CHAPTER II

THE BODY BEAUTIFUL
(The Physical Self)
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Travelling once on a train with a group of dance students one could hear the happy rumpus they were creating in the neighbouring bay. As the train rolled on through the dry summer landscape, suddenly everything was touched with orange-gold as the sun dipped in the West and a little one called out excitedly to her friend, 'Hey, look at the sun!' The happy commotion in the next bay continued unabated. After a few moments the young girl said in loud exasperation, 'Ey sun node ma eshtchennagi set aagtha ide! Eneno maathadtha idiya'. (Hey, look at the sun you idiot, how beautifully it's setting. Instead you're busy chattering away!). A friend's young daughter once disappeared into the bathroom for quite some time to wash her feet. When the mother investigated she found the girl gazing with rapt attention into a bucket of water. On hearing the mother enter she looked up, eyes round with wonder and, holding the mother's hand, pointed to the bucket exclaiming, 'Mummy! A bucketful of sunshine!' I remembered how my sister, when she travelled West in an evening flight, disembarked bubbling with joy at the marvellous experience
of the sunset travelling with them the whole way!

The Sun - giver of light and warmth, of life - is an integral part of our everyday world. Yet, how often would we have seen the Sun and its varied beauty? It takes a child, an artist or a mystic to make us see, to make us see not just the sun but much of the world around us. It is often only when we are reminded that we become aware of the texture of our skin, the blue of the veins and their delicate network beneath, we become aware that we can see the gummy smile of a child, that we can hear a million nuances of expression in the voice of a dear one, the chirping of birds, dragging feet, smell the freshness of a baby. We need reminders to become aware of the infinite variety in our body and the world around us. Wordsworth laments in the 'Immortality Ode':

''The rainbow comes and goes
And lovely is the Rose;
The Moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go
That there hath passed away a glory from the earth.''

He sees all this and laments the loss of the glory that clothed them. But we raise not even a murmur of complaint
that for years maybe, maybe even a lifetime, we have not
even registered many or all of these and much else, let
alone perceive their glory. Not for us the worry that
the 'world is too much with us' and

''... late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune; ...'";2

We have hardly heard the music to know whether we are in
or out of tune. Many a time it is only when someone
points it out to us that we become aware of our breath
coming faster, our ears turning red or the cheeks warming
with a blush.

In Huxley's 'Island'3 there is an interesting episode
narrating the customary manner of prayer before every meal.
The prayer is to chew the first mouthful for a whole minute
giving complete attention to the taste and sensation of
chewing, without swallowing the food in a hurry. This is
to highlight the usual mechanical manner in which food is
taken in, with, perhaps, a very minimal sensation of taste.
Strangely enough, living in the body throughout life (living
very often to satisfy the needs of the body, to see, hear,
eat, touch, smell, objects that the body enjoys seeing, hearing, tasting and so on), believing perhaps that life begins and ends with the body, we are yet not alive to the sensations of the body. We see and do not see, hear and do not hear, touch and know not that we have touched. A million sensations take birth and die in us every day, unknown, unrecognised, unlamented.

It is literature which reawakens our sensibilities, which gives us a new awareness of our selves, even of our sensations. If we read a poem about the song of birds, we are likely to pay attention the next time we hear a song from a tree. It is not merely that we have been reminded about the existence of the song but also that we have been reminded of our ability to hear it. The very process of listening has been so clearly described, in so vivid and apt a manner, that that very vividness and clarity seeps into our processes of listening as well. The experience we might not earlier have registered on account of its being nebulous or inexplicable is now made real because it has been clarified and understood through the right expression. For instance, one might be suffering from a stomach pain that one is unable to define. The doctor then proceeds to probe the area of pain and may arrive at the exactly sensitive spot. The doctor also helps by offering various suggestions, 'Is it a sharp pain that occurs now and then, moving from the base of
the stomach upwards? Is it a heaviness in the stomach region? Is there a burning sensation? Gradually, through the doctor's expressions one may find oneself defining and specifying the nature of the pain. It is a similar process that occurs when we read a poem, the poet's expressions help us define our own experience to ourselves and thereby to become really aware of the experience. This is what Colin Wilson calls the introduction of '3-D vision' and 'wide-angle consciousness' through literature:

"... life is complex and difficult for ninety-nine percent of any time ... . To deal with this complex world, I need the visual equivalent of shorthand [and the auditory, gustatory and other equivalents, in short, a sensory equivalent of shorthand]: I 'speed-read' the world. And to do this, I deliberately deprive it of its third dimension - of reality - and turn it into a series of flat symbols, which are easier to scan. When I become tired, a robot-computer in my subconscious mind switches to 2-D quite automatically, to conserve energy ... . Ideally, the aim of the novel is not only to produce wide-angle consciousness, but also three-dimensional consciousness - a recognition of the enormous and fascinating complexity of the world." 4

What happens is that good literature acts as a brake to the process of 'speed-reading' the world by forcing us to read intensely, slowly, accurately. Literature eschews the
general symbols which we have formulated for speed-reading and uses expressions that bring us face-to-face with the real immediacy of experience. When the brake is thus applied, our self-awareness which was a blur from a speeding vehicle suddenly springs to life in clear, fresh detail. With the poet we become aware, we begin to explore our own selves. I say 'with the poet', because the poet is also exploring his self. He is not merely making us realise what seeing or hearing means but he himself is growing to understand precisely that through his poem, he is clarifying and consolidating his own experience by giving it apt expression. In the instance that I quoted at the beginning of the chapter, the young girl was not happy enough on seeing the beautiful sunset, she had to proclaim aloud to her friends that there was a beautiful sunset which they were missing. By this proclamation she was reaffirming the fact to herself, the fact that the sunset was beautiful and it was a sight worth seeing, a sight she was enjoying. This is one way in which a poem helps the poet understand himself. This is in the manner of confirmation, like the child, whose mother has told her not to touch the candle flame, repeating to herself, 'That is ouch, it will burn baby'. By this process of repetition the child convinces herself that here is an unwanted experience. In like fashion a poem may help a poet confirm his own explorations and to strengthen his understanding of his self.
There is another way in which the poem actually acts as a tool for exploration and clarification. This is like teaching something. I may have myself performed a step in dance numerous times, but it is only when I am called upon to explain the step to a student that I gain an absolute, complete and firm knowledge of the step. In order to make the student understand I will have to go through the step slowly, emphasising its every nuance, 'Lift your leg, bend it at the knee so that your heel touches the thigh, slowly open out the leg as you circle it from the back outward and bring it back to position'. Similarly, the poet becomes aware of every nuance of his experience as he gives expression to it.

In this chapter I would like to present the concept of the 'physical self' as explored and expressed by poets belonging to different cultures and times. I will also attempt to delineate the major trends in perception of the 'physical self', the regular images and the rarer sensibilities, considering at the same time the relatedness of the physical aspect to the other aspects. My effort will also be to identify what makes for a finer and fuller physical awareness and the factors that prevent it. To do so, I must first define what I mean by the 'physical self'. As already explained in the previous chapter, by the term 'physical self' I mean primarily the 'bodily-self' of an
individual. That is, his awareness of the body and all bodily sensations, the concept that the individual has of his own body, the body-image (including its obvious and implicit aspects), the role of the body and body-image in the total self-concept, and the effect of different aspects of the self-concept on the body image. All this would constitute that which is specific to the 'physical self' or rather, that which could be called the self-orientation aspect of the physical self. As in the other aspects of the self-concept, there would also be the object-orientation, the spatio-temporal, normative, motivational and control orientations. That is to say, a study of the 'physical' aspect of the self-concept would also include an analysis of how an individual with a particular body-image reacts to the physical environment, how the movement of time affects the body-image, how that image is related to space, what kind of motivations arise from or form a part of the body-identity, does the body-image itself follow any norms and by what does the individual feel it to be controlled. Since the body (and related to it, the body-image) is the central factor in this aspect of the self, we must necessarily begin with an understanding of what the body is.

**WHAT IS THE BODY?**

''The body is made up of five sheaths. Apart from it is there a world? Without this five-fold body, Say, can anyone perceive the world?''

5
Usually, while using the term 'body' we mean only the physiological organism, with skeleton and flesh, muscles, blood and skin and all the internal organs, including the various functions of the organism. However, in this verse which has been quoted from Sri Ramana Maharshi's 'Forty Verses on Reality' the body is taken to be not just the physiological organism. Rather, the entire psycho-physical entity is called the 'body'. I have taken this verse as the basis for my definition of the body because it includes all the possible aspects that could be considered as 'body'. It is thus a complete definition of 'body'. In this way it also points to the essential unity of what I have divided into different aspects of the self-concept (for convenience of study and analysis). Hence, it places the 'body-concept' in relation to the self-concept as a whole. Also, the verse specifies the relation in which the individual, or the 'body', stands to the world. It, therefore, defines the two major orientations of the self-concept with reference to the body, namely, the self-orientation and the object-orientation. That is, it defines what the body is (self-orientation) and how it is related to the perception of the world (object-orientation). All the other orientations, the spatio-temporal, normative, motivational, and so on, pertain only to the subject (self) in relation to the object and may therefore be termed as aspects, albeit important, of the first two. By providing a comprehensive definition
of the body and delineating the nature of its major orientations, this verse serves as the apt frame of reference for analysing the 'physical' aspect of the self-concept.

The verse opens with a statement that the body consists of five sheaths. What are these five? And do they represent one layer upon another in a manner that we would physically conceive of from the term 'sheaths'? These five sheaths are the annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijnanamaya and anandamaya. That is, the physiological, vital, mental sheaths and the sheaths of self-consciousness and bliss, respectively. The physiological sheath or the annamaya kosa consists of the material aspect of the body. It is composed of the five elements, namely, earth, water, fire, air and ether. Not of these elements in their pure form, but in their gross form wherein they are already in a state of mixture (the gross element of earth is not really an element but a compound which has a mixture of some portion of the other four elements and in like manner each of the five basic compounds contain portions of the remaining four).

These five compounds (which I will refer to as elements for convenience) combine and are so modified in thus combining as to form the physiological body. It is not relevant to this study to go into the details of how these elements combine to form the body. (These details are described at length in the Taittreya Upanishad⁶). At the simple level,
however, it is obvious to us that the calcium of our bones, and much of the solid part of the body, could be equated to earth. The fluid in the body constitutes the water content. It is known that when the body loses all water it dehydrates and dies. The fire aspect is the energy and warmth that are an integral part of the body, which not only keep the body alive but perform all the metabolic functions. The air is in the gases which constantly enter the body through respiration and also permeate the body. The ether aspect represents space and could be equated to the inter-organic spaces within the body. In this manner, the elemental nature of the body is an obvious fact even to the layman. It must be because of this elemental nature that human beings are often deeply moved by the elemental forces without. In fact the objects of the experienced world are also composed of the very same elements. Of these elements, life is given to the body by the vital force, the breath, which permeates the body. Hence, this is demarcated separately as the pranamaya kosa, the second of the five sheaths.

This vital body is responsible for certain basic functions which are termed the five organs or 'senses' of action (karmendriyas). These are locomotion, grasping, speech, reproduction and excretion. Each function, naturally, implies all the organic processes that are involved in it,
for instance, the function of excretion also implies intake, assimilation, digestion of food, as also the rejection of waste matter. In this manner the various physiological processes of the body are included in the definition. Of course, by its very nature, 'prana' implies the respiratory functions as well. All that we normally include in the concept of 'body' seems almost to be present even in these first two sheaths. What remain are what we normally refer to as the 'sense organs', but what are specified in the panca kosa definition of the body as the five sense organs of knowledge (as we already have five sense organs of action). These are the organs of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch which form the channels of the mind, the manomaya kosa. These are categorised as belonging to the mental sheath rather than to the material or vital sheaths because it is through these that the mind perceives the world (while it reacts to these perceptions through the organs of action). It is significant that the mind is also considered to be a part of the body, although it is of subtler aspect than the material and vital sheaths. Because it is only through the agency of the body that the mind perceives the world and through it that it can react. Of course, it is not necessary that the mind have a physical body in order to have experiences. In dreams or in imagination, the mind goes through experiences with a purely mental body. However, there too it functions only in association
with, identified with, some name and form. Again, the body cannot perceive any phenomena without the mind, the experiences of the body are registered and assimilated only in the consciousness of the mind. In this sense mind and body form an integral unit and the mind itself is often referred to as 'subtle body'. The very sense of identification, the awareness of having an identity is 'body'. Since the identity is as much (if not more) mental as physical, the mind is body. The fourth sheath, the *vignanamaya kosa*, denotes self-consciousness, which, in fact, forms the basis of identity, the root of the self-concept. This is the agent of actions and enjoys the fruits of actions which enjoyment constitutes the fifth sheath, the sheath of bliss, the *anandamaya kosa*. One could say that these sheaths are roughly parallel to the normative and motivational orientations of the self-concept. While the mind is the receiver and classifier of information from the world it is the *vignana* or what we could term 'intellect' which holds the discriminative faculty. Since it is both the agent of action and enjoyer of its fruits it is to decide whether a particular action is right or wrong and whether it will provide the right fruits. The motivation is to obtain and remain in bliss and it is the experience of this happiness which perpetuates the need for further action, more results and more enjoyment on the lines of that already experienced.
The verse actually makes two major points. The first is that by the term 'body' the entire identity is implied, including mind, intellect and motivational pulls, normally by the term 'body' we would imply only the first two of these five sheaths. That is, the material and vital sheaths, and also a portion of the third, that is, the sense organs (which in this analysis constitute a function of the mind). And in this chapter also, while referring to the 'physical self' I will be implying only the material and vital aspects of the body (including the senses of sight, hearing, etc.), its sensations, reactions, and relation to the whole. It is to stress this last aspect, the relation of the physical self to the whole self-concept, that I have quoted this verse. Because, in this verse Sri Ramana Maharshi explains the self-concept as an integrated unit which he terms 'body'. In fact, the verse implies that any identification with name and form, be it at the material or even at the purely mental level, is 'body'. In this context (of unity and integration of all aspects of the self-concept) I would like to clarify a concept regarding the nature of the five sheaths. These five sheaths are not one layer within another like the layered peels of an onion. On the contrary, they are all one interfused whole. The material body is permeated and vitalised by the vital force, called 'vital sheath', perceived and manipulated by the mind, with the
consciousness provided by the intellect and motivated by desire to perpetuate itself in terms of blissful experience. Every action, every aspect of bodily existence is permeated by the other four aspects. Similarly, the vital force needs a body to vitalise, it does not exist by itself, it is also controlled by the mind, and so on. In like manner, all five aspects are integrated into one whole and interact constantly on one another. Sri Ramana Maharshi explains this idea with a clear example:

"An apt analogy for the five sheaths would be the scented kerchief. It has material, texture, dimension, colour, and scent, corresponding to the five sheaths. But the five are not distinct from one another. They co-exist together in every fibre of the kerchief. Similarly, the five sheaths are integrated together in the Self."11

The identity aspect of the self-concept is perceived as one unit, each facet of which cannot be regarded independently of the others.12

Looking upon the subject as an integrated whole, the second major point which the verse makes is to stress the interdependence of the subject and the object (which is referred to here as 'world'). Without a sense of subjectivity there could be no perception of objects, the idea is expressed in the verse --

"Without this five-fold body, Say, can anyone perceive the world?",13
Here 'body' stands for the sense of subjectivity, while 'world' represents the object. Subject and object, self and object, are not mutually exclusive categories, rather, they are mutually dependent. This also indicates the relative nature of the self-concept, of identity, and of all the aspects connected with it (a relativity which I have observed and referred to in the previous chapter). For studying the nature of the physical self in literature, the definition of the 'bodily self' provided by this verse offers two important guidelines. One, that while we may look upon the different aspects of the self-concept independently (for purposes of study), we must constantly bear in mind that they are inseparable processes of the whole continuously interacting with one another. The other guideline is that every aspect of the self-concept is relative to its opposite and must be perceived only as a part of that relation, like subject-object, time-space, good-bad, and so on. In understanding the actual character of the physical self the verse points to its elemental nature, the vital principle that animates it, the functions of action that it performs, and its functions of perception (sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch). Thus the physiological basis is explicitly represented, while the spatio-temporal, normative and motivational orientations are implied in the nature of the mental, intellectual and blissful sheaths which form an integral part of the 'body'.
'THOSE ARE PEARLS THAT WERE HIS EYES'

The most basic aspect of our body (in the sense in which I will be using the term - the physiological and physical) is its elemental nature. Our physiological being is an integral part of the elemental universe. The body is constantly taking in the living atmosphere and keeping itself alive. On death it dissolves into its elements once more. The molecular 'dance' in every part of the human body is not different from the rhythm of energy in the mountains and trees, in insects and animals, in water and air. To be aware of one's elemental nature is to feel a continuity with the universe. It is not to see oneself as totally distinct from all other beings. To experience the truth of one's physiological and physical self is to feel a kinship with all forms of existence, to know the earth as mother, the soft-footed leopard as a brother, to belong to the family of crows, squirrels and earthworms. In 1854, the 'Great White Chief' in Washington made an offer for a large area of Indian land and promised a 'Reservation' for the Indian people. Chief Seattle's reply is one of the most profound statements of man's oneness with the environment:

''How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us ... . If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of water, how can you buy them?''

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Such a question could be asked only by one who is in true
harmony with all the elements. It seems horrifying to us
to even think that human beings can be bought and sold in a
slave market, 'like cattle', we protest. How easily we
forget that all life has a right to the same freedom. The
cow that we would 'own' is not less free than us. If we
thought of the sky and earth and all beings as being of the
same element as we are (or know that we really belong to the
elements equally as all beings do) could we talk in terms of
buying and selling land? But the 'primitive' man intuitively
recognises this unity with all things. To continue from
Chief Seattle's statement:

"... Our dead never forget this beautiful earth, for
it is the mother of the red man. We are part of the
earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are
our sisters; the deer, the horse, the great eagle,
these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the juices
in the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and man all
belong to the same family ... . What is man without
the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, man would
die from a great loneliness of spirit ... . This we
know: the earth does not belong to man; man belongs
to the earth. This we know. All things are connected
like the blood which unites one family. All things are
connected. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the
sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life;
he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the
web, he does to himself."\textsuperscript{15}
Yet, it is very difficult for us to believe in and to experience this harmony. It seems absurd to equate a human being and an earthworm at any level. But physically a human body is just a set of movements, rhythms of molecular and atomic activity. So also is not only the earthworm but also a piece of granite. Chemically, perhaps, the human body contains certain elements in addition to other beings, but here too there are many shared aspects. And undoubtedly the biological basis of all living beings is non-different. The variations, the patterns, of course, are infinite, even as the constituents are invariable. To be aware of the variety is by no means an error, but to be dead to the unity and believe only in the diversity is to choose disharmony and prefer to turn a blind eye towards harmony that is the essence. It is the so called 'uncivilised' man who is fully alive to this, his physiological nature as an integral part of the elemental universe. Chief Seattle's statement on the contiguity between man and his environment has already been quoted. But it must not be imagined that Red Indians were the only ones among the primitives to feel this sense of elemental unity. In his second volume of *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Ernest Cassirer examines the consciousness of man in relation to his world before there is any sharp boundary between self and nature. This is the early phase of consciousness where there is really no selfhood and so no limit dividing the self from the 'other'. All things are
experienced without being rationalised. Sypher, quoting Cassirer, says:

"Since the immediate impression is absolute, the presence of things is very intense, and the image is not measured by anything beyond itself. The object is possessed when it is seen - seen under an 'irresistible force with which it impresses itself upon consciousness'." \(^{16}\)

If at all the primitive man marks boundaries between his own physical being and the rest of existence, he still maintains an intimate relationship. He sleeps on the earth, under the starry sky, drinks from rivers. His is not, of course, the idyllic picture of the country for one escaping the bustle of the city. It is not 'far from the madding crowd', not just a gently humming brook, or the rustle of wind in trees, though it might be these too. \(^{17}\) It is the beauty and the wildness, the love and harshness of life, and he gives himself equally, ready to fight, to kill, for survival, but never killing for fun \(^{18}\), never thinking himself to be constantly under the attack of an alien power or force (as the civilised man portrays Nature).

As 'civilisation' grows, the human being moves increasingly away from his elemental nature. In fact, 'civilisation' seems to be nothing but a process of seeing oneself apart from Nature and seeking to gain increasing control over it. \(^{19}\)
As one gets more civilised one strives to do away with as much of the elemental influences as one possibly can. Yet, the roots persist (they cannot but do so) and an occasional man remembers, recalls, maybe relives the fact. Indeed, not many can deny the power of an elemental presence, few would remain totally unmoved at the sight of mountains, the rush of waves. But it is only a poet, a composer, a man of art, with his felicity for capturing every nuance of experience, who can give apt expression to this elemental awareness. It is only Shakespeare who could write:

"Full fathom five thy father lies:
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes:
Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange."

