"Just as characterization and dialogue work on the surface to move the story along, symbolism works under the surface to tie the story's external action to the theme. Earlier, in the development of the fictional narrative, symbolism was often produced through allegory giving the literal event and its allegorical counterpart. Allegory is the simplest way of fleshing out a theme." 1

Essentially, allegory insults our intelligence. It limits our perceptions. The best works of literature are those in which an element of mystery remains—those which lend themselves to a variety of interpretations. To take allegory to the next higher level, we arrive at something better that may be called ‘Symbolism’. Allegory operates very consciously, but symbolism operates at the level of unconscious. A symbol has a complex meaning beyond the literal meaning and mostly symbols convey an indefinite range of meanings. A symbol may thus be called an extended metaphor, because it is used more consistently and vividly than a metaphor.

Some believe some symbols have a universal range of meanings. Men like C.G. Jung believe that some symbols occur with the same meaning across individuals and cultural boundaries. These symbols are often called archetypes.

"The word symbol is derived from the Greek verb 'Symballein' (to throw together). It is an object animate or inanimate which represents or stands for something else." 2

In literature, symbolism was an aesthetic movement that encouraged writers to express their ideas, feelings and values by means of symbols or suggestions rather than by direct statements. This movement extended the evocative power of word to express the feelings, sensations and the states of mind that lie beyond the everyday awareness.

"The symbolist movement of the nineteenth century in France was fundamentally
mystical. It protested with noble eloquence against the scientific art of an age which had lost much of its belief in traditional religion and hoped to find a substitute in the search for truth."...Against this scientific realism, the symbolists protested and their protest was mystical in that it was made on behalf of an ideal world which was in their judgment more real than that of the senses."  

Symbolist movement had its beginning in the poetry of Charles Baudelaire (Les Fleurs du mal—Flowers of Evil 1857) in Mallarme's poetry (Such as L'apres midi d'un faune—The Afternoon of a Faun, 1876), carried on the movements, his prose studies 'Devagations' (Ramblings 1897) formed one of the most important aesthetics. Three works of poetry chiefly associated with the movement are Paul Verlaine's 'Romances sans Paroles' (Songs without words 1874) and Arthur Rimbaud's 'Le Bateau ivre' (The Drunken Boat 1871) and 'Une saison en enfer (A Season in Hell 1873).

"Baudelaire and his followers created the image of the poet as a kind of Seer or 'Voyant' who could see through and beyond the real world to the world of ideal forms and essences. Thus the task of the poet was to create 'Other world' by suggestion and symbolism by transforming reality into a greater and more permanent reality."  

"For Baudelaire, the visible and sensible world was full of symbols which fill man's heart with joy and sorrow and convey him through scent, colour and sound to raptures of the spirit. The essence of symbolism is its insistence on a world of ideal beauty and its conviction that this realized through art. The ecstasies which religion claims for the devout through prayer and contemplation are claimed by symbolists for the poet through the exercise of his craft."  

The symbolists discarded the rigid rules of versification and the stereotyped poetic images of their predecessors. Symbolism to this extent is the continuation of romanticism. It takes over romanticism's one basic tenet that the imagination no longer confined to the
actualization of doctrine, is now the provider of material for doctrine. Symbolist poetry became a technique of meditation. It arises from the belief that the surface of life is a mere clutter, the reality lies deeper and can best be approached by training the mind to dwell on symbols which both express and embody it.

French symbolism spread worldwide and had greater influence in shaping of the twentieth century literature. Symbolists believe that art should capture more absolute truth which could only be assessed by indirect methods. Thus they wrote in highly metaphorical, suggestive manner.

“As far as particular objects are concerned, symbolism can be private or personal. And another kind of symbolism is known as transcendental. The attainment in transcendental symbolism is the vision of essential idea was to be achieved by a kind of deliberate obfuscation or blurring of reality so that the ideals become clearer.” 6

The symbolist manifesto was published in 1886 by Jean Moreas, who announced that symbolism was hostile to plain meaning. We can not speak, perhaps we hardly think of an inner conflict without a metaphor. A symbol, in sum, is an extended metaphor. In relation to novels, symbolism is often used to refer to the way in which object phenomena and people are given special meaning within the text.

