gurusankhya-
Mrityu tar skhalito anchal dhale doith mukhe
Amar ratri amar din tar katakshe bipanna doith

E kon desh?

[What country is this? Death drops its disarrayed ‘anchal’ (end of saree) on the face of the bride. A child gets wailing at his weak door after birth. A strong embracing of weak camp in despair among people and mentor, death drops its disarrayed ‘anchal’ on the face of the bride. My days and nights are at a stake by his side-glance, the bride. What country is this?]

(‘Shishu Surya’, [The Child Sun] Dinguli Raatguli [The Days the Nights])

The poet is deeply moved by the plight of the baby nation. His acute concern for the poverty-stricken country and its horribly critical condition is well expressed through the poem. The violence-ridden world of Hughes does not find a parallelism in Ghosh’s ‘Shishu Surya’, but the spirit of disquiet, disorder and disintegration resemble the spirit of loss and pain presented in Hughes’s poems of violence.

**Violence in the poems of Ted Hughes’s *Lupercal* and Sankha Ghosh’s *Nihito Patal Chhaya, Tumi To Temon Gouri Nau, Adim Latagulmomoy, Murkho Bodo, Samajik Noy***

The second volume of Hughes is *Lupercal* (1960). It contains many great poems of Hughes which are unique in the history of English literature. In power, suggestiveness, technical brilliance and poetic gift the poems are unparallel. The poems like ‘Esther’s Tomcat’, ‘Hawk Roosting’, ‘To Paint a Water Lily’, ‘View of a Pig’, ‘An Otter’, ‘November’, ‘Thrushes’, ‘Pike’, etc. are supreme example of great literature. They are epitome of power and energy; embodiment of brilliant linguistic usages and poetic craftsmanship. The poems uphold the ‘murderousness’ of nature, its ferocity and blood-thirstiness, with measured depth and accuracy. The bare, naked violence in nature as well as human nature seems almost shocking and unbelievable at its initial encounter. Hughes uses raw, rustic, prosaic, even primitive jargon, tough vocabulary, unconventional idioms and compounds to draw a bloody collage of the

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universal state of existence. His voice is not refreshed, smothered and tuned by any pseudo culture and pseudo humanitarian lesson of the ‘civilized’ world. Hughes speaks of what he sees, hears and feels and not the fantastic, romantic, visionary golden dreams of an invented utopian culture. Hughes speaks of a dark, chaotic, unruly, bizarre, violent universe. That is the reality, the truth.

In comparison with *Lupercal* (1960), some poems of Ghosh’s *Nihito Patalchhaya* (1967), *Tumi To Temon Gouri Nou* (1978), *Adim Latagulmomoy* (1972), and *Murkho Bodo, Samajik Noy* (1974) may be cited for critical discussion. The poems like ‘It’ (brick), ‘Khal’, ‘Munia’, from *Nihito Patalchhaya*; ‘Niswabda’, ‘Apaman’, ‘Aruni Uddalok’, from *Tumi To Temon Gouri Nou*; ‘Yukti’, ‘Slogan’, ‘kolkata’, ‘Dui Bangla’ from *Adim Latagulmomoy* and a host of poems form *Murkho Bodo, Samajik Noy*, like ‘Barmo’, ‘Kuthar’, ‘Pratibha’, ‘Sairini’, ‘Timir Bishaye du Tukro’, etc reflect the murderous spirit of the age. These poems of Ghosh do not directly resemble the poems of Hughes, mentioned above. Stylistically and linguistically, Hughes differs markedly from Ghosh. The mode of presentation in Hughes’s poems is unique and there is no parallel till date, in the whole range of English literature. The profundity of his observation, the vaster range and dimension of his universe, the raw sharpness of his pointed expression, the versatility and diversity of his poetic medium make him a living myth in contemporary literature. Yet like Hughes, Ghosh is equally concerned with the violence of the world, though Ghosh’s treatment of violence is specific and confined. Very often he fails to detach himself from the objective presentation of violence. His world of violence is not dark, anarchic and universal like Hughes, his world-view of violence is rather based on the socio-economic, political, and cultural considerations. In this respect, Ghosh’s observation of violence is time-bound and circumscribed whereas Hughes’ is philosophical, psychological, mythological, anthropological and universal. Another unique aspect of Hughes’s poetry is his is unique thematic presentation of the world of birds, beasts, insects, fishes and the natural world of trees, bushes, hedges, flora and fauna, hills and mountains, rivers and oceans. Yet Ghosh also wrote some poems entitling birds and animals where he tries to show the instinctive force of violence in nature. In this respect some of the poems may be mentioned like ‘Munia’ from *Nihito Patalchhaya*, ‘Indur’ and ‘Mahish’ from *Adim Latagulmomoy* ‘Takshak’ from

‘Esther’s Tomcat’ depicts the dreadful picture of a tomcat springing up and attacking a knight on horseback. It suddenly pounces upon the knight and penetrates its sharp teeth in the knight’s throat. The knight bleeds profusely, fell from the horse and dies. The poem is multi-dimensional in meaning. Through symbols and metaphors Hughes presents the picture of primitive killing instinct of man, from the Biblical era to the World War-II. The title itself is allegorical. The knight of the Biblical era represents any warrior killed in an ambush. The way Hughes depicts this art of violent attack and murder is appalling. The fierceness and ferocity of the sudden ambush and cut-slit art of the tomcat is truly shocking. The tomcat is depicted as a dumb, insensible creature having the strong impulse of killing. It fights an eternal fight, it kills and remains unharmed:

…From the dog’s fury,
From gunshot fired point-blank he brings
His skin whole and whole...

(‘Esther’s Tomcat’, Lupercal)

In many ways ‘Esther’s Tomcat’ resembles Ghosh’s ‘Takshak’. Last few lines of the poem consolidate the spirit of violence:

Tomar kono mithya nei tomar kono satya nei
Kebal dangsan
………………………………………………
Tomar kono bandhu nei tomar kono britti nei
Kebal bandhan
Tomar kono drishti nei tomar kono sruti nei
Kebal satta.

[Your have neither death nor truth except biting….you have neither friend nor profession, only binding. You have neither vision nor hearing, only the essence.]

(‘Takshak’, [Serpent] Baborer Prarthona [Baborer’s Prayer])\textsuperscript{114}

‘Takshak’’s ‘dangsan’ takes after ‘Esther’s Tomcat’’s ‘clawing and bite’. Both the ‘Takshak’ and the ‘Tomcat’ unfold layers of meaning. Their actions symbolize the aggressive, attacking, violent, killing instinct of man. The insensitive and callous actions of both the animals uphold the primitive animal instinct of human beings. Through its title and semantic usages, ‘Esther’s Tomcat’ shows the continuity of violence from Biblical era to contemporary bloody history of man.

The greatest acknowledged poem of violence by Ted Hughes is probably ‘Hawk Roosting’. It is violence incarnation. The poem has vaster philosophical dimension. Hawk symbolizes diverse elemental forces of the universe with their exact colour and form. The action of the Hawk is shown as decisive destiny of destruction and there is no sophistry in his art. The poem is prismatic and radiates colourful lights from innumerable angles. Hughes himself recognizes the bird as Nature and God. Although many of the approving critics are enthusiastic to identify the bird as the symbol of some totalitarian ruler like Hitler, Hughes himself disagrees. He equates the Hawk with the God of ‘Job’. Thus Hughes’s Hawk is the embodiment of both nature and God. Of course, Hughes’s god is a malevolent god - a dark, sinister and destructive force. This god is a tyrant god. The way Hawk unfolds him and proclaims his activities is awful and evokes the feeling of horror and mortification. It perches upon the topmost branch of the tree, sees the earth below with sharp, searching and penetrating eyes. It monitors and rules the earth with its strong feet, sharp claws and beaks. The hawk speaks like a tyrant. Solipsism is his manner, to kill and butcher is his action. He is the messenger of murder and death. He kills and eats the flesh and bones of his prey. He does whatever he likes. The hawk expresses his audacity and pride like a tyrant. He says:

It took the whole of Creation
To produce my foot, my each feather:
Now I hold Creation in my foot

…………………………………
I kill where I please because it is all mine.
…………………………………
My manners are tearing off heads –

The allotment of death
(‗Hawk Roosting‘, Lupercal)

Hughes unveils the picture of a hopeless, loveless, bizarre world of violence, death and destruction. Chaos, anarchy and darkness prevail upon. Ravenous and voracious nature dances upon the earth. Naked truth of nature, human nature and the nature of Providence is nakedly exposed. Hughes’s nature is more bloody and violent than Tennyson’s ‘Nature red in tooth and claw’. When nature speaks through the Hawk and proudly proclaims, ‘I kill where I please’, ‘My manners are tearing off heads’, and that he is the ‘allotment of death’, its bloody, voracious and violent image is immediately evoked. Hughes’s Hawk also symbolizes God. Job’s god in the Bible is the god of hawks:

Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings toward the south?
Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high?
She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock and the strong place.
From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off,
Her young ones also suck up blood: and where the slain are, there is she.

(Job: 39: 26 – 30)

And Hughes’s Hawk speaks almost like Job’s God: ‘I kill where I please because it is all mine’ (‘Hawk Roosting’). Job’s God says: ‘Whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine’ (Job: 41: 11). Hughes’s Hawk also represents any creature that survives on the flesh of other creatures. The eater-eaten relationship is clearly stated by the poet when the Hawk says, ‘For the path of my flight is direct/ Through the bones of the living’. Hawk may also represent any totalitarian genocidal dictator, like Hitler, on earth. It boastfully proclaims ‘I hold creation in my foot’. Hawk may also
represent the killing instinct, possessive impulse, devouring nature and destructive blind rage of human being on earth.

Like ‘Hawk Roosting’ ‘Thrushes’ is another powerful poem on violence. Like hawk they are also birds of prey. The narrator’s keen observations of the murderous birds, their unwavering, quick and sharp attack on the prey are lively and accurately presented through innovative symbols and images. Though like the hawk, the thrushes do not proclaim their power and glory; assert their authority and supremacy; their voracious, killing nature is manifested through their dreadful attack on the prey:

Terrifying are the attent sleek thrushes on the lawn,
More coiled steel than living – a poised
Dark deadly eye, those delicate legs
Triggered to stirrings beyond sense – with a start, a bounce, a stab
No indolent procrastinations and no yawning stares.
No sighs or head – scratchings. Nothing but bounce and stab
And a ravening second.

(‘Thrushes’, Lupercal)

These thrushes possess dark deadly eye and their legs are delicate but prompt and swift to pounce upon a prey and stab it within twinkle of an eye. The fierce and terrifying nature of the voracious birds are exposed through their dreadful violent action. The moment the bird finds a worm or an insect, it pounces upon it and stabs within fractions of second. Then the poet wonders at the quickness of the bird’s action and says:

Is it their single-mind-sized skulls, or a trained
Body, or genius, or nestful of brats
Gives their days this bullet and automatic
Purpose? Mozart’s brain had it and the shark’s mouth
That hungers down the blood-smell even to a leak of its own
Side and devouring of itself: ........................................

(‘Thrushes’, Lupercal)

The comparison of the decisive action of the thrushes with ‘Mozart’s brain’ and ‘shark’s mouth’ is startling and innovative. Hughes shows that violence in the world
of birds and animals is the law of nature. But the ferocity he depicts through this poem surpasses even the limits of our imagination. Mozart’s brain probably suggests the accuracy and beauty of the murderous art of the thrushes. It may also imply the great composer’s whole hearted devotion, commitment, dedication and complete concentration to achieve his purpose. In case of the bird’s murderous art, the thrushes need patience, will-power, concentration and determination to stab the prey. Their existence depends upon the killing of their prey. They survive on the fleshes of their prey. The second comparison with the ‘shark’s mouth’ immediately evokes action of the fierce creature of the oceans. The shark smells the blood of its prey and instantly bounces upon to kill it. Even it bites its own tails at the height of its mad ferocious attack upon its prey, to quench its blood-thirstiness. Through this allegory of thrushes and shark, Hughes suggests the domination and authority of the powerful over the weak and submissive and also the elemental laws of eater-eaten relationship in nature. The use of some words and phrases indicate the murderous art of killing man in the bloody battle-field. This may be the First World War or any war in general. The phrases ‘Dark deadly eye’, ‘Triggered to stirrings beyond sense’, ‘with a start, a bounce, a stab’, ‘bullet and automatic / Purpose?’ ‘blood-smell’, ‘devouring of itself’, suggest violence in war. ‘Dark deadly eye’ is the fearful, pitiless, killing eye of an assassin at war. The word ‘triggered’ suggests gun shot and the word ‘bullet’ also suggests similar means of violence in war. The phrase ‘with a start, a bounce, a stab’ heightens the intensity of violence by prompt and ferocious attack upon enemy in an ambush. The phrase ‘devouring itself’ suggests the ravenous nature of the thrushes as well as other carnivorous creatures that live upon the flesh and bones of other creatures. Hughes simply upholds the naked truth of this natural phenomenon; the murderous instinct of living creatures. All through the poem there is no trace of sentiment, feeling, pity and humanity. The reader is possessed by an overwhelming sense of strife, struggle, clash, killing and death. There is neither grace nor beauty and pleasure. Violence is the ruling roost, be-all and end-all of existence.

Hughes follows the same idea of Lawrentian concept of violence. Like ‘Thrushes’ Hughes’s ‘Mayday on Holderness’ enacts the same episode of predator’s world of violence and death in nature and in the world of animal and man:

What a length of gut is growing and breathing –
This mute eater, biting through the mind’s
Nursery floor, with eel and hyena and vulture,
With creepy-crawly and the root,
With the sea-worm, entering its birthright.

The stars make pietas. The owl announces its sanity.

The crow sleeps glutted and the stoat begins.
There are eye-guarded eggs in the hedgerows,
Hot haynests under the roots in burrows.
Couples at their pursuits are laughing in the lanes.
The North Sea lied soundless. Beneath it
Smoulder the wars: to heart-beats, bomb, bayonet.
‘Mother, mother!’ cries the pierced helmet.

(‘Mayday on Holderness’, Lupercal)

Keith Sagar looks into the soul of the poem and gives a vivid rendering of its essence:

“When Hughes writes of ‘The expressionless gaze of the leopard,/ The coils of
the sleeping anaconda,/ The nightlong frenzy of shrew…’, he is writing not
out of wonder and admiration, but out of horror, a horror he can evoke in a
single line: ‘The crow sleeps gutted and the stoat begins.’ To call this pattern
unredeemable would imply a concept of redemption. To call it mad would
imply a concept of sanity. But here ‘the star makes pietas. The owl announces
its sanity.’ There is nothing outside the pattern from which any other standard
of holiness or sanity could be drawn.”

The madness and horror of meaningless war is awfully presented. The poet suggests
that the eggs, so carefully looked after by the parent birds, are to produce new prey, if
they are not sucked dry before they hatch. The laughing couple gives birth to cannon-
fodder for the next battle. This is all like madness, frenzy.

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Like Hughes, Ghosh does not write so many animal poems. Yet we find a number of poems by Ghosh dealing with birds and animals which may stand in comparison with Hughes’s ‘Thrushes’. ‘Munia’ is a very short poem comprising of five lines. Yet the poem bears immense symbolic suggestions. The very first line of the poem is a striking one:

Munia samasta din bandha chhilo

Khub barotai uthe chupi chupi khancha khule

‘Ude ya’ ‘ude ya’ bole prorochona dite
Amar buker dike tule dilo thang –

Joytsnay mane holo baghinir thaba.

[All day the munia (a small bird) was locked up in its cage. At the crucial hour of twelve, opening the cage, no sooner than the bird was given provocation to fly away than it sprang up its legs toward my breast. In moonlight it seems the paws of a tigress.]

(‘Munia’, Nihito Patalchhaya [The Underneath Shadow])

Through this short magnificent poem, Ghosh unfolds layers of meanings and suggestions. Munia is a very small, beautiful, delicate bird. The poet depicts the bird’s pain and agony at the pitiable plight of its imprisonment. The bird being weak is caged, but does not yield. The moment it gets release, it tries to attack its tormentor by its small claws. But the poet renders the meaning of the poem by comparing this small claw with the paws of a ferocious tiger. The idea of ‘coercion vs. liberation’ is thereby suggested. The poet also upholds the will-power and dignity of the bird. It not only struggles to survive and becomes free but also revolts and makes a counter attack. The indomitable spirit of the bird, its rage and anger, its violent attack on its oppressor at

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the moment of its release are akin to the thrushes of Hughes. In a covert way, the bird also reminds Hughes’ ‘Jaguar’ in its state of imprisonment. Though the ruthlessness and cruelty of the thrushes Hughes shows do not have any parallel in the whole range of European literature as well as Indian literature, yet the intrinsic similarity of spirit between the poems of Ghosh and Hughes are astonishing. Hughes shows the root of murderous primitive instinct in living creatures with utmost economy and precision whereas Ghosh shows the superstructure of violence in both animal and human world.