This account must not be dismissed merely as Ariel's euphemistic manner of informing Ferdinand about his father's death. To Ariel, who belongs with the elements, an elemental absorption and re-creation of the human body is perfectly natural. The point is not whether his bones really were transformed into corals. We will be informed by the scientists that human bones do not become corals. But corals are, in fact, formed from an amassing of skeletons (of small sea creatures called corals). It is not much of a flight of fancy then to think of human bones as corals. Not that
Shakespeare was aware of what matter corals were really composed, which only makes the image all the more striking. For, here is a spontaneous recognition of the contiguity of the human body with the elemental universe. This is the important point made by the lines and not the actual or literal transmutation. While that presented here is the more beautiful of one's elemental aspect, there is another that is awesome. Or perhaps, one could say it depends on the angle of vision. What Shakespeare sees as a beautiful 'sea-change' could also be seen as death by water, as water is taking back into itself what it sustained and gave life to. Without water the body could not survive, and if we symbolise water as representing all fluids, it is the amniotic fluid that sustains even the foetus in the womb. So, water gives birth and water deals death. From earth, fire, water, air, and ether, we come, and into these we return, the elements take back the body that belongs to them, no, that is them. It is this idea that sears the mind with awareness of our elemental nature in Harindranath Chattopadhyaya's 'Fire':

"O who are you? an infant asked
The leaping flames whose red caress
Caught his dead mother and unmasked
Life in its lonely nakedness.
Then came an answer from the fire
Sudden and sharp across the gloom -
'I am the terrible desire
That shaped you in the mother's womb'."
Still we find it difficult to believe in our elemental nature. We wish to think of ourselves special and believe that we can be so only by being different. Can the creativity of Shakespeare, the insight of Einstein or the laughter of Charlie Chaplin all be only earth and air and water? Not at all. It is only the physical body that belongs to the elements, not one's thoughts and feelings (although these too are certainly influenced by the elements, they are not wholly made up of them like the body). Yet, to think of the physical frame, that was once 'filled with life' as part of 'lifeless dust' is difficult. Difficult because we do not recognise the 'aliveness' of the elements and because we can no longer relate to the beloved form as we were wont to. Wordsworth, with typically touching simplicity, writes:

"'No motion has she now, no form,
She neither hears nor sees;
Roll'd round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees.'",22

The elemental nature is perceived with quiet power, yet, its sadness for the mind is also poignantly revealed. On the other hand, when Manmohan Ghose asks:

"'I mind me how her smile was sweet
And how her look was gay.
O, she was laughter, joy complete!
And can she now be clay?'",23
he forgets that her laughter has not turned to clay, indeed, in a way, it lives, in his memory. But really, he is more expressing his grief at the loss rather than disputing the idea that 'she is now clay'. It is really his way of saying, "I can't believe she's gone, that she will no more be as I knew her. So full of life she was, I can't believe she's dead and only a part of the earth now". In this sense, he is not negating the elemental nature of the body, only unable to come to terms with it and believe it as a fact he must live with. In contrast is the Hindi poem which affirms:

"What if we cease to be
We shall perfume the breezes
Meet in the winds, in the dewy fog ...".24

This would be to know that 'she' is not dead, not 'mere clay' but her smiles are in the blossoming of every flower, in the smell of the first rain on earth, in all things 'bright and beautiful'. This would be the elemental awareness which is absent in Ghose's poem. But a rather emphatic questioning of the elemental nature is to be found in Sacheverel Sitwell's 'Agamemnon's Tomb':

"The poor are fast forgotten
They outnumber the living, but where are all their bones?
For every man alive there are a million dead,
Has their dust gone into earth that it is never seen?
There should be no air to breathe, with it so thick,
No space for wind to blow, nor rain to fall;
Earth should be a cloud of dust, a soil of bones,
With no room, even, for our skeletons ...".25
yet, if the bones do not become dust, where do they go?
Perhaps they evaporate. Then, instead of the earth, it would be
the air that takes them. Or maybe they break up into their
constituent chemicals. In any case, they dissolve only into
the elements. And the poem itself answers its expostu-
lation in the next lines:

"It is wasted time to think of it, to count its grains,
When all are alike and there's no difference in them;
They wait in the dark corridors, in earth's black
galleries,
But the doors never open; they are dead, dead, dead."26

What use is it thinking of what befalls the body on death,
our concern should be with the living. Do we know what is
happening to the body when it is alive? The understanding
of elemental absorption on death would be meaningful only to
create in us an elemental awareness while alive. For, what
does not affect life is not relevant to living, to the present
moment.

An 'elemental' awareness influences the self-concept
(and thus, life itself) in two important ways. It lends
both humility and exuberance. In other words, it results in
the dissolution and expansion of identity. For one thing,
it reduces the importance of the body-image in the self-
concept by inculcating the feeling that this body is, after
all, only earth and water, fire and air and space, it has
no independent or special status, no uniqueness that it must
be celebrated beyond all other things. One is also awakened to the temporality of the body. This prevents an over-
physicelity in identity (I have dealt with the problem of over-physicality, of over-emphasising the body's importance, later in this chapter). The other effect of an elemental awareness is a sense of unity with all things, which I have already touched upon. This, in turn, Wordsworth analyses, could be of two kinds. One is what he terms 'animal vivacity', so overwhelming a sense of aliveness that one experiences all things clear and sharp, like:

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" A simple child
 That lightly draws its breath,
 And feels its life in every limb,
 What should it know of death!",27
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Certainly this freshness and exuberance, fullness of life, comes from an absence of rigid identity which permits experience to flow in, unchanged, undisturbed. This is a point I deal with later when I consider the depiction of 'sensation' in poetry and how its precision and beauty varies with the presence or absence of identity and also while comparing the child's minimal identity with the adult's developed self-concept. Here I would like to point to the other aspect of elemental awareness, which Wordsworth describes as a 'sense of the indomitableness of Spirit within':
"I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality."  

An experience which Wordsworth recalls in his lines:

"... those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a Creature
Moving about in worlds not realised ..."  

It seems paradoxical to claim that this absence of boundaries could bring a real awareness of things. How can a thing be 'experienced' when it is not perceived at all as an 'object'? On the other hand, only then can it be experienced most intimately, as one's very self. That it is so is evident from the very vividness of Wordsworth's poetry, and most of all in his account of Nature as experienced in those days of 'moving about in worlds not realised':

"The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours, and their forms were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye."
In short, the immediacy of experience unhindered by identity results from an elemental awareness, which is really an awareness of the unity in all things, an awareness that we are a part of the universe and the universe a part of us. This awareness in Wordsworth was as much spiritual as it was physical. But if it should be only physical it would still imply an expansion of identity or a minimisation of identity (the two being really the same), not perhaps the universal communion of the mystic but at least the spontaneity and richness of the child's experience.

Such elemental awareness, however, is rare, even in poetry. One finds sometimes a sudden awareness, a flash of unity, but it is not the sustained mood. Whenever it comes, though, it comes from a total experience of that moment which is possible only with a submission of identity. Whether it be of the elemental unity of one's physical being with the rest of the universe, whether it be perceiving a physical object in its wholeness and clarity (as it is), or whether it be a real understanding of another's feelings, a sensitivity to another, it comes only when one has ceased to wear the coloured glasses of identity and sees with the naked eye, the truth as it is. But if one is functioning with identity, the chances of 'real' experience increase with the degree of balance in identity, when the identity is properly oriented to all its aspects (a point which I deal with in greater detail subsequently). If we look at the elements
not as akin to ourselves but as a force without to be
contended with (because we limit ourselves through identity
and have a self-orientation that excludes all things except
the body as 'other'), then the elements may well destroy
us, mind and body. This is what happens to Iago Prytherch
who pens his sheep in 'a gap of cloud' and churns 'the crude
earth to a stiff sea of clods'. He is a peasant, his life
knows nothing but farming. At night one could see him:

"... fixed in his chair
Motionless, except when he leans to gob in the fire.
There is something frightening in the vacancy of
his mind."31

And the poet, R.S. Thomas, implies that this vacancy of mind
is on account of the farmer's constant struggle against the
elements. For, he says:

"His clothes, sour with years of sweat
And animal contact, shock the refined,
But affected, sense with their stark naturalness.
Yet, this is your prototype, who, season by season
Against siege of rain and the wind's attrition,
Preserves his stock, an impregnable fortress..."32

Doubtless, Prytherch's mental vacancy, his 'animal' existence33
is brought about by the influence of the elements, but not
by an 'elemental' life. If he is dead to all values (moral,
spiritual, all), dead to thought and refinement, it is not
because he lives with the elements as one among them but
because he lives in the midst of elements as one against them, 'a winner of wars' not a liver of life. He does not belong. In his struggle his are a few victories, but his losses are of all sensitivity and beauty. He keeps his fortress but the siege has been so long that it is a ghost city. Does this mean that he should have surrendered himself to the elements? Allowed them to destroy his body? Walk in a snowstorm, roll in the fiery sun? No. Being 'elemental' does not mean being foolhardy or sentimental about the elements. The elemental man knows that ice which freezes also contains the warmth of fire if only he moulds it in the right way. So he builds an igloo and keeps warm. He understands that he is composed not of one element but five and having too much of one would not be right, so he adjusts his living conditions to achieve a balance. He uses fire to protect him from wind and cold, the cool shade and water to counter heat. All this he does, not 'planning' to 'counter Nature's attack' but spontaneously and naturally as the beaver builds its bridge or the bee sucks honey. This is the elemental awareness of the 'uncivilised' man as has been pointed out in passages from Chief Seattle's reply to the American President. Similar is the state of Samarsii, the exiled king of Rajasthan, 'pride of his clan', though not owning an 'acre in broad Rajasthan', for,

'Samarsi the bold is as merry as when
His will was the law in his loved native glen.'
How does he keep cheer though his enemy rules his homeland? Because all things are in their place, all Nature fulfilling itself, he too is ready to act when action is called for, happy equally when there is no need for it.

"For the roebuck still bounds by the dark hunted lake.
And the partridge still spring from the deep tangled brake...
For the copsewood is heavy by Saloombra park,
And the vale of Banmora at noonday is dark,
And he's ready, aye, ready, right firmly to stand
By the wood or the pass with his sword in his hand."

Yes, all things are in their place and he in his among them. Wherever he is, if things take their natural, spontaneous course, there he belongs. Among the much 'civilised' this sense of harmony with all things, thereby in oneself, is a rarity. There are some, of course, who recognise this unity, this diffusion of their entity into all life. We have a Dubuffet in painting who feels one with the rhythm of things. There is a Wordsworth, there is Keats who claims that the poet is most unpoetical, having no identity to call his own. There is Eliot who sees the sea 'within us'. But these are the exceptions, not the rule.

'I AM ALIVE - THIS I'

If a sharp, clear, steady awareness (there may sometimes occur a momentary awareness) of the elemental aspect of our body is rare (even among poets) what usually
constitutes body-awareness? The answer is actually implicit in the question itself. If one does not see oneself as an integral part of the physical, physiological and chemical universe, one must perceive of oneself as being apart from it, as being in opposition to it. By 'opposition' I do not mean necessarily being 'pitted against' but as a relative opposite. That is, each human being characteristically perceives of himself or herself as an experiencing 'subject' and the rest of the universe as the experienced 'object'. The experiences of the physical 'subject' are of various sensations (positive or painful), and of perceptions through the sense organs. By 'sensations' I mean those physical experiences like a thrill or a shiver, an ache or pain, breathing and movement, which are physical experiences to do with the body directly and not experienced through the senses of sight, sound, smell, touch and taste. Therefore, these could be more vividly and immediately experienced than that which is 'perceived' and hence, once removed. For instance, pain is more immediate and sharper than sight. Perhaps, the sense that comes closest to this is touch which results from direct contact and is thus the most sensuous. However, no experience can be really direct so long as the film of identity comes between. Equally, every experience, be it the apparently remote, becomes immediate when identity ceases to be. In discussing at length the elemental character of our physical being, I wished to stress that
identity is not the natural basis of all experience. In fact, it is identity that often warps experience (and as a result, distorts itself further as in the case of the peasant constantly fighting the elements). I wish to further illustrate this point with reference to other realms of physical experience as well, namely, the sensations and the sense perceptions. In the former I would consider two major sensations and how they are represented in literature (literature being, as I have noted earlier, the widest and most sensitive record of life available to us). Of all the sensations the one that is most dwelt upon, much celebrated, is the sexual experience. The other, perhaps equally or more intense in a negative manner, is pain and the sensations akin to pain (numbness, ache, burning, etc.). I would also touch upon other bodily awareness like the movement of breath (but these are not often to be found as themes or even as passing references in literature).

Very often, thinking too much upon the thought, an acute self-consciousness, robs the beauty and meaning of experience. There is force in Whitman's lines:

"This is the female form, ... It attracts with fierce undeniable attraction."

But in-between these two lines is another which is totally disappointing:

"A divine nimbus exhales from it head to foot."
One is unable to conceive of fierce attraction to some creature exhaling 'divine nimbus', while attraction to the 'female form' would be natural and right in its place. What follows is even worse with the man becoming night and 'working' into a 'prostrate dawn' while the woman 'undulates' into 'willing and yielding day' and he loses himself in the 'cleave' of 'sweetfleshed day'. The whole experience becomes artificial and sex is only between the ears. How much of identity, of 'mentalising', must occur to change the experience from what it is into this over-stretched image. Not that one must not use images to depict a physical experience and must only describe it directly. But the image itself must speak the whole truth or there must be no image at all. To work an image, a parallel, into every word and phrase does no justice either to the image or the experience. Or, truth must be veiled, half-spoken and left to the infinite possibility of imagination, which makes for true poetry. While the use of an extended metaphor is not intrinsically objectionable in every instance, Whitman's description does little credit either to the intelligence and sensitivity or to the simplicity of the reader. It leaves one with the sad impression of a mere play of words for the sake of effect. Far better is:

"Hair, bosom, hips, bend of legs, ..." 40

which at least is sincere to the experience and, to that
extent, meaningful.

Whitman states the crux of his problem when he says almost at the beginning:

"... all falls aside but myself and it ..." \(^41\)

As long as the 'myself' remains, and particularly if it looms large (as it does here), so long continues the intellectualising of experience, colouring it or destroying it by becoming overconscious of it. If an experience has been truly and wholly lived, identity dissolved in its intensity (at least for that time), then there would be none to describe it. The very recording of experience implies an identity, a subject who has experienced and is able to recall. Hence, the true report of an experience would be silence. So with love, as Blake says,

"'Never seek to tell thy love,
Love that never told can be.'" \(^42\)

To speak of it is to become conscious of it, thus to distance it from experience and become untrue to it. As a Hindi song goes:

"'Don't touch it with your hands
And sully it with relationship
Let love remain love
Don't name it.'" \(^43\)
Viewed this way all literature, all communication becomes once removed from experience (the word can never be the thing). While this is true in the strictest sense, it is also true that the right word can come extremely close to the experience. But the 'right' word fails to appear in the presence of self-consciousness. At this point I would like to clarify the difference between self-awareness and self-consciousness. A singer may be intensely aware of every nuance of the song, of its melody and meaning. At that point of time the song alone exists, but there is an awareness of the song. This 'awareness', this minimal identity (if one may call it so), with all other aspects stripped off, is self-awareness. Self-consciousness, on the other hand, is when the singer is aware of the audience and their reaction and adjusts his singing to that even as he is singing. It is like a dancer attending to her costume constantly while dancing. To use the simile of theatre, an actor must 'forget himself' and become the role he is playing. At the same time, if he totally 'forgets himself' he may begin to speak and act in a manner that would have nothing to do with the play and the playwright's conception. There must, therefore, be a losing of oneself with a simultaneous awareness of that dissolution, perhaps not consciously concurrent, but an undercurrent nonetheless. This would be self-awareness. On the other hand if the actor fails to 'become' Hamlet or Lear but remains as John or George, it
would be self-consciousness. In self-awareness, then, one may say that identity dissolves into identification with the experience. Hence, there is only one entity (the experience) with awareness of it. As awareness and experience are not divided, are not dual, there is only one, the awareness is integral to the experience. In self-consciousness, however, there are not just two but three entities. There is the experience, the experiencer, plus the experiencer's consciousness of the effect of his experience on the observer (reader, audience, etc.). Subsequently, there is a modification of the experience itself to suit the effect that aught to be created on the observer. Of course, there is the brand of self-consciousness in Confessional Poetry where one might contend that only the experiencer is the focus of attention. However, this too is not without consciousness of audience. On the contrary, the very term 'confession' implies a consciousness of a listener (albeit anonymous) to whom the experience is narrated in order to purge oneself from its obsessive grip. (Sadly, though, the need to confess itself becomes an obsession with these poets). On the other hand, when there is self-awareness during the experience, that clarity and immediacy continues into the recording of the experience as well (provided self-consciousness is not allowed to interfere at that stage).
When this is so, experience is often expressed not so much by direct expression as through suggestion. In fact, the wonder of poetry lies in the suggestive potential of words, their power to evoke images. This suggestive power does not necessarily lie in the use of symbols and images. Sometimes the simplest of expressions may be deeply suggestive. There is this crisp four line poem, for instance, by an anonymous poet:

"Western wind, when wilt thou blow,
That the small rain down can rain?
Christ, that my love were in my arms
And I in my bed again!"44

This, one might say, is by no means suggestive, all the words and ideas are there as plain as ever. The physical longing (and mental, for the two are not really separate in experience) could not be more directly stated. Yet, in it is implied not just the longing but the thrill that its fulfillment brings too. That there is no need to list every part of the human anatomy and detail the exact physiological process to evoke the sensations that arise in a physical experience is clearly brought out by these lines (which are far from simple in their ability to carry the full force of the experience). Anyhow, it doesn't need a poet to record an anatomical, physiological process. It is the very absence of the idea that the reader requires an anatomy class which makes this poem refreshing. Besides, it makes the experience
whole in delimiting it from the personal, from only that specific physical experience. It thus includes not just the poet's but every experience of love. At the same time it is not 'impersonal' in the sense of being indifferent (as the term 'impersonal' is often misunderstood). There is no superimposition of the identity on the experience by very reason of which there is an intensity that imbues it with authenticity.

The poem also renders the experience whole by including the entire self, the mental as well as physical aspects of the experience. For, it is the mind that registers and reacts to sensation. It may seem as if I am contradicting myself in this. Not very long ago I condemned Whitman for conceptualising a physical experience and being untrue to it. But really there is no contradiction, only the difference between self-awareness and self-consciousness. What Whitman attempts is not to present the whole experience, with its physical and mental implications for the experiencing self. He presents only the physical experience but imposes merely a 'mental image' on it. That is, he uses mental vocabulary to express physical experience - the result is incompatibility. If mental vocabulary must be used then the experience also must be as much mental as physical and recognised as such. Of this we have a fine example in Denise Levertov's 'Losing Track'.
'Long after you have swung back away from me I think you are still with me. you come in close to the shore on the tide and nudge me awake the way a boat adrift nudges the pier: am I a pier half-in half-out of the water?'.45

The mind is half-in, half-out of the powerful physical experience, and the body is equally half-in and half-out of it. The physical is quietly suggested in the boat nudging the pier, in the 'swinging back' of the partner, but the mood continues (for it is equally lived with mind and body, here, perhaps, a hint more of mind) with the extended metaphor:

'and in the pleasure of that communion I lose track, the moon I watch goes down, the tide swings you away before I know I'm alone again long since.'46

Of course, here is not the passion of Whitman, but a quiet fulfillment, so one could call the comparison unfair. But the passion is there all right in the shorter poem that I quoted. The passion is there in Donne and Marvell. But none of them strove to conduct classes in anatomy inappropriately mixed with 'poetic' imagery. Perhaps those
who revel in Whitman's spontaneity will find this a bit too harsh. But I am not out to bury Whitman. Certainly there is an immediate and natural physicality in Whitman that is beautiful, but elsewhere, not in those lines. For instance, in the very same poem:

"You would wish long and long to be with him ... you would wish to sit by him in the boat that you and he might touch each other."\(^{47}\)

is true and beautiful. Why Whitman fails in those other lines which I earlier discussed is because of over-consciousness, an interference of identity which wrongly infuses a need to overemphasise, to be more real than the real.

Modern poetry also sometimes overdoes itself in this manner (and especially on this subject of sex) in order to shock the reader, to shock literary tradition may be, or, perhaps, to shock itself out of 'Victorian prudery'. And with the influence of Freudian psychology there is also an overplaying of the importance of the sexual drive. Freud forgot the laws of balance, of surfeit and diminishing marginal utility (he was, after all, not an economist or philosopher). To look at all things in relation to sex would be as absurd as looking at all things in relation to food and water.
Only one who is starved or dying in a desert for water can see all things in relation to food or water. Similarly, Freud failed to recognise that it can only be the sex-starved and not the normal, balanced, individual who thinks wholly in terms of sex (be it consciously or unconsciously). The normal man needs sex when he needs it and not all the time. If he were to have it all the time he would soon tire of it as one overstuffed with food. One finds a refreshing poem on this idea by Byron (though he speaks, of course, of loving not in the physical sense the same would apply for that too):

''For the sword outwears its sheath,
And the soul wears out the breast,
And the heart must pause to breathe,
And love itself must rest.'',48

What holds for the 'heart' holds for the body too. To constantly think only in terms of sex would be as perverted as vomiting in order to be able to eat more (as the participants of Roman orgies are said to have done).