“Certainly, most realistic fictions contain a good deal of local metaphor in the form of both of overt tropes and submerged symbolism. There are, however, certain controls in the use of metaphoric strategies in realistic fiction.” 7

Symbol is used as a resource in the expression of mysterious psychological experience incommunicable in direct terms. Sometimes it may be used as a suppressed or implicit form. It was always appealed more strongly to the artistically imaginative than to the scientifically minded. Psycho-analysis was an exploration of symbolism and its methods were not quantitative but interpretative. In case of Freudian psychoanalysis, each symbol
refers to an oedipal complex which the infant passes through on the way to maturity.

"The literary text is always metaphoric in the sense that when we interpret it, when we uncover its 'unity', we make it into a total metaphor, the text is the vehicle, the world is the tenor." 8

Symbolists deliberately extended the evocative power of words to express the feelings, sensations and states of mind that lie beyond everyday awareness. Through symbols, poets and writers transcend beyond their humdrum existence. Denied influence of the everyday world, they turned inward to private thoughts, associations and the unconscious. Thus they seek the underlying pattern, the deeper level of reality, because to do so is a condition of our life. Thus the symbols used by the symbolist writers deeply contemplate and provide their means to contact with the interior reality of the universe.

"Fiction is often described as a 'slice of life.' Yet this phrase which point to the synecdochic character of the realistic text is itself a metaphor and we know that it is not possible for the literary artist to limit himself to merely to making a cut through reality as one might cut through a cheese, exposing its structure and texture without altering it." 9

"The very word 'woman' is a symbol of eternal mystery and enchantment, as if it is not enough that she is flesh and blood, but she must be something higher than what she is and so she is never asked to take part in the incessant activity of this work a day world. Woman it seems, was created to make the world more beautiful...and that description of man's creation of woman culminates in the statement——

Your femininity is half your womanhood

Half is the imagination of man...'" 10

On the other hand, modern feminist thinkers think——

"When he (male writer) writes that woman is mystery, he implies that she is mystery to man. Thus his description which is intended to be objective is in fact an assertion of
When woman is a concept, symbol or allegory, she is no longer a flesh and blood entity, but represents the ‘super-natural.’ Woman, then, resembles as Jibanananda Das said—‘The sacred flame of a galaxy of stars that lights up the dark sky. She, then, is owned by nobody, nor is she up for grabs for physical pleasure. She begins to be worshipped, becomes intangible, is beyond the realm of perception, is instrumental in the evil transforming into the good. However, the aforesaid image of woman is not a real woman's image.

A question may arise how far has Sunil used symbols in his novels deliberately and whether there are symbols in his novels at all? If he is realist, how far can he be a symbolist? To find answer to this paradox, we have to go to Sunil, the poet, because it is his poems that are replete with symbols. Sunil, the poet is always romantic.

Though not all romantics are symbolists, the symbolist is a kind of romantic one who singles out and develops the romantic doctrine of creative imagination. ...As an exponent of imagination, the symbolist tends to be defiantly aesthetic in his view of the mind, of ‘ideas’ and of knowledge itself. In his romantic poems, Sunil has always resorted to symbolism and it is difficult to make two water tight compartments between the poet Sunil and the novelist Sunil, because the persona behind both the identities is the same.

His own creation Nira may be called the muse of his poetry, the condensed image of the overall feminine beauty. She is not merely a woman, but a symbol of womanhood-is larger than life. The romantic poet that Sunil is, he has not kept her in the confines of a bodily prison. He has wanted to see her in an entity which is surreal and is beyond the limits
of physicality of looks, smell and touch.

When the writer wants to go past the travails of reality, he treads the path of beauty. He has to take recourse to symbols which stir our inner self somewhat unconsciously. Sunil said about himself:

"I am basically romantic. Call this my drawback or qualification, an inborn romantic. I am. I have written about social reforms, alleviation of poverty, nation’s welfare and things like that, but in the heart of my heart, I always revelled in the pleasures of romanticism. This romantic bent of mind works best for me. This is why I miss no opportunity to include such thoughts in my novels. But when it comes to poetry, those thoughts come alive more vividly'.