Like ‘Thrushes’ ‘Munia’ also represents the eternal idea of struggles for existence and the inevitable violence underlying this struggle. Another powerful poem of Ghosh is ‘Charaiti Kibhabe Morechhilo’ (How the Sparrow Died). Though the poem does not belong to the above-mentioned anthologies, it may be discussed here because of the similarity of spirit with the poems of Hughes discussed here. The poem is an allegory of struggle for freedom from any type of domination, subordination or imprisonment. Sparrow is a symbol of innocence and simple pleasure of life. Here the poem is written in first person and the sparrow itself is the narrator who dramatically presents the whole tragic story of his imprisonment, his desperate struggle for freedom and failure and his sad death. The last four lines of the poem touch the heart of the readers:

Pubpaschim opornich dealkathe thukte thukte
Furie ase nishawaser rekha
Kather ekta putul hoye ulte gelam sadar kone
Daraja khule dekhuk other thanda mathar khun.

[The breathing comes to an end after repeated stroke on wooden wall - east-west and up-down. I was turned upside down like a wooden doll. Let the murderers open the door and look at their cold-blooded murder.]

(‘Charaiti kibhabe Morechhilo’, [How the Parrot had Died] Mukh Dheke Yai Bigyapone [The Face Covers by Billboard])

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The last line of the poem clearly indicates the savagery, brutality and violence that underlie the surface of human psyche and the sophisticated pseudo-civilization. The sparrow bears multi-dimensional meanings. It may be a symbol for victim in the hand of a tyrant ruler. Or it may be any man striving for liberty and freedom. The sparrow may also symbolize the soul of man that is captivated and caged in the dark prison-house of hedonism and sensuality. This may also symbolize intellectual imprisonment of the artist. In any case the sparrow suffers and dies. Of course, here the sparrow is the victim of violence. In ‘Munia’ the bird plays paradoxical role of a victim and avenger. But the sparrow is the opposite of the hawk and the thrushes of Hughes. But the basic idea presented by Hughes and Ghosh is almost same, that is, violence as ruling roost.

Two other representative poems in the volume Lupercal are ‘Pike’ and ‘An Otter’. They represent power, authority, energy and action. To discuss the magnificence of the poems, along with ‘November’ and ‘Lupercalia’ M. L. Rosenthal comments:

“In such magnificent poems as ‘An Otter’ and ‘Pike’ – poems that with ‘November’ and possibly the mysterious poem ‘Lupercalia’ approach the full articulation of great art – it is sheer bitter endurance and the devouring ferocity lurking in every depth and crevice of life that obsess him.”

An otter is an amphibious and a primitive creature. Hughes describes in details the features and nature of the otter. In the second section of the poem the readers visualize a bloody picture of the struggle for existence where the otter is shown both as prey and a predator. Man’s hunt for the otter with parsley and his hound and the otter’s strategy to save his life is depicted as vividly as in National Geography channel:

The hunt’s lost him. Pads on mud,
Among sedges, nostrils a surface bead,
The otter remains, hours. The air,
Circling the globe, tainted and necessary,
Mingling tobacco-smoke, hounds and parsley,

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Comes carefully to the sunk lungs.

(‘An Otter’, *Lupercal*)

The otter lies under water to save him from the hunter. Under water he lives on the flesh of other creatures of water, particularly fishes. His predatory nature under water is presented thus:

Blood is the belly of logic; he will lick
The fishbone bare. And can take stolen hold

On a bitch water in a field full
Of nervous horses, but linger nowhere.

(‘An Otter’, *Lupercal*)

The otter kills fishes, eats up their blood, bones and fleshes to mitigate his hunger and to survive. Hughes shows this double nature of creatures – both a prey and a predator. Keith Sagar explores the allegory underlying the poem thus:

“The otter is the opposite of the hawk who rules his element imperiously, the kingdom of daylight. The otter is also a predator, giving short shrift to the trout, but, since man arrived on the scene with his trained dogs, is also prey, dual again in this.

No analogues are offered. But the otter, crying without answer for his long paradise, is surely, in part, an image of the duality of man, neither body nor spirit, neither beast nor angel, yearning for his Eden home where death was not.”

‘Pike’ is another great animal poem of violence by Hughes. The poet through a number of anecdotes, descriptions, narrations and impressions builds up a uniquely integrated poem with perfectly wholesome artistic effect. The description of the pike evokes the feeling of horror and fear:

killers from the egg: the malevolent aged grin’

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Or move, stunned by their own grandeur,
Over a bed of emerald, siboutte
Of submarine delicacy and horror.’

The jaws’ hooked clamp and fangs
Not to be changed at this date
A life subdued to its instrument;
The gills kneading quietly, and the pectorals.

(‘Pike’, Lupercal)

The ruthlessness and horror of a pike is graphically presented by its physical feature and nature. ‘Killers from the egg’ suggests pike’s primitive killing instinct. The ‘malevolent aged grin’ suggests the primitive creature’s murderous and vicious nature. ‘The jaws’ hooked clamp and fangs’ indicates voracious and blood-thirsty nature of the pike. The narrator’s consummate skill in presenting the anecdote of three pikes in a glass jar is interesting. The experiment is conducted with minute observation and accuracy. The outcome is horrific and awesome. It shows how weak and small fish is killed and eaten by the strong two in the first day of the experiment and then the strongest pike kills and eats up the second one. This may be the struggle for existence and survival of the fittest where the strong one kills the weak. The bare naked truth of ferocity, ruthlessness and cruelty in the world of animal is so tellingly depicted by the poet that the readers are possessed by fear and dread. The poet ramifies the theme of the poem from ‘pike’ to all other living creatures on earth. Through symbols, metaphors and allegory the poet shows the panoramic view of violence existing in all living creatures. The pike fishes are so destructive in their nature that they even kill and eat each other to mitigate their hunger and rage: ‘And indeed they spare nobody.’ From hunger, blood, brutality and murder, in the last four stanzas the poem runs through chaos and universal darkness.

‘Indur’ (Mouse) is an interesting animal poem by Ghosh. Through symbols and metaphors Ghosh heightens the ugliness, ferocity and horror of life. The poem is very short in length, but in profundity of thought and suggestiveness, it attains the stature of a great poem. Rat is an ugly, awful, cruel, capricious, destructive creature. It
destroys corn and eats up the health of vegetation. It is also supposed to be clever and deceptive creature. ‘Rat’ symbolizes destructive, dirty, deceptive human nature. The speaker is possessed by an overwhelming sense of hatred and violence when he speaks thus:

Bodo ghrina kone kone, ghar bore giyechhe indure
Pranam chatur dant
Kintu ato jala kano mukhe?

[The home is infested by rats, hatred piled up in its dark corner. Respectful clever teeth but why so much pain in the face?]

(‘Indur’ [The Rats], Adim Latagulmomoy [Ancient Vines and Trees])

‘Ghar’ may symbolize human body and ‘indur’ may symbolize destructive dirty, deceptive, murderous human nature. Three words ‘pranam chatur dant’ forming a compound, unveils the killing instinct underlying human psyche. This ‘rat’ of Ghosh closely takes after Hughes’s ‘pig’, ‘pike’ and ‘thrushes’.

A reading of Ted Hughes’s Wodwo and Sankha Ghosh’s Murkho Bodo, Samajik Noy and Boborer Prarthona

Apart from symbolic and metaphorical presentation of universal violence, Ghosh was highly susceptive to the contemporary socio-political violence, economic crisis, and cultural clashes that made great upheaval in national and international politics. In fact, the inter-war and post World War-II international political perspective not only influenced but greatly regulated and directed the national, socio-political and economic scenario. It would be no exaggeration to say that the national political movement is a derivative part of the global political perspective. Different ideologies that grew up and the national movements based on those ideologies are directly drawn from Western political theories and movements. Both the democratic movement for independence and the armed struggles are product of western liberal

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democratic ideologies. The communist movement that sufficiently influences the mainstream national politics of the post-independent as well as independent India is also originated in Europe. The ideas and events of Europe and America are closely connected to the currents and cross-currents of national politics since the foundation of Indian National Congress in 1885. In 1917 Soviet Union came into existence and there was craze for communism in whole Eastern Europe. The wave of communism came to India also. In 1925 C.P.I is established. In the mean time Europe experienced the awesome blood-bath in the World War – I (1914-1918). Just after two decades the World War-II starts. These two consecutive world wars completely shattered the faith and value of human society and break the backbone of world economy. Amidst turmoil and chaos of the inter-war period the autocratic and fascist force emerge out to seize state power in many European countries. In 1933 Hitler became the god of Germany. In 1935-36 Italy captured Abyssinia and after few days General Franco captured Spain and Japan attacked China. The World War – II ends with the dropping of Atom Bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 that completely shatter both the cities to dust and exterminate all living creatures. The ruthless riot of 1946, partition of India in 1947 and the assassination of M. K. Gandhi in 30th January of 1948 demolish the dreams and expectation of millions of Indians. Post-independent India began to weave new dreams but shortly that dreams turn into nightmare. Sixties saw the turmoil and instability in all aspects of national life. In1964 C. P. I. is divided into two over the issue of Indo-Sino war (1962) and the new party C.P.I (M) emerged out. The time is torn by economic bankruptcy, unemployment, food movement, and violent Naxalite movement against the exploitation, tyranny and oppression of the state. Police atrocity became the order of the seventies. It saw the massive war with Pakistan and at the same time saw the birth of democratic Bangladesh in 1971. Six years before, Indo-Pak war over Kashmir took thousands of human lives and destroyed human property of crores of rupees. Indira Gandhi’s declaration of national emergency in 1975 marks the momet of the greatest political unrest in post-independent India which threatens democratic dreams of millions of Indians. The imposition of dictatorship is marked as a blemish in the history of democracy in India. In Bengal the emergency period took a nasty turn under the then chief minister Siddharta Shankar Roy. To suppress naxalite movement police took in all measures of brutality and oppression. The charge is leveled against Mr. Roy that many genocides
took place at his command. The time is marked by political violence and unrest, social instability and cultural crisis.

Sankha Ghosh voiced forth this political violence, cultural crisis, social instability and erosion of values in many of his verses. Many poems of his Murkho Bodo, Samajik Noy (1974) and Baborer Prarthona (1976) reflect the violent time. Such poems as ‘Barma’, ‘Pratibha’, ‘Joyotsab’, ‘Timir Bishaye Thu-tukro’, ‘Murkho Bodo, Samajik Noy’ from Murkho Bodo Samajik Noy and ‘Dhongso Koro Dhaja’, ‘Sada Falak’, ‘Babarer Prarthana’, ‘Indra Dharechhe Kulish’, ‘Haspatale Bolir Bajna’, ‘Sasti’, ‘Bhikhiri Chheler Abhiman’, ‘Kaljamuna’, ‘Radhachura’, ‘Apatata Santikalyan’, etc. from Baborer Prarthona sing the song of disenchanted seventies of Bengal and hopelessness of millions of Indians. ‘Barma’ is the poet’s pathetic lamentation for the awesome insecurity and helplessness of the lawless, anarchic time. When the poet exclaims, ‘Eto yadi buho chakro teer tirandaj, tabe keno/ Sharer diyochho shudhu barmakhani bhule gehcho dite!’, it reminds us of Gloucester’s famous protestation in Shakespeare’s King Lear, ‘As flies to wanton boys, are we to th’ gods/ They kill us for their sport.’ 121 This is a universal state of the bizarre, chaotic, lawless, disordered, disjointed time of the universe which Shakespeare tried to uphold. The same in a different way is done by another 20th century famous bard, W. B. Yeats. In his ‘The Second Coming’ Yeats proclaimed:

    Things fall apart, the centre can not hold
    Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.
    The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
    The ceremony of innocence is drowned; 122

‘Pratibha’ is a short poem of Ghosh which effectively and accurately translates violence of the world into violence in poetry. The poem is one of the most forceful expressions of the disjointed, violent years of seventies:

    Krome ene debo toke sfito mundo, snaiuheen dhad
    Thabai lukono bohu baghnokh, lomosh kakuti


Cold dead bodies, cut-off head, hungry beasts of prey with powerful paws and sharp pointed claws are suggestive of dark days of violence of the naxalite movement of seventies. The image of the tiger with its crafty, greedy, fiery, killing eyes evokes the picture of brutal police atrocities against those naxal youths fighting for ideals who dreamed of bringing about new days. The most powerful topical poem on violence of the seventies is probably ‘Timir Bishaye Du-tukro’. The poem vividly presents the picture of a dreadful foggy night of darkness where the narrator discovered the blood-smeared cut-off head of Timir Baran Shingh. The narrator is stupefied at the horror and shock of the spectacle. The poem runs thus:

Maidan vari hoye name kuashai  
Diganter dike miliye yai rutmarch  
Tar majhkhane pathe pode achhe o ki krishnachuda?  
Nichu hoye bose hate tule nie  
Tomar chhinna shir, Timir.

[Deep frost comes down upon the field. The sound of routemarch vanishes toward the firmament. Amid that what is fallen in the street, Krishnachura? Bending down I pick up your cut off head, Timir.]

(‘Timir Bishaye Du-Tukro’, [A Few Words on Timir] Murkho Bodo, Samajik Noy [The Fool, not Social])

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The term ‘rutmarch’ clearly evokes the picture of a state of emergency where state seizes all civil rights of her people by imposing military rule. The poem presents the violence-ridden seventies and it expresses Ghosh’s concern for the democratic rights of people. Many talented youths like Timir fall prey to the state-sponsored police atrocities. In the name of law and order police force took in violent means of mass-murder, secret murder, and all sorts inhuman torture inside police lock up. Ghosh invokes the memory of the heroic death of Timir again in ‘Indra Dhorechhe Kulish’in Baborer Prarthona. In the mean time, general election of 1972 was held and many idealistic revolutionary naxal comrades died. Some remained behind the bar and some gave in. But the memory of Timir remained vivid in the poet’s mind. Here too, he celebrates the idealism, bravery and self-sacrifice of Timir and other revolutionary leaders for a noble cause. The poet expresses his helplessness, anger and nausea at the meaningless wastages of human life. A few lines from the poem run thus:

Indra dharechhe kulish

Churmar fete yai megh, dash bhage das tan bidyut
Tarpar sab chup

Ei tomar mukh, Timir
Kintu tarpar sab chup

[Indra has grasped his thunderbolt and cloud bursts into pieces. The fire bursts into ten directions. This is your face Timir but all calm after that all quiet.]

(‘Indra Dhorechhe Kulish’, [Indra has caught the Thunderbolt] Baborer Prarthona [Babur’s Prayer])

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The poet vehemently attacks the emergency of 1975, declared by Indira Gandhi, in his two poems ‘Apatata Santikalyan’ and ‘Radhachura’. Ghosh sarcastically directs his contemptuous criticism against the autocratic oppression and barbarism of the then military regime led by Mrs. Gandhi. After the emergency is declared all civil rights and liberty of the common people were seized. Lawlessness became the law and suppression of people’s voice through oppression became the order of the days. The poet ridicules the ruler’s foolishness and obstinate audacity to ignore people’s voices. He also cautioned the government that one day their ruthless oppression would unite the oppressed masses and led to violent counter attack. Of course, the poet does all these by means of symbols and metaphors. In ‘Radhachura’ the poet satirizes state-sponsored terrorism and violence:

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Khub yodi bere othe
Dau chhente dau sab matha
Kichhute koro na sima chhara
Theke yabe thik thanda chup –
Gharer o dibyi sova hobe
Lokeo bolbe radhachura.
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[If grows too high cut off the head. Don’t cross the limit, he would remain silent. The rooms would be decorated and people would say radhachura.]

(‘Radhachura’, Baborer Prarthona [Babur’s Prayer])

The same message is conveyed through Ghosh’s ‘Apatata Santikalyan’. Here too, he criticizes the insensitivity and cruelty of blind demonic state power which very often makes false promise of peace and prosperity. But their very action and attitude to the common people belie their promises. The crafty dictator through the means of lie and false propaganda always tries to establish the idea that he is the messiah of the people and always ready to serve them for the welfare of the country. But the truth is that the ruler always undertakes violent means of brutal physical force to dominate common

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people. He does never speak of what he practices and always speaks of what he never
practices. People suffer from fears and threats and are compelled to oblige by the
ruler’s whims and desires. In such a state violence is sure to erupt as there must be an
inevitable clash between this coercion and people’s desire of liberation. The poet
presents an exact state of the State during military rule:

Peter kachhe unchie achho chhuri
Kajei ekhon sadhinmoto ghuri
  Ekhon sabi santo, sabi bhalo.
Taral agun bhare pakasthali
Ye kathata balate chau boli
  Satya ebar hoyechhe jamkalo.:  

[You have placed the knife across my abdomen. Now I move freely. Now everything
is calm and quiet. Fiery liquid fills the stomach. I speak what you want to speak that
truth becomes gorgeous.]