Sadly, the failure was not merely Freud's but of a whole people believing implicitly in his theories, living them and producing poetry that has lost all the charm and subtlety and the richness of suggestion, being, of course, unbalanced in approach. So we have a Kamala Das selecting for her themes the dance of eunuchs, 'wailing' and 'writhing' in 'vacant ecstasy', going into convulsions. And with a self-
conscious defiance (that is an end in itself) introducing herself:

"... I was child, and later they
Told me I grew, for I became tall, my limbs
Swelled and one or two places sprouted hair."49

Certainly these lines are well in keeping with the tone of the whole poem. Yet, the whole is only one long attempt at 'revolution', at startling. Hence, it is all for effect and not for itself. Much of the negativity of modern poetry is of this kind. A.K. Ramanujan concedes this need to break the laws of his people, to break traditions (which he believes, apparently, consist only of morality and prudery - what a partial picture of tradition!):

"I burned and burned. But one day I turned
and caught that thought
by the screams of her hair and said: 'Beware.
Do not follow a gentleman's morals
With that absurd determined air'..."50

But soon enough, morality is shattered:

"'commandments crumbled
in my father's past. Her tumbled hair suddenly known as silk in my angry hand, I shook a little
and took her behind the laws of my land.'"51

In the utter self-consciousness of the poem '"her tumbled hair suddenly known as silk in my angry hand'" stands out as
the one powerful image, its richness the more in contrast to the 'screams of her hair' which reveals the affectation, the striving for effect. How much more beautiful Lovelace's:

''When I lie tangled in her hair
   And fettered to her eye.'',52

for its unselfconscious simplicity. Not that the wish to startle should never be, but that it should be a natural outcome of a situation, like Donne's:

''For Godsake hold your tongue and let me love''.53

Or

''Busie old foole, unruly Sunne,
   Why dost thou thus,
   Through windowes, and through curtaines call on us?'',54

Ramanujan and Kamala Das are in a sense true, true, that is, to themselves. For, they depict their true mental state, unable to come to terms with, to assimilate their traditions, yet unable to break away. They are rootless and so is their poetry. Which brings us to the fact that if identity must be, it must be balanced and being balanced means a proper sense of linkage with one's own past and future. If there is a break from the regular pattern, there must be a linkage with some new pattern that is found to be meaningful. Identity cannot remain supportless. If it is robbed of customary supports and not given new ones it will resort
to negativity, to mere defiance as a support, as an end in itself (of course, if identity is altogether transcended, and not just one tendency of it negated, the result would be quite different. But this idea I will deal with at the end of the chapter). If some of this imbalance and negativity springs from the physical disorientation some of it comes from the social break-up as well. The latter I will be considering in the next chapter and former in greater detail a little later in this chapter.

The point which I am making here, however, is that whatever the reason, self-consciousness robs experience of immediacy and hence also the spontaneity of its representation in literature. A degree of self-consciousness may be considered inevitable in sensation (though it is not really so) and in writing, but even if it is so it could be minimal like that of a child. Then the experience is very nearly whole and is reported wholly. To depict an experience 'wholly', to make it wider than itself, is in fact the task of literature. I have pointed out that it is through the suggestive power of imagery that it achieves this expansion. This is not to altogether eschew direct description. Sometimes, direct description with its immense simplicity carries conviction in a manner that imagery may fail to do. But then, it must be just that — direct and simple. The examples of self-consciousness that I have considered are to indicate
the absence of this directness. On the other hand, its presence is found, for instance, in Amy Powell's 'Patterns':

''I would be the pink and silver as I ran along the paths, And he would stumble after, Bewildered by laughter. I should see the sun flashing from his sword-hilt and the buckles on his shoes.

I would choose To lead him in a maze along the patterned paths. A bright and laughing maze for my heavy-booted lover - Till he caught me in the shade, And the buttons of his waistcoat bruised my body as he clasped me,

Aching, melting, unafraid.''

The picture of laughter and love, of the 'aching and melting', the passion and the gentleness, the entire experience in its immediacy is found here. And yet, this too is not simple, far from it, for it comes in this context:

''Not a softness anywhere about me, Only whalebone and brocade And I sink on a seat in the shade Of a lime tree. For my passion Wars against the stiff brocade ... I should like to see it lying in a heap upon the ground. All the pink and silver crumpled up on the ground.''

It is this pink and silver that she would be as she leads her lover a laughing race. She desperately longs to break the
patterns of society. Why, she would have broken them in a month with the man she loved. But now she stands upright too,

"Held rigid to the pattern
By the stiffness of my gown ...
For the man who would loose me is dead.
Fighting with the Duke in Flanders,
In a pattern called war.
Christ! What are patterns for?"

Yet, she is able to speak of what 'might have been' with a freshness as if it really was, right then. Why? Why not the negativity of a Ramanujan or a Kamala Das? Because the questioning is there deep, truly deep, not merely as a necessity to defy. At the same time the experience is remarkably true and real for itself, everything is not blanketed over by that need to defy. When the experience is, it is. The indignation at the unnatural social 'patterns' is also natural, not just an abstraction, not a mere mental stand but very real, its sharp impact cutting through life. Obviously, there is no lopsidedness. Identity is balanced and while the experience lasts, identity is surrendered to it. Hence the defiance is real yet doesn't interfere with the experience. Which once more brings us to the point that identity stands in the way of real experience. It is not for nothing that Shakespeare stands out as a giant in the world of literary heroes. Where is Shakespeare in his poetry? Nowhere. So he can be anywhere and everywhere (if he was in
one place he couldn't be in another and his vision would be necessarily limited).

Having discussed at length the depiction of love as a physical experience, I must now take up the other strong physical sensation which I proposed to, that is, pain. Perhaps the transition from love to pain is best made through Yeats' 'Leda and the Swan' where love is pain. Not the yearning ache and melting that was in Lowell but a pain that is the terror of rape. To be 'ravished' by a 'God' would not lessen the anguish of the woman, on the contrary it must be heightened, her powerlessness the more (if it could be) in that the power of the oppressor is greater. All this is forcefully evident in Yeats' depiction:

''A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

How can those terrified vague fingers push
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?
And how can body, laid in that white rush,
But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?''

The strange terror, the overwhelming brute force, the horrifying experience comes alive in every phrase and word. Yet there is no negativity, no judgement passed either way - positive or negative. There are of course the emotions of terror and helplessness but also the immediacy of the
physical experience, suggested in feeling the heart beat against her body. Whatever the symbolic overtones of the poem a direct reading impresses two things. First the violent physical experience, and, second, by implication, the role of the mind in the experience. The experience is brutal not merely at the physical level but in being forced upon her in every sense. Had the occasion been one of willing submission (or reciprocity) then the same overwhelming power would have been the passion of love, the woman's pain would then, perhaps, have been the welcome 'aching' which is to be found in Lowell's poem. It is the fusion of physical pain with the mental that makes it so hopeless and terrifying.

One finds an equally gripping account of physical pain that combines with mental agony in Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner'. The anguish of extreme thirst, an existence without water for days:

''And every tongue through utter drought,
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.''

But here is as much spiritual drought as physical, the guilt of the albatross's blood on the Mariner. When a ship appears to be approaching, the Mariner frees his speech from the bonds of thirst by paying a dear ransom:
If with throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could not laugh or wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!
With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call;
Gramercy! They for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.'

Here is an emotional experience where physical power is startling, pointing to two things, one that every experience is a whole (mental, social, physical and spiritual). Second, that intensity of experience dispenses with identity and so is whole and powerful. Equally, it is the absence of identity which allows for a permeation of the experience's intensity. If here there is directness and force springing from an absence of identity, in Owen it is the intensity that destroys identity. It is indeed a greater task to dissociate oneself from a pain that one has directly lived, to look upon the experience without the distortion of subjectivity. This is achieved by Owen, in him the pain itself is the poetry. He talks of the pain of war at every level, as social madness, as mental insensibility, as spiritual meaninglessness. But here my concern is with his direct physical experience of war. The pain is so great that identity itself has been numbed and every sensation registers itself (as it is) in the blankness. Nothing can be done,
nothing achieved or not achieved. Theirs is not to question
why but the unquestioning duty-bound faith of chivalrous
warfare has vacated the world whose new tenant is an
emotionless, anesthetic blankness.

"Our brains ache, in the merciless iced east winds
that knive us... Wearied we keep awake because the night is silent...
Low, drooping flares confuse our memory of the salient...
Worried by silence, sentries whisper, curious, nervous,
But nothing happens." 61

All motivation and norms, all sense of time and space have
disappeared taking away identity also with them. So the
experience alone remains. The physical and mental merge into
one another, with physical numbness, mental numbness makes its
entry. The mind, body, the surroundings, all take on the
blanket singleness of harsh, hard grey.

"Sudden successive flights of bullets streak the silence -
Less deadly than the air that shudders black with snow,
With sidelong flowing flakes that flock, pause, and renew.
We watch them wandering up and down the wind's nonchalance,
But nothing happens." 62

Owen wrote that his senses were 'charred', for, 'I don't take
the cigarette out of my mouth when I write Deceased over
their letters'. But if these be the accounts given by
'charred senses' then perhaps the creation of true poetry
requires the charring of senses. The apparent insensibility
it is which allows for experience without any directionality. Yet it is not aimless. The direction, the shape, is given by the 'pity' of war. Owen wrote of his poetry:

"'Above all I am not concerned with Poetry. My subject is War, and the pity of War, The Poetry is in the pity.'"\(^63\)

Perhaps it was because his 'intention' was not to write poetry that poetry flowed spontaneously without the conscious striving to create it that often robs it of itself, robs the richness of poetry. Here in Owen, we find that 'unification of sensibility' which is commended in the Metaphysicals. For, the experience is necessarily with the whole being, springing from the atmosphere and extending back into it:

"'Pale flakes with fringing stealth come feeling for our faces - We cringe in holes, back on forgotten dreams, and stare, snow-dazed, Peep into grassier ditches. So we drowse, sun-dozed, Littered with blossoms trickling where the black bird fusses, Is it that we are dying?'"\(^64\)

So benumbed are body and brain by the unbroken onslaught of bitter cold and motionless waiting. Almost unknown arises a faint memory of 'blossom-littered', 'sun-dozed' moments, the 'fussing' of the blackbird. Not so much a memory, more a vague vision, as if one had suddenly been transported there with no awareness of the shift, as one falls asleep in
the midst of work and has half-conscious dreams. This confusion of mind is further heightened by the dull flat harshness of weather. This could well be death, all fuzzy and untrue, on the verge of oblivion.

Death is something pictured as being kind and gentle, a rest after the struggle and anguish of life. What happens after it is anybody's guess or belief. But, being often linked with its milder companion, sleep, the approach of death is pictured as a fading out, a dissolution of faculties, marked perhaps by an occasional invasion of pain (if the death be through physical suffering) and a confusion of senses. The borderland is described sensitively by Siegfried Sessoon:

''.. he could not see the stars
Glinting among the wraiths of wandering cloud;
Queer blots of colour, purple, scarlet, green,
Flickered and faded in his drowning eyes.''

Even the sharp pain of the wound is not altogether real to the dying soldier:

''Someone was holding water to his mouth.
He swallowed, unresisting; moaned and dropped
Through the crimson gloom to darkness; and forgot
The opiate throb and ache that was his wound.''

But sudden in a shaft of pain comes the agony, physical, intense, sharp:
''He stirred, shifting his body; then the pain
Leapt like a prowling beast, and gripped and tore
His groping dreams with grinding claws and fangs.
But someone was beside him; soon he lay
Shuddering because that evil thing had passed,
And death, who'd stepped toward him, paused and stared.''

Yes, death sometimes must pause, when life has stronger hold.
And from this searing grip of death to the racing pulse of
life we move with Harold Monro. Here it is the mind which
thinks on death, but the body, tingling in every nerve,
declares its comaraderie with life. In a poem appropriately
titled 'Living' Monro presents one of the most 'alive'
pictures of life:

''Slow bleak awakening from the morning dream
Brings me in contact with the sudden day.
I am alive - this I.''

The word 'sudden' here placed alongside 'day' and against
the 'bleak' morning dreams, brings with it all the freshness
and beauty of 'living'. How the very same word spells
terror in the 'sudden blow' of Leda and the Swan, and how
suddenly it leaps as a growling beast of pain in Sassoon's
dying soldier! It is the moment of living that is startlingly
different in the poems. Nevertheless, it is this immediacy
which lends them all their power, an immediacy which comes
when the present is unclouded by motivation and prejudice
(standing really for the future and the past), by fear or
expectation, by pre-conceived norms. Immediacy excludes all except itself, in short, it excludes identity and only exists, and it is. Immediacy, as I noted earlier, could come from the intensity of the experience. But, only if identity is kept at bay can it be accurately recorded. Otherwise, it would again only be pigeonholed into habitual reactions. When it is not, it comes through as a remarkable piece of life itself. I quoted Coleridge earlier with reference to the forceful representation of pain. Equally powerful is the expression of relief –

"My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank."

This last line is unparalleled in the communication of cool relief – relief in every pore of the body. It is this immediacy which fights with the mind's brooding premonitions of death in Monro's 'Living', which negates death in the present aliveness:

"I let my fingers move along my body.
Realization warms them, and my nerves
Prepare their rapid messages and signals.
While Memory begins recording, coding,
Repeating: all the time Imagination
Mutters; You'll only die."
The contrast between habitual identity (that is the mind 'recording, coding, repeating', the imagination that forebodes the death of that 'I', perhaps of aliveness) and the freshness of existence (the 'realisation' of the nerve endings) could not be better brought out. And again the sudden rejuvenation:

''But suddenly, as if without a reason,
Heart, Brain and Body, and Imagination
All gather in tumultuous joy together.
Running like children down the path of morning,
To fields where they can play without a quarrel:...
Back to your rampart, Death.'','71

But this aliveness does not come as a matter of course. It has to be paid for dearly with one's identity. Often the price seems too high and we will not pay. We would rather continue in the mind's realm, recording, coding, repeating, repeating, repeating... There is nothing new about my pulse beating today that it should suddenly make me feel alive. It's been beating for a long time now, ever since I was born, even before in fact. So why pay attention to its monotone? There are other fields to be won. The heart will beat and the breath will flow whether we are aware of them or not. What we need to 'control' and 'tackle' the experience that comes to us is means of understanding it. And for this we must enlist the support of our senses.
THE WORLD OF NAME AND FORM

It is the senses that act as channels of experience. If we are to be 'experiencers' of the 'world object' it can only be through our sense perceptions. So, the body is for us (at least, for most of us) only that which sees, hears, smells, tastes and touches all that is outside itself, in that order. I say 'in that order', because, vision seems to be the dominating sense. It is true that poetry particularly has much to do with listening, in its affinity with music, in itself, its rhyme and rhythm, assonance and alliteration. Yet, for all its courtship of sound, the images of poetry tend to be predominantly visual. It is more often what the eye sees (perhaps a sharp and sensitive eye, but an eye nonetheless) that is recorded, that stands out alike in a simple, straightforward physical description of a scene, or in simile, metaphor and even allegory used to depict various complex shades of experience.

In fact, the two aspects that go in to make-up a concept are form and name. Form pertains to the visual and name to the auditory. The two cannot really be separated. However, form appears to impinge more obviously on consciousness, perhaps because of its greater concreteness. Form necessarily means shape, the curve of a road, the roundness of the moon:

"When round the shore, in one long circling line,
A thousand cheerful lamps in order shine."
Sometimes shapelessness itself may define shape, as when we say 'a blotch' or when Furtado writes of buffaloes luxuriating in summer waters, 'nonchalant', 'impassive':

"Black blobs bounce
In the water -
Muddy water
Corrugated
With circles
Concentric.
A thousand O's." 74

the shapelessness of the buffaloes contrasted to the perfect circles that they create in the water. Whether it be the skinny hand of the Ancient Mariner who himself is

"... long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand." 75

or the Autumn's fruit-laden vines that run 'round' thatch-eaves, the apple tree's 'bending' boughs weighed down with fruit, the fruits themselves all filled with 'ripeness to the core' or 'swollen':

"... gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; ..." 76

the images are of shape, of form. But there is a different quality about this lankiness of the Mariner and the fullness of the autumn fruit from the concentric O's and the circling lights. The difference lies in that the depiction of the
Mariner and the fruit relates to that aspect of shape which has its equivalent in touch. The other two images are purely visual. The former are three-dimensional, the latter only two-dimensional. The third dimension of vision, the dimension of depth is what gives reality to a thing seen. It also stands for the wider scope of vision and points to one of the bases of vision. While all vision is spatial, the awareness of depth alone makes for a completeness of vision. For depth is the perception of the relation of things in space.

'THE SPRIGHTLY DANCE'

James Kirkup imagines a delightful inversion, or rather, disruption of spatial relations between things in his 'Tea in a Space-ship'. With the absence of the gravitational pull there can be no fixing of objects in their places. Yet, the very random movement of all things is still a movement in space.

"In this world a tablecloth need not be laid
On any table, but is spread out everywhere
Upon the always equidistant and
Invisible legs of gravity's wild air."77

In fact, Kirkup emphasises the relative movement, by using terms such as 'always equidistant', and again, 'parabola', 'girdled':
"Lumps of sparkling sugar
Sling themselves out of their crystal bowl
With a disordered fountain's
Ornamental stops and starts.
The milk describes a permanent parabola
Girdled with satellites of spinning tarts."

The description is not only refreshingly light-hearted but a marvellous account of movement as well, which is an extension of perceived spatial relations. To know depth is to know there and here, far and near, movement is a change in spatial relations - 'from there to here'. Movement is an essential aspect of the 'aliveness' of visual experience, and is at least implied in every visual description. Of course, stillness forms the ground, the basis in relation to which, against which background, movement can be recognised. But the latter is the most natural in a world of space and time, it is the rhythm of life (to use an auditory expression).

And those visual descriptions that have to do with movement are some of the most evocative, a celebrated instance being the dance of Wordsworth's daffodils. The poem begins with the gentle, quiet movement of a cloud (with which Wordsworth equates his own wanderings) and suddenly bursts into a gay song, in the sprightly dance of the golden flowers:

"'A host of golden daffodils,
Beside the lake, beneath the trees
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze
Ten thousand saw I at a glance
Lossing their heads in sprightly dance.
The waves beside them danced, but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee.'"79

The gaiety, the 'glee' of the flowers is wholly expressed through their movement. Had there been no breeze the scene would not have held half its marvel. It is not surprising that Indian poets tend to describe beauty more through pictures of movement than 'still-life'. For instance, it is the gait of a woman that is described, calling her 'gaja gamani' or in Tamil 'anna nadaiyal' symbolising the sway of her hips and the slow grace of her movement. The beauty of her eyes lie not just in their largeness or in their colour, but in their expressiveness and quick movements, like those of a deer, or of fish in water:

"[Her] Eyes glistening, dancing, through translucent veil
As in clear river waters leap and sport twin fish."80

One of the best descriptions in English poetry of the beloved is Herrick's 'Upon Julia's Clothes':

"Whenas in silks my Julia goes,
Then, then, methinks, how sweetly flows
That liquefaction of her clothes."81

The charm springs from the perfect capturing of the movement. But, of course, not all movement is so vivacious. It is
often quieter. Aldrich's 'Memory' depicts the transition, from quick to slow, from gaiety to solemnity:

"And on the last blue noon in May
The wind came briskly up this way,
Crisping the brook beside the road;
Then, pausing here, set down its load
Of pine-scents, and shook listlessly
Two petals from the wild rose tree." 

The sensitivity is reminiscent of Keats Autumn. Here the contrast is in the brisk wind suddenly quietening, ceasing. In 'Autumn' the picture is even quieter as we see her patiently watching the cider-press, oozing hour by hour, or balancing a sheaf on her head as she crosses a brook. The movement has almost ceased when one finds her

"... sitting careless on a granary floor", 

but then too her hair is

"... soft-lifted by the winnowing wind." 

Stillness is finally reached, one believes, when she lies

"... on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep. Drows'd with the fume of poppies... "

One is once more mistaken. Here is not stillness but frozen movement, for her hook

"Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers."
No one has painted a more tender picture even of his beloved
than Keats etches here of Autumn by description of her gentle
movements, in the granary, amidst the poppies, in the fields,
watching the cider-press.

But for the force, the power of movement, one must turn
to Coleridge:

''And now the STORM-BLAST came, and he was tyrannous and
strong:
He struck with his o'rtaking wings
And chased us south along.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
As who pursued with yell and blow
Still treads the shadow of his foe,
And forward bends his head,
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
And southward aye we fled.''

The power comes not just from a visual depiction of the storm-
racked ship but in interfusing the auditory, and more, the
tactile imagery. There is the roaring of the storm, but
the storm 'struck' with his wings, he 'yelled' but also dealt
blows. The image evoked is of a ship gripped by the shoulders
from behind by a storm that is pushing it forward with full
might.

A similar transmutation (of course, of a milder movement
not a strong one) occurs in Emily Dickinson's 'In the Garden'.
She is, unlike Coleridge (whose use of the tactile and auditory imagery to express the visual is spontaneous rather than conscious), conscious of the translation of one sensation into another. But the consciousness serves to stress the possibility of transition, also pointing to the real absence of boundaries. Rather, I should say, there is awareness not consciousness in her poem (to use the vocabulary I had adopted earlier in the chapter). The poem begins as a simple description of movement:

"A bird came down the walk:
He did not know I saw;
He bit an angle-worm in halves
And ate the fellow raw.
And then he drank a dew
From a convenient grass,
And then hopped sidewise to the wall
to let a beetle pass.
He glanced with rapid eyes
That hurried all abroad - "

at this point the language of sight changes into that of touch, for:

"He stirred his velvet head."