Realism is a problematical term; it is used sometimes in a neutrally descriptive sense and sometimes as an evaluative term. Sunil’s romantic sense and his natural poetic grace are a bit removed from what is known as photographic reality. That explains why his characters, though, steeped in middle class struggles, are different from other characters. Just as their struggles are true, their dreams are also no less true. That is why just like any great littérateur, Sunil brings something more to his characters that is beyond their trivial existence and thus they are not totally devoid of symbolism, though, it can be said that he does not use them deliberately.

According to Sunil, three of his novels, namely, ‘Saptam Abhijā’’, ‘Amriter Putra Kanya’, ‘Swapna Lajjā Hā’ are symbolical. 14

Though in his other novels like ‘Arjun’ and ‘Jochna Kumbāri’, we find symbolical
Sunil always loves to portray women with his own brand of imagination. Manisha of ‘Swapna Lajja Uj-h’ has in her something beyond her beauty. The writer himself has dubbed her ‘Symbolic’. 15

An imagined character of his, Manisha was created in the mould of Nira—Sunil’s ultimate goddess of imagination. The hero of this novel (Sunil) who loves Manisha (His friend’s sister) very much, penned a poem about the experience he felt on seeing Manisha near Bou Bazar——

Just three minutes in bus stop
Yet in my dream last night
You were there for so long!
I have seen you stuck in the unending sea beach
Like a knife...

We all know that the above-mentioned poem is the part of the much read and talked about poetry ‘Hathath Nirar Janya’. Nira and Manisha are so similar that sometimes they seem identical. Like Nira, Manisha is also not merely an ordinary woman, but a receptacle which holds Sunil’s true identity as a lover. Like a star in the galaxy, the lady has a planet in Sunil (The hero of the novel) orbiting around her body and soul. Not only Sunil, the hero, but his friend Hemanta is also equally enchanted by the charm of Manisha. Both of them want to sacrifice their right as a lover for the sake of the other. Manisha is the symbol of eternal feminine virtues and charms that subjugate man for ages, but she stays beyond the touch of any desire or lust of men.

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Manisha exists in half-reality and half-imagination. Sunil (The hero of the novel) could not utter those vital words to her, his ultimate desire.

“কথা বললো, একদিন আমার সনে একটা খুব উঠে পাহাড়ে হেঁটে যাবে। সেখানে একটা জরায়ু কথা বলারে রাখাকে। যা কেননা কথা হয় নি। পাহাড় চূড়ায় না বাঁধিয়ে যা কথা যায় না।”

“Let you accompany me for a climb to the height of a hill. There, I will discuss with you something very important which I never had told you before. Something which can be said only in the serenity of a mountain top with only the sky overhead as witness with no trace of livelihood except in places far downhill. That is the place, where I can talk freely with you.”

“মনীষা আমি তোমাকে পেতে চাইনা কিছু তুমি আমার।
আবার
সকল শিন্যের সার তোমার ও মুখের বর্ণ।”

“Manisha, I do not want to possess you, but you belong to me... again...you and your face are the mainstay of my art.”

The portrayal of Manisha in this novel has effaced the dividing line between Sunil, the poet and Sunil, the novelist. The passion and youthfulness with which Sunil presented Nira in his poetry are present in equal measure in his portrayal of Manisha’s character.

But in terms of sheer expanse and breadth, in characterization and in terms of subtlety and suggestiveness of the use of symbols, Nira perhaps enjoys an edge over Manisha. The suggestiveness is very limited in case of Manisha so much so that a discerning reader is bound to feel let down. Like Nira, the woman in Manisha can make a man rich as well as a pauper.

They can not be kept in personal grip, which is why Sunil does not possess them but belongs to them. The scene that is eternalized in the writer Sunil’s as well as in the hero
Sunil’s mind is that of Manisha sitting with her chin rested on her palm. It is worth noticing that Sunil has seen Nira in the same light.

"তুমি এই দে বসে আছো আঘুলে ধোয়ানো তুমি কপালে পড়েছে চুষ্টর।

পাড়ের নয় কা পা

ওঠায়ে আসে হাসি

এই দৃশ্য অদ্বিত

তুমি তো জানো না নয়

আমার মুখার পরের ছবি থেকে যাবে।”

There you are

Sitting, your chin softly rested

On your nimble fingers

The strands of your black hair

Falling over your brow

The textured borders of your saree

Are covering your feet

A hint of an impending smile

Is playing across your lips

...The scene is immortal

You know Nira

This picture of yours will be alive

Even long after I cease to live.

