CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have tried to establish that violence is one of the cardinal forces in the poetry of T. S. Eliot, Jibanananda Das, Ted Hughes, Sankha Ghosh, Seamus Heaney and Joy Goswami - poets from diverse cultures, encompassing a very wide range and spanning nearly a century. Violence in the human world is closely related to violence in poetry, and the violence of poetry, that is, linguistic-textual violence, is inseparably related to and depends upon violence in the world. Violence in language and text may also depict an evolution in linguistic-textual history and/or revolutionary changes brought about by breaking away from the traditional use of text, discourse and language. The chaos in the physical-metaphysical world and the psychic-spiritual universe meet the human linguistic operating system of a poet and violence erupts with vast, blistering energy. I have tried to locate this violence and its dissipating, disintegrating, chaotic force while reading the poems of the above-mentioned poets.

I have tried to highlight the multifarious perspectives of violence in the poems of these three sets of poets. Even domestic conflicts and violence may have a decisive impact on their poems. Psycho-sexual violence also gets reflected in the violence found in the poetry of all three sets of poets. Violence in nature is another phenomenon which no poet could ignore. Of course, this violence is very often corroborated and communicated in terms of violence in the human world. The phenomenon of linguistic-textual violence is pervasive in the poems of all three sets of poets as I have tried to discuss in the preceding chapters.

As to the representation of violence in the poetry of T. S. Eliot and Jibanananda Das, discussed in Chapter I of this thesis, I have tried to show how both Eliot and Das have had similar impulses and incentives in breaking away radically from the linguistic-textual tradition set down by their predecessors. In this regard, there are abundant similarities between the two poets. Both the poets belonged to the same era; both had similar challenging historical-cultural perspectives and both played the role of a rebel and a heretic in respect of repudiating and demolishing traditional styles and techniques of writing poetry. They gained the status of iconoclasts by their original, innovative, inventive and ingenious technique, style, linguistic usage and textual orientation.
Violence in the language of both Eliot and Das is an all-pervasive phenomenon - at the phonological, morphological and syntactical level; in rhyme and metre; in stanza division; in the use of typography and the use of vowel and consonant sounds. Both incline to the heavy use of ellipses, dots and dashes. Both have amalgamated alien diction/s in their poetic discourse. Very often both Eliot and Das mix up rhyme, half-rhyme and free-verse. In their poems narrative, dramatic, lyric and reflective modes are used to give shape and displace semantic suggestions. Many other techniques, like compression, the use of uncommon symbols, exotic images and remote mythical atrocities and violence, have been employed by both the poets. From the pattern of their avant-garde mode of writing, it quite clearly emerges that both poets consciously broke traditional patterns of grammatical and linguistic order and turned their poetry into apparently illogical and disarrayed shapes, primarily in order to convey the violence of the world they perceived.

In Chapter II, I have examined the poems of Ted Hughes and Sankha Ghosh. Here I have tried to show how Hughes presents the fundamental ferocity of nature, as well as human nature, shorn of all cultural and humane considerations. An awful, bizarre yet epiphanic experience is achieved when we come across the naked truth of beauty, ugliness, dread and void and look at the representation of violence in Hughes’s poems through his ‘super-simple and super ugly’ language. Through his poems Hughes shows the murderous, ravenous and predatory nature of nature as well as of human beings. Long before Hughes, Nietzsche had unveiled the truth of this sham, pseudo-cultural, pseudo-linguistic prepossession of false and illusory notion as truth. He had said:

“a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms – in short, a sum of human relations, which have been enhanced, transposed, and embellished poetically and rhetorically, and which after long use seem firm, canonical, and obligatory to a people: truths are illusions about which one has forgotten that this is what they are.”


Through a comparative reading with Hughes, I have shown in Ghosh’s poems the same representation of violence in the world as well as linguistic-textual violence. But his poems do not have the span of ideas, ideals and deep philosophic vision that we find in Hughes. Hughes contravenes the idea of a benevolent, righteous and perfect almighty god and shows god as anarchic, tyrannical, imperfect and fiendish. His God is malevolent and tyrannical - a dark, sinister and destructive force. Ghosh, in contrast 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 socio-political clashes and conflicts, racial hatred and sexual violence against women. He never raises question about the ‘ways of God to man’. On the contrary, his poetry is deeply rooted in a profound faith in God.