So far only 'his' movements, his actions were observed. But now it is the texture of his head, soft, downy, velvet. And when a crumb is cautiously offered:
'... he unrolled his feathers
And rowed him softer home
Then oars divide the ocean...''90

There is no real touch here, only sight that perceives touch, rather, sight become touch. The 'velvet' of the bird's head, the 'soft' movement of his wings breaking air, moving through air, is not actually touched but known to be so just by being seen. There are other instances where the eye is recordist but touch the experiencer:

''More beautiful and soft than any moth
With burring furred antennae feeling its huge path
Through dusk, the air-liner with shut-off engines
Glides over suburbs and the sleeves set trailing tall
To point the wind. Gently, broadly, she falls
Scarcely disturbing charted currents of air.'''91

where the landing of an aircraft becomes a 'soft', 'gentle' falling, the antennae 'furred' in their movement across the runway. Or else, as one sees the rain falling on parched earth, the drops seem to console with their touch:

''This dust, this royal dust, our mother
modelled by spring-belonging rain
whose soft blank drops console
a single vineyard's fever or a region
falls now in soft percussion on the earth's
old stretched and wrinkled vellum skin.'''92

It speaks for the dominance of vision among the senses that by seeing one can experience sound, smell, taste and touch.
Perhaps because of this we rarely feel the need to know the other senses in themselves, as they are. It is rarely one finds an account presenting solely an experience of touch, as in

'Breezy April, vagrant April,
Rock me in your swing of music;
Thrill my branches with enchantment
At your touch of sweet surprises.'

Although touch is the dominant image, this too leads to a visual experience:

'All my boughs break into blossom
At your passing breath and whisper,
All my leaves break into tumult
Of surrender at your kisses.'

It is really a visual occurrence, the flowering, the leaving of trees in spring, that finds expression in tactile language. Of course, this, in the best manner of poetry, makes for a harmony, the blending of sound, touch and vision with one experienced reality. As I will point out at many later points as well (and have done earlier too), poetry makes for a transcending or dissolving of identity and a living of experience. This it does sometimes by a presentation of the experience in its simplicity (and thus its completeness) which is dissolution of identity. But more often it does so by presenting an experience in terms of imagery that is other
than itself (and thus, again, its completeness, its relatedness or unity with all things). This is the transcending of identity. Tagore's depiction of the touch of Spring's flowering belongs to the latter category.

The former is rarer, but more to be found in modern poetry with its creed of direct expression, as in Amy Lowell:

"'Underneath my stiffened gown
Is the softness of a woman bathing in a marble basin
A basin in the midst of hedges grown
So thick, she cannot see her lover hiding
But she guesses he is near,
And the sliding of the water
Seems the stroking of a dear
Hand upon her.'"95

While this seems to be a direct and purely tactile experience, it must be noted that the sensation arises from a guessing of the lover's presence and sight upon her. In this sense, the simple one-to-one simile of Elizabethan poetry is more direct. That is, similes where sight is denoted by sight, touch by touch. One of the best instances is Jonson's:

"'Have you seen but a bright lily grow
Before rude hands have touch'd it?
Have you mark'd but the fall of snow
Before the soil hath smutch'd it?
Have you felt the wool of beaver,
Or swan's down ever?
Or have smelt o'the bud o'the brier
Or the nard in the fire?
Or have tasted the bag of the bee?
O so white, O so soft, O so sweet is she!'"96
Where the seen lily and snow are equated to her fairness, the touched wool of beaver and swan's down are to her softness, the smell of the bud, the taste of honey (while still in the bee) to her her sweetness. Each experience is itself and yet all combine in the person of the beloved. Of course, if one stretches the point one could say that the root experience is the beauty of the beloved, which would be primarily visual. However, as in Tagore's 'April' (and other poetry where identity is transcended) the visual does not predominate. There is a vivid experience of all the sensations.

'SOIL'S AROMA, SMELL OF CLOVE'

While touch may be sensed by vision, it cannot so easily grasp smell. One can look at a cloud and call it soft, a building and feel it to be hard. Even by seeing one can almost feel the texture of silk, the coarseness of sack. Of course, a red apple looks appetising, while some dishes may not look appetising. In this sense vision can tell us of taste too. Perhaps because of this one says that someone looks 'sweet' or that another is 'sour-faced'. However, smell seems to belong wholly to itself. Smell may spring from the earth and be carried by the breeze:

'Until a breeze
From some pure nowhere straying, stirs
A pang of poignant odour from the earth, an unheard sigh
Pregnant with sap's sweet tang and raw soil's fine
Aroma, smell of stone, and acrid breath
Of gravel puddles.'
Or one may associate certain smells with certain objects, as perfume with flowers, like the \textit{Rajnigandha}

''... that expands at night
   Alone, and like a lover's vow doth breathe
   Its odour rich in secret.'',98

Sometimes the fragrance itself may be personified, or rather, humanised, by equating it to a breath, a breathing. For, smell, that enters one's being through the breath, is itself seen as a kind of breathing of that which exudes it. In that breath may be heard, smell may be 'heard' with the breath that carries it. As the country bedroom wrapped in the peace of awakening dawn:

''Hears through an open window the garden draw
   Long pitch black breaths, lay bare its apple trees,
   Ripe pear trees, brambles, windfall-sweetened soil,
   Exhale rough sweetness against the starry slates.'',99

The pitch black of pre-dawn and the sweetness of soil and fruit-laden trees combine in the breath of the garden. Vision, sound and fragrance become one in that breath. Yet each is itself too, clearly and fully. This kind of unity is unusual, arising from a willing suspension of identity. What is more often found is the experience by itself, where sight is sight and smell is smell:

''Where the green walnut's outer rind
   Gives precious bitterness to the wind;
In acrid bulb beneath the mold,
Sleeps the elixir, strong and old.\textsuperscript{100}

But even here, experiences are not fully lived. They will not be known for what they are but must be weighed on a scale with other experiences:

"What bottled perfume is so good
As fragrance of split tulip-wood?\textsuperscript{101}

'Well, this rose smells sweet', one will say, but cannot stop there and must add, 'though it is not as sweet as the other that I smelt two days back'. And both the perfumes are lost in this mental arithmetic which always says 'not equal to', always 'greater than' or 'less than' and no experience is known in itself. So no experience is really known, what is known is only the mental construct of relativity. If it is not plagued by relativity then it is by negativity. A meagre rain falls that smells

'... of dust in
Attics and the urine of lizards and mice.'\textsuperscript{102}

Except to a perverted imagination rain could not smell of such things. Not a single soul who has smelt rain (other than the poetess herself) could vouch for having sensed this particular smell in it at any time in their lives. And the description cannot be forgiven as a part of an unrealistic, fevered mental raging as we find in Roethke, who in the summer heat smells:
"... the dead buffalo
The stench of their damp fur drying in the sun."

and

"A kingdom of stinks and sighs,
Fetor of cockroaches, dead fish, petroleum,
Worse than castoreum of mind or weasels, ...
The slag-heaps fume at the end of the raw-cities:
The gulls wheel over their singular garbage."

But then Roethke confesses that this negativity is unnatural, not right. It only arises because

"'Lust fatigues the soul.'"

And he is genuinely worried

"'How to transcend this sensual emptiness?'"

For, only from an emptiness, a hollowness can such negativity spring. This hollowness is not an absence of identity but the presence (as I have pointed out in the first chapter) of a hollow-identity and too much concern with this identity. It is better to have a positive identity (if one cannot transcend identity) than to have this kind of a negative, hollow one. This is not to say that one must always see only the moon and roses, smell only fragrances and nothing bitter (this would be actually another kind of imbalance in identity which I have considered later in the chapter under a disorientation of motivation). The point is not to feel
negatively about things. Dilip Kumar Roy describes the event of Krishna destroying the hydra-headed serpent Kaliya who poisoned a lake and the environment in Brindavan. Kaliya is traditionally (and in Roy's poem as well) painted as a personification of evil. Yet there is nothing negative in the manner of presentation of the poisonous fumes that he and his hordes exhume:

''The poison from their fangs
Made the inviting waters swirl repellent,
Whence rose a stabbing odour which had made
The young blades wither and the neighbouring trees
Widowed of leaves. And the eddies' exhalations
Hung in mid-air, a dangerous canopy,
An overt war declared on all that breathed.''

This may be because, here there is the presence of an objective-correlative. That the venomous snake Kaliya should exude equally venomous fumes is natural, not negative. That rain should smell of lizard and mouse urine is unnatural, so negative. Again, the description of the stench is not because the poet feels a propensity to depict things negative like Koethke (and Kamala Das) - but because it is required in by his theme (the theme itself, however, is positive - the triumph of Truth over evil).

There is another notable feature in this description. The smell itself, apart from mention of the 'stabbing odour' is not depicted so much as its effect on all life around.
So we have really an instance of smell translated into vision, a sight of withered grass, the leafless trees, and swirling of the waters. Which brings one back to the predominance of vision. While smell is mostly independent of vision, it too gets linked to it. Besides, it is also true that smell itself is not often sensed (and is only rarely the subject of poetry). This may be because purely auditory or tactile (or olfactory and gustatory) experience is difficult for a seeing person. While listening to music one also sees the singer, very often one positively wishes to see the singer. It may be to avoid this distraction that some music lovers prefer to listen to music with eyes closed. It may be because of this too that Keats is able to fully 'sense' the perfume of each flower because he cannot directly see them:

''I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what sweet incense hangs upon the boughs,
But in embalmed darkness guess each sweet
Where with the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine,
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves,
And mid-May's eldest child,
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine ...''

But even Keats cannot totally keep at bay the visual predominance. For, along with the smelling of each 'sweet' is the picture of it, white or fading, covered in leaves or
filled with dew. Only here the visual does not interfere with the other senses but serves to complete the picture.

Usually vision distracts us from other sensations, it imposes itself on almost all sensations. With eyes closed one can experience the exact movement of a car, perhaps one feels it in a heightened manner. With eyes open one only sees the other vehicles speeding by, the buildings and trees and people and billboards. If one is able to put up with the din of traffic it is because one is not totally aware of it, being (in this case, perhaps thankfully) preoccupied with what is seen. It is the blind who know what touch really means. In them it is touch that is translated into sight - touch becomes shape and shape becomes vision, or touch is itself vision (like coolness associated with water, warmth with light). For an instant touch becomes vision even to Edmund Blunden as, with the coming of October,

"Upon my hand the fly so small that sight
Hardly could shape him settled, quested, flew ..."109

There is 'questing' about experience in Blunden which brings this typical phrasing. The fly is known first by touch upon his hand, then seen, but not just seen - 'shaped by sight'. It is not form that is seen, but shape that is formed by sight. As an extension of the idea his sight shapes the clouds floating above so that they become "crowns of cloud and thrones of light" moving "with the minutes".
But things have a reality of their own too, the "season's blue" and the "clear forget-me-nots" which draw his eyes back to the stream. How are they real as apart from a sight which forms them? Because they are formed the same by other sighters as well, for, "the vole watched too". Nonetheless, Blunden has posed the questions, is sight merely or purely physical? Is the seen only a physical perception or does it have something to do with the seer? Is form itself or is it formed by sight? He poses these questions but lets them pass into the blues of the seasonal skies and of the forget-me-nots. And I too will let them pass here (to take them up once more in the fourth chapter, relating to the mental self) into not just the blues, but greens, reds, yellows and all the colours of visual poetry. For, I began with considering the predominance of vision among all the sensations.

**SEA-WASHED SILVER, KINGFISHER BRONZE**

Form as the basic aspect of vision is sensed and recorded by poetry in itself and also in relation to space and movement (and to touch). But that aspect of vision that is special or unique in it is colour. And colour is naturally more perceived than shape. Be it the crimson clusters of flowers that wind round a causarina tree¹¹⁰ or water-lilies 'like snow-enmassed'¹¹¹; be it the fresh red, red rose (which symbolises love)¹¹² or the Miller's beard
'reed' as a fox, with the hair on his nose—wart 'reed' as the 'bristles of a sowes eres',\textsuperscript{113}; be it ice, emerald-green or the sea-snakes 'blue, glossy green and velvet black',\textsuperscript{114} — they all seem to spring from painters' pens. For, as sound is the musician's forte, form the sculptor's, so colour is the painter's medium. Of course, sound has form and colour and pictures have sound and texture and so each art may include others and be complete in itself. But what is striking or predominant, what one calls the 'medium' differs in each. So, when a poet captures vibrant colours in his words, he may be said to share the sensitivity of the painter (when his poems are rich in sound, the sensibility of a musician, and so on). And like the painter, the poets also have colour preferences. Chaucer has an affinity for red. Though one does find whites and blues and browns, it is the red that dominates. Coleridge, in choosing a seascape for his theme in the Ancient Mariner, implicitly voices his preference for green-blues. While the gold and crimson of the sun also pervade the poem, the sun is 'bloody' except when he rises bright from the mist, but that is an image of light, not colour. And the nightmare 'Life-in-Death' has red lips, yellow locks and a white skin. While the wondrous blues and green also burn in the water like 'witch's oils', it is only when the Mariner is crazed with guilt. Later they become the blessed hues of the only
living creatures that keep him company. Ample proof of his liking for these colours.

But, for a riot of colours, it seems, one must turn to the tropics with their flowers and birds of myriad hues.

"Upon the grass the wandering gull parades its sea-washed silver,
The hoopoe and the kingfisher their bronze and sapphire blue.
Wild grey pigeons dreaming of a home amid the tree-tops Fill their beaks with silken down and slender banyan twigs. But the jade-green gipsy parrots are only gay marauders, And pause upon their sun-ward flight to plunder red-ripe figs."

Or, as when it rains:

"'The green is greener:
And so the red ...','116

and

"'The ants begin to march
In single file with a rain-dead beetle. Leaves glow emerald-green, as the belly of a bumble bee.'117

Yet, the temperate zones have their share of colour too in the gay, though short, summer.

"'When daisies pied and violets blue
And lady-smocks all silver-white,
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue
Do paint the meadows with delight.'118
Of the many colours thus seen, the poet may still opt to choose one. As I have pointed out, he may wish to paint his scenes in shades of blue and green, or in shades of red and brown. According to his choice of colour will he choose his subject, so perhaps, Emerson chooses a purple rhodora:

"The purple petals, fallen in the pool,
Made the black water with their beauty gay;
Here might the red-bird come his plumes to cool,
And court the flower that cheapens his array."

(Emerson thinks the flower-purple richer than the bird-red, Chaucer might not have agreed).

'THE MIRACLE-WORKER LIGHT'

But a poet may hardly even see any colours for seeing the light that colours them. Colour is a very vital part of vision, particularly of human vision (which alone, science tells us, colour adorns). But light it is which makes vision itself possible. So the poet-painter (like the actual painter and the photographer) is concerned not just with colour but greatly with light as well. Thus, Conquest's colours blend into the light:

"'Liguria tingles with peculiar light.
The sea and sky exchange their various blues ...'"

And the green of forest is itself transformed into light as
'Green flames pour up, the pines and cypresses
   Beyond the stream. The stream itself
Hipples and ripens to a falling sun
   Whose light makes metal at this hour
   Its golden froth of leaf and flower.
A dragonfly is basking on a stone ...
Foam spurts between the pebbles; currents swirl;
   It slides, a shining film, over rock
   Smooth as itself, or into pools of dark ...

Light - which awakens our bodies and our minds, light
flowing to us from the sun (and its reflection in the moon),
which clothes all things with form, is naturally the first
to be observed by the eye. All things seen are related to
light (or to darkness which is really light that is absent).
And much of the beauty of a visual description lies in
capturing the nuances of light and shade. Of course, poetry
may well record events and even landscapes without even a
mention of light. But light creeps in at least through
chinks and keyholes or gaps in leaves and makes its presence
felt. It is captured as it reflects and refracts or as it
creates forms and colours. It may be noticed when it blushes
in dawn's sunrise or glistens on dew-dripping forest leaves.
Or it may be welcomed by the joyous brightening of the earth,
which makes one think that the Sun, the mainspring of light,
courts the Earth with his warm touch:

'You look and look on the earth
   As if in love with her!'
Nor is there any doubt
That she too is in love with you
The smile that lights up her face
When she sees you in her glory!".122

His penetrating glance, not satisfied with one distant
glimpse, comes down upon her in "showers of golden glance".123
and she smiles her reply by reflecting his look:

"On both sides of the road the corn is ripe to the horizon,
- the glad golden answer of the earth to the morning
light.".124

The Sun is water-worshipped too, adored by water reflecting his
radiance in myriad ways from her moving surfaces:

"Scattering your rays on the sea
How swiftly you go up the sky! ...
And the sea with its limbs all spread
Making each little drop its eye
Takes in your dazzling form
And sings your praise with joy!".125

Else in a welling wayside spring the sun turns into liquid
light, as if morning itself had melted "into a chorus of
tears and laughter".126

The beauty of all these descriptions of light lies not
just in the wondrous nature of the subject (for light is life
and rouses a spontaneous response of joy). The power of
these lines lies both in their pictorial richness and in
their elemental sensitivity. Although the images have to
do with 'seeing' they extend beyond that. Because, light is presented in its relationship with the earth, with rich harvest and cool waters, in fact, with all life. When the earth or the sea are personified one is perceiving the human elements in them. If the sea is human, if the earth is human, the humans must be sea-like and earthy. In that they point to the unity between the elements and the human these descriptions may be called 'elemental'. They are indicative of a sense of identification with nature. This awareness of the harmony of all things is literature's special wonder as I pointed out (with reference to Blyth's study) in the first chapter. All figures of speech, by referring to one thing in terms of another, highlight this unity, the oneness of all things.

When the boundaries between things are dissolved it implies a transcendence of identity. Thus, Nature may become human, or animal too, as in the description of noon by Chattopadhyaya which captures most marvellously the various shades of day's light and the heat and coolness which its changes bring.

"The noon a mystic dog with paw of fire
Runs through the sky in ecstasy of drouth
Licking the earth with tongue of golden flame
Set in a burning mouth

"It floods the forest with loud barks of light
And chases its own shadow on the plains
Some secret Master-hand hath set it free
Awhile from silver chains

"At last towards the cinctured end of day
It drinks cool draughts from sunset-mellowed rills,
Then chained to twilight by the Master's hand
It sleeps among the hills."126a

Here is a masterly description of light and heat. Where the sun's rays are not, when they are not on half the hemisphere, there lies the shadow of light. And light, constantly moving into this zone of darkness, is thus ever chasing its own shadow. The unity between the subject and image is perfect. So one pictures in the poem a dog, running, running, tongue hanging out in the heat, perhaps panting slightly, reaching an evening stream, lapping up the cool water and lying down, paws outstretched, head between, to sleep. The experience of light is equally vivid, its intense heat, its relentless movement through the land, its apparent repose in the distant, misty, hilly horizon.

There is a picture used for experimental psychology which appears to be the outline of two profiles of people facing each other. It is so drawn that it could equally be seen as a curved glass. However, if one sees the faces, one sees not the glass and if one sees the glass one cannot see the faces. But here one sees the dog and the noon, and yet, one does not really for, the dog is the noon (or noon is the dog). The identification of the subject with the image is complete as the identity of each is lost (or found) in the other. This unity may be with a single image,
an extended metaphor as Chattopadhyaya's 'noon-dog', or it could be with a number of images. For instance, the palm tree is Roy Campbell's subject. 'She' is personified, light is seen only in relation to her, yet there is an arresting harmony in 'her' movement and the patterns of light created so that she herself becomes a fountain of light and music.

"Victory-vanned, with her feathers out-fanned,
The palm tree alighting my journey delayed
And spread me, inviting, her carpet of shade.

"Like a fountain she played, spilling plume over plume in
A golden cascade for the winds to illumine,
Ascending in brilliance and falling in shade
And spurning the ground with a tiptoe resilience
Danced to the sound of the music she made."

In this remarkable unity of the senses each sensation becomes identified with the others, is seen in terms of the others. The predominant experience is of shade, the shade cast by the desert palm, hence to do with light. But the shade is soft, rich, like a carpet. There is softness in her 'feathers' and plumes, there is coolness in her fountain-like dance. Light and shade are heat and coolness, hard and soft. What the eye sees is also touched, known by the skin even as it is heard. The movement of light is like the waves of a melody, rising, 'ascending in brilliance', ebbing, softening, 'falling in shade'. And the whole is a dance to the rhythm of light
and shade, like the 'spilling' of waters singing to the wind. But the winds illumine the palm, not sing in her (she sings to herself). The winds, rather unusually, are carriers of light, not of sound, reminiscent of the breezes in Keats' 'Nightingale' Ode (which blow in the occasional light). The poem not only unites sight, touch and sound but also the elements. The palm grows in the ground but dances in the sky, 'spurning' the earth, standing almost tiptoe on it (but she can do so only because she is firmly rooted in the ground), and the water-cool cascade of her swaying fronds are gold-illumined, fire-touched by the winds. Earth, sky, water, fire and wind combine to create the grace of the swaying palm.

While such a harmony of senses and elements is truly rare, the translation of one sense perception into another occurs often in poetry suggesting the unity of all the senses. For instance, a Kannada poet, Dr. Lakshminarayana Bhatta, equates the advent of spring to the sound of a child's anklets and to the flower-blush of his love. The former is an auditory image for the visual beauty of spring. Another instance where not just vision but light, specifically, is directly translated into sound is in Emily Dickinson's 'There's a Certain Slant of Light':

''There's a certain slant of light,
On winter afternoons,
That oppresses, like the weight
Of cathedral tunes.
When it comes, the landscape listens, 
Shadows hold their breath
When it goes, 'tis like the distance 
On the look of death.'\textsuperscript{129}

Not only is light expressed in auditory terminology, these lines also carry an implied personification. The coming and going of the light is near human and more so is the landscape that holds its breath and watches the light silently. Sometimes, this infusion of the human element in Natural description is hardly discernable yet present in the words or phrasing, as in Coleridge's:

''The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out;
At one stride comes the dark.'\textsuperscript{130}

where the 'stride' is a human movement, yet, in the context it is not apparent at all and only highlights the suddenness of nightfall.