Sometimes, we can not help feel that Nira in poetry is what Manisha is in his prose or that both of them are symbols of eternal womanhood and complete symbols of art which is somewhat intangible, illusive, imaginary and dreamy. What is beyond the realms of physicality brings unadulterated joy.
In his writings, Nira, Manisha, Yamuna, Gyatri, all became one and the same entity, as it were! In these women, he looked for a complete woman. In his famous poem, ‘Prabaver Sese’, he used the names of all the above women to highlight the different personas of the ‘woman’.

In general, his bohemian hero may have many dalliances, but the mirror of his mind always captures the image of an innocent, uncorrupted woman. He can thus write that memorable line:

“Yamuna, hold my hand, let us go to the heaven!”

In his autobiography, ‘Ardekh JI ban’ too, specially in the chapter, where he narrated his romance with wife Swati Gangopadhay, we find that Sunil discovered the same innocent beauty in her. One may, therefore, legitimately ask whether the women of his imagination (Nira, Manisha) are the mirror images of the real woman in his life.

Shikha’s appeal is body-centric. Her attraction for Dhiman is very overt and Dhiman does not reciprocate her advances. Spurned by his rejection, she becomes more desperate. She does not to take revenge as yet; she only tries to bind him to her through her feminine charms and sexual overtures. She is the symbol of Dhiman’s dormant sexual desires. Dhiman says: ‘Shikha, sometimes I feel, you are not a flesh and blood woman. You are either an illusion or a ‘digression’ of mind. You have come to nip this seventh expedition of mine in the bud and thereafter take me along.’ Nandini represents that self of ourselves that thirsts for beauty. She does not have any agenda of her own for this expedition. She moves on for the pleasure of it. She has no urge to complete the journey within a
specified time. Her only aim is to enjoy and relish the beauty of nature. That is why while atop the peak, she wants to linger her stay there. She prefers not to be in the company of other passengers of the bus and camps a tent. She represents the concept of man’s eternal search for beauty. That is why she is is like a crystal clear waterfall. Poetess Krishna paid tribute to her in her poem like: ‘You are a leaf of lightning; your other name is profundity.’

A question naturally occurs in our minds—‘Is Sunil inspired by Tagore’s Nandini?’

“Nandini” in ‘Raktakarabi’ (The Red Orleanders) is the symbol of the hopes and aspirations of the new age. She moves freely in different sections of society, carrying the message of joy and liberation.” 21

Nandini of ‘Saptam Abhijān’ also represents similar qualities.

Jayashree tried her hand in politics, first in the ruling party and then in the leftist party. She now talks in terms of women’s self-respect and gives the impression of having shed all the malice and ill feelings of her past. She appears to represent a stage of spiritual progression, but she actually does not. That is why she can pretend to help Batukeshwar, whom she once wanted to kill by volunteering to carry his luggage on her person. That she keeps dynamite and weapons hidden on her shoulders show the evil streak in her. Her innocence is a camouflage and she is more dangerous than Shikha. With so much greed and worldly desires in her, her search for the ‘ultimate’ beauty, that is why, ends in a fiasco. Her ‘progression’, therefore, gets arrested midway.

‘Saptam Abhijān’ is the story of Dhiman, the protagonist, who, disillusioned with his six expeditions, wants to make a success out of his seventh one. Free from materialistic desires, his aim is to scale high and high.

‘Let us go to different horizons

Let us scale the summit.