(‘Apatata Santikalyan’, [For the time being Peace and Utility] Baborer Prarthona
[Babur’s Prayer])127

‘Haspatale Bolir Bajna’ is the pen picture of a sad, heart-rending final moment
of a dying woman whose son was absconding. The very term ‘ferar’ (absconding)
reinforces the suffocating, awful atmosphere of police atrocities during the violent
days of the seventies. Much heinous carnage took place in different parts of Bengal
like Baranagar, Beleghata, Shyampukur, Belghoria, Berhampore, Krishnagar, etc.
Many young revolutionary naxals, most of them were talented students, became
victim of their golden dreams. They died for a noble cause and the poet sympathizes
with the nobility of their soul, their self-sacrifice for an ideal. The poems ‘Sasti’ and
‘Bhikhiri Chheler Aviman’ also suggest the fearful state of coercion and a desire for
liberation from the bondage of an autocratic rule. The poem ‘Sasti’ shows the nature
of violence during President’s rule in West Bengal. How innocent people were

127 Sankha Ghosher Kabitasangraha (Vol.1), [Collected Poems of Sankha Ghosh]. Kolkata:
arrested, tortured and kept behind the bar for no illegal or anti-state activity but for speaking in ‘low voice’ is exemplified below:

Nichu galai katha balar aparadhe tar
Jabajibhan
Karadanda holo

Hamle porlo tar opor tinte valuk
Thik valuk noy, prahari
Thik prohorio noy, satyi bolte dandomunder karta

[He is sentenced to life-time imprisonment for speaking in low voice. Three bears pounced upon him, not exactly bears, guards; not exactly guards, to speak the truth the masters of all.]

(‘Shasti’, [Punishment] Baborer Prarthona [Babur’s Prayer])

How state behaves like a mindless, mechanical instrument of torture for her own people is exemplified through the above lines of the verse. The poet nakedly depicts the horrible picture of lawlessness and anarchy of the seventies when nobody was safe and secure and any body could be arrested without any offence or cause whatsoever. It is interesting to note how the poet compares the guard (‘prahori’) to ferocious bear (‘valuk’) that pounces upon its prey. Thus protector becomes murderer. The poem ‘Marching Song’ is a restrained, yet pungent criticism of state-sponsored terrorism. He upholds the truth that no protest is possible against the tyrant ruler. State tortures her people like a lord to his slaves. Part of the poem runs thus:

Ghas bichali ghas
Ghas bichali ghas
Kintu mukhe jalbe alo
Padmavo sankas
Nei kono santras

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Nei kono santras
Tras yodi keu bolis tader
Ghatbe saronas

[Straw and grass, grass and straw. Your face will be lighted up yet there’s no terror. If you call it terror, you will be ruined.]

(‘Marching Song’, Baborer Prarthona [Babur’s Prayer])

The same attack is directed against tyranny of the ruler in another poem ‘Srinkhala’ (Discipline). Here the poet upholds the state of fear and silent terror unleashed by state power where even smiling is prohibited. People are robbed off their liberty. They are reduced to sub-human species as they are compelled to give in their morality, values, justice and humanity to a tyrant ruler:

Sabda koro na
Heso na bachcha
Chup
Haat pa chhuro na.
Dant khule rakho.

[Don’t make noise, don’t laugh, son. Be silent. Don’t throw hands and legs. Unfix and keep out your teeth.]

(‘Srinkhala’, [Discipline] Baborer Prarthona [Babur’s Prayer])

The poet sarcastically comments that even the smiling of a child is prohibited in the reign of terror. How much the ruthless coercion of the State power during naxalite


movement of the seventies touched the poet can be well understood from the part of a letter written to Joytirmoy Dutta, the editor of ‘Kolkata 2000’, in 1985:

“You are not supposed to have least belief in the path of Naxalite. So what can be said if any indulgence or support may get expressed for its repression? For the time being it may seem, nothing. Only at the moment of hearing that word ‘coercion’ fifteen years old pictures begin to revive again before our vision, faces of so many friends, relatives, young students. They are quite known to you and me and all of us. Some of them are bright in determination, some deaf and dumb by oppression, some who were confused that day but before whose agonized imagination there was the dream of a great healthy day. As police commissioner even Ranjit Gupta thought that during fight with them what is needed is ‘civilized police action and coercion with humanity’. When I read these two words civilization and humanity in the page of illustrated weekly, then reminiscences of Beleghata, Barahanagar, the ruthless and untrammeled massacre inside Dum Dum and Berhampore central jail awake to my mind. It was hard to believe those acts as the main basis of humanity. Can you still call up some of those days of terror-stricken repression?”

Hughes’s poems of sixties and seventies continue the tradition of representing chaos and violence, both of temporal and timeless. His innovative jargon and expressions amalgamate the disorder, chaos and anarchy of past as well as the violence and disorder of temporal history of mankind. Of course, in this respect his vision is not circumscribed by time and place. Here the expansion and appeal of Hughes’s poems of violence are vaster and greater than Ghosh. Some poems from Wodwo (1967) parallel the poems of violence by Ghosh. ‘Thistles’ is a poem of violence and energy, of battle and butchery, of murder and survival. The poem is ambiguous and multi-dimensional in meaning. Apparently the poem may be of the thorny shrub but the poet personifies human attributes to the thistles and it gets new dimension. The chief motive of the poem is that of violence of murder and revenge, ferocity and fierceness of thistles in term of human actions. Last nine lines of the poem embody barbarity, cruelty and fierceness:

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Every one a revengeful burst
Of resurrection, a grasped fistful
Of splintered weapons and Icelandic frost thrust up

From the underground stain of a decayed Viking.
They are like pale hair and the gutturals of dialects.
Every one manages a plume of blood.

Then they grow grey, like men.
Mown down, it is a feud. Their sons appear,
Stiff with weapons, fighting back over the same grounds.

(‘Thistles’, Wodwo)

The term ‘splintered weapons’ suggests modern warfare of arms and ammunitions, of bomb shells. Similarly, ‘underground stain of a decayed Viking’ connects modern warfare to the fighting of the pirates of the eighth to ten centuries. Again, each of these plants has ‘a plume of blood’. They all grow grey like men, and they are all killed, like men fighting in a battle. Then their descendants come, armed with weapons, fighting over the same ground.

Another great animal poem of violence is ‘Second Glance at a Jaguar’. Here too, the ferocity and violence of the jaguar remain intact. The word ‘gangster’ for the animal suggests the animal’s violent nature. At the same time, it suggests the leader of a gang of ruffians who acts and behaves by baser instinct. The use of the phrase ‘Cain-brands’ is also highly symbolic. It suggests the Biblical first murder of Abel by his only brother Cain. Again the jaguar seems to represent the shamanistic act of ‘muttering some mantrah, some drum-song of murder’. In this poem the poet tries to present the baser nature of killing instinct.

Another great representative poem of violence in the anthology ‘Wodwo’ is ‘Gog’. About the theme of violence in the poem one of the great critics Geoffrey Thurley comments: “In Gog Hughes strikes through to a primal violence existing within the civilized man that is at the same time an intimation of a new awareness, a
mutation almost, ready for the future.” Gog is a mythical being who represents the primeval man or the primitive instinct of man. The poem is a soliloquy or a monologue by Gog which describes the primeval creature’s reaction to the announcement of God as Alpha and Omega and Gog’s reaction to the things and happenings around him. There are different versions of myth regarding the Gog. But in almost all the versions Gog is represented as evil incarnation. Gog assumes different shapes of devil, dragon and darkness fighting against God. Gog may also be the metaphor of advancing evil Nazis brigade, a totalitarian regime that believes in military power of coercion during World War – II. In the first part of the poem Gog asserts himself egotistically when he pronounces:

I listen to the song jarring my mouth
Where the skull-rooted teeth are in possession.
I am massive on earth. My feetbones beat on the earth
Over the sounds of motherly weeping…

Afterwards I drink at a pool quietly.
The horizon bears the rocks and trees away into twilight.
I lie down. I become darkness.

(‗Gog‘, Wodwo)

‗Skull-rooted teeth‘ may be the image of skull of those dead bodies discovered long after his death. This skull may be of those men who died in Hitler’s gas chamber or in any battle field. Again, ‘darkness‘ is an image of chaos after extermination. The second part of the poem seems to focus on the bleak panorama of cold death, death of all living creatures and plants on earth. This is the picture of cosmic destruction where ‘The sun erupts. / The moon is deader than a skull.’ The last few lines of the part run thus:

Sun and moon, death and death,
Grass and stones, their quick peoples, and the bright particles
Death and death and death

Her mirrors.

(Gog, Wodwo)

In the third part of the poem we find the ‘blood-crossed Knight, the Holy Warrior,hooded with / iron the seraph of the bleak edge.’ Interestingly enough this Knight is not like Sir Gawain and the Green Knight who in the medieval romances undertook long and troublesome adventures to rescue the distressed damsel abducted by some terrible demon. Rather this Knight is murderous in nature and dictatorial in temperament. This Knight does not go for the Holy Grail. On the contrary, the grail is his arch enemy. The poet presents the destructive, demonic Gog thus:

through slits of iron his eyes search for the softness of the throat, the navel, the armpit, the groin.

...............................................................

Through slits of iron his eyes have found the helm of the enemy, the grail.

(‘Gog’, Wodwo)

Gog’s tone, temperament and action are anti-Christ, anti-democratic. He speaks in terms of power and authority and not of love and humanity. Hughes seems to celebrate the underlying brutality and violence of pseudo-polished human history. He seems to depict through Gog that the law of nature and human history is determined by brutal physical force that yields to blood, death and destruction.

Hughes wrote limited number of poems on war and violence. Among them ‘Out’ is probably one of the most interesting poems having strong autobiographical elements in them. Other war poems in the volume Wodwo include ‘Scapegoats and Rabies’ and ‘Bowled Over’. As an autobiographical war poem it recalls the fortunate survival of the poet’s father who had fought as a soldier in the famous Gallipoli campaign of 1915, in the World War – I. The poet’s father Bill Hughes had received serious injuries while fighting the enemies. He was one of the seventeen survivors in the battle; though his wound was deadly. When he came back from the battle field, Ted Hughes was only four years of old. He used to tell little Ted the terrific experience of war. To Hughes war has nothing to glorify. Neither does he think of
war in terms of patriotism or heroism or even victory. To him war is nothing but a destructive event where innocent human lives are lost and people suffer the agony of physical wound. The poet presents a shocking picture of the killing field in the first part of the poem:

................While I, small and four,
    Lay on the carpet as his luckless double,
    His memory’s buried, immovable anchor,
    Among jaw-bones and blown-off boots, tree-stumps, shellcases and craters,
    Under rain that goes on drumming its rods and thickening
    Its kingdom, which the sun has abandoned, and where nobody
    Can ever again move from shelter.

(‗Out, The Dream Time’, Wodwo)

All five parts of ‘Scapegoats and Rabies’ is graphic presentation of soldiers’ ultimate fate in the battle field. The poem is set like a five-act play with exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and conclusion. In part –I (A Haunting) the poet describes the dreadful silent marching of young soldiers to the battle field. It immediately recalls Wilfred Owen’s famous war poems ‘The Send Off’ and ‘Futility’. Hughes describes their marching thus:

The soldiers go singing down the deep lane
    Wraiths into the bombardment of afternoon sunlight,
    Whelmed under the flashing onslaught of the barley,
    Strangled in the drift of honeysuckle.

(‗A Haunting’, Scapegoats and Rabies)

The second part (The Mascot) of the Scapegoats and Rabies unfolds the horrible picture of the killing field where the soldiers are brought garlanded for butchery. The poet depicts the ruthlessness and fierceness of the battle field where innocent young soldiers are killed with utmost cruelty. The dreadful description of the use of so many modern weapons on man by man sends a cold shivering through the spine. Some lines of the poem may be cited for critical discussion:

    Every shell that bursts
Blows it momentarily out, and he has to light it.

Every bullet that bangs off
Goes in at one of his ears and out at the other.

Every attack every rout
Storms through that face like a flood through a footbridge.

Every new-dead ghost
Comes to that worn-out blood for its death-ration.

Every remotest curse weighted with a blood-clot,
Enters that ear like a blowfly

Knives, forks, spoons divide his brains.

(The Mascot, Scapegoats and Rabies)

The poem is steeped in such words like ‘bullet’, ‘shell’, ‘knives’, ‘forks’, ‘blood’, ‘death’, etc. The title of this part is fraught with intense irony, for the soldiers are nothing but the cannon fodder in the battle field. Presenting them as mascot is fraught with severe irony, for the soldiers in the field kill each other and bring no fortune, either to themselves or to any other. Every line of the poem is coloured with crimson colour blood and every line is composed of deadly weapons. The type of weapons recall the World War – I. Violence of the war is vividly translated into violence in Hughes’s poetry. The third part (Wit’s End) is the climactic point of the poem. The General and his action in the poem are suggestive of both Hitler and Stalin’s action, the totalitarian tyrant who dared to determine the destiny of mankind by military power. Humanity became apprehensive of their madness of military adventure. The poem suggests advancing of a dark, bleak, destructive, mechanical force- a mindless, menacing, huge army that threatens the extinction of lives on earth:

The General commits his emptiness to God.

And in place of his eyes
Crystal ball
Roll with visions.
And his voice rises
From the dead fragments of men

A Frankenstein
A tank
A ghost
Roaming the impossible
Raising the hair on men’s heads.

His hand
Has swept the battlefield flat as a sheet of foolscap.
He writes:
I AM A LANTERN
IN THE HAND
OF A BLIND PEOPLE
(‘Wit’s End’, Scapegoats and Rabies)

The poem shows the General with his false promise to God. The General’s eyes of ‘crystal balls’ suggests his pitiless robotic eyes which stand among the dismembered parts of the dead soldiers and announce his insane decree. He is a ‘Frankenstein’, a devil and perverse dark force that kills everybody, even his creator. ‘A tank’, ‘A ghost’ suggests modern warfare, probably the World War – II, the General and Frankenstein may be Hitler, Mussolini or Stalin, or any warmonger dictator. The last two parts’ title ‘Two Minute’s Silence’ and ‘The Red Carpet’ are fraught with grim irony as the poet describes the funeral process of the dead soldiers and offering honor to those ‘brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives for their motherland.’ The poet suggests that the words ‘patriotism’, ‘heroism’ and ‘bravery’ are extremely shallow and false in comparison with the meaningless death of so many young soldiers. Here the poet does not moralize; he merely translates the profundity of violence in war into violence in poetry.
**A reading of violence in Hughes’s Crow: From the Life and Songs of the Crow and some poems of Ghosh’s Linei Chhilam Baba, Mukh Dheke Yai Bigyapone, Chhander Bhitore eto Andhakar, Dhum Legechhe Hritkamole**

*Crow: From the Life and Songs of the Crow* (1970) is the crown of Ted Hughes’s success. In its diversity, profundity and epic grandeur the poem assumes the status of a modern epic. Initially, Hughes himself acknowledges that

“… The first idea of Crow was really an idea of a style. In folktales the prince going on the adventure comes to the stable full of beautiful horses and he needs a horse for the next stage and the king’s daughter advises him to take none of the beautiful horses that he’ll be offered but to choose the dirty, scabby little foal. You see, I throw out the eagles and choose the Crow. The idea was originally just to write his songs that a crow would sing. In other words, songs with no music whatsoever, in a super-simple and super-ugly language which would in a way shed everything except just what he wanted to say without any other consideration and that’s the basis of the style of the whole thing. I get near it in a few poems. There I really begin to get what I was after…”

But this primary opinion of Hughes seems to belie *Crow’s* later development as a full-fledged great poem of an epic grandeur. In the beginning the title of the poem seems almost shocking to any reader for how the poem whose title is ‘*Crow*…..’ and the protagonist is a crow, claims to be a great poem, comparable to great epics? The answer to this question is not as simple as the scavenger bird that we see everywhere around us. Here Hughes contravenes the traditional concept of method and material for poetry writing. Surely he had a design in mind as he takes a look on life from Crow’s eye-view and not of eagle’s. He shuns all artificialities and superficialities of pseudo-cultural presentation of life and penetrates deep into the reality and truth. At the very core of life Hughes saw violence, brutality and ferocity. The world he travels through is not dominated by peaceful, lovable co-existence, but by predatory instinct of power and murderousness. Throughout his journey Crow explores the entire course

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of human history, from ancient past to contemporary time. Crow’s view of history unfolds the panoramic view of a journey through the realm of chaos and destruction. Like a political philosopher Hughes shows that coercion is the quintessence of history. As an individual being as well as race man is criminal both in head and heart. His existence and his survival depend upon his execution of power and domination of others. This leads to violence, bloodshed and butchery of innocence. Of course, Hughes does never involve his ego or so-called human feeling to justify the right or wrong of any human action. He merely lays bare the basic regulatory forces that drive forward the wheel of history. He never plays the moralist or judge. At the same time Crow’s view of the external natural world is dark, destructive, brutal, chaotic and murderous. Hughes also hints at the bleak and chaotic astronomical universe, of demonic black hole, of destructive big bang. From micro to macro, Crow journeys through blackness of chaos and destruction. He thus assumes the role of Ulysses, Beowulf and the Biblical Satan. But interestingly, Hughes inverts the idea of traditional literary and religious notion of a hero of great supernatural power endowed with the gifts of God or blessings of deities. Hughes’s protagonist is rather Crow – an ugly, nasty, ravenous creature. The bird neither possesses beautiful look, nor has the gift of melodious voice. It is just the opposite of the majestic, powerful bird of prey, the Eagle.