In this manner literature unites so unobtrusively and spontaneously that the seams are invisible. However, there is the other manner of depiction or presentation where the experience appears in the original, untranslated. The one is expanding identity to include all things, the other is dissolving identity completely into one thing that it remains in its own fullness. So the Ancient Mariner when he discards the curse of identity, when he no longer loathes the sea creatures for being alive when his mates are dead (a manner
of perception springing from a strong sense of identity — of 'me' and 'mine'), is able to wonder at the sea-snakes and really 'see' their glowing grace:

''Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watched the water-snakes:
They moved in tracks of shining white
And when they reared, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes ...''\textsuperscript{131}

And within the shadow of the ship too,

''They coiled and swam, and every track
Was a flash of golden fire...''\textsuperscript{132}

And it is only when he blesses them unawares, when he feels a natural love for all life, that the dead albatross hung around his neck drops of its own accord. When identity dissolves, each thing is experienced in its fullness and with perfect clarity minus the colouration of identity. Then all comparisons seem superfluous. So Subrahmanya Bharathi begins to ''compose a poem in praise of the beauty of dawn...''\textsuperscript{133}

''To melt gold, and cool it, and turn it
Into honey...''\textsuperscript{134}

but there stops and wonders

''... is that just a gimmick?
When light spreads slowly over the sky
And soon sets all of it aflame
Where is the simile to describe that miracle?''\textsuperscript{135}
For, light, among all things seen, is itself a part of the seeing. It is by light that we see form and colour, by light that we see light itself,

'That which makes the grass giggle,  
The flower a surprise, mud clear,  
Water smile, the sky a plain -  
That miracle-worker light  
I awoke in the morning and worshipped.'

Here too, though light is not translated into any other sensation and is seen in its own glory, its relationship with all things is evident. This is because absence of identity not only allows for an immediate perception of things but, by dissolving boundaries, brings an experience of the universal harmony.

By highlighting the self-luminosity of light Bharathi also touches upon its elemental and spiritual nature (the latter I will take up for discussion in Chapter 5 on the spiritual self). Light, self-lighter, 'sets all aflame', for light is fire and fire is light. In fact, each sensation is produced by the effect of an element. Therefore, one who has an elemental awareness (as I have earlier discussed in the chapter) experiences the truth, the basis of his physical existence. However, I have also pointed out that elemental awareness is rare, what is to be found frequently is sensory awareness. Even this could lead to a fullness of experience wherever identity is dissolved, but results in partial or
even negative experience when clouded by identity. This point which I have already made with reference to the sensations of pain and love, of touch, smell and vision holds good for the other perceptions, for hearing and taste as well. In the perceived world vision holds sway, sound follows as a close second. I have referred to the importance of sound in poetry. Here, I will be giving special attention to the auditory images or the 'sound pictures'. Because, poetry has two aspects (always interfused and really inseparable, but again, often separated for study and understanding) - it is pure sound and it is a word picture (or a series of word pictures). This latter aspect, the meaning aspect which includes imagery, consists not only of visual pictures but of sound, smell, touch and taste pictures as well. I have already considered the touch and smell pictures. Now I wish to consider the nature of the sound pictures and also how they overlap or are translated into other images and how they are affected by the presence or absence of identity.

'HEARD MELODIES ARE SWEET ...'

The most direct depiction of sound is in onomatopoeiac words. These have basically to do not with the imagery but with the auditory aspect of poetry. But form and theme, sound and image, cannot really be separated. This unity is highlighted where sound itself forms an obvious part of the
theme or is itself the theme. Here onomatopoeic words would not only be of auditory but thematic significance as well. In his poem 'The Orchestra Conductor' V.C. Dutt equates the process of creation, life and death, to an orchestra. The birth seems wonderous like the striking of deep chords, but death casts its shadow:

''Death broods, night intrudes; the soul is in pain;
Always, always, the end of the refrain
Rings back, swings back, ... dies with a sob;
Let go the drums again ... throb, throb, throb.''

The 'throbbing' of the drums captures not only their sound but the pain, the agony that is a part of life, the pain itself is a physical throbbing, a refrain that returns forcefully, swinging back, but dies sadly, with a sob of sound. The mental and the physical get inextricably fused into the sound of the drums, and the words themselves throb in the mind of the reader going on as a sort of background, throb, throb, throb ... Then enters scepticism, all pain disappearing,

''Look not, brook not, 'tis all in the show;
All hash, this trash; let the cymbals go.''

While the sound of the cymbals is not onomatopoeically depicted, it is echoed in 'hash' and 'trash' which are close to the crashing of the cymbals, a crashing that stands for the breakdown of values and aspirations. There is a brief
respite for Love's entry, to the chiming of bells and the welling, swelling, of joy's music. But the dominant rhythm of the death-drums beat:

"Deep chords! still chords! What is there to solve? The dominant, prominent, crash to resolve;
Love's fled, they are dead! slow rhythmic the triad;
Oh, muffle the drums now ... dead, dead, dead."

There is a music, especially a rhythm in the universe that is reflected in every life. The power of this poem lies in its awareness of this rhythm, an awareness so tangibly expressed that it is transmitted to the reader. But even within the poem it is not the chiming of Love's bells or the swelling music and the blowing of bugles that penetrate. It is the drums that vibrate in response. Not only because they depict the inexorable rhythm of death (though death is indeed an unforgettable presence) but that their rhythm is the rhythm of life as well, the throb of the heart, the beat of the pulse. In Indian iconography it is the drum held by the Dancing Lord, Nataraja, that symbolises creation, the pulse of Time, Birth and Death are two aspects of its movement. Dutt creates the texture of the movement by repetition of the onomatopoeic sounds - throb, throb, throb, dead, dead, dead, throb, throb, throb, which almost reads 'life, life, life, death, death, death, life, life, life ...' the unbroken cycle. At the same time, the sounds of the orchestra are also vividly experienced.
Carl Sandburg's 'Jazz Fantasia' is startlingly similar, only in it dominates the long drawn 'moaning' note of sadness that is a very human rather than instrumental sound or rhythm (although the drums, the percussions are very much present). The sadness is in how close this 'fantasy' sometimes comes to the pity of life, to the depression and muted pain which the jazz seeks to express.

"Drum on your drums, batter on your banjos, solo on the long cool winding saxophones. Go to it, O jazzmen. Sling your knuckles on the bottoms of the happy tin pans, let your trombones ooze, and go husha-husha hush with the slippery sandpaper. Moan like an autumn wind high in the lonesome treetops, moan soft like you wanted somebody terrible, cry like a racing car slipping away from a motorcycle-cop, bang-bang!"140

Why do I not term this description 'negative' as I earlier did Kamala Das's or Hamanujan's? Because here is not that negative stance. Here there is no intrusion of identity which superimposed a negative vision. Rather, along with the sadness, almost implied in it is a comment on the desperate self-pity that jazz indulges in. But there also seems to be an empathy with that plight which is the outcome of a hollow, lifeless society, the fading of all norms, severing of roots, why this is so, why the age is smitten with despair and hollowness, I have considered later in the chapter (and will also deal with in greater detail in the next chapter regardin
the social self). Even among these two poems the moaning, the crying is only in Sandburg's. Dutt's comment on the sadness is far more subdued, almost drowned in the continual pulse of the drums.

In absolute contrast are the gaiety and liveliness of Shakespeare:

"'When all aloud the wind doth blow, 
And coughing drowns the parson's saw, 
And birds sit brooding in the snow, 
And Marian's nose looks red and raw, 
When roasted crabs hiss in the bowl, 
Then nightly sings the staring owl, 
To - whit! 
To-who! - a merry note, 
While greasy Joan doth keel the pot.'",141

It is not as if all things are joyous in this picture and there is no cause to mourn, but that, laughter permeates the temperament, finding expression even in the lightness of the rhythm and metre. In these lines too there is the brooding of the birds, the loudness of the wind, the coughing that drowns even the saw. But all these do not succeed in detracting from the amusement of Marian's red, raw nose and the appetising hiss of dinner getting ready, a positivity epitomised in the merry note of the owl. Sound is only a part of this description, for, it is equally vivid in visual and gustatory images as also in the depiction of the social atmosphere. But sound becomes important in being linked to
the whole. The very wholeness is testimony, as is the freshness, to the absence of identity. In Shakespeare there seems to be no gap between the experience and the writing, the words tumble, trip and dance forth, like a mountain stream, from their experienced source. He sees, he hears, smells, tastes, touches, perceives, knows, and that is the poetry. There is no re-arranging, patterning of experience to suit identity. As I pointed out in the first chapter, here is neither subjectivity nor objectivity but only experience.

Another who displays this sensitivity (though not with the light-heartedness often encountered in Shakespeare) is Keats, in whose 'Nightingale Ode' is found one of the most marvellous auditory images:

"The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves."

To comment on it and thus, to expand it in any manner, is to detract from its beauty. One can only say that even the noise of flies, one of the most unwanted creatures on earth, acquires an attractiveness even while the image is perfectly true to the sound it depicts. Not that attractiveness is in itself a virtue. Rather, here it is the truth that lends charm to the experience. In fact, mere attractiveness would ring false and appear superfluous. One can find instances of this use of decorative language, which are
actually as much a form of self-consciousness as the negative stance. We have:

"The Himalay's immense epiphany!
No thin melodic themes drawn to high hush
Which yet weighs never the ineffable on earth's ear
Nor wipes out the earth's eye with infinite blank —
Here an all-instrumental harmony
Sweeps to a multitudinous peace beyond."\(^{143}\)

What can one say but 'words, words, words'? Neither does one hear the melody, nor can one see the grandeur, nor feel the spiritual peace that is multitudinous. How can peace be multitudinous? There is peace or there is no peace. Perhaps it is like the many deaths that cowards die, multitudinous. But then it is qualified with the article 'a'. And then, why 'epiphany' and 'thin melodic themes'? The orchestral image hardly coincides with the wonder that is the Himalaya, not even if it be called an all-instrumental harmony. Not because the wonderful vision cannot be translated into sound, it can, but because the auditory images are ineffective and are merely verbal. The words fail to create the experience, because the real experience is lost in the need to use 'beautiful language' to depict it.

Similarly, Thadani's description of the magic music of Krishna's flute, saying it is

"Deeper than the music of the stars at night."\(^{144}\)
is inept. The 'music of the stars' is a classical image, perhaps an idea but not a real experience. It is, therefore, not an image that can evoke that wonder, the richness of that melody. Much better is an earlier line:

''I never heard such wonder melt the light.'',145

Not that light melting is a daily experience as opposed to the sound of the stars' music. But, the very combination of the words 'wonder' and 'melt' is a happy one, music that melts can create wonder, and that it seems to melt the light itself speaks of its tenderness. There is, besides, a freshness and immediacy about the image, while the music of the stars is certainly an intellectual notion. Intellectual notions would make for good mental make-up not for full physical experience. If one is thinking of the music one cannot listen. Again, there is a simplicity and completeness in Thadani's

''And hark! - The koel's deep, shrill cry above,
Re-echoed by his mate with added power;
And all the woods are singing now from bower to bower.'',146

This problem of ornamental language occurs also in Sarojini Naidu's 'Bird Sanctuary':

''In your quiet garden wakes a magic tumult
Of winged choristers that keep the Festival of Dawn,
Blithely rise the carols in richly cadenced rapture
From lyric throats of amber, of ebony and fawn.'',147
It is food too rich to digest, too many 'lyrical' words crowded into a single passage. But where is the melody? The wood is lost for the trees, grown large and disproportionate. Yet, how much of beauty in her own:

"'When bees grew loud and the days grew long
And the peach groves thrilled to the oriole's song.'\textsuperscript{148}

Especially the phrase 'when bees grew loud' which is as vivid and immediate as the murmurous haunt of flies in heats' summer eves.

One cannot dismiss this as a tendency only in the users of 'Indian English' for the English themselves are not exempt from it. Even Milton's 'Nativity Ode' passage on the music of the crystal spheres fails to sound any melody:

"'Ring out ye Crystall spheres,
Once bless our human ears,
(If ye have power to touch our senses so)
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time;
And let the Bass of Heav'ns deep Organ blow,
And with your ninefold harmony
Make up full consort to th'Angelic symphony.'\textsuperscript{149}

Not only does it seem from the description that the crystal spheres do not have the power to move our senses with their music, but neither, it appears, does Milton. Though, of course, here is not the excessive use of 'sweet' words, there
is an overdose of classical ideas as opposed to the real experience that rings in the very same Ode in:

"When such musick sweet
Their hearts and ears did greet, ...
As all their souls in blissful rapture took:
The Air such pleasure loth to lose,
with thousand echo's still prolongs each heav'nly close."

By 'real' I mean that which communicates itself in a vividly felt manner, what Eliot termed the presence of 'objective correlative'. That is, the appropriateness of the image to the experience that it stands for. Eliot contended that Hamlet's reaction was disproportionate to the situation. But it is often possible that one may over-react or under-react. In fact, the occasions on which one reacts in perfect proportion to the stimulus are rare and only possible when one is able to surrender identity to the experience. Shakespeare is depicting a character who is disproportionate, who has too much of a mental identity. The absence of objective correlative, on the other hand, would be if Shakespeare had failed to convincingly portray the fact that Hamlet is over-reacting. The objective-correlative lies in the relation between the experience of the poet's subject (if the experience is his own, than between his experience) and its expression, between the theme and the image employed to communicate it. Hence if the theme is the problem of too
much thinking Hamlet himself is the perfect objective-correlative for it. It is a failure of objective-correlative when a poet writes of Tansen's voice that it rang like the sound of 'silver bells'. Silver bells do not evoke the sense of resonance and depth, as one does not usually visualise large silver bells. And small bells (even of silver) tinkle, tingle or jingle rather than ring. It is the huge iron temple bells (or church bells) that have an echoing resonance.

This disjunction in the relation between word and meaning can occur simply when the wrong image is chosen and even when the right image is stretched too far. We have an instance of the latter in C. Day Lewis' 'You that Love England':

''You that love England, who have an ear for her music
The slow movement of clouds in benediction,
Clear arias of light thrilling over her uplands,
Over the chords of summer sustained peacefully.
Ceaseless the leaves' counterpoint in a west-wind lively,
Blossom and river rippling liveliest allegro,
And the storms of wood strings brass at year's finale:
Listen. Can you not hear the entrance of a new theme?''

Where all except the first and last lines seem unnecessary labour to stretch the images. Would not just this be enough, one wonders:
'You that love England, who have an ear for her music
Listen. Can you not hear the entrance of a new theme?';153

In fact, it would be far better, for the 'music of England' left uncatalogued includes as much the ways of her people as also her natural beauty, far beyond the pen can hold in a single stanza. Listing some aspects one excludes others, by listing none but only suggesting their presence, one includes all. Not that an extended metaphor is always a failure. In fact, it is a typical mode in Indian poetry and has also been employed to great effect by Shakespeare and others in English poetry as well, particularly by the earlier English poets. I would like to consider an example from Indian poetry in English, Armando Menezes's 'The Train':

''Earth lies a violin to my bow:
And as I rush,
A thousand shapes of music grow
Out of the hush.
Strange orchestrated sounds unroll
From waiting woods;
And as my passion thrills the soul
Of solitudes ...';154

This could be termed an auditory presentation of a visual phenomena in the sense that the movement of the train through changing scenes is seen rather than heard. But the poem sensitively perceives that the sound of the train is more immediately felt than even its movement. In fact, children
associate the train primarily with its chugging noise, then only, its long, winding form. There is also a children's song that exploits this fact to advantage in describing a train journey. The words of this Hindi song are simple, comprising mostly of a list of Indian stations, but the manner in which it is rendered recreates the very sound of a train's movement. So, here Menezes uses the metaphor of music to recreate this auditory experience of the train.

One could equally say that he uses the metaphor of the train to evoke the earth's music, the music that is latent in scenery and human habitation. For, the poem continues:

''Long echoes rolling to the ridge,
Or valley green;
The different notes of tunnel, bridge,
Or cleft ravine;
The fury of neglected stations -
A shrieking wind
Shrill with a million excerations
Of hag or fiend;

The murmurous silence when I stop,
Live with the noise
Of water drowsing drop by drop
Of human voice.'',155

Indeed, metaphor itself means unity, and so whether one says the train is the metaphor for earth's music, or the other way round, it would really be saying the same thing.
Another notable feature of the poem, apart from its apt use of extended metaphor, is its presentation of the relationship between sound and silence. The earth is in a hush and the train awakes it to a 'thousand shapes of music'. When the train stops there is a murmurous silence, a silence highlighted by the dripping of water and broken human voice. This silence is particularly audible as the continuous sound of the train's movement suddenly stops. And again the train proceeds to its destination:

'A little pause, and off I go ...
My simple art
Touches to music with my bow
Earth's silent heart.'

Sound can grow only from silence and into silence it must resolve. Silence is the basis of sound, as light is the basis of form, as movement can be perceived only on a still background. But silence itself seems sometimes to have a sound, to speak its own language. This is a silence one hears on the sudden stopping of the train, this is the silence in the quiet forest breathing fear, a hushed breath:

'Brilliant, crouching, slouching, what crept through the green heart of the forest,
Gleaming eyes and mighty chest and soft soundless paws of grandeur and murder?
The wind slipped through the leaves as if afraid lest its voice
and the noise of its steps perturb the pitiless Splendour
Hardly daring to breathe. But the great beast crouched and
Here the silence is commingled with fear, it is a hard silence of suspense and foreboding, of coming pain, of destruction, the silence of death itself. There are other silences that are soft, that the wind is not afraid to disturb with its breath. There are the silences in whose tranquility the wind sleeps and the whispers come from human movement:

"There was never a sound beside the wood but one, And that was my long scythe whispering to the ground What was it it whispered? I knew not well myself; Perhaps it was something about the heat of the sun, Something, perhaps, about the lack of sound - And that was why it whispered and did not speak."  

There is nothing one can add on this perfect portrayal of silence and the gentle sound of 'mowing' that serves to accentuate it.

However, in this context I would like to consider the technique of contrast that is employed to bring home the presence of silence. I have already pointed out the contrast between silence and sound in Menezes' poem. In Aurobindo's poem there is no sound at all, all is noiseless, Nature herself is with bated breath. Frost's mowing, of course, highlights the silence with presence of soft sound.
But one of the sharpest contrasts is to be found in Coleridge's:

"The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea."159

The special mark of this being that the contrast is really not between sound and silence but between movement and stillness. It is the stillness, a visual freeze that is depicted through 'silence', an auditory freeze. And we come once more into the domain of translation, the translation of one sense into another. For, the sensations are not really as distinct as we would have them be, indicative of the fact that nothing is really distinct from another as we believe it is. Poetry often startles with this unity, the dissolution of identity boundaries. As sound depicts vision, so vision can portray sound. In Denise Levertov's 'The Breathing' we find literally a 'picture of silence':

"An absolute patience. 
Trees stand up to their knees in fog. The fog slowly flows uphill."160

Upto this point there is no mention of a sound, and still further it is the same, the silence is in what is seen,
... White
  cobwebs, the grass
  leaning where dear
  have looked for apples."

Even the deer are now no longer there, they have been and
gone, leaving their hoofprints on the leaning grass. The
white of the cobwebs and the fog, blanking out vision, also
form a visual equivalent for silence (a whitening of colours,
like a blanketing of sound). There are no colours, no
movement.

"The woods
  from brook to where
  the top of the hill looks
  over the fog, send up
  not one bird."

Then it comes, only at the end of the poem, the auditory
phrase which comments that the whole poem is an auditory
more than a visual experience:

"... a breathing
  too quiet to hear."

In Shelley's 'Skylark' we have a rich example of sound
being translated into light and fragrance, and being heard,
being 'sensed' one should say, the better for it.

"All the earth and air
  With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is overflow'd."

The spreading quality of the skylark's song, capturing all attention, totally enveloping the landscape, could not have been depicted in a more apt image. The simplicity and beauty of the lines is moving. And there is a special touch in the moon raining her beams from a cloud. The loveliness of the moon (as of the sun) behind a cloud is touched with silver, the brilliant etching of light that the cloud takes on. And it is then that one can truly see the light slanting down the sky in beams, like a sheet of rain. Shelley continues with another visual image that carries a softer glow, for the quieter aspects of the skylark's song:

"'Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aereal hue
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from view!'"
a typical village tradition of question-answer songs (almost in riddle fashion) called 'ese-pattu'. Only, here the singer is unseen, she is a girl called Kuyil (Koel) and when he asks through song, 'Who sings with me?' she answers 'Does the koel show her face while singing?' So the skylark is heard but not seen, the joy of its song perhaps sharper in that it is undistracted by the sight of the bird:

''Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
by warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet those heavy-winged thieves.''