Let us go up

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His journey up to the White Mountain peaks away from the known, mundane world is replete with symbolic suggestiveness. The characters of this novel, specially, those of females bring with them enough of symbolic implication. They suggest something more than their worldly existence. Dhiman and his group of fellow travelers comprising men (including an old man), women, children (as if it represents the whole of mankind) set sail to an expedition up the snowy mountain—quite removed as it was from the dusty worldly existence they otherwise lived and their scaling the heights, have in them a symbol, hidden in eternity. Man always strives to attain further heights, to go from the realm of the possibility to the impossibility. From definitism to infinity. Other characters, it seems, bring with them different stages and motives of the expedition. In fact, if we delve into the motives, we find that they symbolize the different faces of failures that characterize all his (Dhiman’s) earlier expeditions in some form or the other.
Those who have read John Bunyan’s ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’ can easily discover thematic parallels between ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’ and ‘Saptam Abhijān’. In Bunyan’s ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’, for example, everything and everyone stands for something else. The protagonist Christian, to no one’s surprise, stands for every Christian reader. His goal the celestial city stands for Heaven, the places through which he passes on his way—Lucre Hill, Vanity Fair and the like, stand for temptations, which, Bunyan felt, the Christian readers would encounter on their journey to salvation. Even the names of Christian’s fellow travelers, Mr. Feeble Mind, Great Heart etc. represent not individual characters, but the states of being.

In ‘Saptam Abhijān’, that conscious operation of allegory that we find in ‘Pilgrim’s Progress’, comes in a more subtle way. It appeals to our subconscious, sometimes giving a more complex meaning beyond the literal presentation of the characters. Here, all other expeditionists, specially, the females, bring with their outer worldly identity, some universal range of meanings. For example, Shikha represents

But so far as this expedition is concerned, it may be called protagonist’s search for identity and that has some close similarity between the two.

“It is the allegorical representation of the individual Christian’s struggle to achieve salvation. His progress is one of constant struggle and conflict.”

In both the cases, we find: “The hero, who is overpowered by his consciousness of sin, starts his soul-searching journey. So it depicts ‘The lonely drama of the individual soul.”

“The outstanding scenes in this drama are combats with the powers of darkness. Each major crisis of the pilgrimage reflects some stage in Bunyan’s spiritual struggles.”

“His conception of the world as a battle ground of good and evil spirits, his haunting dread of eternal retribution and his fierce evangelistic zeal were those of his age and sect.”
But unlike Bunyan’s Christian’s allegory, ‘Saptam Abhijat’ does not give any illustrated moral theology or does not give any particular religious implication but the terror of spiritual extinction is there. All the other characters of this novel signify different ideas or views instead of merely representing flesh and blood individuals living in the real world. Seen in a different perspective, these characters represent various stages of progression of the human soul.

Among the female characters, Shikha is the most important one. She represents coarse physicality, who again and again tried to distract Dhiman from his avowed goal. She defined herself as the source of eternal feminine charm. Dhiman told her once:

‘You are not a woman of flesh and blood. You are not a mere woman, an illusion, distraction, who came to foil my seventh expedition and to make me go back.’

It is evident that Shikha symbolizes worldly desire, lust and a certain feminine charm that deviates man from going on in the right path. She spoke in a calculative manner; her world is the world of physicality, limited to its own sphere. She lacks the wider vision of Krishna or the aethicism of Nandini or the prudence of Jayashree.

Though, Shikha represents many negative traits, such as lust, greed, avarice etc., but Sunil being a diehard romantic, could not portray her with all black. Once the author himself had said: ‘I have never seen any bad woman in my life.’ So, Shikha brings some positive qualities with her along with her obvious negativity,

“শিখা রূপকে ঠিক আঁখা কলা যায় না কপর্যে উজ্জ্বলায় সেই তুলনা দেওয়া চলে, তার সারা আছে,
পরাপর আছে তার নিচের নিচের নামার বোকাটি দেশী।” 27

“Shikha’s beauty can not be equated with that of fire, it is more in the nature of a restive water fall. She has innocence, has that ‘do gooder’ proclivity, but is prone to slip downwards
"Shikha, I have returned a failure even after reaching the high. That was not due to my illness, not due to my bodily infirmity either. It was due to my mistake. The mistake of decision, judgement. I never followed any pre-meditated ‘Dos and Don’ts’ always relied upon my old judgement. But that was not easy. Even if man becomes lonely and is free from selfish thoughts, he is prone to do mistake.’ Dhiman was correct when he laid stress on overcoming ‘self’, subjugating one’s desires in the battle of supremacy between head and heart. That is why he forsook others to take the young boy Nabarun, who was an embodiment of purity and childlike innocence. As if, he tried to sow the seeds of his dream, his future in this boy, he initiated him to the galaxy-ridden infinite sky.