Hughes has a definite design to depict the core as well as entire collage of man’s history, from time immemorial. For this he amalgamates anecdotes and events of myths, legends, folk-tales, folk-lore of diverse far-flung cultures and civilizations, of Old world and New world, of the story of Prometheus, Hercules, Oedipus, Proteus, the Greek hero Ulysses, and the English epic hero Beowulf. Moreover, Crow shares stage with the Satan of the Bible and the Koran and the lore of the Talmud. Hughes also hints at the Knights of the Arthurian romances and the legend of the search for the Holy Grail. He also made use of myths of the Eskimos, the Japanese, the North-American Indian tribes, the Persians. Hughes creates Crow in the fashion of an iconoclast. Crow appears not as a legendary hero but as a rebel and a heretic. He challenges the order of God or great supernatural force. He breaks the gravity of the great Biblical stories of Creation, of Adam and Eve, of Abel and Cain. He made use of fun, ridicule, satire and sarcasm, harsh criticism and violent attack upon the established order of man’s cultural history and shows that instead of giving order to
the chaos of modern life, the cultural history, especially the classical and Biblical myth, for the most part appear as the source of this chaos and disorder. Hughes thus inverts the order of cultural history of mankind and separates it from the bondage of moral judgment. The world Hughes depicts is incoherent, chaotic, lawless, destructive, violent and murderous. 'Crow' contains a series sixty poems and almost all the poems unfold the picture of a ruthless, awful, grotesque universe. The anthology, in a way, is the narrative of a symbolic, allegorical journey of the Crow through the chaotic realm of human psyche as well as through the imperfect universe created by an imperfect God. The poems also unearth the distorted picture of racial memory. They are metaphor for anguished existence and the presentation of the darker force of the darker side of an unpleasant universe, yet a truthful universe. Hughes tries to synthesize the central paradox of ‘self’ and ‘world’ in relation to the complex cultural notion of traditional ‘God’, though he always tries to invert the long-standing Christian concepts of a benevolent God.

Ghosh does not have so unique a creation as Hughes’s Crow. Yet he endeavours to portray the bleak picture of socio-political anomalies and abnormalities. Ghosh’s universe is circumscribed within the periphery of social injustice, political oppression, ethical aberration, spiritual bankruptcy and callousness of the state. Violence of the physical world is prominently presented by Ghosh through the deft use of pungent satire and irony. Many of his poems show the state’s indifferent attitude to the suffering of common humanity and injustice done to them. Thus the range, versatility and profundity in Hughes’s poems are far greater and vaster than Ghosh. But interestingly, many of Ghosh’s poems have intrinsic similarity with the poems of Hughes depicting the violence and terror in life and society. Both share the agony and wound, brutality and ferocity of life. Yet Ghosh’s has the simple, sober tone while Hughes’s has the broken, bizarre, robust and savage melody of a unique type, hitherto unuttered. The fundamental difference between the two poets lies in their attitude to violence. Hughes views violence as a natural, universal phenomenon unchangeable since the dawn of life, while Ghosh laments over the lawlessness and chaos in life, erosion of values and culture of man-made civilization. Hughes records nature and its instinct objectively while Ghosh’s poems of violence are modified by subjective humanitarian, cultural values and identities. Thus Hughes poems are based on scientific, philosophical basis whereas Ghosh’s poems are based.
on pseudo-cultural considerations. Yet violence as an entity plays a predominating role in the poems of both Hughes and Ghosh.

The tone of violence is beefed up in Hughes’s short poem ‘That Moment’ and ‘King of Carrion’. A violent, brutish and murderous world-view is laid bare with crow’s departure for food leaving behind the dead-body of a man either killed by self or other. The weapon used is a pistol. This indicates the contemporaneity. The callousness and cruelty is suggested by the fact that the body

… lay on the gravel
Of the abandoned world
Among abandoned utilities
Exposed to infinity for ever

Crow had to start searching for something to eat.

(‘That Moment’, Crow....)

Crow must go for food for his existence. He is indifferent of the dead body. His instinct leads him only towards his survival. ‘King of Carrion’ equally illustrates the predatory, violent nature of voracious Crow. The very first line is ponderous and shorn of ornaments, both of literary and life. The poet says that the palace of Crow is built up by ‘skull’, ‘His crown is the last splinters/ Of the vessel of life’. Hughes further says that his throne is the ‘scaffold’ made of ‘bones and the hanged thing’s / Rack and final stretcher.’ Here Crow emerges as a victor against his antagonist, the imperfect ‘hanged thing’. Splinters which crow uses to make his crown may symbolize the lance and sword used to pierce the body of Jesus. ‘Hanged thing’ is no other than Jesus. Crow’s robe is turned black by the ‘last blood’, the blood of Jesus Christ, supposed to be the only means of redemption for the sinners, according to the orthodox Christian doctrine. Hughes’ idea is further consolidated with the journey of the Crow towards an empty void, where all endeavours, all pursuits and all yearnings come to rest in complete silence, an eternal silence. Hughes thus inverts the principal Christian tenets of a benevolent God, supposed to be the creator of all living creatures as well as the material universe. He not only inverts the Biblical world order, he also challenges the authority of God and his ordain by making a violent attack on every
steps of God’s action and judgment. Sankha Ghosh has no such crow-like creature as Hughes’s. Yet his depiction of cultural and socio-political violence is distinctly presented in many of his poems. There is a little difference in their attitude to violence. Where Hughes unfolds the raw truth and never tries to colour it with cultural or humanitarian consideration, Ghosh laments over the loss of cultural values, the death of innocence and the meaningless killing of man by man. Of course, Ghosh’s cultural lesson and learning denominates the killing, destructive, predatory power as ‘evil’ and ‘unjust’. Hughes hails Crow as a hero, whereas Ghosh denounces the destructive force as something devilish and bad. Ghosh could not come out of the sham cultural convention of man-made history and participate actively in his poetic universe as a moralist, judge and commentator. Hughes isolates his ego and Crow establishes the raw truth that we are likely to deny or to avoid for the sake of keeping our false cultural citadel unhurt and unharmed. Man denies to seeing the demon inside and loves to portray the false picture of a coherent, beautiful universe. Thus the dead body that ‘lay on the gravel / Of the abandoned world’ (‘That Moment’) and Crow’s indifferent departure for food may be rightly compared to:

Tin round guli khele teishjan more-e yai loke ato bajjat hoechhe./
Schooler ye chheleguli choukathei dhose galo abashay tara chhilo
samajbirodhi/.
Odike takie dekho dhoa tulsipata
Ulteo pare na khete vaja machhti aha asahai
Atma raksha chhara ar kichhui jane na buletara
Darshonik chokh sudhu akasher tara bate dekhe majhe majhe.

Police kokhono kono anyay kare na tara yatakshan amar police.

[Three round gun-fire kills 23 persons. People have become so wicked. These boys who could not pass out form school must be anti-socals. Look at the other side – they pretend innocence, seem spotless. Bullets are meant for self-defence. They behave philosophically. Police does never do any wrong till they are under my command.]
There is enough similarity between the man killed by a pistol in ‘That Moment’ and twenty three men killed by police, in ‘Nyay Anyay Janine’. Of course, Ghosh ironically directs his satiric barb upon the callousness and atrocities of the state power that does not feel any qualm of conscience to kill her own people. In the like way, Hughes’s ‘King of Carrion’ resembles Ghosh’s ‘Desh Amader Ajo Kono’. In Ghosh’s poem we hear the scream of humanity articulated through symbols and images:

Jangaler majhkhanle kata haat artanad kare
Garo paharer pae kata haat artanad kare
Sindhur srotier dike kata haat artanad kare
Ke kake bojhabe kichhu ar
Samudre giyechho tar dheu er mathar theke hajar hajar bhanga har
Aler vitor theke hajar hajar bhanga har
Chura ba gombuj theke hajar hajar bhanga har
Tormar chokher samne laf diye artanad kare...

[Cut off hand cries in panic in the middle of the jungle. Cut off hand cries in panic on the foot of Garo hill. Cut off hand cries in panic toward the current of the sea. Who would console whom? You have gone to the sea and seen thousands broken bones on the surface of the waves, from the light of the sun, from the dome or the peak jump before your eyes and cries in panic.]

(‘Desh Amader Ajo Kono’, [Our Country is still] Mukh Dheke Yai Bigyapone [The Face is Covered by Billboard])


In Ghosh’s poem the cut off hand, leg and thousands of bones from the waves of sea and from the dome of some magnificent monument scream in pain and agony. In Hughes’s poem the poet passively and objectively describes crow’s palace, crown and throne made of skulls:

His palace is of skulls.
His crown is the last splinters
Of the vessel of life
His throne is the scaffold of bones, the hanged thing’s
Rack and final stretcher.

(‘King of Carrion’, Crow…)  

Crow creates himself not in the image of God but in the image of Milton’s Satan or Marlowe’s Mephistophilis- an aggressive, destructive, death-defying, trickster creature. He challenges the order and authority of God. He labeled God as a tyrant who denies liberty to his own creation and plays his arbitrary game to satisfy his whims. Crow challenges the fundamental principles of Christianity and establishes his own image which is also based on power and authority. Crow distorts the Biblical stories and destroys the dignity and gravity of its principal characters. He falsifies the Biblical myths and seems to create his own universe. But his search for a new order only leads to loneliness and helplessness. Crow is violence incarnation. Since the moment of his creation he experiences violence and horror of the universe as exemplified in ‘Examination at the Womb-Door’ and ‘A Kill’. Crow plays the dual role of a victim and a destroyer.  

Sankha Ghosh’s poems do not have such vast span and profound philosophic vision. Ghosh, contrary to Hughes is a believer in tradition, cultural values and religious order. Violence in his poetry is topical, temporal and socio-political. He is concerned with the socio-political clashes and conflicts. He never raises question to judge the ‘ways of God to man’. On the contrary, his poetry is deeply rooted to the profound faith in God. Thus from religious and philosophical point of view Hughes’s pseudo-Biblical poems like ‘Crow’s First Lesson’, ‘A Childish Prank’, ‘Lineage’, ‘Crow’s Theology’, ‘Apple Tragedy’, ‘Snake Hymn’, ‘Genesis of Evil’, etc. do not have any parallel in Ghosh. Hughes’s tirade against traditional God and religious order is not matched by Ghosh. On the contrary, in Ghosh’s poetry there is an eternal
war against evil and corruption, violence and anarchy, bloodshed and destruction. Therefore, it is quite evident that Ghosh shares same concern with Hughes regarding violence and anarchy in the world and in human nature. The only difference is that while Ghosh naturalizes and appropriates violence in accordance to his ideological and cultural prepossessions, Hughes lays bare ‘Nature red in tooth and claws’. Both are seriously concerned with the force and ferocity of violence and evil, the difference lies in their attitude to it. Hughes does not appropriate Nature, but objectively upholds the basic regulatory forces of nature, that is, the dark, destructive, anarchic, unpleasant, nihilistic, disintegrating forces that continually war against each other and never come to rest. He lambastes ideological and cultural prepossessions as false and distorted and brings us face to face with the raw truth in nature.

‘Crow’s First Lesson’ is a poem where we find God’s futile attempt to teach crow the meaning and purpose of life. God repeatedly tries to make him pronounce the word ‘LOVE’, but Crow is so much over-powered by ‘the horror of Creation’, that the

Crow convulsed, gaped, retched and
Man’s bodiless prodigious head
Bulbed out onto the earth, with swivelling eyes,
Jabbering protest –

(‘Crow’s First Lesson’, Crow….)

The poem ends with passionate sexual love of a man and a woman which ironically God denounced and cursed as sin for which they are punished. Man’s universe exists on the biological love and sex resulting in reproduction. They are alternative to each other. The God which teaches the lesson of love betrays his own command on sexual love. The very act of reproductive process is based upon sexual love. How can God curse this love if He is a benevolent God? Thus Crow makes fun of the idea of Christian God. He leveled his satirical barb onto God and directs a disparaging, violent attack on the Christian notion of ‘love’. Hughes portrays the picture of an autocratic, tyrannical god challenged by the Crow……. Crow’s mockery of the imperfect God seems to be terser than ever in ‘A Childish Prank’ where Crow laughs at the Christian concept of ‘Original Sin’ of Adam and Eve. According to the Biblical lesson, consciousness of sex came after tasting the fruit from the ‘Tree of
Knowledge’. It was the first Sin committed by the first Man in disobeying God’s command for which both Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden. Crow taunts God for his puritanical, conservative attitude. Crow laughs and enjoys the wild physical love of man and woman while God ponders and goes to sleep. Hughes thus subverts the Christian beliefs of God and His Creation, of love and sex, of birth and death. Crow seems to assume the counter-image of the God. Crow not only ridicules God and his notion of love, he renders him a hopeless, defeated entity. The poem begins thus:

Man’s and woman’s bodies lay without soul,
Dully gaping, foolishly staring, inert
On the flowers of Eden.
God pondered.

The problem was so great, it dragged him asleep.

(‗A Childish Prank’, Crow….)

In the poem the Serpent, originator of sin and death, is changed back into a phallic symbol of life. Even after surrendering to the almighty, omnipresent God, Ghosh sympathizes with the Crow-like argumentative existence of man and also lends his support to them who refuses to surrender. This attitude is prominently presented in Ghosh’s short poem ‘Rakter Dosh’. If we go through the poem we will see this dialectic:

Biswer provu ke se to sokolei jane, amra rini
Se mahakendrer kachhe. Taree theke aloe eshe pade
Amader mansho, hade; amader soke o sangame
Nizeder mane amra taake chhara bujhte parini.

………………………………………………

Ar ok dekho ajo akatore apan bhasai
Gane bose khunte khai khudkunro, athaba bijane
Hantu bhenge pode thake alpathe garome ba sheete –
Rakte to ingreji nei, banchbe kibhabe prithibeete.
Everybody knows the master of the world and we are indebted to that great centre. Light falls on our flesh and bones; our pain and love-making from that centre. We don’t understand our meaning without him. Till day he eats up his native grain with his own language or remains sitting alone in some lonely field-path of summer or winter. How would he live without English blood! 

(‘Rakter Dosh’, [Fault of Blood] Chhander Bhitore Eto Andhoka, [So Much Darkness in Rhyme])

In the first part of the poem Ghosh’s attitude is like Dante who surrenders to the will of God. In the second part he praises nature and defies pseudo-culture, pseudo-religion and pseudo-god. He praises one who suffers hardship, pain and agony in his prolonged struggle but never yields to broken, ramshackle and corrupt order. In a way, Ghosh struggles to escape from the world of God to the world of Crow. The expression ‘rakte to ingreji nei banchbe kibhabe prithibeete’ ironically denigrates the false, propagated cultural ethos and also political principles of the West. Or it may be the contrary idea also that those who have English blood would survive like Crow. The chaos and conflict in human psyche as well as in the metaphysical state is another face of violence, both in Huhges and Ghosh. Of course, he does not ridicule and censure God like Hughes. Both break the traditional notion of spiritual love and come to represent Nature. The difference between the two is that Hughes finds wild pleasure in detailed description of sexual love hitherto considered taboo by self-designated cultural police. Hughes unfolds the whole truth of love and sex. Ghosh too, tries to escape from suppression, but could not completely unveil the chemistry of love and sex. He gives sober expression of physical love in the last line ‘tomakei khunji tobu shorirer of bhitore shorire’. Hughes continues his same tirade in the following pseudo-Biblical poems like ‘Lineage’, ‘Apple Tragedy’, ‘Snake Hymn’, ‘Genesis of Evil’, to dismantle the fundamental Christian tenets on God and his creations.

