CONCLUSION

Poetry is born in grief

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Throughout our various analyses of images in the work of the eight poets from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, the refrain has been that the images, their meanings and the sensibilities underlying them, bear clear marks of the tropics. The images interpreted under three categories—"Nature," "People and Belief" and "Man-made Objects"—profoundly correspond to the nature and the people, to the traditions and the values of the Indian subcontinent and understandably so because a poet "attains for himself vision and possession of the experience engendered between his own soul and the life around him, and communicates that experience at once individual and collective."¹ Therefore, the debate posed in the beginning is resolved against the criticism of English poetry of the three countries well represented by the opinions of David McCutchion² and M.K. Naik.³

The nature that is evoked in the images is of oppositions and extremes, differentiated by freezing cold or scorching heat,

¹ Maud Bodkin, Archetypal Patterns in Poetry (London: Oxford University Press, 1934)8.
² Quoted in page no.2.
³ "Indian Poetry in English is thus only occasionally poetry and only sometimes, Indian, having been made as England, in an uncomfortably large number of cases." in "The Indianness of Indian Poetry in English," Indian Poetry in English, ed., Hari Mohan Prasad (Aurangabad: Parimal Prakashan, 1983)30.
unmitigated drought or devastating flood; it is benevolent and malevolent, celestial and terrestrial, a source of joy and a source of misery. This dual attitude of the poets towards nature refers to the bounteous but cruel nature in reality which has inclined the people of the subcontinent towards mysticism. Razia's desire to meet God in the hills, Halima's belief in God's presence in the greenery, Kamala Das' identification of Krishna with the sun and sea, Ezekiel's search for heavenly grace in the hills, Hashmi's recognition of God's voice in the sounds of nature echo the subliminal spirituality of the people of the tropics. Similarly, the hostility of nature present in all the poets, except in Halima, mirrors the fatalism and the pathos born of the fear of the unconquered tropical nature.

And the social picture reflected by the human figures of these poets also corresponds to the ground realities of poverty, religiosity and social maladies of this subcontinent. The emaciated children, scraggy mothers, half-naked men and women, skeleton rickshaw pullers, bruised labourers, flood affected villagers, maidservants-cum-whores, beggars, slum-dwellers, snake-charmers, monkey-players and the grandfathers and grandmothers brooding over the past golden days, re-echo the socio-economic condition of the region. The poets' beliefs revealed in their portrayals of the Bauls, Vaishnavas, sadhus, sanyasis, saints, Buddha, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jews and religious frauds, offer the bewildering religious scenario of these three countries. The beaten wives, rapist policemen, generals-turned-politicians, arrogant officers, dominating
husbands, and the like, refer to the social injustices particular to this part of the globe. These people form a typical crowd that gives a bird's-eye view of the social multiplicity unique to this region.

The predicaments of the same people continue to suffuse the images of man-made objects. The gloom and depression characterized by the tropics pervade them. They too render the deprivation, the sea-gap between the privileged and the deprived, the spiritual crisis of the Bauls and Vaishnavas, the sufferings of the women verging on feminine frustration, the penury beneath the glaring city life, and the dying indigenous culture particular to these lands.

The world visions of the poets objectified in their respective poems, thus, closely resemble the people and societies of the three countries. However, the gaps in the totality of their experiences are remarkable. Though rooted in the surroundings of the poets, the images do not encompass all the aspects of the societies in which they live. Halima clings to the dying Baul tradition, to which her contemporary Bangladeshis are no more attached. Similarly, she has utterly failed to present a view of the social conditions of her people. The rickshaw puller in her poem is merely a drop in a sea. Razia Khan's images present a more realistic picture of her society but still lack completeness. She focuses on the difference between the privileged and the deprived and suggests that one section of the people suffer because the other enjoys
luxury and comfort. The difference may be one of the reasons for the sufferings of the people of Bangladesh but not the only one. Her women figures also reflect a partial view, as women in Bangladesh do not suffer only from male domination. For the sufferings of the people in general and women in particular, the whole socio-economic-religious setting and the natural calamities are responsible which is not reflected with completeness in the images of Razia and Halima.

Kamala Das' evocation of hatred of the males, who alone, according to her, cause sufferings to the females, is not justified. The woman who turns religious because of her unfulfilment in her conjugal life is not a true image of an average woman of India. The average Indian woman is religious whether her hopes are materialized or shattered. The other few sufferers in her poems though sketched with master-strokes are devoid of the grim reality of the various downtrodden people around her. This is because her knowledge of them is limited only to her family boundaries.