His third expedition fell flat on the conflicts centering around the dirt of politics and political leadership. The pains of his separation from his wife were the reason for the failure of his fifth expedition. And the ‘woman’ was the reason for his other two expeditions meeting with failure. Once, he could think of a life without the sweet company of a woman. But now, he is free from all these desires and he has no mind to indulge in lust. Disillusioned that he had been with the earlier expeditions, he now freed himself from all the worldly desires. He does not want wealth, power, women. His only motto is to scale high, even higher than what he had done earlier.

Sunil has used some archetype symbols, such as Dhiman stands for mankind, its aspiration for spiritual upliftment.

The aged Batukeshwar also went out on that expedition. He wanted to climb atleast one snow-covered mountain in his lifetime to get over the bitter experience of having had
trodden only muddy paths in his life so far. We do not find it difficult to understand which mud it is—a desire-filled life spent with the sole aim to save money, a greed that consumed his senses so much as to slowly send him down the slippery paths of decrepitude and a pair of hands that were reddened with the blood of others. Now, in the afternoon of his life, more and more as he reflected on his past sins, the more and more he felt the necessity to embrace the ‘greater truth’. He said to Dhiman—

‘I used to see mud everywhere. Even lying on a soft bed. I used to feel the presence of stick mud with a stinking smell all around me. Then and there I decided to go somewhere where no mud reaches, where all dirt gets washed away.

“কাৰ্য্যত বলা রাখা যাবে না যে আমি গুন্ধার পথে পথে চলি শুধুমাত্র। যেখানে চাকুরি নেই যেখানে মুখ নেই। যেখানে সব কিছু ধূঢ়ে যায়।’”

His journey is to free himself from the guilt of sin. Still, he could not succeed in freeing himself from all the bindings. A mindset steeped in skepticism and a blasphemous attitude did not give him peace of mind. Doubts and fears chased him like a pack of hunting dogs. Every moment he was nagged by a feeling of insecurity, as if Shikha and Jayashree would shove him to death.

A subtle question that begs answer here is whether Sunil like orthodox males indirectly supports that women are the cause of men’s downfall! In spite of being so close to his destination—the white snow-capped peak, Batukeshwar could not reach his goal, seized as he is with so many doubts and contradictions. His end came with his committing suicide when he could efface those guilts and doubts from his mind. His cherished dream to scale the peak remained unfulfilled.

Batukeshwar represents that stage of human soul where the small is dwarfed in the presence of the great. He was so bent with the weight of a guilt-ridden mind and his mind
was so small that the greatness of the divine or the great failed to touch him. That is why his progression was halted by self-deprecation and self-negation, which ultimately resulted in his tragic end. Through death, he freed himself for good from the mud and filth of the temporal world.

It appears that in ‘Saptam Abhijān’, all the characters are no separate individuals; they combinedly reflect the different dimensions of the same human entity. Beneath the surface of the plot, lay the deeper level of inner experience. Outer action was not that important as the inner drama that went within the protagonist. In this novel, we find something universal—a conflict between the powers of good and evil. Dhiman represents every man in the quest of wisdom, ever anxious of the thought of spiritual extinction.

‘Amriter Putra-Kanya’ is basically an imaginary novel. Its four main protagonists are not familiar characters of our society. They are individuals without past memories, sent to a forlorn island by the scientists on a special mission.

Once dead but made alive again thereafter through a unique process, their past totally shut on them. That is why; they were treated in the novel as subjects, not typical human beings. The first male is subject number one, the boy is subject no two. The only woman present in the group was subject number three with the second male being subject number four. The reason behind the experiment was to examine the process of evolution that the human civilization had gone through. There was another reason for the experiment. Very soon, the human race might have to undergo similar trial. It remained to be seen whether the human race held on its own in its battle against nature. This experiment, in a way, might answer the question. Seeing the hideous side of science, one may be tempted to think that the final hour of civilization is but very near. The result of evolution, probably, is that, man is destined to suffer at the hands of the demon that has been created by him. The human beings have established their superiority over other animals and according to
the rules of the survival of the fittest, man is the uncrowned king of the universe. But he has not failed to vanquish himself. Since he has no other enemy, he is bent on killing himself. Thus this project is not the result of his fear for death. There is actually the larger question of the extinction of the whole human race.