‘Lineage’ is another such poem which breaks the orthodox Christian idea of God and His universe. The very first line is labeled as blasphemous which inverts the cardinal word ‘Word’ from the Scripture. The poem begins thus: ‘In the beginning was Scream’ but the Biblical lines run thus: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”. Instead of Logos, that is the word of God, in the shape of Jesus, Hughes contravenes that it was ‘Scream’ in the beginning. He thus inverts the fundamental Christian notion regarding Creation and the Creator. In a sense, Hughes denies the traditional concept of a benevolent Christian God. Hughes implies that from the very beginning violence is the ruling roost. What the Bible teaches are bloody lies. The message of love and peace are nothing but will-o-the wisp. Violence and murder for one’s survival is the cause enough for existence. And this practice continues from the very beginning. All are created from Scream-blood, sweat, eye, bone, Adam, Mary, God, Nothing, Never, etc. After generalizing all these entities, Hughes emphasizes upon Crow and says that he is also created by Scream and shows his dirty habit and menacing nature:

Screaming for Blood
Grubs, crusts
Anything
Trembling featherless elbows in the nest’s filth

(‘Lineage’, Crow...)

The same dismantling of the Christian tenets and the order of God and Creation is done with consummate skill in ‘Apple Tragedy’ and ‘Snake Hymn’. Hughes makes fun of the Biblical story of the Fall of Adam and Eve. With savage black humor and bitter irony, God’s image is stigmatized. On the contrary, the Serpent emerges as the hero, a counter-image of God. God squeezes the apple but gave Adam ‘Cider’, instead of apple. The Serpent, instead of enemy appears to be a drunken partner of the tyrant God who simply plays a game to fulfil his whims. God offers Serpent with a drink. Adam also drank and addresses the Serpent as his god. Eve also drank and invites the serpent for sex. Thus all we see here is a drunken debauchery of all the characters. God plays a mischievous prank with Adam by revealing Eve’s proposal to Serpent for

137 John i,1. the Bible.
sex. This mockery and fun of the stories of the Scripture is a subversive design of Hughes that dismantles the lies and falsities of religious order of God and Creation. Hughes’s serpent, contrary to the Biblical notion is a symbol for sex and fertility, the only force that helps sustaining life on earth. The poem runs thus:

So on the seventh day
The serpent rested.
God came up to him.
I’ve invented a new game,’ he said.

The serpent stared in surprise
At this interloper.
But God said: ‘You see this apple?
I squeeze it and look – Cider.’

The serpent had a good drink
And curled up into a questionmark.
Adam drank and said: ‘Be my god.’
Eve drank and open her legs

And called to the cockeyed serpent
And gave him a wild time.
God ran and told Adam
Who in drunken rage tried to hang himself in the orchard.

(‘Apple Tragedy’, Crow…)

“Eventually”, Ekbert Fass comments,

“the quester realizes that beyond the traditional God – ‘the man created, broken down, corrupt despot of a ramshackle religion’ who accompanies crow through the world in many guises, mis-teaching, deluding, tempting, opposing
and at every point trying to discourage or destroy him’ – there must be another God.”

bigger than the other
Loving his enemies
And having all the weapons.

(‘Crow’s Theology’, Crow…)

‘Snake Hymn’ and ‘Genesis of Evil’ are as shocking and outrageous as ‘Apple Tragedy’, ‘Lineage’, or ‘A Childish Prank’. ‘Snake Hymn’ is the last of the pseudo-Biblical poem that paints a convincing counter-image to God’s creation. Silently and unmistakably the poem dismantles the doctrines of the serpent’s deception, fall of Adam and Eve, crucifixion of Jesus and God’s infinite love until nothing remains except some fundamental facts about sex, birth, life and death. From the Christian points of view the poem appears blasphemous:

The blood in Adam’s body
That slid into Eve
Was the everlasting thing
Adam swore was love.

The blood in Eve’s body
That slid from her womb –
Knotted on the cross
It had no name.

Nothing else had happened.
The love that can not die
Sheds the million faces
And skin of agony

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To hang en empty husk.
Still no suffering
Darkens the garden
Or the snake’s song.

(Snake Hymn, Crow…)

This is one of sober but courageous attacks that Hughes ever made against the basic principles of Christian doctrines. But in ‘Genesis of Evil’ the attack becomes sharp, severe, direct and naked. He leaves no stone unturned to falsify the Biblical concept of love and sex. Hughes seems to celebrate sexual love and finds wild pleasure in denigrating God’s teleology. God has become a butt of bitter bantering, fun, mockery and ridicule. From sarcasm to black humor Hughes uses all sorts of poetic device to tarnish the image of God. Or he challenges the authority and ways of God on man. In his attack against God, these poems seem to be more destructive than Milton’s ‘Satan’ or Marlowe’s ‘Dr. Faustus’. In ‘Genesis of Evil’ Hughes turns God into a ‘mouse’ who stealthily watches the wild love making of Adam and Eve and ‘become blind with Jealously.’ The title ironically ridicules God as the originator of evil and the serpent as the symbol of life and creation. The core of the poem is the cultural violence that unveils traditional religious doctrines as the source of chaos and disorder in modern life. According to Crow’s account, God’s savage retaliatory measures continues. In ‘Crow’s ‘Song of Himself’ Crow says, how God tries to crush him, tear him to pieces or bury him by hook or by crook. But Crow defeats God’s futile attempt and celebrates the increasing strength of his insolent attitude while bringing despondency to the torturer.

Amidst all conspiracy, antagonism and attack, Crow’s defiant struggle continues. During his emergence into the earth Crow experiences the basic cruelty of existence as he has to encounter Death in ‘Examination at the Womb-Door’ and has to play a contradictory role of a victim as well as a destroyer in ‘A Kill’. God’s inane babblings of love is silenced by the silent panorama of the devastated waste land which Crow observes minutely. That the crow watches no picture of imaginary battle field but an awful spectacle after nuclear devastation is implied through the use of beautiful images, effective symbols and accurate metaphors:

Crow saw the herded mountains, steaming in the morning.
And he saw the sea
Dark-spined, with the whole earth in its coils.
He saw the stars, fuming away into the black, mushrooms of
the nothing forest, clouding their spores, the virus of God.

And he shivered with the horror of Creation.

(‘Crow Alights’, Crow…)

Crow is shivered with the horror of Creation. In the like way, the personae in Ghosh’s
‘Biswas’ is in search for love even after the death of innocence by devastating atomic
fire. Ghosh seems to be too optimistic to find a regenerated universe of love. Hughes
Crow watches the nuclear devastation with horror and pain and no hope of
regeneration. Contrary to Ghosh, Hughes God is shown as malevolent, whimsical,
tyran being who indifferently plays with the fate of man. He shows the precarious,
helpless state of human being in our earth. Ghosh always ties to meliorate the human
condition, though both are possessed by the horror and violence of the world. One of
the critics Daniel Hoffman comments on Hughes’s Crow as a new version of the
gospel and traces the fundamental force of violence and conflicts that construct the
dialectics of the universe as well as the poem. He comments:

“Hughes has come to see the cosmos as a battlefield. His is the world-view of
a betrayed Fundamentalist, who, discovering that God has no care for man’s
fate, understands the universe to be governed not by divine love but by power.
In Hughes's earlier books, Nature appeared as a field of violent struggle where
only the fittest survived. Such Darwinian determinism required its own
unforgiving theology. These views of life are not meliorated in Crow. With a
startling composite myth Hughes explores our fate in such a universe. Crow’s
life is a harrowing series of combats.He becomes Heracles, wrestling Proteus
the shape-changer. He becomes St. George also, and the dragon is his
monstrous nightmare. He "followed Ulysses till he turned/As a worm, which
Crow ate"; "Drinking Beowulf's blood, and wrapped inhis hide, / Crow
communes with poltergeists out of old ponds.” Not surprisingly (since Hughes
has adapted Seneca's "Oedipus" for Peter Brook), Crow becomes Oedipus in several poems, and in a ballad sings of him." 139

‘Crow’s Account of the Battle’ is a literal rendering of the horror and agony of any battle field. Hughes assembles all paraphernalia of warfare like bombs, bullets, guns and explosives and paints a lively picture of the human bombs and the cannon-fodders, their dread, fear, gasping agony, scream and pain. He also gives a shocking picture of water, mud, dirt, sweat, tear and blood in the war field. The dreadful and pitiful description of the mindless, mechanical massacre of young soldiers reminds us of Wilfred Owen’s poems:

The cartridges were banging off, as planned,
The fingers were keeping things going
According to excitement and order.
The unhurt eyes were full of deadliness.
The bullets pursued their courses
Through clods of stone, earth and skin,
Through intestines, pocket-books, brains, hair, teeth
According to Universal laws.
………………………………..
Shock-severed eyes watched blood
…………………………………….
There was no escape except into the death.
(‘Crow’s Account of the Battle’, Crow….)

After the dreadful blasts of explosives, coil and cloud of black fumes covering the sky; after the shocking massacre, the reverberations; after the mutilated dead bodies lying strewn in the muddy field, the very few survivors who escape death became deaf and dumb. Of course, the poet finalized the last destiny of such battle that ‘there is no escape except into death.’ After the dreadful, awesome, bloody event is done, Crow observes and comments:

Then everybody wept,

Or sat, too exhausted too weep,
Or lay, too hurt to weep.

(‘Crow’s Account of the Battle’, Crow…)

The poem’s barbaric violence means to recoil one in disgust and anger. It’s bleak, nihilistic picture suggests total devastation. Its awe-striking, horrific effect makes one deaf and speechless. The war and violence came directly in Ghosh’s ‘Ye Bhole Bhuluk’ where he refers to Hiroshima as a refrain:

Deurid gae
     Proti akshore
     Ranga angar
     Hiroshima

Chhere sab asa
     Eso chole eso
     Samne takao
     Hiroshima

[Words are written on the wall of the portico by fiery coal, Hiroshima. Leaving all hopes look forward and see Hiroshima.]

(‘Ye Bhole Bhuluk’, [Whoever may Forget] Chander Bhitore Eto Andhakar [So Much Darkness in Rhyme])

Another great poem of Hughes is ‘Crow’s Vanity’. Here Crow looks at the time glass which reflects the phantasmagoric image of evil and destruction. Interestingly, Crow visualizes the surrealistic picture of dull, monotonous, dirty, mechanical, metropolitan cityscapes. The images communicate powerfully the sense of horror and nothingness. At the first look Crow sees ‘Mistings of civilizations towers gardens/ Battles…’. After wiping the glass he sees again. This time he sees ‘…skyscrapers webs of cities’. One after another the reflection of ‘a spider’,

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‘grinning face’ came to him like hallucinatory vision. The image of high-rising buildings, gardens, battles, spider, webs of cities communicate strong sense of a bleak and diseased universe. The pictures of the soulless, ghostly cities are indication of man’s technological progress by destroying the ecological balance:


………………………………..he peered

For a glimpse of the usual grinning face

But it was no good he was breathing to heavy
And too hot and space was too cold
And here came the misty ballerinas
The burning gulfs the hanging gardens it was eerie.

(‘Crow’s Vanity’, Crow…)

‘Notes for a Little Play’ upholds the horrors of total nuclear devastation. Crow seems to visualize devouring nuclear flames that swallows all except ‘two strange’ items that remain inseparably with the flames, ‘Mutations’ and ‘Horrors’. The protagonist minutely watches the horrible visions of how the nuclear flames destroys everything, how the sun-like fiery blast come closer with cumulative shape, size and power, how it torn off clothes and melts different parts of human body like faces, eyes, brains, hands, arms, legs, feet, head, neck, chest, belly, etc. The onlooker further watches: ‘And the flame fills all space. / The demolition is total’ (‘Notes for a Little Play’, Crow…). Ghosh mentions the horror and destruction of the atomic bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima by America but Hughes minutely observes all aspects of its devastation. Through images and symbols he gives a telling picture of the terrible event in the poem ‘Hiroshima’. In one of his famous poems ‘Andhabilap’, Ghosh makes a universal statement on war and violence. Of course, he speaks everything in the guise of Dhritarashtra of the famous epic the Mahabharata. Through subtle irony and pungent satire, Ghosh unveils the truth of how the persona tries to justify unjustifiable war and violence. The concept is akin to Hughes.

Samanya ek chhatak jomi chharbe keno amar chhele
Amar sange vumi sena amar sange vuswamira

Adharmo? Ke dharma mane? Amar dharma sotrunashan
Nirostroke marbo na ta sab samoy ki mante pari?
…………………………………………………………..
Baj sokune hadgilete bhorbe gachher unchu churo
Takie thakbe lohar thonte khuble khabe mangsho kokhon.

[Why my son would leave a small patch of land? The landlords and their armed forces are with me….Are you talking of religion? Who does obey religigion? My religion is to suppress the enemy. It is not always possible that I will not kill the unarmed….The perches of the tree would be full of hawks and vultures. They would observe with lust when to eat up the flesh with their iron beak

(‗Andho Bilap‘, [Lament of the Blind] *Dhum Legechhe Hritkomole* [Lotus Heart is Smoke-infested])¹⁴¹

This poem of Ghosh easily calls up the horrible pictures of battlefield in Hughes’s ‘Crow’s Account of the Battle’. Although ghosh does not give so detailed and accurate a picture of the modern battlefield like Hughes, there is enough intrinsic similarity between the two. Like Hughes, Ghosh speaks of the soldiers, preparation of war, bloodshed and carnage. He speaks of fifty seven round fires from guns and death and bloodshed. At the same time, here too, the image of blood and fleshes, strewn dead bodies, and the falcon and vulture’s making meal of the fleshes; give the picture of a bleak and cruel world. Here too, Dhitorastro speaks of power and authority which the poet may ridicule justifying by moral judgment or the final victory of justice as shown in the *Mahabharata* is a downright lie and culturally promoted false notion of our false heart. What the persona says in the poem is the truth and real nature. A Machiavellian political world of power and Darwinian natural world of survival of the fittest by killing and devouring the weaker is the central idea of both the poets. Hughes’s impersonal and objective presentation of the precarious state of the violent universe find parallelism in Ghosh’s many poems.

A reading of violence in Hughes’s *Prometheus on His Crag* (Collected in *Moortown*), Gaudete and Sankha Ghosh’s *Chhander Bhitore Eto Andhokar* and *Adim Latagulmomoy*

From *Prometheus on His Crag* (1973) (a sequence of twenty one poems subsequently collected in ‘Moortown’ (1979) onward, there’s a radical change in Hughes’s visions and voices. Violence was the ruling roost of the earlier poems of Hughes. From this period we find a gradual transformation of his attitude to man and nature. The turbulent sea suddenly ceases roaring and becomes sober and quiet. The howling of the wolves is subdued. The blood-dripping nature becomes violent soul-searching. From this period onward, Hughes looks deep into the darker recesses of human psyche. At the same time, his poems become more and more symbolic, psychological and cerebral. He communicates ideas through symbols, images, metaphors and allegories. *Prometheus on His Crag* is based on the Persian myths of the semi-divine figure Prometheus. He stole fire from the hearth of Zeus for mankind and was caught and chained alive to a barren crag to be eaten by vultures. Underneath the myth, Hughes explores its multifarious symbolic and allegorical manifestations. From the story of Prometheus, he builds an intricate structure of self-conflicting meaningless ideas on god, good and evil and the self-destructive precarious nature of our existence with plurality of suggestions. The poems yield no meaning but hallucination of innumerable meanings. In poem no. 20 Hughes tries to portray the proper prismatic identity of the vulture in relation to Prometheus but the poem gives no finality, no conclusive, definite trait of the bird’s character and action. From the beginning, war of ideas and identities continue as to who is the hero- the vulture or Prometheus. Hughes here breaks the traditional notion of God and His numinous attributes as well as human values. The poet asks whether the bird is Prometheus’s ‘unborn self, some hyena’ or ‘his condemned human ballast –/ His dying and his death, torn daily/ from his immortality.’ The bird is identified with his scorched ‘godhead’ that pierces horribly into his human limitations. Or the bird is the destructive divine self of Prometheus or Knowledge incarnation that is destined to suffer. Or the bird does have no destination as Prometheus, ‘the flapping, tattered hole –/ The nothing door/ Of his entry, draughting through him?’ The vulture eats up the flesh of its own image for mere survival. The only urge that leads him to act is his urge to exist. In a way, the image of the bird tearing off flesh of Prometheus is self-inflicting, self-destructive and
self-erasing. The poet throws questions as to the bird is the ‘atomic law’ or ‘Life his transgression?’ or the ‘punished criminal aberration?’ Hughes here suggests that human life is attributed with violence and crime of the bird and his criminal instinct. Again, the bird is associated with the stolen fire of God’s hearth that now feeds on his own fire which Prometheus swallowed up. Or the bird is that supernatural spirit that he had stolen and now that spirit steals his own flesh. The bird is further identified with the ‘enlightenment’ of earth and again Prometheus’s anti-self, ‘The him-shaped vacuum/ In unbeing, pulling to empty him?’ The oxymoron and paradox heightened the chaos of meaning. The bird is ‘him-shaped’, yet a ‘vacuum’ in ‘unbeing’ that devours flesh of Prometheus. Finally, the poet suggests that the bird may be the Helper, the reliever that helps to liberate him from all bondages. Here we experience a metaphysical war of ideas and images that starts from nowhere and turns up to nowhere. The war continues and remains unresolved. From different perspectives Ghoh unveils the evil instinct that continues to destroy and kill others and self simultaneously. In his ‘Adipurana’ we find violence-ridden self-destructive world:

Kibhabe manus name nirmam pranir kono bodhuddhi jegeo jage na
Kibhabe protiti din amra sudhu sudhe yai anya sokoler jama dena.