Ezekiel's views of life are relatively comprehensive. His women exhibit almost all the virtues and vices of the Indian metropolitan women. His portrayal of the urban poor is also realistic. But whenever he goes out to the rural people, he falls short of sympathy and authenticity. Similarly, he is close to the reality when he points out the excessive worldliness of his people, but perhaps away from the truth when he accuses all the "Gurus" and "saints" of being devoid of religious purity.
Mahapatra's observation of the world around him also lacks completeness. He has very powerfully presented the negative aspects but failed to reflect the positive ones. The newer culture which is in the process of replacing the old one, which he broods over, is not always harmful; rather, in some cases, it is useful. The crime committed by the jeans-clad young son of the priest is done, too, by the sons of the people of other professions and in indigenous dresses. The perception of all the religious people as frauds and hypocrites is also not absolutely true. The poet seems to be interested only in the failures of his people, their vices, and is blind to their virtues. He draws sympathy for one section of people at the cost of the other section, and therefore seems to want in tolerant wisdom.

Daud Kamal's presentation of the society also lacks proportion. His human figures exist only in comparison with the well-off section of the society. He says that one section suffers because the other section enjoys all the fruits. He, like Razia, fails to suggest that the social structure created by ethics, religion, and economy of the country is more responsible for the sufferings of the people than any particular class. His attitude to the privileged lacks the sympathy that we notice in his portrayal of the poor. Moreover, a society does not consist only of the suffering women but in his poems we find only such. He, like Mahapatra, is one-sided in his observation.
Taufiq's images reflect a more pragmatic view of his society. He has established the sufferings of his people without comparing them with the rich. It is not only because of the exploitation, but because of the lack of education, medical facilities and the sense of a better life that bring suffering to them. His disgust for the privileged is not because they live in comfort and luxury but because they are morally indifferent to their duties.

Alamgir Hashmi's images give a very limited picture of the society. Neither the scene of the suffering people nor that of the rich is comprehensive. His sketch of the Vietnamese girls, whores and cart drivers have the feel of casual references without due sympathy. Moreover, their number is so small that a reader cannot infer the condition of the whole society. He appears to be oblivious to the rural people who constitute the majority of the people of Pakistan.

So the view of life in the world visions of these poets is not comprehensive. The poets, according to their interests, concentrate upon the fractions of the societies, and lack the wisdom of the great minds (Taufiq Rafat of Pakistan may be the exception).

It has been observed that the images of archetypal value are not many in the poetry discussed here. The images such as the water cycle—'cloud-rain-river-sea'—in Halima's poems, corresponding to 'birth-growth-death-birth' or Ezekiel's woman—a lover, a wife and a mother—corresponding to Eve or the
rivers in Mahapatra's poems suggestive of the cultural flow borne by the Ganges Civilization, are the only three images of great importance. On the contrary, the poems are replete with fragments of everyday experience which are not always significant. For instance, Hashmi writes:

Then an errand got me
into a rickety rickshaw of Lohore,
such as keeps you aloft
over the seat,
and the bump is where you stay.

("Poem of the Road," NTT, 1984, 17)

The rickshaw is minus the rickshaw puller and ends by arousing disgust for both the rickshaw and the road instead of sympathy for the rickshaw puller. The meaning is the comfort of the rickshaw, thereby signifying nothing. These not-so-significant images are many while the images rising from a particular locale but dealing with the grand, sublime issues of universal interest are very rare if not completely absent.

It has been recorded that the images used by these poets are characterized by repetition. They assume symbolic dimension, as the recurrent images always do, but at times we have felt that the repetitions marred the expected freshness of poetry. For example, rivers and summer in Mahapatra, and vultures, mirrors and rivers in Daud Kamal always recur with diversity and so they retain their freshness. But the greenery and God in Halima, sun and sea in Kamala Das, and city in
Ezekiel recur for the same signification in such a way that they tend to be dull.

We have also observed that there is considerable Western influence on some of the poets. Razia Khan is influenced by Eliot but at the same time her occasional emotional outburst reminds us of a familiar reading of the Romantics. In Mahapatra and Daud Kamal the Imagists' influence is obvious but they have naturalized it by their artful adaptation.

The different devices used by the poets to convey meanings through images offer an insight into the quality of the poetry in question as the suggestive power of any poetry is widely held to be the mark of its poetic excellence. Though there are literal, figurative and symbolic images, the figurative ones outnumber the others. Nissim Ezekiel and Taufiq Rafat excel in handling the literal images to suggest the intended meanings without much strain. Their ways of telling simple stories, deceptively rich in suggestion, mark their maturity. The other poets resort mainly to figurative images and sometimes to symbolic images. There are strenuous efforts to connect the heterogenous objects so far unconnected in order to render the images enigmatically vibrant with suggestions as in Mahapatra and Daud Kamal. There are also a few examples of aridly mechanical images as in Halima or uselessly decorative images as in Hashmi in which the meanings lie at the superficial level. However, the suggestive meanings of most of the images surpass the expressed meanings, and hence, the poetry may be qualified
as suggestive poetry.

The images reveal that irrespective of the political boundaries, the poets share similar sensibilities. They are more interested in urban settings than in the rural ones. They are all believers but liberal in their religious attitudes. All of them are critical of the hypocrites and feel for the deprived.

There is no doubt that the imagination of the poets is rooted in the "collective unconscious" of the people of this subcontinent but one wishes that its expression was more rounded and better chiselled.