From vision to fragrance, the skylark's song like the scent of the rose carried by warm winds, yes, wind is carrier of smell as of sound. But there is taste too, implied in the intoxication of the heavy-winged bees, an intoxication which again takes one back to the skylark's song, the experience is complete. Sight, smell and taste all combine to create the headiness of the skylark's song. Only touch remains and that too is implied in the rose enclosed by its leaves and being 'deflowered' by the touch of the warm wind.

One wonders if this is the Shelley who could cry:

''I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!''

All that subjectivity seems to have taken flight with the skylark and identity is truly lost in the song. But, sadly,
it returns (though nowhere in such awful measure as in the 'West Wind'), very subtly, imperceptibly to begin with:

'' Sound of vernal shower
    On the twinkling grass,
    Rain-awakened flowers,
    All that ever was
    Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.''

From complete identification with the experience (which is an absence of identity), from simile we have moved to contrast. A simile is comparison which stresses unity, but here we have comparison that has begun to play up the differences. The song of the skylark, so long like the moonbeams, like the glow-worm hue, like rose-fragrance, has suddenly become better than all things and the unity is broken, identity is back to ask,

'' Teach me half the gladness
    That thy brain must know;
    Such harmonious madness
    From my lips would flow,
    The world should listen then, as I am listening now.''

The flight has ended, Shelley is back to earth as Shelley and the skylark with its song has flown away like Keats' nightingale and all one can do is bid adieu with a heavy heart. Shelley himself is conscious of this, sadly conceding:

''We look before and after,
    And pine for what is not.''

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Then why would he not just be, as he is, lost in the sky-lark's song and drawing the reader also into it, a complete merger? Then, only the song exists and the song is light and sweet intoxication and all things that are wondrous. And all wonderful things are the song. Why with such earnest pains does he want to 'become', wanting to fly, remembering that he cannot which he has awhile forgotten and thus flown?

Such is the power of identity to divide. But to the poet at least are given moments when he can cast it aside and enter into the experience taking the reader with him. Rather, both he and the reader are left behind, 'fact' is lost in truth. In a world of fact:

"Of mahogany, gilded walls, upholstery,  
Dress suits, satin, lace, silk,  
backs of heads, bare shoulders, and stiff collars..."

she begins a piano recital,

"She bent her head  
Lower, nearer, nearer,  
Breathed, and spoke  
To her white prancing palfreys -  
Her fingers - galloping the ivory surf,  
And the notes rushed and leaped,  
Danced and whirled and scurried..."

Sound has really come 'alive' and not only in that it is personified but in its exuberance being infectious. This is
because 'fact', which here stands for identity really, is overwhelmed and the experience, which is truth, blossoms as the notes stream forth, running

"... before her chasing fingers Down the scale, Up the scale Round the gilded walls, Up the straight backs of men, Up the stiff backs of women and chairs..." 174

(stiffened with the starch of identity, rigid, unbending, set in a mould)

"Down the veins of rheumatic old gentlemen, Down the capillaries of old lumbago, Up and down, laughing and trilling, And skipping and screaming and Thundering! Huffling all the dignity of Fact, Unfurling worlds within worlds of Truth!" 175

When she stopped, 'Fact' shattered, scattered, and the 'sprites of Truth' still cheerily whirling, dancing around, the audience clapped

"And clapped, sat up and clapped - Clapped the elves away! Truth gathered up her faery worlds And fled, The dignity of Fact was restored." 176

In the regular, customary response of clapping, identity is
restored. People have once more become conscious of themselves, of their appreciation of the music and that they are expected to express this appreciation in a given pattern, so they clap and are back where they began.

And so Shelley comes back to earth, though longing to fly (rather, because of this very longing) and even Keats decides that 'fancy cannot cheat so well'. It is like waking a sleepwalker who is balanced on the parapet of a highrise building or who is swimming, though dreading water while awake. The absence of identity, of the waking identity in any case, permits one to achieve otherwise impossible tasks. But the moment identity is revived (as in the example given, by waking a sleepwalker), the impossibility of the task becomes real and that which was naturally done, now cannot even be thought of.

This world of 'fact', the world of identity, may be either subjective or objective. Subjectivity makes one lose the fullness of the experience by being overly concerned with the experiencer. Yet, too much of 'objectivity' can also create an unreal feeling, a sense of being apart from the experience and observing it.

"But deep in the velvet crater of the ear
A chip of sound abruptly irritates.
A second, a third chirp; and then another far
Emphatic trill and chirrup shrills in answer; notes
From all directions around pluck at the strings
Of hearing with finely sharpened claws."
This objectivity, the feeling of being a 'witness', is different from a complete loss of identity, in that here there is an identity which remains as an 'objective witness' of the experience. Here we get the feeling of an experience being watched and recorded without any clouding by emotion. The difference between the subjective and objective identities is that one is emotion dominated, the other intellect based. However, both are equally identities, ways of looking at the world; differently coloured lenses, but lenses for perception nonetheless. One is an 'experiencer' identity, the other a 'witness' identity.

In the other case, where identity is dissolved, there is no recordist, only the experience. As in the world between sleep and waking, on the brink of sleep, identity is receding, senses still awake, one's head sunk into pillows; or as one awakes, identity not yet risen:

"Blind loose lids, in sleep's warm porch, half hears
White hollow clink of bottles, - dragging crunch
Of milk-cart wheels, - and presently a snatch
Of windy whistling as the newsboy's bike winds near..."

There is a marvellous clarity about this 'half-hearing' sharpened trebly by the minimal identity (waking from sleep and perhaps identity submerging again in falling back into sleep), the closed eyes (preventing visual distraction) and the silence of the morning hours (in which every sound is
accentuated). But there is a wakeful clarity in Tomlinson's 'Tramontana at Lerici'. For Tomlinson, art is a process of self-discovery.

"... for what he saw
Discovered what he was ..."179

he writes of John Constable's paintings. And the same could be applied to him, that what he wrote must have discovered what he was. In any case, he is conscious of the self-consciousness (or self-discovery) that poetry implies. From such 'double consciousness' (conscious-consciousness) springs this description of sound:

"'Today, should you let fall a glass it would
Disintegrate, played off with such keenness
Against the cold's resonance (the sounds
Hard, separate and distinct, dropping away
In a diminishing cadence) that you might swear
This was the imitation of glass falling.'"180

Here is an awareness of the usual indistinctness of sound contrasted to its distinctness in the cold. Normally, due to attention being incomplete (divided by identity) all sensations are also incomplete or indistinct. So much so that the poet seems ironically to say that the reality appears too real to be true!181 Here is also an awareness of sound as it is fully, clearly registered.

But, for all this clarity in such conscious descriptions, they lack the vivacity of those where there is no identity and so only the experience and not even an analysis of it.
These pictures of analytical precision lack the simplicity, the innocence of a straightforward presentation like:

"'And oft at nights the garden overflows
   With one sweet song that seems to have no close...'",182

or

"'And far and near kokilas hail the day...'",183

or again,

"'The chit-chat of mynahs
greets the snail trudging along with his onion-
Shaped shell, and the crow's stoned-cold cawing.'",184

Neither does it have the freshness of imagery, an interfusion of the human and the Natural, thus the widening of horizons, as in Tagore's:

"'Breezy April, vagrant April,
Living with my lonesome shadows,
I know all your fitful fancies
Leafy language, flitting footsteps.','','185

However, the conscious clarity is better than total unawareness. It is only after one becomes conscious of one's own experience that one can transcend this consciousness as well. As Swami Vivekananda would say, it is only one who is attached who can know detachment. Where is attachment or detachment to the feelingless stone? Consciousness at least brings precision. Where there is ignorance the experience itself may be falsified by disproportionate reaction (the
absence of objective correlative) or by being like a feelingless stone and failing to register a sensation altogether. A typical instance of the latter is Jessuwala's description of a Bombay beach which may be called a 'silent picture'. Not a presentation of the silent experience but a total failure to perceive the sounds that are natural to the scene. He describes the sea, the shallow waters sliding and retreating but they do not even 'lap' at the shore; nor is there any sound of the moonlit waves on nightfall when tides must rise higher. Around the shoreline are lights, but the traffic, if it moves there, is silent too.

"Where Malabar's long hill, all clad in green,
Runs forth into the water, where between
It and the shore the shallow waters glide,
Again retreating with each turning tide;
Each aspect fraught with beauty to the eye..."¹⁸⁶

(where he unwittingly confesses his visual prejudice and his practical deafness)

"When shines the wave beneath the moon's soft glow,
Then sinking darkens in its onward flow;
When round the shore, one long circling line,
A thousand cheerful lamps in order shine; ..."¹⁸⁷

And so the poem goes on, soundlessly. This is not a depiction of silence like Aurobindo's, Levertov's or Frost's (that I quoted from earlier) but like the sound cut off completely while watching a film. It is not even like a silent movie
which is consciously silent and also has appropriate background music. Better than such death to a sense is to be fully conscious of it. Consciousness may be used as the step to transcend itself and lose itself in the experience. But the fullness of experience can be lived only when consciousness too is dissolved in it.

Such fullness of experience could be best expressed with metaphor as it signifies a total merger. Simile should normally be less preferred as it is only an indication of unity and not union itself. But poets repeatedly prove that when identity is not (and experience is), any technique, any form of expression would serve to portray the richness of the lived moment. So it is with simile that Saha creates an experience of harmony. In his portrayal of a picnic, the easeful mood, as also the laughter and exuberance, mingles with the sound of leaves and human voices, the one merging into the other smoothly with no trace of boundaries:

"Dry leaves being blown along
(the drowsy murmur of reclining shadows)
And whispered words
Tumbling into laughter
Like naked boys into a river,
Splashing the sunlit joy about with candid insinuations;
And in the wind the trees around
Sighing with deep contentment.
Let us rise and shake the grass from our clothes."
The human becomes the Natural which becomes human, they converge in the most imperceptible yet palpable manner. The transition from one to another is silent. In fact, there is no transition at all, for the two have become one.

'WHAT COLOUR IS THE WIND?'

But where are all these sounds, where the laughter, the happy tread of feet, the bathing in tones of human voices, for one who is deaf? Lost in a dominant world of vision and hearing we almost forget what it is to taste, touch and smell. We forget that we are endowed with five senses and live only by two. The predominance of vision and hearing in our world is brought to light in many ways. For instance, Ananda Acharya in 'Blind, Deaf Fish' makes an allegoric equation of the human condition and fish that are blind and deaf (as the title of his poem professes). These fish are, therefore, oblivious to the beauty of life, to the rainbow and song 'woven' and 'sung' by an old man ('older than the Sun' — symbolising God) ever seated, singing and weaving, on the bank of their stream. My point here is not to comment on the effectiveness or otherwise of the image but only to emphasise the human orientation towards vision and hearing, that extends even to poets. Why was that ancient, timeless man by the river of life not weaving fragrant flowers (that could be smelt) or soft, flying clouds of sugar (that could be touched or tasted)? Why did
he weave a rainbow? Certainly the poet must have used the rainbow for all that it symbolises, the hope and freshness (after the rain), the gaiety and joy (implied in its colourfulness) and so on. But why is it that only the rainbow has come to mean these things for us? Why music and not perfume? It is but testimony to our visual and auditory leanings.

Acharya, naturally, is not the only poet to talk of 'deaf blindness'. There are many other references to this idea. One, for instance, is found in Sidney's praise of sleep as that land where vision and hearing no longer disturb the consciousness (as if smell, touch and taste continue in sleep!), the sweet bed a ''chamber deaf to noise and blind to light''. Which is almost to say that these are the only senses that are wearied by use during the waking hours. So important in sight in our agenda of the senses that we call our great men 'visionaries', our saints 'seers'.

In a scene in the Hindi film 'Sparsh', as she waits for her blind lover, the heroine picks up a comb to run through her hair, but the next minute lays it back on the dresser and sprays on his favourite perfume. One finds an equally sensitive description of this 'translation' of visual experience into other sensations in an essay by Dwaraknath Reddy, the following passage from which could well have been poetry:
"If a little blind girl were to ask you: 'What colour is the wind?' how would you answer her?

So asked one lady of me, and whether I replied at all I do not now recollect... When I thought I was alone again, the little blind girl stepped out of memory, sat smiling by my side, turned up to me an unseeing face, and gently asked: What colour is the wind?

... Then I turned towards her, and without sadness said: I will tell you what colour is the wind. It is the colour of the softness of a rose petal upon your cheek. It is the colour of the coolness of a mountain stream in spring. It is the colour of the song of birds timidly knocking upon the doors of silence as you lie half-awake. It is the colour of the fragrance of summer showers upon the thirsty land. Such is the colour of the wind...

And she smiled radiantly, saying: 'I know'. Yes, she knew it all along, for what else could have been the colour of the wind?"191

The blind have four senses throbbing with life, yet we would say they are 'handicapped' by the absence of one sense. But how handicapped are those who have only two senses because they have let the others rust? The most poignant and unforgettable comment on this absolute 'insensitivity' of 'normal' human existence is Patricia Beer's poem, 'The Fifth Sense'. The poem was stirred by a news item declaring an old shepherd wounded by security forces for failing to answer their challenge. A subsequent hospital examination showed that the man was deaf.
"My sight was always good,
Better than others. I could taste wine and bread
And name the field they spattered when the harvest
Broke. I could coil in the red
Scent of the fox out of a maze of wood
And grass. I could touch mist, I could touch breath."  

Rarely do we find such sensitivity, such fineness in the images of every sense, of sight and taste (the direct simplicity of tasting 'wine and bread'), smell and touch (also intimately connected with his life). This serves to heighten the pain, the irony, cruelty and insensitivity imaged in the following lines:

"But of my sharp senses I had only four
The fifth one pinned me to my death.
The soldiers must have called
The word they need: Halt. Not hearing it, I was their failure, relaxed against the winter Sky, the flag of their defeat.
With their five senses they could not have told That I lacked one, and so they had to shoot.
They would fire at the rainbow if it had A colour less than they were taught."

It is deeply educating and humbling to turn the angle of vision around and look at the world with the handicapped, to know that, quite often, the blind are those who see clearly and the deaf who listen to the real music of all things.
... BUT THOSE UNHEARD ARE SWEETER'

It is a great wonder to observe the growth of the self-concept and the understanding and competent use of language by a blind-deaf person. But more moving it is to perceive how these individuals experience the physical world and how it affects their entire self. It is an amazing process for us whose worlds are so automatically vision and sound based that we often miss the sounds and sights which they can touch and live. To get a glimpse of their 'physical' world I would like to consider some passages from the autobiography of Helen Keller. Each passage in it is so rich and vibrant that to choose some is no easy task but I will begin with her description of winter, a journey into the treasures of snow.

'A mysterious hand had stripped the trees and bushes, leaving only here and there a wrinkled leaf. The birds had flown, and their empty nests in the bare trees were filled with snow. Winter was on hill and field. The earth seemed benumbed and the very spirits of the trees had withdrawn to their roots, and there, curled up in the dark, lay fast asleep. All life seemed to have ebbed away, ... the withered grass and bushes were transformed into a forest of icicles.
Hour by hour the flakes dropped silently, softly
from their airy height to the earth,
a snowy night closed upon the world. The trees
stood motionless and white like figures
in a marble frieze...
There was no odour of pine-needles.
The rays of the sun fell upon the trees,
so that the twigs sparkled
like diamonds
and dropped in showers when we touched them.
So dazzling was the light
It penetrated even the darkness that veils my eyes.''

So physically 'alive' are these lines that except for the
last one would hardly recognise that they come from the pen
of one who is blind and deaf. The chill in the air, the
odourless pines and the shower of light would have been
direct experiences for Helen. But the 'white' of the trees
and the winter 'on hill and field', pictures of colour and
a wide landscape, these we think could not have been to her
a direct physical experience. Perhaps, we might presume,
they form a part of the picture as it was described to her,
a part of her mental concept. Yet, we are probably wrong
in thinking this. For, Helen could well understand distance
and, climbing up and down hills and walking on level fields,
she could probably sense everywhere the spirit of winter which
she, thus, truly describes, true to an immediate experience
and not merely an indirectly perceived concept. Helen would
also have 'seen' with the touch of her hand the bareness of
tree and bush, save for the rare wrinkled leaf, the snow-filled, deserted homes of summer birds and the numerous icicles.

It seems, perhaps, strange to us that she should describe all this in visual rather than tactile images. If we were to be blindfolded and asked to describe something by touch our description would probably be more replete with tactile imagery. How is it then that the writings of a blind person often describe the world in terms of the visual? It is not just in this passage that Helen Keller uses such language, very frequently in her writing one encounters various forms of the verb 'to see' (or an implication of it) when the actual physical sensation would be 'to touch'. This does not indicate a falsifying of experience. Rather, it may be a poignant comment on the self-concept of these individuals to whom life has denied a 'whole' existence. The casual and spontaneous use of visual images by the blind, and auditory images by the deaf, may reflect their need to identify with the 'normal' world around them and to respond to it on its own terms. But then, it is quite likely too that this world would not understand if they spoke their own language. The language which the handicapped person assumes is really a reflection of the dominance of vision and hearing in the world and language of the non-handicapped. It is this language which handicapped individuals also learn to imbibe, it is this that they are taught and this they, naturally, use regularly.
With a simplicity that would lie uneasy on most of us, they understand that what to them is touch or taste is sight and sound to others and adopt the common vocabulary. That they can use that vocabulary better than those to whom it belongs is proved by Helen even in the one image of light that she paints in this passage (the dazzling shower of snow-light droplets) surpassing any that a sighted person have etched.\textsuperscript{196}

The other prominent image in Helen's description is the silence of winter, the sleep of the trees, their very 'spirits' retiring into their roots, the cold numbness of the earth, the utter motionlessness of all life, almost ceasing to exist, the soft, noiseless fall of snowflakes. How could Helen, ever living in a silent world, discern this sudden silence of the world around as well? She could, for, though she did not hear with her ears, she could feel the vibrations of sound with her entire body. She could certainly feel the wind and also the hum and whirr of tiny life in the numerous insects of summer. One can perceive her intense awareness of sound, both the billowing roar and a soft 'whirr' in two other descriptions that stand in contrast to the absolute quiet and stillness of this winter scene. Her vivid description of these auditory experiences, sensed through her entire body make it possible for us to comprehend how, as an absence of all these sounds, she must have sensed the silence of winter too.
Yet, unlike the visual verbs which one finds quite commonly in her writing, she does not so often say 'I heard'. Her description of auditory experience is absolutely sensitive perhaps more so because it is sensed with the entire body; be it the wild torrent of the Niagara or the rush of the waves against a rocky shore. In a letter to her mother, Helen describes her visit to Niagara:

"The hotel was so near the river I could feel it rushing past by putting my hand on the window... I was in the presence of Niagara... I could hardly realise it was water that I felt rushing and plunging with impetuous fury at my feet. It seemed as if it were some living thing rushing on to some terrible fate. I wish I could describe the cataract as it is, its beauty and awful grandeur, and the fearful irresistible plunge of its waters... One feels helpless... overwhelmed in the presence of such a vast force. I had the same feeling once before when I first stood by the great ocean and felt its waves beating against the shore. I suppose you feel so, too, when you gaze up to the stars in the stillness of the night, do you not ... dear Mother?"
emotions experienced in its presence are exactly those that would be felt by a seeing and hearing individual. In fact, their force is more vividly lived. And again, except for the obvious declaration that she could not see the water nor even believe that the tumultuous force was the rushing of water, one could hardly discern that this description comes from an individual who is different, because, she has indeed got to the essence of the experience. No sighted individual will describe the colour of the Niagara or the trees that grow beside this river. Anyone would be struck only with that which has made its impact on Helen, the stupendous power of the Niagara.

Yet, this description is in almost total contrast to the earlier snowscape. There is not a single visual image. In fact, the lines clearly refer to her handicap. She 'feels' the river on the window. She can hardly believe that it is water that rushes thus. Again, the last lines draw attention to the fact that the vast beauty of the star-lit sky is an experience that cannot be hers. But this fact is presented with simple naturalness, there is no element of sadness, certainly not of self-pity here, or anywhere else, in Helen's description of her experiences. There is, on the other hand, a constant joy and excitement at living, knowing the world through touch, through smell and taste and through the sensations of her entire body. Perhaps the most intimate
the most alive of all our senses is touch, because it brings
the object into direct contact with our body, with the
experiencing subject. The objects of vision, of hearing,
of smell, all have to be at least a little removed from us
in order to be clearly perceived and understood. Of these,
the object that is smelt can perhaps be brought directly
in touch with the nose, and of course, taste is also abso-
lutely direct. A person like Helen Keller, who is both blind
and deaf, experiences the world totally only through those
senses which imply direct contact. Thus, the world for her,
and her descriptions of it, pulsate with life in a way which
that of the greatest lover of Nature might not do. How the
world of vision and sound come alive to her through touch
and smell is beautifully described by her as her 'early
education'.

"All my early lessons have in them
the breath of the woods -
the fine, resinous odour of pine needles, blended
with the perfume of wild grapes.
Seated in the gracious shade of a wild tulip tree...
Everything that could hum, or buzz, or sing, or bloom,
had a part
in my education -
oisy-throated frogs, katydids and crickets held
in my hand until, forgetting their embarrassment,
they trilled their reedy note,
little downy chickens and wildflowers,
the dogwood blossoms, meadow-violets and budding fruit
trees."
I felt the bursting cotton-balls and fingered their soft fiber and fuzzy seeds; I felt the low soughing of the wind through the cornstalks, the silky rustling of the long leaves, and the indignant snort of my pony, as we caught him in the pasture... Ah me! How well I remember the spicy, clovery smell of his breath!'