Amader hate amra trongsho kore dite chai yekhane yegechhe yoto dhan
Chokhe kono parda nei mane kono jage na bikar
Er oor mangsho khete amrai jhanpie podi simanar dhare
Sajib sahas mukhe pronoyer katha bole kamde dhori arokhsito ghade.

Keu karo bondhu noi, sokole sabar atataee.

[How the cruel creature man’s sense and sensibility start awakening but failing at the end. How we have been paying only other’s debt each day...We want to destroy all the crops we planted. No qualm of conscience, no sense of shame, we pounce upon each other and feigning love-making catch hold of each other’s neck with our teeth to eat fleshes... None is nobody’s friend, each is everybody’s assassin.]
Ghosh says that man is a ruthless and retributive creature with no numinous quality that eats up flesh of one another. Hughes’s vulture eats up Prometheus’s flesh. The allegory suggests precarious state of human existence in both the poems.

Violence and murder continues to be a major preoccupation even in *Gaudete* (1977) of Hughes. In one of its epilogue poems we see the same ‘Nature red in tooth and claws’:

Who are you?
The spider clamps the butterfly – whose death panic
Becomes sudden soulful absorption.

A stoat throbs at the nape of the lumped rabbit
Who watches the skylines fixedly.

Photographs of people – open-mouthed
In the gust of being shot and falling-

The fate of ‘butterfly’, ‘stoat’ and ‘people – opened-mouthed’ is the same sad falling prey to the strong predator that kills for survival and victory. All three images uphold the picture of a ruthless, voracious world where one kills another for food and livelihood. Therefore, struggle for one’s existence is the law of nature and the strong survives by destroying or devouring the feeble. In the world of man the strong rules by defeating and destroying the weak. The spider and the stoat are the victor and murderer. Carnage in the battlefield is a common picture. Young soldiers are sent to the field as mere cannon fodders. Ghosh’s preoccupation with violence and butchery of innocence is well expressed in ‘Kobutor’, with its white breast scratched and bleeding. This is symbolic presentation of butchery of innocence.

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Oi kobutor tar sada buk dekhalo amake
………………………………………
Sei sukhrekha noy
Aj tar sada buke anek nakher dag dekhi
Yeno koto prithibir meghbhar jomie rekhechhe
Chhoto oi buke-

[That pigeon has shown me her white breast…those happy lines were no more there. Today I see many scratches on that breast. As if she has preserved a heavy weight on that small chest of her.]

(‘Kabutor’ [The Pigeon] Chhander Bhitore Eto Andhakar [So Much Darkness in Rhyme])

Among Hughes’s many poems of violence in the anthology ‘Orts’ (1978), poem no.17 is one of the representative poems, depicting violence and terror in nature and man:

The white shark
With its strength of madness

The rat
With its file

The gull vomiting its laughter
And gulping it in again
Like intestines hanging from the mouth

-the thorn
with its petals.

The images in the poem are set like still-pictures. There is less movement and action and more impression. The image of mad white shark is awful and the image of hyena and rat impinges an impression of ferocity, cruelty and destruction. The last image is that of thorny petals. Here, of course, beauty is mixed up with violence and fearful aspects of nature. Thematically this poem takes after one short poem of Ghosh, ‘Indur’:

Chokh beye neme ase thik
Thont duto unchu hoy tukus tukus
Sohite pari na ar, kholo, khule rakho
Nakol mukhos.
Deho sudhu chole yai thik thik.
Bodo ghrina kone kone, ghar bhore giyechhe indure
Pronam chotur dant
Kintu eto jala keno mukhe?

[Right rolls down from the eyes, the lips speak something else. Remove that intolerable mask. Only the body grows straight. The home is infested by rats, hatred piled up in its dark corner. Respectful, clever teeth but why so much pain in the face?]

(‘Indur’ [The Rat] Adim Latagulmomoy [Ancient Vines and Trees])^{144}

Here ‘rat’ has been used as an image of rotten, decayed, dirty and destructive force that parallels the ‘rat’ of Hughes’s Orts.

**A comparative reading of violence in Cave Birds and Mati Khonda Purono Koroti**

Hughes’s *Cave Birds (1978)* is a great success after *Crow*. The poems in the sequence are characterized by rich sensuousness of language and a metaphysical exploration of being and the persona’s relationship with that being. Like *Gaudete*, it depicts violence as an apocalyptic ceremony in the animal’s universe, subsequently transcended to

human. Like his former anthologies, here too, many poems tend to translate external violence of the world as well as the spiritual chaos and psychological trauma into violence in his poetry. Here too, he explicates his main concern through the dichotomy of contrast and paradox. All the while, violent energy or the ‘elan vital’ occupies the focus of attention where disintegration and chaos emerge as the dominating force of nature, human psyche and supposed God against whom Hughes raises questions after questions. Hence, his semantics and poetics may be deciphered with the help of explicative linguistic tools of semiotic and by applying numerous post-modern literary theories and approaches. The book opens with a striking composition ‘The Scream’ which depicts how the persona’s (who is a cockerel here) initial complacency and peace of mind regarding the world and his place in it is shattered by his horrendous encounters with some terrifying bird-beings. The birds seem neither supernatural nor fantastical but real and the persona’s encounters with them reveal the violent state of the soul and psyche. Although the birds remain invisible, some inane weights of iron fell suddenly on people and crushed the living creatures on earth:

That come suddenly crashing into people, out of nowhere,
Only made me feel brave and creaturely.

When I saw little rabbits with their heads crushed on roads
I knew I rode the wheel of the galaxy.

Calves’ heads all dew-bristled with blood on counters
Grinned like masks where sun and moon danced.

And my mate with his face sewn up
Where they’d opened it to take something out
Lifted a hand –

He smiled in half-coma,
A stone temple smile.

Then I too opened my mouth to praise –
But a silence wedged my gullet.
Like an obsidian dagger, dry, jag-edged,
A silent lump of volcanic glass,

The scream
Vomited itself.

(‘The Scream’, Cave Birds)

The inane weights of iron that crashed into people and crushed the heads of the rabbits and the calves are symbolic suggestions of killing innocent creatures by the sophisticated weapons made of steel, iron and other metals. These may be the invisible supersonic bird-like war planes or may be the beastly ferocious instinct that behaves disorderly and pounces upon the soul to disintegrate it. The anarchy of the soul and psyche is implied through the obscure presentation of the ‘inane weights of iron’. Even the sexual union of the persona with her mate is obstructed due to the lover’s turning into coma, a death-like existence. Thus love and reproductive process is devastated. What remains alive is only a fatal ‘Scream’. Hughes’s ‘The Scream’ may rightly be compared to Ghosh’s ‘Protiddhoni’ (echo). Like ‘The Scream’ it also reflects the state of violence as a universal, cosmic and natural phenomenon. Here Ghosh is more objective, suggestive and symbolic. Violence is voiced as a condensed and concrete state of human predicament. Here too, like ‘The Scream’, the poet starts with the expectation of a sunny, complacent morning which in turn becomes violent and killing:

Egie cholechhi ami
Ar bhabchhi ye sabee dekhte pachchhi
Du chokh yodio kalo kapode anto kore bandha
Paer niche suchyagro pathor
Bujhte parchhi ami tahole kono pahad sringe dandie
Buk bhore sas nite chaichhi
Kintu sas bhore uthe aschhe golito naro mangsher gandho
Hat dutoke dana kore chhodie dite chaichhi
Kintu tokhuni ter pachchhi kono hatee nei amar…….
[I am moving forward and thinking all things are visible to me though my eyes are covered with black garment. The sharp stones under my feet make me realize that I am on the top of a hill and trying to inhale fresh air. But the air is filled with smell of rotten flesh. As I try to fly, I feel that my hands have been dispersed…]

(‗Protiddhoni’, ‘The Vibration’ Mati Khonda Purono Koroti, [Earth-dug Old Skull])

The persona tries to inhale fresh air but the air is filled with bad smell of rotten flesh; he feels as if his arm is dispersed and he can not escape like bird any more. As he tries to express his horror and helplessness, he falls deep into the darkness of dungeon and his fearful scream is echoed uninterruptedly.

‘The Accused’ is another poem which translates violence of the world and violence of soul into violence in poetry. The protagonist passes through the ordeal of agony and suffering to emerge as a renewed and invigorated self whose ‘body’ is like ‘gripful of daggers’. His ‘heart’ is like ‘soul-staffed despot’ and his ‘stomach’ is compared to ‘corpse-eating despot’; his struggling life is compared to ‘lust’ and his ‘brain’ to ‘sacred assassin’. All these comparison led the idea of the protagonist struggling against violent, odd forces of body and soul; individual self struggling to transcend to a universal self. The body has the sharp, killing nature of daggers, and the heart is of a tyrant and he has the ravenous nature of eating corpse and his brain plays the shrewd, secret, cold-blooded murderer’s game. Of course, all his encounters led him forward to the attainment of sainthood. But Hughes, interestingly enough, keeps the violent purgatory process of the protagonist’s fate inconclusive. This amplifies the semantics of the text into multifarious indefinite possibilities. Like ‘The Accused’, ‘The Owl Flower’ is violence incarnation. The very opening line of the poem is shocking. It heightens the suggestion of atomic explosion that scorched and burnt millions of innocent people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki:

Big terror descends.

A drumming glare, a flickering face of flames.

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Something writhes apart into a signal,
Fiendish, a filament of incandescence.

As it were a hair.

(‘The Owl Flower’, *Cave Birds*)

Each of the phrases is like thunderbolt. An awful image of total destruction by ‘flickering face of flame’ suspends our sense perceptions. We are stupefied with the devilish, fiendish, ghostly, evil force that descends upon earth and destroys everything. The same destructive, devilish, fiendish image of terror is found in Ghosh’s ‘Ekdin Tao Hobe’:

Surya yakhun Dhaka pode yabe Krishnagreeb meghe
Konodike keo dekhbe na kichhu, diganto hobe lope –
…………………..…………………..…………………..…………………..
Akash yokhon fete chouchir, jhore yabe sab tara
Somudra jal hote hote borofe jamat, dhu dhu
Jangole moda poshura pakhira yokhun atmahara
E ok o eke nokhore nokhore khude khabe sudhu sudhu
Protiti matir han kara fatole prothito kabondhora
Matha khunje khunje jante chaibe koun mahadoshe ora
Prokkheponer prantor jude luptochetona aj –

[When the sun would be enveloped by black cloud, nothing could be seen and the horizon would be vanished…When the sky would burst out and the stars would be shaken, the sea water turned into ice. When the birds and beasts in the fiery jungle would kill each other and the corpse without head would be buried inside the crack of the dry soil, they would demand to know what was their fault and how the sense and sensibility have been lost.]
The image of darkness that enwraps the earth, in the first line, the image of cactus in the fourth line, the image of crashing sky in the fifth and image of mortal combat between two fellow human beings, heighten the atmosphere of violence and anarchy. This may be fittingly compared to Hughes’s ‘The Scream’, ‘The Accused’ and ‘The Owl Flower’.

Remains of Elmet, Moortown Diary, River, Woolfwatching, The Birthday Letters and Jalee Pasan Hoye Achhe, Samosto Khater Mukhe Poli, and Mati Khonda Purono Koroti

Violence remains an integral part of Hughes’ poetry throughout his final phase of writing. A close reading of Remains of Elmet (1979), Moortown Diary (1979), River (1983) and Woolfwatching (1989) can easily establish this notion, though these books are based upon Hughes’s transformed vision of nature and her relation with man. Poems of his earlier stages like ‘Hawk in the Rain’ and Crow, violence is fomented by numerous dissipating, disintegrating, devastating intrinsic forces of matter, spirit and human psyche. These forces are killing and they war eternally against each other. There is no synthesis and final resolution among these forces. The energy that is generated through this clash is like ‘elan vital’ that is hailed victorious against death. In these earlier works Hughes emphasizes upon the Darwinian theory of ‘survival of the fittest’ and Jungian approach to psycho-analysis. There is no endeavour of establishing a unique, universal, unified identity of the natural forces, numerous metaphysical notions, visions, and isms. Rather, Hughes finds mad pleasure in depicting violent clashes, conflicts, and contradictory forces inherent in the universal order of nature and human lives. In his later four anthologies Hughes’s imagination is occupied with the beauty of nature, particularly landscape. In these books landscape becomes metaphor for a universal vision which embodies violence as an apocalyptic ceremony. By leaps and bound this becomes archetypal pattern of existence which

\[\text{('Ekddin Tao Hobe' [One Day that also would be], Mati Khonda Purono Koroti [Earth-dug Old Skull])}^{146}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{146}Matikonda Purono Koroti, Kolkata: Papyrus, 2009. p. 32.}\]
bears timeless significance. In anthologies of his last phase, nature becomes the material reality of his metaphysical adventure, as commented by a famous critic:

“...Landscape in the poetry of Ted Hughes has always been the material reality in which he has rooted his metaphysical adventure. It provides in his poems the measure of man’s unity with and separation from the natural world.”\(^\text{147}\)

At this stage nature becomes wild, violent beauty and Hughes tries to synthesize and unify numerous discordant forces of nature and human psyche. Yet sudden flashes of his former world of violence can be visible even in his Moortown Diary. This book is, in fact, an anthology of four segments of poems published separately in different times, in a single volume. The first section namely “Moortown” celebrates the beauty of nature and recounts his experience at Devon where Hughes stayed with his father-in-law Jack Orchard. The second part ‘Prometheus and His Crag’ was formerly published in 1973, in limited edition. In this part violence becomes a paradox of creation and destruction, but with an expectation of regeneration of new life through suffering. This differentiates the anthology with the former books Hawk in the Rain and Crow. The third part consists of the poems mostly taken from formerly published Orts (1978). In this part we find a series of seven poems, entitled ‘Seven Dungeon Songs’ which are closely fashioned upon his earlier books of violence. Here violence is explicated through the paradox of creation and destruction. The first poem of the sequence explicates how innocence of the mother earth is corrupted by man:

The Wolf
Gazed down at the babe.
The beast’s gangrenous breath
Clouded the tabula rasa.

The wolf was wounded in the jaw.
The blood dipped
On to the babe’s hands.

Here violence is fomented by a logocentric perception of self and the destruction of the persona’s foster-mother nature. As a result, the ecological balance of mother-nature is at stake. Man persistently corrupts and destroys nature and tries to transcend to the status of God. This breaks the nature’s laws and destroys the inseparable bond between man and nature. The wolf’s deadly eye falls upon and clouded the innocent soul of nature. In the process of conquering nature the wolf too, is fatally wounded. In the skirmish, the babe, that is, the mother-nature surrenders to the wolf. The ‘wolf’ symbolically suggests the destructive, ravenous force of human world. In the second part of the poem it is suggested how offspring of nature becomes the bloody murderer of its mother earth:

**But her murderer, mad-innocent**  
Sucked at her offspring, reckless of blood,  
Consecrating them in fire, muttering  
It is good to be God.

The ecological overtone gets accentuated in the poem as the child becomes grown up and disowns its mother-nature and sucks its blood. In the self-destructive skirmish, he becomes the rising God, the despot who kills his mother-nurse and then exercises his fruitless, futile intellect to reshape and reanimate the ‘mud’ out of which he is created. The logocentric illusion of the self hinders him to understand the cardinal rules of nature that his body and soul, his existence is confined by the laws of nature. As Thomas West says:

“At all events, what ‘Seven Dungeon Songs’ acts out and tries subjectively to induce is simply the mythic coupula ‘I am’ which uttered by the world couples man and world like Prometheus’s first transitive active gestures or Adam’s foot pressed to earth in the perfect continuum (both linguistic and existential) ‘World is am I’.  