Sunil has made use of archetypes in this utterly imagined novel. The characters have been named after the elemental forces. For example, the first male, who is very accommodative and is largely instrumental in arranging food for the rest, is called ‘Samudra’ (Sea). The boy is named ‘Brishti’ (Rain) since, he is brisk and restless. And just as the sky pervades all over the sea, the woman is called ‘Akash’ (Sky). The second male, is hairy bodied like an animal. He lacks finer qualities, is endowed with physical rather than mental attributes, is primitive yet strong, though helpless. His name is ‘Jungle’ and quite fittingly so.

Here, the characters do not have to carry their outward image and are, therefore, free from hypocrisy that is part of a civilized society. Life, here, is uncomplicated and unpretentious that simplicity, is a thing of the past in this modern world.

Here, every character represents the different facets of a human entity. If the first male is the embodiment of tolerance, generosity and forgiveness, the second male is totally different with his worldly desires and a revengeful bent of mind. The boy is full of life and innocence, just as a boy of his age should be. The woman represents love and beauty. The woman who was an artist in her previous birth, has come to be associated with the bounties of all eternal womanly qualities in this birth like the unforgettable Eve, the woman who was banished from the garden of Eden and who became the first ever woman to live in this earth. Sunil has described her as:

"চারাধিক মাত্র মায় তরুণ দেখলে গোল পাথরটির মুখায় বলে আছে মূর্তিময়ী পানিবা। এই মূর্তিময়ী শরীরই রয়েছে অর্থাৎ, রয়েছে সমুদ্র, পাহাড়। এখানে রয়েছে নক্তপুঞ্জ। এখানে রয়েছে জীবন ও মৃত্যু। এখানে রয়েছে শাক্তি ও শক্তি।" 30
In that dark transparency, the youth saw the iconised universe sitting atop a big, round stone. Be it the ocean, the hills, the galaxy or stars, all were present in her body. Life and death have coexisted here, just as eternity and mortality.

After this out of the world description, we realize that the woman in question is not another ordinary woman. The woman named ‘Akash’, initially showed disinclination towards settling in this island. Her depression and disenchantment with this life pointed towards her basic feminine instinct. The first female tried to control her, but to no avail. But afterwards, her natural feminine instinct goaded her to nurse the fever stricken male back to recovery.

The first male on the one hand, was a living symbol of life, the woman on the other hand was a symbol of our finer sensibilities. Love for beauty was central to her character. She was enamoured of the moon. When they caught hold of the beautiful white swan, she wanted to have it as a pet, not as part of her dish, even though she had just been done with her long lasting fast. Like Eve, she taught the first male the art of love.

The woman was a symbol of love, beauty and bonding. She inspired the man to fight against the odds. In that lonely island with no food and amidst physical ailments and adverse conditions of nature, it was once felt that they would all perish. But the next moment, they told themselves that it was not so easy to give in.

Bruised badly by the bite of a wild dog, when the first male was about to give up, in came the woman, with her comforting words——‘It is not easy to throw in the towel so easily. You have to fight to survive.’

It at once reminded one of the famous Charles Darwin maxim——‘Struggle for existence, survival of the fittest.’

The man and the woman in question symbolized the will to live, the belief that one can live, so to say.
In one sense, the characters of the novel are the symbols of human excellence, of a transcendental form of humanity. Here everybody is judged, not by the yardstick of achievement or the lack of it. It is the soul that takes precedence over everything. That is why, the person who had been a killer and had been sentenced to death in his previous birth, is a transformed soul in the present birth. I am talking of the first male, who is an epitome of gentleness, generosity, responsibility and above all love with which he inspires others to live. That is why he sacrificed his love for his beloved ‘Akash’ in favour of ‘Jungle’, because he believed that the civilization would one day face extinction, if everybody cannot distribute love equally amongst others and because unequal distribution, whether economic or emotional is the root cause of all round discontent.

Otherwise we can say that this symbolic novel expresses author’s profound distrust of modern materialistic civilization. Life is insubstantial there. Free from empty materialism wondering through life with the primitive knowledge. They are free from the triviality of their milieu. That is why, the lady (One of the scientists) who so long had been treating them as subjects, became sanguine to go back to that primitivity where life is as simple as anything, free from all absurdities and complexities. Where life is free from human arbitrariness and pettiness.