For Helen, perhaps, the experiences were only those of touch, of smell and the vibrations of sound. But for one who reads her description the picture comes alive for all the senses, we can not only 'see' what she describes but also hear, smell and touch that living world.

'Few know what joy it is to feel the roses pressing softly into the hand, or the beautiful motion of the lilies as they sway in the morning breeze. Sometimes I caught an insect in the flower I was plucking, and I felt the faint noise of a pair of wings rubbed together in sudden terror as the little creature became aware of a pressure from without.'

One is tempted to say that the rich variety of live images is reminiscent of Keats' sensuousness. Helen's lines recall to the mind the sounds and smells and flowers of mid-May that come alive in Keats' 'Nightingale' Ode. Rarely, except in Keats, do we find all the sensations bubbling forth in a single piece. It is true that we cannot find in Helen,
the condensing of numerous experiences in the vibrant language of varied sensations, all within the span of a few lines, such as one frequently encountered in Keats. Like the warm wine that comes with visions of the very earth where it is cooled, and its gay frothing colours like the country of its birth. There is a pure personal element that runs through what Helen writes. Her description does not evoke in her a horde of associations, it is limited to, wholly concentrated on, the present experience. To her a 'draught of vintage' would be just that, with the special tang on her tongue, the headiness, the sensations it creates in her body. In her it might not arouse pictures of an entire nation, its dance, song and festival. Helen is very much a part of all her experiences and descriptions. There are not the images which link present experience with a variety of other experiences. In that sense, there is nowhere the width, the broadening of experiential horizons.

But there is everywhere the intensity of life itself. Helen's descriptions are all the more real for her intimate presence in them. Besides, what is depicted is always the actual physical truth. It nowhere drops into subjectivity, it is nowhere coloured by concepts, prejudices and the other appendages of identity, but is fully lived in the now. It remains an experience that could be equally true to any reader who would touch a flower or smell the fragrance of the
breeze. In this sense Helen is nowhere present in her descriptions. It may be that she describes only her own joy while talking of autumn fruits:

"The large, downy peaches would reach themselves into my hand, and as the joyous breezes flow about the trees the apples tumbled at my feet. Oh, the delight with which I gathered up the fruit in my pinafore, pressed my face against the smooth cheeks of the apples, still warm from the sun, and skipped back to the house!"

Still, the picture is not very different from the 'fruitfulness' and late 'sunshine' (which is here too in the sun-kissed apples) of Keats' Autumn. Of course, the mellowness of Keats' 'Autumn' is not here, here we have rather Helen's exuberance, whilst there we have the softness, the fullness of Autumn. Here, in Helen's description, is a child's picture, while Keats' Autumn reflects his own maturity. But it is not really fair to compare the record of Autumn by Keats as a mature poet, aware of the transience of life, even his own, in a very real sense, to that of Helen's recollection of the child's first joyous acquaintance with autumn. In fact, it is not fair to make any serious comparison between Helen's and Keats' writings as poetry. But Helen certainly does compare in her sensitivity to life. And if poetry be the intense living of experience, then, certainly, they share a
poetic sensibility. The difference in experience lies in the approach of the child and that of a mature individual. But theirs is an intensity and a fullness of experience (each in their manner) that is often unknown to the 'normal' individual who is so accustomed to physical experience that he often loses it altogether.

More often than not we are carried away by our conceptual leanings, our mental preoccupations. Even to Wordsworth, so full of love for Nature, for the physical world about him, the 'meanest flower' gives rise to thoughts, noble thoughts, thoughts so deep that they are inexpressible in words, but thoughts nonetheless. The flower is not just a flower, it is a symbol of something, it is beautiful in that it reminds one of something deeper, not in itself. But to the handicapped person, particularly so to the blind, and more to one who is actually cut off from the physical world, being both blind and deaf, each physical experience is meaningful totally in and for itself. Because, each physical experience, felt, grasped and understood is fresh knowledge, it is a world conquered.201

If Wordsworth himself can forget the direct loveliness of nature, it is not surprising that Shelley, preoccupied with the prophetic nature of the poet, uses Nature only as a symbol to convey his prophecies to mankind. I have already considered how Shelley's 'West Wind' loses the experience on
account of its subjectivity (and how the 'Skylark' lifts the reader above identity, itself being so lifted). So preoccupied is he with the need to be lifted that he does not allow himself to be actually lifted. There is so much of Shelley and his need, his desire to use the wind as a symbol of higher meaning that the wind itself is almost relegated to the background. In almost strange contrast, we find Helen describing only her own experience, she does not set out to describe the wind, yet, we are almost carried away by that wind:

"In places the shore of the lake rises abruptly from the water's edge. Down these steep slopes we used to coast, plunging through drifts, leaping hollows, swooping down upon the lake, we would shoot across its gleaming surface to the opposite bank. What joy! What exhilarating madness! For one wild, glad moment we snapped the chain that binds us to earth, and joining hands with the winds we felt ourselves divine!" 202

Perhaps there is not even an actual wind in this scene, the wind may be one that is created and experienced by the rush of a tobaggan on winter slopes. But the experience is racy, it has the taste of the wind, its exhilaration, its wild impetus, its absolute sense of freedom, a throwing away of all cares and fears, all bonds, and being spontaneously as the wind itself.
Each experience is itself and alive and beautiful for itself. Perhaps the physically handicapped, with their own keen awareness of that handicap, strive earnestly to surpass it, to overcome the limitations, so much so, that they eagerly grasp each experience fully, particularly those physical experiences which have been denied them in naturalness. In another context, Helen says:

"It is splendid to feel the wind blowing in my face... The rapid rush through the air gives me a delicious sense of strength and buoyancy,... makes my pulses dance and my heart sing."\(^{203}\)

These two descriptions of the wind also bring forth the fact that the physical and mental in us are really inextricably intertwined. Every physical experience has a mental effect. A sudden breeze lifts our spirits in the very same way as it makes a leaf dance on a tree. But the point of difference between an experience that is predominantly physical and that which is more mental is perhaps best illustrated by this contrast in the description of the wind by Helen Keller and that by Shelley. While Shelley's physical experience is conditioned by his mental concept, Helen's mental experience is a direct result of the physical moment. The difference is thus, not in that a physical experience has no mental element and vice versa, but in what constitutes the primary factor.
Helen's experience of the soft beauty of the wind's motion is present even in one of the earlier passages that I have quoted where she describes the motion of the lily, the rustle of the leaves and the 'low soughing of the wind through the cornstalks'. The wind is also carrier of the perfumes and odours of the atmosphere, which we have seen the blind person is more aware of than, probably, we would be, there is always a delicate and keen perception of the smell, of the atmosphere's breath. Finally, the wind is sometimes sound and fury and one may wonder how a deaf person can sense and grasp this aspect. And one wonders if they can also understand the wind as the destroyer. Here too, our questions are answered by two experiences that Helen describes, one is just the fury of the wind heard from the safe indoors,

''... during the night the fury of the wind increased to such a degree that it thrilled us with a vague terror. The rafters creaked and strained, and the branches of the trees surrounding the house rattled and beat against the windows, as the wind rioted up and down the country.''

The other experience is more immediate, as it describes the direct fury of the wind which Helen encountered when she was seated on the fork of a tree, waiting for her teacher to return, and a thunderstorm struck:

''A strange odour came up from the earth. I knew it, it was the odour that always precedes a thunderstorm,
and a nameless fear clutched at my heart, there was a moment of sinister silence, then a multitudinous stirring of the leaves, a shiver ran through the tree, and the wind sent forth a blast... the tree swayed and strained. The small twigs snapped and fell about in showers...
The branches lashed about me. I felt the intermittent jarring... as if something heavy had fallen and the shock had travelled up till it reached the limb I sat on.

One cannot ask for a more vivid and precise description of the wind as a destroyer. Perhaps, the most striking images in the piece are the straining of the tree in the wind (it not merely swayed, it 'strained'), the picture of part resolute resistance and part submission, by swaying, as also the image of the jarring, the shock that to Helen was expressive of the destructive sounds of the wind, of the falling of heavy objects.

Not only this incident, but another, with elemental water, billowing in the waves of sea, are for Helen experiences with the destructive aspects of Nature, experiences which poignantly stress her handicap and greater sense of insecurity when faced, alone, by the dark forces of Nature. Yet it speaks for her great zest for life and experience that not much after this event, lured by the fragrance of a mimosa in bloom, she overcome her fear and climbed the tree on her own.
"One beautiful spring morning when I was alone
in the summer-house, reading,
I became fully aware of a wonderful subtle fragrance
in the air. It seemed as if the spirit of spring
had passed through the summer-house.
I felt my way to the end of the garden...
Yes, there it was, all quivering in the warm sunshine,
its bloom-laden branches almost touching the long grass.
I made my way through a shower of petals
to the great trunk
and for one minute stood irresolute;
then putting my foot in the broad space between the
forked branches,
I pulled myself up into the tree."

The other experience, her first encounter with the sea,
is similar. Her description of it, like that of all her
other experiences, is alive and immediate. But most moving
is return to inquisitiveness, the zest to explore and know,
and the observation of the exact nature of a new physical
experience even while that experience produces terror.

"I sprang out upon the warm sand
and without thought of fear plunged
into the cool water. I felt the great billows
rock and sink. The buoyant motion of the water
filled me
with an exquisite, quivering joy.
Suddenly my ecstasy gave place
to terror; for my foot struck against a rock
the next instant there was a rush of water over my head.
I thrust out my hands to grab some support,
I clutched at the water... at the seaweed which the waves tossed in my face... playing a game with me, ... tossed me from one to another in their wild frolic... Everything seemed shut out from this strange, all-enveloping element...
At last, however, the sea... threw me back on shore, and in another instant I was clasped in my teacher's arms. As soon as I had recovered from my panic sufficiently to say anything, I demanded: 'Who put salt in the water?'

If even a sighted child had lived through the terror of nearly drowning in the tumultuous sea, it would be hard to imagine any reaction other than a continuation of that terror. The sense of insecurity must have been far greater for a blind child who could not even know in which direction to move, whether the shore and help were at all within reach. One cannot imagine the depth of panic that must have stricken. If one also remembers that to 'speak' after that meant writing out the letters on her teacher's palm (for, at the time of this incident Helen had not yet learnt oral language), one cannot help feeling deeply moved to think that her first reaction should have been to demand, 'Who put the salt in the water?' How alive she should have been to the taste even while the water was severely dousing her, and how deep her longing to know about the world around her!

It may well be that often we take the physical world for
granted. Being able to grasp it with the swiftness of sight and sound, we classify it into known concepts and look upon the world coloured by the mental pictures of the past. A blind person cannot form mental pictures so easily, if the person is also deaf, the process of concept-formation becomes extremely difficult. Thus, the experience of the physical world is ever fresh, ever new and ever imbued with the excitement and joy of the child's first discovery of the world. Not here the complaint:

''The things which I have seen I now can see no more.'''

or that

'''... there hath pass'd away a glory from the earth.'''

Even when concepts have been formed and experiences have become known, even familiar, they still retain their beauty, their special presence. These individuals, with their handicaps, are able to perceive the physical world in its real beauty, a beauty, which others, with their senses intact, carelessly overlook altogether, or if they do perceive it, do so only with some of their senses and hence their perception too should be termed 'partial'. In many of these passages that I have quoted, Helen Keller seems to defy the seeing, hearing world, she seems to be saying, 'What if I cannot hear those sounds that you do? The world is more alive and real and beautiful to me in spite of it than it often seems to you'. And, there are other descriptions by
her which seem defiantly to ask, 'Do you wonder what beauty
I can see in a flower when I do not see its vibrant colours,
can you see this which I see?'

"We bought a lily and set it in a sunny window
Very soon the green, pointed buds
showed signs of opening.
The slender, fingerlike leaves on the outside opened slowly,
reluctant, I thought, to reveal the loveliness they hid;
There was always one bud larger
and more beautiful than the rest,
which pushed her outer covering back with more pomp,
as if the beauty in soft, silky robes knew
that she was the lily-queen...
while her more timid sisters doffed their green hoods shyly,
until the whole plant was one nodding bough
of loveliness and fragrance."

Yet, really, there is no defiance in Helen, just a brimming eagerness to perceive the experiences of the physical world and make their loveliness her own. Only, that very eagerness seems to mock at us who have lost it in the desert sands of dead habit, as the blossoming of spring mocks the inhabitants of a spiritual wasteland.

Of course, it is not as if the world of the handicapped individual (specifically the sensorily handicapped whom I have considered here) is always one of exciting discovery and an awakening to the beauty of the physical world. Very often these people are lost in deep frustrations, they have very
negative self-concepts and feel unnamable despair at being unable to communicate with and respond to the world as all other people around them seem to do. Very often, they are gripped by a gnawing sense of inadequacy. Helen Keller herself went through this phase of bitterness as a child, before her teacher, Miss Sullivan, came and made her aware that she could discover the world for herself on her own terms, through touch and smell and taste. She knew this in a sort of way before, yet there was an urgent need to communicate with the world:

"Meanwhile the desire to express myself grew. The few signs I used became less and less adequate, and my failures to make myself understood were invariably followed by outbursts of passion. I felt as if invisible hands were holding me, and I made frantic efforts to free myself. I struggled..."\textsuperscript{212}

In another passage she describes her state through a most touching simile:

"Anger and bitterness had preyed upon me continually for weeks and a deep languor had succeeded this passionate struggle... Have you ever been at sea in a dense fog, when it seemed as if a tangible white darkness shut you in, and the great ship, tense and anxious, groped her way towards the shore with plummet and sounding-line, and you waited with beating heart for something to happen? I was like that ship before my education began, only I was without compass or sounding-line,..."\textsuperscript{213}
It is only with appropriate education and a channelising of energies towards those modes of sense experience that can be readily grasped by the handicapped child, that the child begins to really live life. From then on there is no turning back. Other painful hurdles to be crossed may still emerge, but the awareness of an ability to conquer and grasp experience on par with the people around provides sufficient impetus to cross all hurdles. What comes as a matter of course to the normal child comes after a great deal of groping and effort to the handicapped child and hence, is all the more treasured.

I have dealt with so many passages from the writings of Helen Keller, and in such great detail, because these throw great light on how a person who is deprived of sight and hearing throughout life looks on the physical world and experiences it in relation to himself or herself. I have taken the case of Helen Keller, although it might not be typical in every way, because to be deaf and blind at the same time is probably the most severe kind of physical handicap wherein the individual is almost totally cut off from social and mental contact with the world around (language skills and concept-formation becoming very difficult to acquire apart from being physically cut off. Physical contact is doubtless possible in some ways but without the concomitant mental pictures it remains meaningless, each experience
disparate and unconnected. No doubt the children with defective limbs or speech also do encounter severe adjustment problems which affect their self-concept, but the case of Helen Keller is outstanding testimony to the fact that no physical handicap need be an impediment to finding joy and meaning in life. On the other hand, Helen's life (and her record of it) once more reiterates the fact that it is when identity is put aside, in the eagerness to taste the present moment fully, that the experience is truly 'lived'.

NIGHTSCAPES

If in Helen we find the fully sensed world thrown into relief, light and sound also featuring vividly along with smell, touch and taste, in Borges we encounter the images of darkness. Borges differs from Helen in that he was not born blind but became blind and also in that his handicap was only visual. Thus, while in Helen we have the child's eagerness and response to the physical universe, in Borges is the mature man's reaction. While Helen's is the need to discover, to know for the first time, Borges writes of a world he already knew with all his senses. Yet, this world is certainly transformed by the blacking out of vision and we have the dark images. By the term 'dark' here I mean the actual black of light and not anything negative. In fact, Borges seems 'half-in-love' with 'easeful night'. He does
not long for warmth and light as Helen does, in fact he often seems uneasy in the presence of light. It is his descriptions of light that are often negative:

"In the shimmering countries that exude summer,
The day is blanched white light. The day
Is a harsh slit across the window shutter,
Dazzle along the coast, and on the plain, fever." 214

And again,

"The useless dawn finds me in a deserted street-corner; I have outlived the night." 215

On the other hand, velvet night has great beauty:

"But the ancient night is bottomless, like a jar
Of brimming water." 216

Night shares the coolness of the sea and is likened to it:

"Nights are proud waves: darkblue topheavy
waves laden will all hues of deep spore, laden
with things unlikely and desirable." 217

And yet Borges's cannot be explained as a simplistic love of darkness as opposed to light. At the physical level it must be remembered that unlike Helen who belonged to a cold country and therefore, naturally loved the warmth of sunlight, Borges knows the uncomfortable heat of the sun. This would automatically explain the love of the cool night. It is also true that it is this quality that is loved in the night and not wholly the darkness, for, the night is a bottomless, brimming jar of water or drenching waves. This is really equivalent to the praise by English poets of warm days and by Indians of the cool breeze.
But, Borges's imagery doesn't stop there. While the night is cool, it is also dark, dark blue like waves of the sea. And all things dark seem to hold an enhanced beauty and are the more loved (of a woman he met—'Your dark rich life'). Is this Borges's way of coming to terms with blindness? It could be called so but not in the sense of being resigned to blindness or trying to love what cannot be escaped. It is more the full living of the experience that has come to him, the exploration of its texture. A doctor friend of mine used to criticise the use of pain-killers except in the event of absolutely unbearable pain, saying that it is a running away from life. 'You must know how pain feels, you must live it', she would say, 'every experience must be really accepted and lived as it is, only then can one really understand it'. Being a gynaecologist, she would smilingly add that the sweetness of the child could be intensely felt only by the mother who has actually suffered labour (like reunion after the pain of separation). While one may not be able to agree with her completely, it must be conceded that to know any experience one must be prepared to face it, to go into it without fear or prejudice (without, as I have defined it, identity).

Helen strives to surface from the sea of darkness (and silence), Borges allows himself to be sucked within, exploring the underwater landscape. He can, perhaps, afford to
do this being already well trained in swimming which Helen is not and she must first learn to swim before she can explore underwater. That is, having already known the seen world and still knowing the 'heard' word, Borges can afford to explore the other world (both these being denied to Helen she must necessarily understand them first). But it is not necessary that he should do so even if he can afford to. Milton mourns his blindness but comes to terms with it at the spiritual level. Borges grapples with blindness, no, walks hand in hand with it, responding to its nuances, experiencing the world through its newly bestowed perception. The world is not 'alive' or sensed despite the blindness, it is sensed through the blindness. In fact, as I have already noted, the dark night is wooed and the day resented. In his poem on daybreak:

"'The light streaks in inventing dirty colours...
I seek my house,
amazed and icelike in the white glare,
while a songbird holds the silence back
and the spent night
lives on in the eyes of the blind.'\textsuperscript{218}

and before the coming of the light:

"'Under the spell of the refreshing darkness
and intimidated by the threat of dawn.'\textsuperscript{219}

This darkness is a visible presence. It is not just
a blanket—darkness cast indiscriminately over all things like a fog stealing the world from sight. Borges's depiction of darkness is that of a man day—weary, who happily watches the tide of night running in. In fact, his images are the more visual bringing to life the shapes that light and darkness assume. Among the seeing poets it is not often that this concreteness of vision is portrayed, only rarely (as I have noted earlier) do we clearly see shapes and contours which are the union of touch and sight. It seems to be given only to the blind poet, sensitive to touch, to inter-twine light and form,

'... light like a vine
begins twining itself to walls still in shadow.'

Here, inspite of his feud with light, Borges gives us one of the most intimate images of morning light. Light is experienced by us as clinging to form, reflected from, thrown out from, numerous forms; always known in relation to the things that it lights. But more intimate, more tender for his caring, are the shapes that night assumes. While light clings (almost suggesting its dependence on form), darkness flows. While the one is solid, hard, the other is liquid, graceful. One is almost tempted to court the night oneself, so gentle is Borges's portrayal of it:

''Patio: heaven's watercourse, .
The Patio is the slope
down which the sky flows into the house.
Serenely
eternity waits at the crossway of the stars.
It is lovely to live in the dark friendliness
of covered entrance way, arbor, and wellhead.'\textsuperscript{222}

For the blind man, light is the stranger, dark the constant companion. Borges seems to ask, 'What is the idea of courting a stranger, of finding loveliness in one who has deserted you, not knowing her who stands beside, who walks step in step, who is intimately you, always?' It would be like man's eternal search for knowledge, unknowing of himself, his unquenched thirst to conquer the universe while living life with a stranger. Borges's awareness of the infinite nuances of darkness is self-exploration and self-awareness. It is not merely a 'physical' reaction to the world by a handicapped person, every perception, every response is intimately linked with his self. To know his blindness, to understand its every shade, is to know himself. The more, to recognise himself in all those facets.

Borges's poetry is, in this sense, not physical at all. In fact, there is always a fusion with the mental state and in most of the poems it is into the mind that he ventures. Quite often it is the 'way of seeing', the mind's impress on experience, even physical and visual experience, that one encounters in his poems. Since the manner of perceiving can never really be delinked from perception (except when the
perceiver is totally absent and only the perception is), in Borges we find an authentic account of physical perception by a blind man. The more authentic in that he is a man who strives to comprehend the real 'blindness of blindness'.