Through my reading of violence in the poems of Ted Hughes and Sankha Ghosh I have tried to show that violence is a ruling principle, an omnipresent force in their poetry. It determines the character, colour, quality and strength of discourse and semantics in their works. From the very beginning, violence dominates Hughes’s poetry. Ghosh also reflects the socio-political world of tyranny, conflict, and bloodshed. With regard to violence in the human world, both Hughes and Ghosh have shown their concern about cultural anarchy, historical duplicity, socio-political instability, moral depravity, spiritual bankruptcy and psychological disorder and chaos. Both have shown violence in the world of nature and the universe at large, which is integrally related to violence in the human world. But the difference between them is that while Ghosh’s universe is based on values and ideals that human beings create for their needs and purposes, Hughes shows not the trimmed garden but the dark natural forest where fear, danger and death reign supreme. He does not attempt to meliorate nature, or appropriate it to his cultural predisposition. He shows the innate ferocity and murderoussness of nature and of human nature.

As for the representation of violence in their poetry, Ghosh has upheld different metaphysical abnormalities and anomalies as well as the cruelty of man to man. Violence in his poems is an essential element of violence in the universal order of nature. On the other hand, in Hughes’s poetry we always come across a dark, gloomy and sinister cloud that hangs over human fate and when it rains, it rains only blood; 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 in future - only annihilation. Fear and dread is the state; battle and blood is the law; annihilation and extinction is the destiny of Hughes’s poems. But Ghosh is ever optimistic. He dreams of a golden age of peace, prosperity and beauty, free from exploitation, corruption and the tyranny of man over man.

In the last section of Chapter II, I have tried to point out that violence is an all-embracing phenomenon in the poetry of both Hughes and Ghosh, though they differ from each other with regard to the use of form, style, 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 may be puzzling, complex, and obscure, Sankha Ghosh’s moves with ease and spontaneity, offering, very often, the clear meaning of the context. In 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 his poetry. 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 colloquial diction and natural expression is a conscious blow to the artificial, avant-garde, anti-establishment regime of the 50s and 60s. 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 and handles half-rhymes with skill.

The multiple layers of violence in the world are unveiled by Hughes through the use of symbols, images, metaphors, allegories and aphorisms, while Ghosh’s presentation of violence is very often direct, though sometimes he presents violence through irony and satire. Both poets use myths and legends as tools to unveil different kinds and layers of violence.

In the next chapter, I have tried to make a comparative reading of violence in the poetry of Seamus Heaney and Joy Goswami. Different kinds of violence and their multifarious manifestations are ingeniously used in Heaney’s poetry which lends him a unique status in English language poetry. On the other hand, by virtue of his
exceptionally gifted poetic art and vision; his brilliant technical mastery; his innovative stylistic and linguistic usage and above all, his superb power in translating violence in physical and metaphysical reality into violence in poetry, Goswami establishes himself as an heir and natural descendant of the literary/cultural heritage of Jibanananda Das and Sankha Ghosh in the post-Tagorean era. Though Heaney and Goswami represent two different cultures, there are close affinities between them in unfolding physical and metaphysical violence which they tend to translate into violence in their poetry as well as the linguistic violence of their verse.

I have tried to depict that in personal, professional and familial life the poets remain far apart, yet, strangely enough, the poems of both uphold the same precarious nature of existence; the same psychological fear and dread, spiritual chaos and disintegration. Heaney is seriously disturbed by a profound sense of identity crisis throughout his poetic career. Being Irish he is to be faithful to the cause of his country; being Catholic he must remain loyal to his community and religious faith; being a poet of the English language he must remain indebted to and respectful towards the British linguistic-literary lineage. These ambivalent, conflicting forces had a decisive impact on the themes, forms, and structures of Heaney’s poems. On the other hand, throughout his poetic career, Goswami continues to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct the theme, form and structure of his poetry. A ‘provisional’ reading of his poems yields some determinate meanings of his poetic discourse. This can lead to a critical close reading which expands these provisional meanings into an infinite range of significations. But again, when these diverse significations are gathered together like the beads of a rosary they form a complete whole possessing a vast range of meanings and suggestions.