In ‘Amriter Putra-Kanya’ we find some animal symbols. Usually dogs symbolize loyalty, faithfulness. But dogs here represent lust deceitfulness cruelty and ferocity, who again and again attacked the protagonist, but at the same time gave him the power to defend himself. They represent the low and repulsive animal elements in human soul. On the other hand, the dolphins represent self sacrifice and a natural instinct to do good to others.

In the novel “Arjun” the author has deliberately drawn parallels between the Arjun of the Mahabharata and its protagonist Arjun, who lives in a refugee colony. His making
successful aims at the target board in Shukla’s room reminds us of Arjun winning over Draupadi after the ‘Lakshaveda’. Even the doubt, restlessness and melancholy that Arjun had suffered due to his having taken arms against his relatives in the battle of the ‘Kurukshetra’, find a similarity with the inner pains that this modern Arjun undergoes when he takes on his neighbours of the refugee colony. It is another matter that he ends up getting bruised by them.

But all these symbols have not come across very vividly in this novel. The main theme of the novel is the protagonist’s existential struggle. Implicit in this theme are all those underlying symbols that undoubtedly enhance the beauty of the novel and gave it some universal appeal when the hero resembles an epic hero for his prowess, bravery and unparalleled heroism. Undeniably these symbols extend the scope of the novel.

Other than the above, Sunil portrayed the image of Yamuna in his epoch making novel ‘Ātmprayakāś’ in an interesting way. Though she cannot be called a symbolic character, she brings with her that eternal feminine beauty, that is beyond the realms of reality without losing on the ‘universal’ appeal. She also, like Neera and Manisha, transcends the heart of her lover from mundane physicality to the higher world of art and beauty. Thus, Yamuna symbolizes eternal womanhood to some extent.

‘किर निमित्त यमुना से एक बार दाद नै, तथि चोर करके गुप्तिमा नै गया गया बिथा। धरित्रिग तिर भी किंतु देवी ता देन आमिर लो कुछ देखे पाओगी, यह यह यह सूक्ष्म द्वारा देखा यह यह एक सबसे बच्चे मृत वह।’

‘यमुना, तुम सत्ता सुन्दर! यह आप बतो, आमिर ओर पाए हात दिन अभिनंदन करिं।’

‘How transparent, spotless her face is! A pair of innocent eyes with a hint of hesitation..... One can see the best of the universe on her face as it were! ...... This is what is called beauty. This beauty compels you to bow down. For an instant. I thought, I could say, ‘Yamuna, you are so beautiful!’ and then touch her feet….’

The relation between the beauty of a woman and her purity has been there since
times immemorial. Jamuna is the symbol of that transparent pure beauty.

We find a weaving of reality, myth and symbol in ‘Jyosnākumāri’. In this novel Sunil studied a myth and transformed it into a symbol. Bina a beautiful young wretched women deserted by everyone and who is not even in her proper frame of mind, becomes a victim of socio-political evils. But when she is imagined as Jyosnakumari she represents eternal glory of womanhood and surpasses the limitations of her helpless worldly existence. She becomes a symbol of beauty, who enchants the youths of the village and even enslaves them by her charm. She becomes the source of poetic inspiration to the village poet Trilochan who composed verses on her. Jyosnākumāri comes and disappears as a comet. Sunil wants to convey here that ‘beauty’, ‘purity’ and ‘innocence’ cannot be held long in the ugliness of human life, yet Jyosnakumari comes to jerk the stagnation of our life to make people think again for a while about the aesthetic values of life.

In her, Sunil projects a larger than life image of the eternal woman, who after all her victimization remains untortured and unadulterated. She is as pure as the water, as bright as the fire and as innocent as the flower. Here also we find the symbolist and the novelist Sunil is not different from the poet Sunil, as they share the same romantic vision about woman.

Since literature is symbolic, its meaning is not simple or single. Because of the nature of symbols literature has surplus meaning. One can never really exhaust the complete meaning of a piece of literature. Another reading or reader will produce new meaning or new shades of meaning. The meaning resides in the reader’s freedom to respond. Thus no interpretation of symbol can be absolute.
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