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Towards the end of the century Sankha Ghosh becomes more and more acutely concerned with all-pervasive violence in social and political sphere of life. He tends to depict how man becomes mad with power and corrupts life and society. Here too, like Hughes, Ghosh shows the tyranny and callousness of man. Though the perspectives and pattern of thoughts are different, there is a fundamental similarity in their presentation of violence. In the earlier phase of *Hawk in the Rain or Crow*, Hughes presented the bleak state of chaos and universal violence without any hope of unification of the discordant, waring forces of life, nature and god. But here we find a conscious endeavour of discovering the possibility of a regenerated, cohesive, integrated order of the existing forces of violence. Ghosh’s concern is with the erosion of cultural and humanitarian values which bring about conflicts, clashes and carnage in the socio-political arena. The difference is of attitude and observation. Hughes unfolds the instinct and dark psychic forces of man that leads to violence. Ghosh unfolds cultural crisis of values that leads to violence. He lambastes and at the same time laments the overwhelming, bloody state of human world. In Hughes instinct and nature get absolute priority; in Ghosh, culture, intellect and emotion are the leading, decisive and justifying forces. Moreover, in the last few collections of verses like *Jalee Pasan Hoye Achhe* (2004), *Samosto Khater Mukhe Poli* (2007) and *Maati Khonda Purono Koroti* (2009), Ghosh is possessed by contemporary political atrocities and violence in West Bengal. Most of the poems of the anthologies are topical and temporal having a permanent trait of socio-political violence yielding cultural chaos. In a sense, poems of this phase find close affinity with Hughes’s ‘Seven Dungeon Song’. The very first poem ‘Yabar Samoy Bolechhilen’ of *Samosto Khater Mukhe Poli* upholds the devastation of ecological balance by man. At the same time, symbolically the poem suggests the greed and cruelty of man that destroys the soft, green, lively soul of man. The persona says:

Pahader churo theke sagarer kinara abadhi  
Fete yaoa khet yoto agom jangol ar moje yaoa nodi  
Bhese yak sei sware. Abosade ghera  
Nasto hoye achhe sabujera  
Ke take ferabe ar tomra yadi kichhu nai balo?  
Ye dikey yao sudhu prachiner vasmo jhore pade  
Mathar upore
Bandho hoye ase sab chokh
Ei maha krantikale.

[From the peak of the mountain to the coast of the sea, let the cracked land, the dense jungle and the dry river float with that voice. The greeneries have been lost with exhaustion. Who would restore her health if you don't do anything? Look around, the ashes of the old and the aged is sprinkled down upon the head. The eyes begin to close at this great epoch-making time.]

(Yabar Samoy Bolechhilen’, [You have told Before Departure] Somosto Khater Mukhe Pali [Silt on the Face of All Wounds])

The destruction of greenery, corn-fields, remote jungle and river resembles Hughes’s description of the destruction of the mother-nature by her foster-child man in ‘Seven Dungeon Songs’. Of course, the philosophical dimension of logocentric assumption of man by destroying his own creator and nurturer remains absent in Ghosh. Ghosh is rather optimistic. He believes that one day the dismantled universal order would be regenerated into a reintegrated, vigorous, hopeful universe with peace, health and beauty. Through irony and caustic satire Ghosh makes a severe, subversive attack against tyranny, corruption, greed, exploitation, and torture of the rulers. He also ridicules the opportunists belonging to all sections of society, particularly, educated elite class. The poet is vocal against the spineless, ethically depraved, so-called advantageous intellectuals and educated society. Through self-pity and derision the poet presents the diseased society and the source of violence that leads to. In the poem ‘Badal’ (change) Ghosh is bitterly critical both of the rulers who fails to provide justice to his people impartially, in accordance with law and those opportunists who change their colour like chameleon sensing better prospect and opportunity in future. In the very beginning the poet sets the main theme of the poem:

Ekhon ar amader kono ashanti nei
Kenona amra dal badol korechhi
Hoye ghechhi ora.

.........................

Dekho kemon chamatkar kete yachchhe amader krimikit jibon.

[Now we have no troubles because we have changed the party and become ‘other’. Look, how our degraded life is passig on.]


The same anger, nausea and protest against exploitation, greed and tyranny of the rulers and the opportunist groups surrounding the rulers, are nakedly expressed in the poem ‘Bibhuti’, ‘Mando’ and ‘Sabsadhona’. In ‘Mando’ he criticized the cruelty and despotism of rulers. In ‘Sabsadhona’ he lambastes the politics of dead body and in ‘Bibhuti’ criticizes the greed and exploitation of the corrupt regime. In another poem ‘Soksaba’ Ghosh upholds the political violence and murder which becomes so regular a phenomenon that it makes man insensible and heartless. The title ironically suggests that there is neither any mourning nor any congregation to pay homage to the victim’s soul of a political murder. All assemble for politics and power, to secure political advantage of the dead bodies:

Kichhui ar jante chai na ekhon!
Tabler opase dujon dujonke kamde dhorchhe manus
Yekhane chokher jal godie namar katha
Sekhanei sari sari rakto dage fossil.

[I want to know nothing now! Whereas tear should roll down from the eyes, there remain lines of bloody fossils as two persons bite each other from the opposite of the table.]

(‘Soksaba’, [Funeral Party] Samasto Khater Mukhe Poli [Silt on the Face of All Wounds])

The poem ‘Sitkar’ is multi-dimensional in meaning. The poem shows violence in different spheres of life and society. Initially the persona’s dark and sinister vision of

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dripping blood and dropping flesh in the field strewn with corpses set the atmosphere of evil and destruction. The poet tries to unveil the sad paradox of death-in-life existence of man and the victory of dark and evil forces. The ghostly walk of dark and evil forces ruling the earth echoes Ted Hughes’s eternal war of diverse contradicting forces of life and nature and ultimate victory of the dark forces that he identified with nature, ‘red in tooth and claw’:

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\text{Adhibhoutik raktomangsho jhore pade charidike} \\
\text{Amra ekhane neeshade bose sabdo suni tar} \\
\text{Sei dhonijale bhore yai yato pase pode thaka sab} \\
\text{Randhre andhre sada peye tara druto node chode othe.}
\]

[Supernatural blood and flesh drop down around us. We listened to that sound. The corpses are enmeshed with that charming sound. They quickly respond and move.]

(‘Sitkar’ [Erotic Sound], \textit{Samosto Khater Mukhe Poli} [\textit{Silt on the Face of All Wounds}])

Hughes’s two poems ‘Before-dawn twilight, a sky dray as talc’ and ‘Tiger-psalm’ of the anthology part \textit{Earth-numb} echoe violence and terror of his earlier poems of \textit{Hawk} and \textit{Crow}. In the first poem the image of ‘\textit{blackbird}’ ‘in a black terror’ exploding off and we are frightened by a sinister, evil force of destruction. In the second poem the image of ‘\textit{tiger}’ and ‘\textit{machine-guns}’ are recurrent image. Both the images recapitulate the art of murder and destruction in diverse ingenious forms and styles. Both the poems present an apocalyptic vision of violence and destruction, resulting from the exercise of instinctive, autocratic power in human world; dark, destructive inherent force in natural world and a mysterious, chaotic cosmos. Ghosh too, very often comes akin to Hughes’s vision. In the above-mentioned poem ‘Sitkar’ we are frightened to visualize such a fiendish picture as in the above two poems of Hughes:

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\text{Tar pade ei abchha aloy dekhi benche achhe yara} \\
\text{Tara benceh nei; yara more gachhe, due paye hente hente} \\
\text{Pret nishwas niye tara ei prithivi sason kare.}
\]

[Then I see those in shadowy light remain alive, they are not alive; those who have died rule the earth with their ghostly breath and movement.]
Wolfwatching (1989) is another milestone of Hughes’s poetic success. Three main facets of Hughesian fascination are combined together in the anthology. First, he is possessed by animal world as evident from the title of the book itself. Second, towards the twilight of his life, Hughes harks back frequently to the natural beauty of his adolescent Yorkshire district. Third, the bloody, brutal force of violence and destruction is major theme in the collection like his former anthologies. There are a number of poems in the anthology that recounts his experience of World War-I that he gathers from his father as a young boy. This experience is minutely presented in his earlier collections. Here we get repetition of same fatal experience of war his father had gathered as a soldier in the Great War. In ‘Dust As We Are’ the persona explicitly states the predicament of his shocked-returned father from the battle field: ‘My post-war father was so silent / He seemed to be listening.’ Or after two stanzas the persona’s account of his father’s plight is awful:

He had been heavily killed. But we have revived him’

There he sat, killed but alive – so long

As we were very careful.

The picture of awe-stricken, mortified state of his war-shocked father is the revival of his childhood experience and that experience had become his ‘soul’s food’ which the poet identifies as ‘A soup-smell spectre/ Of the massacre of the innocents.’ The persona recounts the same experience of war more lucidly and minutely in ‘For the Duration’. Here we find details of his father’s carrying the ‘wounded’ soldiers, fatal ‘shell-burst’ in front of his father’s collapsed body, ‘the blue scar of the bullet’ at his ankle and ‘a traversing machine-gun’. But the most stunning experience of the persona is his father’s silence. The violence and destruction of the war was so shocking and havoc that it had almost stupefied him. The war-ridden bloody violence is the focal point of Sankha Ghosh’s ‘Karner Swapno’ which closely resemble the spirit of Hughes war poems:

152 *Samasto Khater Mukhe Poli*. Kolkata: Saptorshi, 2007, p. 44.
'Prithivi rudhire abil o astre paribestito hoyachhe'
- Udyogparbo, the Mahabharata.

Takhon se katha sune- sanirbandho sei dak sune
Karno bollen: ‘ami kal ratre swapno dekhechhi ye
Chhunde dichchho tumi ek bhobisyat notun prithivi
Yekhane kothao kono manusher chinhamatro nei
Lal hoye achhe yar chhadano samosto jaladhara
Hader upore har unchu kore tulechhe pahad
Jonie rekhechhe sudhu charpashe anobik bhar
Ar tari shirodeshe hajar stambher prasade ke
Manuser rup dhore dariyechhe prachipratichite

………………………………………………

[The world has become corrupt with blood and surrounded by arms – Udyogparva, the Mahabharata.

In reply Karno told: I have dreamt a dream yesterday night that you have prophesied a new future world where there is no sign of human being, only bones are piled upon to make a hill and has preserved the weight of the atom bomb. On the top of the hill someone builds a huge palace and stands on it in the guise of man, in East and West.]

('Karner Swapno’, [Dreams of Karno] Mati Khonda Purono Karoti [Earth-dug Old Skull])\textsuperscript{153}

In the backdrop of the Indian epic the Mahabharata, Sankha Ghosh unveils the perennial picture of war and violence where evil rules innocents, kills antagonists, and exploits the poor and underdogs. The tyrant very often builds up his palace of pleasure and plenty upon the blood and bones of millions of innocent people. The epigraph suggests the universal, timeless phenomenon of violence. The Darwinian theory of the survival of the fittest and Hobbs’s totalitarian philosophy which Hughes transmuted in his poetic parlance is aptly manifested in Ghosh’s ‘Karner Swapno’. The idea of violence as coercion vs. violence as liberation is well manifested in the amplifying process of violence in the poems of Hughes and Ghosh. The idea is that of

\textsuperscript{153} Matikhonda Purono Koroti, Kolkata: Papyrus, 2009. p. 31.
antagonistic, opposite forces that always fight against evil and destructive. Violence, emanating from these dialectical forces remains victorious. All subversive forces participate in the turmoil of dissipation and the outcome is sad, bleak and hopeless. Though Sartre believes in establishing a new integrated, synthesized whole, a state of peace and harmony after liberation from oppression of the tyrant rulers, Hughes finds no such utopian world of integration and unification of opposite forces. On the contrary, violence remains for ever, a proactive natural force that acts as the most powerful, dominating force in the world, in national and international perspectives.

Hughes unlocks the most exciting chapter of his poetic career with the publication of his famous *Birthday Letters* (1998). It’s an epoch-making book in modern literary history. Most of the poems are autobiographical in nature and confessional in mode. They deal directly with the poet’s tempestuous relationship with his first wife and a creative genius herself, Sylvia Plath. The poems recount their relationship right from their first fateful meeting, through their courtship and marriage, their bitter sour conjugal life with their two children, to the suicide of Plath and the shock he received thereafter. The poems cover almost thirty-five years of his poetic life. Sylvia- Hughes myth continues to haunt the literary circle throughout decades and Hughes remains almost silent regarding their relationship till he decides to publish *Birthday letters*. In the anthology Hughes does not celebrate their love but explores the dark, deep, dungeon of their feverish, fiery, agonized relationship. From the very beginning Hughes shows his penchant to portray the spiritual and psychic chaos of Plath which is solely responsible for the fatal separation of them and her suicide. In the poem ‘The Shot’ Hughes paints her as a psychotic who suffers from Electra complex and never comes out of her father’s shadow:

...............Your Daddy,
The god with the smoking gun. For a long time
Vague as mist, I did not even know
I had been hit,
Or that you had gone clean through me –
To bury yourself at last in the heart of the god.

(‘The Shot’, *Birthday Letters*)
Does the account seem justified or should it be re-evaluated? In the next poem ‘Trophies’ Hughes paints her in the bad light of having the instinct of the panther, the most fatal beast of prey. The shocking description of their relationship is given thus:

The panther? It had already dragged you
As if in its jaws, across Europe.

Its jungle prints
Hit your page. Plainly the blood
Was your own. With a laugh I
Took its full weight. Little did I know
The shock attack of a big predator.

(Trophies, Birthday Letters)

The poet concludes that he bears with the pain and agony of the love that he receives from the predatory Plath with ‘smiling’ face and takes off her ‘hair-band’ and ‘ring’ during his love-making, as his victory ‘trophies’. ‘18 Rugby Street’ is one of the famous poems in the sequence. The poet gives an elaborate account of their first love-making in the Rugby-street flat. Here violence in love is well manifested through their tempestuous relationship. As the poet recounts the actions and behavior of Plath and paints a psychological trait of her mind, it gives the picture of a feverish, impulsive, panic-stricken and traumatic psychopath. She is compared to a great bird of prey at the moment of her love-making. The description of different parts of her body offers a chaotic picture of her soul:

And I became aware of the mystery
Of your lips, like nothing before in my life,
The aboriginal thickness. And of your nose,
Broad and Apache, nearly a boxer’s nose,
Scorpio’s obverse to the Semitic eagle
That made every camera of your enemy,
The jailer of your vanity, the traitor
In your Sexual Dreams Incorporated,
Nose from Attila’s horde: a prototype face
That could have looked up at me through the smoke
Of a Navajo campfire.
(‘18, Rugby Street’, Birthday Letters)

Such description of Plath places her as a neurotic and it suggests an unhealthy relationship between the two. Instead of love-making, it seems they found maddened pleasure in tearing off the soft, sensitive fibre of their soul. Both are aggressive and attacking. Violence in their diseased relationship created wide breach between the two which led to the fatal suicide of Plath. There is no such personal agony in love in the poetry of Ghosh. But in the poem ‘The Badland’ Hughes turns again to the hellish picture of atomic destruction. He mentions place name of Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Manhattan. The violence is that of the atomic war which destroys millions of lives. The agony is well expressed in the following lines:

In North Dakota
We met smoke of the underground burning –
A fistula of smouldering bitumen.
Hellish. Or lit by lighting. Or
Dante’s, to coach us. Ignited
By the moon’s collision. I saw it in a dream
Coming bigger and closer till almost
The size of the earth it crashed
Into the Atlantic –
I watched it from the point of Manhattan.
The earth took it with with a tremendous jolt –
Impact and penetration.

(‘The Badland’, Birthday Letters)

The destruction by the atomic fire finds a parallel in Ghosh’s ‘Karner Swapno’ which too, gives an elaborat account of blood-shed and carnage in the atomic war. Thus the spirit of violence in the poems of both the poets is almost similar, though they have different outlook and approach to violence in the world and violence in life.
Linguistic and textual violence

Linguistic and textual violence in the poetry of both Hughes and Ghosh is one of the most dominant aspects in their poetry. Hughes’s poetry in fact, gets its high acclaim due to its epoch-making usage of language. Hughes is a past-master in the use of language, rhetoric and rhyme. Textual violence in his poetry is another phenomenon which is strong, effective and electrifying. Linguistic violence is an all-embracing phenomenon in the poetry of both Hughes and Ghosh. In their poetry violence is a dominant characteristic, though they differ largely from each other in regard to their use of content, form, style, linguistic practice and mode of presentation. Where Ted Hughes’s poetry is made up of a dense, tough, unconventional vocabulary, Sankha Ghosh generally uses simple, ordinary, colloquial diction. Ted Hughes’s syntax is puzzling, complex, and obscure, Sankha Ghosh’s moves with ease and spontaneity offering, very often, the clear meaning of the context. In Ted Hughes’s poetry we see odd combinations of words forming pregnant and striking phrases. He uses startling Hopkinsian compounds. This warring of words can be seen as part of the linguistic violence of poetry. About his successful use of vocabulary and syntax A.E. Dyson comments:

“Ted Hughes’s control of words and metre in his best poems is profoundly mature already; the style is clearly the expression of a serious and adult intelligence …..poetry need not always evaluate experience. Sometimes its main function is to extend awareness, creating new areas which the reader can assimilate into his own total morality later……Ted Hughes more than any recent poet I can think of, has the skill to do this. The quality of violence, which many of our finest novelists (Angus Wilson, William Golding, and others) explore as moralists, is presented in Ted Hughes’s poems in a manner which makes us more alive to what certain forces in modern politics and life really are.”