Historical-mythical atrocities and the violence of the Northern Troubles are represented in Heaney’s poems throughout his poetic career. His ‘bog poems’ memorialize the atrocities and violence committed by ancient Irish tribes in the name of ritual sacrifice. Similarly, in present-day Ireland, religious disrespect, ethnic intolerance and political mistrust and hatred among the people of Northern Ireland are so deeply rooted and strongly sustained that it seems almost impossible to bring to a peaceful and amicable solution of the core issues of conflict and violence. Heaney’s view of violence from past to present is one of continuation and repetition of the barbarity and cruelty of humans upon fellow human beings.
Like Heaney, Goswami has been preoccupied with violence in the world and represents it through symbols, images, myths, and allusions of diverse kinds. Over and over again, Goswami presents political violence and atrocities committed during the Naxalite movement in the seventies and later. I have tried to show that in respect of thematic presentation, both the poets have vast range and versatility. The poems of Heaney contextualized the huge hoard of his Anglo-Irish literary heritage; the Irish cultural, mythic, literary lineage; historical, archeological, anthropological explorations of Ireland and the Irish Troubles. With regard to the themes of Goswami’s poems, human beings, nature and the universe come together. Most of his poems are songs of life. Like a minstrel, the poet sings the saga of the vicissitudes of life; its births and deaths, failures and successes, loves and hatreds, its deprivations and exploitations, its struggles and sufferings, its ferocity and helplessness. All through his poetic journey Goswami endeavours to explore the human condition within the universal order. What he visualizes is a chaotic, disintegrated, nihilistic, bleak force that continually destroys and destabilizes the order of the universe. Each time, after his journey’s end, he discovers no peaceful abode of God or Garden of Eden, but an anarchic void, a shapeless, formless, nameless, blank, dreadful, nightmarish. Here all questions and meanings, all aims and endeavours, all aspirations and ideologies, all striving come to halt, a stand-still, a deadlock.

The linguistic and textual violence in the poetry of both Heaney and Goswami are a kind of celebration of violent resurgence of a new and livid discourse which I find spellbinding. In this respect, the notable aspects of violence are the revolutionary use of diction and jargon; rhetoric and rhyme; brief, terse, compressed expressions; simultaneous use of diverse modes of writing, like the lyric, narrative, dramatic and reflective; and other stylistic and technical innovations. The texts of both poets are battle-grounds where we find a ravaging wrestling of jargon – native, alien, obsolete; grammatical lawlessness among morphological and syntactical segments; imagistic shock and symbolic surprise; an inherent clash of competence and performance and ever-shifting semantic possibilities. The hieroglyphics of Heaney are a notable aspect of linguistic violence in his poetry. Goswami’s diction, too, as I have tried to show, contains metamorphosed, prismatic pearls. All jargon – poetic or prosaic; conventional or obsolete; slang or Sanskrit are transmuted in his texts into a transcendentally meaningful, magical cadence; sonorous, sensuous, shivering;
composite, dialectical, distorted force; beauty, dread and void; a complete blank; a black force that holds all creation and destruction together.

A study of these two poets reveals how their technique helps in locating the inter-textual and contextual references which again are a selection of undecided possibilities, wrestling sense out of present, absent (non-present), subjective and relative ‘meanings’. In a sense, the text body of most of the great poems of both Heaney and Goswami proffer only flashes or hallucinations of meaning rather than what we commonly understand by meaning. In a sense, the textual violence unveils an epiphanic universe, at least aesthetically; and again antithetically, a destructive, demonic, dystopian universe.

Stylistic innovation reaches amazing heights in the poems of both Heaney and Goswami. Goswami, in fact, is a past-master in this regard. Readers can be taken aback with the huge hoard of resources in discovering the unheard music, melody and cadence of a great art. This is a never-ending process. Both the poets are successful in weaving a vacant shuttle. Goswami, like Heaney in his poetry, has travelled a rich boundary between conscious and unconscious and at the same time, fuses physical and metaphysical exploration. With regard to thematic and linguistic-textual violence, their credit lies in transmuting violence into a potent force for poetry. The anarchy and disintegration represented through their poems only uphold truth and reality.

When I started exploring violence in the poems of the three sets of poets discussed above I thought I had found a symmetry, balance, orchestration and uniformity of violence in the poems of each set of poets. But as I proceeded I was taken aback to discover the range of diversity and dissimilarity in thematic presentation, linguistic application, stylistic innovation and psychic-spiritual exploration. Through my diachronic study I have endeavored to show aspects of violence are presented by all the three sets of poets. I have also tried to show the unique mechanisms of linguistic maneuvering, stylistic innovation and textual presentation in the poetic discourse of all the six poets discussed.

After the end of my personal journey of reading the poems of the six poets discussed here, my path yet remains unfinished, my voyage incomplete, the result of my investigation inconclusive and, quite unlike Milton’s ‘calm of mind, all passion spent’, I found that violence renders the void and blankness infinite and their meaning impalpable as they are ever cumulative and ever changing. This creates a twist in our
soul and psyche as we fail to arrive at our destination of a meaningful world of beauty and truth. The final realization is therefore, not ‘calm of mind’ but anguish and a sense of utter futility in a meaningless existence. Through my reading I have tried to show that violence is an eclectic, quintessential force in the verse of the studied poets, and it plays the role of a catalyst and upholds the truth of life and the world; the strange, precarious predicament of man in the universal order of existence.