In both ego-centric and impersonal poems Sankha Ghosh’s practice of rhyme and metre is a combination of tradition and individual innovation. His use of

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colloquial diction and natural expression is a conscious blow to the artificial, avant-garde, anti-establishment regime of the 50s and 60s, whereas Ted Hughes used unconventional phraseology and tough vocabulary. Formally, both Hughes and Ghosh are at one and the same time traditionalists as well as innovators. As a traditionalist Sankha Ghosh follows the Tagorean tradition of four or six line stanzas and as an innovator writes in half-rhyme, free-verse and in couplet form. Ted Hughes as a traditionalist shows his preference for the four line stanza and as an innovator he lets his lines run frequently on to the next stanza. He uses caesura and free verse. He handles half-rhymes with skill.

Thematic violence finds exquisite expression in Ted Hughes’s and Sankha Ghosh’s poems. The multiple layers of violence in the world are unveiled by Ted Hughes through the use of symbols, images, metaphors, allegories and aphorisms, with all their brutality, cruelty and ferocity. Sankha Ghosh’s presentation of violence is very often direct, though sometimes, he presents violence through irony and satire. Both the poets are keen in using myths and legends as a tool of unveiling different layers of violence that exist as an unchanged reality from time immemorial to the present.

Much of the effect of linguistic violence is manifested in Hughes’s heavy use of dense and unconventional tough vocabulary with excessive use of consonant sound. This makes his poetic language less melodious and more ponderous. The sound it creates is not only discordant and jarring but explosive. Each word and phrase stands like independent tower of strength and meaning, yet forming a unified, integral whole. Moreover, his fascination for using excessive archaic jargon blurs the distinction of prose and verse language. Most of his phrases and compounds are strange, uneasy and baffling. Hughes also shows his careless disregard for the rules of punctuation. His aphoristic and terse expression combined with solidity of sound and amplifying meanings gives new dimension to his text. He speaks abruptly and less but creates atomic effect. Each of his word and phrase is like fiery thunderbolt. His sounds are killing like his monstrous nature. His compressed, elliptical style makes his poems eccentric, obscure and elusive. Ghosh, on the contrary, is both a traditionalist and an innovator. His words are simple, colloquial and free-flowing but his expressions are brief, striking and abrupt. The economy of expression makes his poem pregnant in multifarious meanings and suggestions. Another aspect of linguistic
violence in the poems of both is the conscious breaking of grammatical order in plethora of expressions.

Both the poets are fond of using remote myths and legends in contemporary context. This blurs time gap and depicts violence as an essential component in all ages and in all time. The technique of using myths and legends as linguistic and textual tools, are matched with thematic violence they present to render a new meaning in the contemporary context in both Hughes and Ghosh.

Linguistic violence in Hughes is best manifested in the poems of his earlier period, particularly, *The Hawk in the Rain, Lupercal* and Gaudete. The title poem of the anthology ‘The Hawk in the Rain’ is a testimony to prove this. In the poem the vocabulary is tough and dense and the compound words and phrases are so strangely innovative that it baffles the reader initially. Words are combined in the most possible unusual and eccentric manner and the grammatical order is distorted. The very first line is stunning: ‘I drown in the drumming ploughland.’ The words ‘drown’ and ‘drumming ploughland’ initially baffle us. But the close study of the metaphor suggests that the speaker is immersed in the drum-like sound of the huge rainfall. Again, ‘plough’ and ‘land’ are two separate words, combined together without any hyphen and is qualified by the adjective ‘drumming’. This is peculiar and striking. Again, such phrases as ‘weightless quiet’ in the line ‘His wings hold all creation in a weightless quiet’ and ‘streaming air’ in the line ‘Steady as a hallucination in the streaming air’ are fantastic. The intrinsic meaning is too deep and eclectic to grasp by common readers. The first phrase may suggest dead silence of cosmos and the second simile suggests that wings of the bird are as steady as hallucination. Now question is that can hallucination be steady? The paradox implies that the bird’s wings are strong and steady but the bird is, in fact, fantastical and strongly alive only in the poet’s vision. Again, the ‘banging wind’ is compared to a killer. Violence is further exploded in the next stanza where the speaker says:

‘And rain hacks my head to the bone…..’

………………………………………

And I

Bloodily grabbed dazed last-moment-counting
Morsel in the earth’s mouth, strain towards the master-
Fulcrum of violence where the hawk hangs still.
The destructive act of the predator, killer bird is matched with equal forceful and violent expression. ‘Bloodily grabbed dazed’- these three strongly stressed words are heavy both semantically and audibly. It suggests the murderous act of the voracious bird of prey. The bird is merciless. It dashed the head, smashed the body and eats up its prey. The bird acts like a grinding machine. Violence in nature is transfused through the violence in language. The vocabulary is tough and heavy, weighing equally ponderous semantics. The syntax is bold and innovative. It repudiates, rather destroys every rules of grammar. The syntax is formed with the odd combination of jargon and compounds which reminds Hopkins and later Dylan Thomas.

‘Snail’ is another beautiful poem which is subtle, slim and felicitous. Its economy of expression with perfect compression of language is a revolutionary innovation in language. Moreover, Hughes repudiates traditional grammatical rules of punctuation and lets the poem run uninterrupted slowly, silently like the snail. The poem has no full stop and only a number of commas, just to maintain the comparison of the snail’s features and nature with eels, whales and dog’s noses. The few similes he uses are concise and measured. The snail is as old as life on earth. Since the beginning of life, snail continues to exist among races. It is a lively creature which conquered all odds and oddities and survives to rise as a victor. The poem, with minimum number of words achieves maximum effect. Though not included in any of his anthologies, the poem, I think, is a great achievement of Hughes’s, thematically as well linguistically:

Out of earliest ooze, old
Even by sea-stone time,
Slimmed as eels, wrinkled as whales,
And cold
As dog’s noses,
And slow, sap-slow,
Under their coiled cauls of shells
Snails
Climb
The roses
Structurally, the poem is interesting. It begins and ends in a single breath and the last three lines have only three words, excepting the article ‘the’ in the last line.

In the poem ‘Hawk Roosting’ the poet seems to encounter the epiphanic moment of power and violence and is elated. About the handling of so complex and abstract theme in the poem A. E. Dyson finely comments:

“The hawk’s victorious moment of triumph – might without mercy, conquest without effort, privilege without responsibility, energy without consciousness of end – is explored in a vividly memorable phrases (the words and statements suggesting animal consciousness deeper than either words or statements); and remains without any specific comment from the poet, but unmistakably, the embodiment of one possible mode of being
‘I kill where I please because it is all mine.
There is no sophistry in my body:
My manners are tearing off heads –

The allotment of death.”155

The stark, bare, raw mode of presentation of the killing bird adequately highlights the pitiless violence of the famous bird of prey. Here style matches the theme and manner dramatically narrates the bald moments of murderous actions of the killer bird. Almost grotesque expression of phrases and metaphors; twist and turns of metre in wrestling with meaning and general sense of violent state of being and its burning experience is deftly manifested through violence in language. The tradition of using tough, robust and vigorous vocabulary and puzzling syntax continue. This leads to ambivalence and obscurity. There are plethora of such use of vocabulary and syntax. ‘Fire –Eater’ for example, we have such uncomfortable combination of words: ‘those stars are the fleshed forebears/ of these dark hills, bowed like labourers.’ In the poem ‘View of a Pig’ we have the following lines: ‘They chop a half-moon clean out. /

They eat cinders, dead cats.’ And then in the poem ‘November’ we have the following line ‘the thorns/ Quivered with glassy verticles’ or the description of the pike in the poem ‘Pike’ as ‘killers from the egg: the malevolent aged grim’. The staccato language continues to explode in one after other poem of Hughes. In an apparently insignificant poem ‘Cadenza’ the robust words and ghostly images appear:

A bat with a ghost in its mouth
Sturck at by lightnings of silence –

Blue with sweat, the violinist
Crashes into the orchestra, which explodes.

(Cadenza, Wodwo)

In the poem ‘Apple Dumps’ we come across the following phrase: ‘A dawn-lipped apocalypse kissing the sleeper’. And in the poem ‘Ghost Crabs’ we have such phraseology as the following: “a bristling surge of tall and staggering specters”, “the convulsion in the roots of blood, in the cycles of concurrence”. The same may be traced in the poem ‘Gog’ ‘Out of the blood-dark womb, gallops bowed the horseman of iron./ The blood crossed Knight, the Holy Warrior, hooded with/ iron , the seraph of the blek edge.’ Another example of Hughes’s use of super simple, super ugly, naked and explosive expression is found in the poem ‘The Summoner’:

Spectral, gigantified,
Protozoic, blood-eating.

The carapace
Of foreclosure.

The cuticle
Of final arrest.

Among crinklings of oak-leaves – an effulgence,
Occasionally glimpsed.

(‘The Summoner’, Cave Birds)
‘Thrushes’ is one of most remarkable poems of Hughes. The ferocity and violence of the bird is matched with terse, penetrating, sharp expression in the poem. The very appearance of the bird is suggestive of cruelty and the metaphor used to convey the message is as sharp as a sword. The bird is presented as ‘more coiled steel than living’ and having ‘dark, deadly eye.’ When they attack their prey, they do so with ‘a start, a bounce and a stab’. Their swiftness and readiness in attacking their prey is conveyed to us by the use of the following words: ‘No indolent procrastination and no yawning stares.’

One of the greatest examples of eccentric use of language and rhetoric is manifested in the poem ‘Second Glance at a Jaguar’. Here we find the use of tough vocabulary and unusual kind of similes and metaphors. ‘A terrible, stump-legged waddle/ Like a thick Aztec disemboweller’. And here is a line in which the unusual kind of simile occurs: ‘carrying his head like a brazier of spilling embers.’ Then there are such difficult and archaic jargon and idioms as the following: ‘He swipes a lap at the water-trough’; ‘Swivelling the ball of his heel’; ‘Club-tail lumped along behind gracelessly’; ‘Spurred by the rosettes, the Cain-brands.’ Such use of words and expressions is suggestive of linguistic innovation and poetic experimentation. The poet achieves high acclaim by critics and commentators. I think this is one of the most appropriate examples of violence in language and metre in the verse of Hughes.

Hughes’s another great anthology, Crow seeks to explore, in the poet’s own words, “in a super- simple and super- ugly language which would in a way shed every thing except just what he wanted to say without any other consideration”.156 This statement of Hughes highlights on the style, language and structure of not only the poems of ‘Crow’ series, but most of his poetic output. The comment suggests that his poetry is essentially a continuation of the native English tradition and he reinvigorated the English rural idiom with a new sense of role and purpose. As regard to structural formation of his verse, the poet does not keep any prejudice and discards the traditional pattern of rules. On the contrary, Hughes reconstructs the deconstructed structural pattern of verse by setting a completely original and new organism of his own. He endeavours to bind together diverse disarrayed structural elements in a new,

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reintegrated fusion of innovated mechanism which paradoxically controls and at the same time renders his verse into a freshly new liberation. In this way, he is both an iconoclast and a founder of virgin poetics. He achieves integrity, unity and cohesion in every individual poem of his by dismantling the traditional pattern of imposed structural unity. In stanza formation he repudiates rules and lets each of his line run liberally which may connect or may not to the stanza, next line. Each line, even each word of him is strikingly individual. Of course, they are chained together to form a coherent pattern of existential state of being which paradoxically it opposes. This metaphysical dialectic is imposed upon Hughes’s structural pattern of verse also. As regard to rhyme and metre, Hughes shatters the myth of traditional rhyme scheme and metrical form. On the contrary, he develops the use of free verse to the extent of his design and purpose. Each of his poems in the sequence of Crow or Cave Birds is well-knit, compact and self-sufficient within their own structural periphery, yet each of them is an arena of linguistic elements which fight against each other. This idea of linguistic and textual violence gets support from one of the great critics Geoffrey Thurley:

“.... ‘Density’? ‘Correctness’? ‘Body’? ‘The strength of the English Language’? Surely, these lines have them, or the terms have no meaning. If Hughes, like Dylan Thomas before him, does not ‘keep up’ the English language, it is impossible to conceive what or who could. The failure of the academic world to acknowledge Hughes demonstrated that behind the concern for ‘body’ of the language, lay the effectively dictatorial policy of ‘positive values’; systematic self-denigration, and the ultimately corrupting concern for ‘integrity’. Against all these laws, Hughes offended grievously: neither interested in irony nor distrustful of himself, he did not seem aware of ‘integrity’ at all. He thereby raised in an uncomfortable form the doubts that must always have existed within the academic establishment: how much of significance can continue to be created by poets so obsessed with showing their awareness of their own intellectual transgression, of the ‘unease’ they alone saw beneath the façade? The effect of power in Hughes’s verse
Like Hughes, Ghosh is not a radical innovator. Yet he brings about fresh lease of life in the language of Bengali verse. He follows tradition in dealing with language, form and style and at the same time, deftly employs vocabulary and syntax of his own choice. Linguistic violence takes place in his successive inter-mixture of prose and rhyme. His jargon is common, colloquial and ordinary, yet it is surprisingly refined. The use of everyday words in the text of poetry struck the sensibility and taste of the readers. In this respect, Ghosh is just the opposite of Hughes. Since the beginning of his maiden anthology, *Dinguli Raatguli* the poet repudiates the so-called ‘poetic’ language and writes by employing common, prosaic jargon. This is daring and challenging. Ghosh’s credit lies in the fact that the readers welcome his writing from the very beginning. The very first poem ‘Dinguli Raatguli’ is written in prose and only two stanzas in poetic form. In one of his poems ‘Kabor’ we find the use of such simple diction:

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amar janya ektukhani kabor khodo sarbosaha
Lajja lukoi kancha matir tale
Gopan rakto ya kichhutuk achhe amar shorre, tar
Sabtukutei sasya yeno fale.
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[You, who tolerate all, dig my grave so that I can hide shame under soft earth. The hidden blood that is still there in my body may help sprouting crops.]

(``Dinguli Raatguli´´, [The Days the Nights] *The Days the Nights*)

Most of the poems of *Murkho Bodo, Samajik Noy* and *Baborer Prarthona* are written, like Hughes’s in a ‘super-simple’ language, though not in a ‘super-ugly’

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language. The words and phrases are simple but the expressions are sharp and pointed. All components of each line are measured and calculated. The terse and aphoristic manner of expression is another aspect of linguistic violence that very often, to maintain pace and power, over-rules the grammatical order.

In ‘Indro Dhorechhe Kulish’ we experience the economy of forceful expression. The syntactical compression is really commendable.

In his Panjore Dander shabdo (1980) we find a series of sixty four poems, all untitled. The poems symbolically record the chaotic state of human psyche and the precarious state of being. All the poems are written in four lines stanza form, yet there is no formal rhythmic pattern in the poems. The violence in the universal order of being is translated in the violence in language. In poem no. 2, Ghosh uses images of murder and destruction, of war and infernal darkness:

Jhade bhanga lamp-post eka pode achhe dhankhete
Siore jonaki, sunye kalpurusher tarobari
Yuddho hoye gachhe shesh, nishsabdo prahor dashdike
Ye dike takao ratri prokando nikosh sarobor.

[Storm-uprooted, the lamp-post lies lonely in the fields,
Fireflies at its head, and above, Orion's sword,
The battle is done, the hour still, all around
The night looms like an immense, opaque sea.]

(Poem no. 2, Panjore Dander Shabdo [Oars in the Ribs])

In most of his later anthologies like Mukh Dheke Yai Bigyapone, Dhum Legechhe Hrikomole, Linei Chhilam Baba, Shaber Upore Samiana (1996), and Chhander Bhtore Eto Andhakar (1999) Ghosh experiments with the use of diction, syntax, rhyme and rhetoric. He also breaks the predetermind structural pattern of verse and sets the text at its liberty. Side by side, with the use of traditional structural

pattern, like Hughes, Ghosh too, endeavours to explore infinite resourcefulness of linguistic innovation and textual form. Linguistic and textual violence take place in the poems of both Hughes and Ghosh. Violence is manifested in their poems in theme, form, technique and style; in rhyme and metre; in the use of stanza division; in the inter-mixture of prose and poetry and of course, in the use of numerous myths and legends in contemporary context. In spite of superficial differences, violence in the language of both Hughes and Ghosh is one of the indispensable basic components that make them of what they really are.