His exploration of 'blind night' is immediate and deep in 'A Rose and Milton', where he wishes to protect from oblivion one rose, from among 'generations of past roses':

"Destiny allows me
The privilege of choosing, this first time,
That silent flower, the very final rose
That Milton held before his face, but could
Not see. O rose, vermilion or yellow
Or white, from some obliterated garden,
Your past existence magically lasts
And glows forever in this poetry,
Gold or blood-colored, ivory or shadowed
As once in Milton's hands, invisible rose."

Blindness (for that matter deafness too), like death is a leveller under whose influence all things are seen alike, nothing ugly, nothing beautiful, no colour preferred to another. But here is not the 'level' indifference of sameness, rather there is a multitudinous possibility. To the blind man, a rose in his hand can take on a hundred hues, its physical limitation has dropped away. The rose in blind Milton's hands, being invisible, can be seen in every colour, having no form, can assume every form. It has become like
unto Blyth's unfinished picture, like the beauty of Helen of Troy in the mind of every reader. The physical has outgrown itself and yet is infinitely itself. The rose is very much present in the poem and present specially, not as touched or smelt and thus known but, as seen by blind eyes. So Borges savours blindness, testing its taste in every experience.

Yet, his love of the dark night and his exploration of 'invisible vision' is nowhere a self-conscious obsession with blindness. It is a direct and natural encounter with it, probing spontaneously into its nature, not a reactionary (in reaction to absence of light) clinging to it. That his approach to blindness and the dark is not simple is a fact I have already noted. It carries the mental stamp and a groping towards self-awareness. But, even at the obvious level it is far from simple. One cannot categorically say that Borges loves darkness and rejects light. For, light may make him uneasy, it may be an icy glare, a harsh heat, yet it impinges on consciousness persistently, it cannot be done away with. Why? Because, deep down, perhaps, still lies the lurking fear of darkness. So, 'sunset is always disturbing':

'... but still more disturbing
is that last desperate glow
that turns the plain to rust
when on the horizon nothing is left
of the pomp and clamor of the setting sun.'
(Still the harshness to light persists, even to the setting sun) yet,

"How hard holding on to that light, so tautly drawn and different, that hallucination which the human fear of the dark imposes on space ..." 226

Only here, perhaps, is a hint of the human necessity for light (described negatively, typically, by Borges, as fear of dark). But this too is dismissed as an illusion, or rather, that which creates illusion. The 'afterglow' is only a hallucination created to cling to light till the last possible moment. Reality is different. It is as much darkness as light and one can sense it, become alive to it only if one gives up fear. This is what Borges seems to imply. Then, if one gives up fear, the illusory light disappears:

'... ceases at once
the moment we realize its falsity,
the way a dream is broken
the moment the sleeper knows he is dreaming." 227

Borges does not acknowledge a fear of darkness in himself. He merely calls it a human condition. But being human himself, it would not be wrong to understand that by implication, the fear resides in him as well. Only, he wants to do away with that fear (which he perceives as being only
illusory) and to wake from a dream of light to the reality of darkness. While this poem stands as a rare reference to the conflict, the other poems are testimony to that wakefulness, to the immediate experience of the reality that is darkness. A reality that is more intense for the blind and so to the poet, but undeniably a part of reality for all humanity which must be faced, known and befriended as integral to living.

In Helen was the exuberant dissolution of identity into every experience, making every sensation complete by translating touch into sound and vision, the 'whole' physical experience in one to whom Nature had denied it. In Borges there is a movement towards a fullness of identity by delving totally into a single experience. The one is marked by innocence, the other by maturity where the physical is inter-fused with the mental (and perhaps the spiritual). Yet, both are deeply sensitive accounts of physical experience.

Strangely, one devoid of one (or some) sense organ is sensually more alive and alert. But in the fully sensed world light and sound practice monopoly, leaving smell, taste and touch lagging far behind. It is not to say that these are totally missing in the images of poetry but that they are infrequent visitors (particularly when compared to visual and auditory imagery). It would be difficult to say which of these other three is the least frequent, probably taste
(smell and touch seem to run an almost equal race for the third place after sight and sound). In fact, among more than a thousand poems in English (both American and English) I could find only one which uses taste as a central image. There is, of course, mention of honey sweetness on occasion. But beyond this hardly any exploration of taste. A rare hint of it in Shakespeare's 'sizzling crabs', a more intimate remembrance in Keats' 'beaker full of the warm South' with 'beaded bubbles' and 'purple-stained mouth', and less sensitive, indirect references here and there, that is all.

'DELICIOUS FLAVOUR OF AMBROSIA'

Only in Christina Rossetti's 'Goblin Market' taste becomes pivotal and is also presented with keen sensitivity. Tasting forbidden but luscious fruit purchased from goblin vendors, Laura pays a heavy price. For, once having tasted she can have no more yet is 'eaten away' by longing for their deliciousness. Lizzie warns her sister:

"We must not look at goblin men,
We must not buy their fruits:
Who knows upon what soil they fed
Their hungry thirsty roots?"²²⁸

(Even the plants have eaten, hungrily, from the soil - so full of gustatory images is the poem). But Laura will not heed her:
'Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie, ...
How fair the vine must grow
Whose grapes are so luscious;
How warm the wind must blow.
Through those fruit bushes.'

And she ventures to try the wares of the goblin men who come
towards her chuckling, clapping, crowing, clucking, gobbling;
with cat whiskers and rat tails, parrot-voiced and gliding
like fish. Paying a golden lock as price, she buys those
rare fruit:

''And then sucked their fruit globes fair or red:
Sweeter than honey from the rock,
Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,
Clearer than water flowed that juice;
She never tasted such before,
How should it cloy with length of use?''

The near intoxication of this taste is marvellously brought
home by Rossetti. It is a crazing desire:

''She sucked and sucked and sucked the more
Fruits which that unknown orchard bore;
She sucked until her lips were sore;
Then flung the emptied rinds away
But gathered up one kernel stone,
And knew not was it night or day
As she turned home alone.''

In fact, so vivid is the description that one's mouth almost
waters as one reads:
"Have done with sorrow;
I'll bring you plums tomorrow
Fresh on their mother twigs
Cherries worth getting;
You cannot think what figs
My teeth have met in,
What melons icy-cold
Piled on a dish of gold
Too huge for me to hold,
What peaches with a velvet nap,

Odorous indeed must be the mead
Whereon they grow and pure the wave they drink
With lilies at the brink,
And sugar-sweet their sap."

The immediacy of these lines comes from their directness
and simplicity and their fullness, their total depiction of
a sensation. Yet, all the senses are included, the icy-
coldness of melons and velvety peaches marvellous to the
touch as to taste, their odorous meadows, the gold dishes
and the lily lakes beside which they grow. But all the
sensations contribute to heighten the experience of taste.
Now the canker has taken root in Laura, for, having once
tasted she must have more:

"'I ate and ate my fill,
Yet my mouth waters still;
Tomorrow night I will
Buy more.'"
And yet, she cannot have more, for no more can she hear the goblin cries or see the goblin men and neither will the kernel stone she bore home that day take root or bear fruit. So she wastes away in yearning and is on the point almost, of death. Then the brave Lizzie, risking her own life too, ventures to meet the goblin men. Lizzie asks them for fruit that she may take them home to Laura but they tempt her:

"Such fruits as these
No man can carry;
Half their bloom would fly,
Half their dew would dry,
Sit down and feast with us."

But she refuses, remembering Laura waiting and recalling her plight, and asks for her silver penny to be returned if they will not sell their fruit. Angered, they pinch and bruise her in every manner, strive to force the juices down her throat but she will not open her mouth and they disappear disgruntled. Running back home joyously, she calls out to Laura:

"Come and kiss me.
Never mind my bruises
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
Squeezed from goblin fruits for you
Goblin pulp and goblin dew,
Eat me, drink me, love me;
Laura, make much of me..."
This is the most wonderful description of love that comes in
the imagery of taste. In fact, Rossetti presents the poem
as a lesson in love, for, tasting the juices in Lizzie's
face, Laura is first half crazed and then lovingly nursed
back to whole health and happiness. The poem certainly
contains many sensitive and touching images of love. But
love itself is really surrender of identity. Lizzie is
prepared to risk her life for love of her sister which
means she is prepared to give up her identity. And when
this happens all things become joyous and beautiful. She
can brave the goblin and yet laugh within herself. She
can face temptations and remain undaunted:

''Like a fruit crowned orange-tree
White with blossoms honey-sweet
Sore beset by wasp and bee...'' 236

(Here too the image is vividly gustatory!).

Laura's problem, on the other hand, springs from the presence
of identity. Not that she does not know love. In fact,
it is her love for Lizzie and concern that she too should
not have fallen into her own plight that really revives her.
But her sorrow is that she looks 'before and after and pines
for what is not'. She has once tasted the luscious fruit
but wants to repeat the experience and is desperate at the
thought that she may not be able to do so. She is so full
of that desire that she loses her link with reality:
"Laura rose with Lizzie
Fetched in honey, milked the cows,
Aired and set to rights the house,
Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat
Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
Next churned butter, whipped up cream," 237

(Again the dominant image of taste)

"'Talked as modest maidens should:
Lizzie with an open heart;
Laura in an absent dream,
One content, one sick in part,
One warbling for the mere bright day's delight,
One longing for the night." 238

These seem to be the most crucial lines of the poem. Lizzie is totally in the now, her life is therefore full of joy, bubbling with exuberance. Laura is in the future (and later in the poem, in the past), not in the now. To be in the now is to be without identity, in the sense that identity is lost in the experience of every moment. To be in the past or future is to be preoccupied with oneself and therefore to miss the beauty of the present as well, in short, to miss all beauty, to be unhappy. How simply and yet directly the poem represents this marvellous truth with its attractive narrative and fresh, full imagery! Not only does it make one's mouth water with vivid 'tasty' images, it also gives one a taste of truth, a taste of life and love. But this taste, as I stated earlier is not often to be encountered,
not even purely as gustatory imagery (leave alone the taste of truth). At least, not in English poetry.

In contrast stands Tamil devotional poetry with its well-defined gustatory images. Considering Manickavachagar's 'Tiruvachakam', Glen C. Yocum points to this profusion of 'taste' imagery. 'Inbam' which is bliss, connotes sweetness, being derived from the noun 'Inimai' (sweetness). An adjective that springs from the same noun is 'in'. Siva's grace is sweet (inarul), nectar sweet. He is (in amudu), or He is nectar unalloyed (aramudu). The other word for sweetness in Tamil is 'Thittippu'. Even 'sweet' has a certain ambiguity being equally applicable to or interchangeable with 'charming'. But 'Thittippu' is typically gustatory. And Siva is the 'Sweet One' ('Thittikkuman'). He is honey, milk, sugar-cane, the juice of sugar cane, a ripe fruit:

''When shall I embrace,
When shall I be united with
the ripe NELLI fruit,
the Honey,
the Milk,
the copious Ambrosia
the delicious flavour of ambrosia
Ah, when shall I be united with my uncut gem?''

And Siva is sweeter than honey and nectar (thenāy in amudāy thittikkum Sivaperuman).

''Don't eat honey from a flower,
Yocum points out that Siva is equated not only to sweet but also to natural food (that which is uncooked) pointing to the completeness of Siva's grace which requires no human modification "or effort to render it digestible." It also explains the spontaneity of Siva's grace. Yocum further says, "More sensuous, immediate ways of portraying God and His activity could hardly be imagined than to call Him the savor of ripe fruit. Certainly, comparable images in western religious poetry are not easy to find." (And I would add not just in religious but in any western poetry). But while answering the question, why this predominance of gustatory images, particularly those of sweetness, Yocum goes wrong. He attributes the high incidence of these images to Manickavachagar's 'sweet tooth'. If Yocum had a wider acquaintance with Tamil poetry (religious and other), he would perhaps have decided that all the Tamils have a liking for sweets. For, Manickavachagar is not alone in the use of such imagery. In 20th century Tamil devotional poetry we have a poet singing:

"To bestow the vision
Delicious as sugarcane
He revealed Himself
With Gracious look."
In his 'Decad of Grace', Muruganar, addresses Ramana, his master and lord, in every verse, as 'a well', 'a brook', 'a flood', of 'brightest bliss', of 'infinite bliss', of 'bliss supreme' (perinba, needinba). Here, 'bliss', in every instance is denoted by the word 'inbam' (and not words like 'sugam'; which, of course, feature elsewhere and which bear only the connotation of joy and not sweetness - 'inbam' on the other hand, is sweet bliss). The Lord is not an abstract essence of sweetness, everything about Him, every aspect is specifically sweet in itself. In 'Madhurashtakam' the Lord of Mathura, Krishna, is sung of as being sweetness incarnate. His lips are sweet, sweet His laughter, His gait is sweet, sweet His attire, all things about Him are exceedingly sweet. 246

Describing just the sweetness of the Lord's name Purandara Dasa sings:

''To the payasa of Kama's Name
Krishna's Name is sugar,
Add the melted butter of Vittala's Name,
And drink and smack your lips.'', 247

And so also Muruganar describes Ramana's nectar sweet language:

''Face to face, king Ramana, speak
From flower like lips ambrosial words,'' 248
and then as a maiden pines for her Lord, asks of Him:

'Let me drink the nectar sweet
From these lilies, your soft, sweet, lips.'249

Yet even to describe his lips thus is but a mistake for, honey, milk and even heavenly nectar taste bitter to one who can drink the sweetness of those lips.250 He is indeed bliss personified:

'To save us from the pain of death
Immortal Bliss has come and settled
In Aruna now with the name of Ramana.'251

To save us from death, to bestow on us His own state of immortality, He gives us a taste of that bliss, fills with nectar every pore of every bone. When one is thus burning with love of Him, He dismisses it all as a mere dream and gets intoxicated in the bliss of 'that other woman, Mukti',252 (Liberation is here personified as the 'other woman', while the devotee is the beloved). The only recourse then is to supplicate in words He Himself teaches when He sings to Siva, Arunachala:

'If you are lost in silent bliss, asleep,
Tell me, what other recourse do I have, Arunachala?'253

Or else one can pray as Kavyakanta Ganapathi Muni does:

'Ramana, become a cook to Siva, Lord of Death
Then season well the egos of all beings
And offer them to Him as tasty food.'"254

When we pray thus, He who is Himself Siva, acts not just as a cook but swallows us whole. Why only when we pray? Even unasked He comes:

"A rare, unlooked for guest he came,
Right in he came, of his own accord,
This Venkata, Lord of my own self,
And ate up the whole of my fond mind
As if it were uncloying nectar.'"255

When thus he has transformed one into Himself what remains is only Bliss unbroken, unperturbed:

"Into that same Awareness he transmuted
This 'I' of mine. Now, nothing to be known,
My past undone, my being his,
I stand, unruffled bliss, a Rock
Untouched by any shock.
Lord Siva – Venkatesa, King of kings,
Came conquering
And made me his alone.'"256

Describing that awareness, Sri Ramana Maharshi in the song 'Self Knowledge' repeatedly emphasises the Bliss, saying at the end of each stanza that 'Bliss alone remains', or that it is the 'abode of Bliss', the 'blossoming of Bliss', a 'revelation of Bliss'. Even in the Sanskrit 'Five Hymns on Arunachala', the Maharshi uses neither 'Sukha' or 'Ananda' but 'Sudha' (nectar) to describe the Siva-Hill.
'Ocean of nectar, full of Grace
   O Self Supreme! O Mount of Light.'\textsuperscript{257}

But though he gives unstintingly of that nectar supreme,
what if we should be unable to receive, to digest it and
should be beset by hiccups or choke even on that ambrosia?

'Generous giver of gifts, you gave me
   The nectar of your grace
   Must I now choke before I can
   Fully swallow it?'\textsuperscript{258}

If thus we plead He becomes, not doctor but, the medicine
itself:

'Lord beloved; fruit delighting
   learned minds; ...
   ... mountain-medicine
   which has cured the stupor of this madman.'\textsuperscript{259}

Using the same image Sri Ramana bewails in mock fear:

'How many are there who have been ruined
   Like me for thinking this Hill. to be supreme?'\textsuperscript{260}

And then proceeds to reveal the wonderous secret:

'Oh men who, disgusted with this life of intense misery,
   Seek a means of giving up the body,
   There is on earth a rare drug
   Which without actually killing,
   Will annihilate anyone who so much as
   Thinks of it.
   Know that it is none other than this Arunachala!'\textsuperscript{261}
A great Saivaite saint, Nandanar, repeatedly begs of his master to grant him leave and permission to visit Tillai, the abode of the Dancing Siva, Nataraja. When the master believes him crazed (really with devotion) Nandanar answers:

"There is one medicine to cure madness. There is one medicine to cure The madness of this slave Supreme Bliss it is on earth."

and describes the beauty of Nataraja. For, he has

"...tasted maddening bread, glimpsed truth, The poison whose sole antidote is more and more of it, till one has tasted all."

When once the whole has been tasted, the Lord is intimately known as one's Self, as the

"Bliss growing in Love The supreme nectar Soaking the devotee's being."

For, this sweetness is not merely tasted by the tongue but lived by every pore of one's being until the very marrow melts with love. Such is the ecstasy of the Truth that it can be expressed in no other imagery than that of sweetness. Not Manickavachagar's sweet tooth it was, but the abundance of the experience, that flowed in these gustatory images. However, it must be noted that vivid gustatory images occur
not just in the devotional and spiritual literature of Tamil. They are to be found in its secular writings as well. Subramania Bharathi sings:

'Peach ambrosial darling child,
   Speaking picture of gold!
Dancing honey, dripping and tripping,
   For me to enfold.'265

It may be said that these lines come from his 'Kannan Pattu' where he sees Krishna (Kannan) as his friend and beloved, as master and servant, as teacher and disciple, as mother and father, and here, as child. So, it is really devotional poetry. Though it is so, it is also a marvellous record of what any mother would see in her child. To the mother her child is divine and exceedingly sweet, the centre of her world. And the second half of the stanza is imitable. Even to talk of its vividness would be to detract from its immediacy and completeness. But to really prove my point I would like to quote a few lines from Bharathi's 'Kuyil' which is purely a romance with no hint of spirituality or religion, like the fairy tale 'frog-prince' or the 'beast' turned handsome with a kiss,266 here is a koel transformed into her original maidenly form by love's first kiss.

''A miracle, a miracle that can't be described!
Nectar emerging from the ocean of love,
The land of faery, the Divine as Woman!'
O Lord, how can I in words
Describe her beauty, or her two eyes
That looked as if they would eat me up?" 267

Yet he does enumerate the ripeness of her rich lips, her firm
figure sweeter than honey.

"One word to the learned let me say:
Mixing with the fruit juice of poesy
The essence of music and of dance
And adding to it a little nectar
The Creator must have put all to dry
In love's sunshine, that with the candy
Thus obtained he could fashion her body." 268

One need look no further to understand the important role
played by gustatory images in Indian poetry (particularly
Tamil poetry). This is not to say that other images (visual,
auditory and others) are lacking or any the less defined.
I have already quoted instances of these images from Indo-
Anglian poetry. As for the presence of these in traditional
Indian poetry and poetry in other Indian languages, I will
not go into it in detail here. Why I have considered the
gustatory imagery in detail is because such vividness in these
is not to be found anywhere in English poetry. But of the
importance of the visual and the auditory I would say this
much, that the poet is called a 'Kavi', 269 which means a
'Seer'. Knowledge of Truth is termed 'Darsana' (six major
systems of philosophy are called 'Darsanas'). As for the
significance of sound, in one of the traditional Indian spiritual practices sound is itself worshipped (Nadopasana) as the supreme Truth (Nadabrahman). But even at the simple level the sound of music has ever been a part of poetry, poetry being always sung or chanted. Although Greek and English poetry (all poetry in fact) had their beginnings in the oral tradition (which is perhaps one of the reasons for poetry being the first literary form, being easier to memorise than prose), their separation from music occurred quite early. In the Indian tradition however, the divorce has still not come through, almost all poetry (except perhaps the Indo-Anglian) still being set to music and sung as songs. Tagore's and Bharathi's poetry was sung throughout the land not so many years back. Purandara Dasa and Tyagaraja (to quote just two instances) were not only giant poets but themselves fathers of Indian classical music. The power of the Vedas lies as much in their resonance and music as in their revelation of Truth. Just hearing them chanted rouses a spiritual response in the listener. Yet, what is truly intriguing is not the key role of the visual and auditory images and the supremacy of these senses. I have repeatedly pointed to this as a near universal phenomena - the dominance of sight and sound in the sensed world. What is surprising, on the other hand, is the presence of the rich gustatory images. Must one conclude with Yocum that this is on account of a prevalent liking for food, in
particular sweets, among Indians? I think not. All aspects of Indian culture have roots in her spiritual heritage. So also this. The highest experience is described by the Vedas as 'Raso vai saha' 'That is Rasa' and it is called 'Rasanubhava', the experience of Rasa. This term 'Rasa' is interpreted by some to mean 'aesthetic experience', but Coomaraswamy points out that 'aesthetic' experience pertains only to the senses, not to the Truth (which includes and transcends sensory experience).

270 'Rasa' as used in lay vocabulary means essence, juice, something delicious. It is a gustatory term. In the Vedic statement also 'Rasa' means 'Essence' that which is the Essence, which is the Truth of all things. At the same time it also denotes the sweetness, the nectar like bliss which is the experience of Truth. Since the Essence of all things is nectar-bliss, the artiste, who is in tune with the Truth of things, naturally perceives that bliss and represents it in his work. According to Indian aesthetics, such a one alone is a true artiste. And the work of such a one (be it a dance, a piece of music, a painting, sculpture, or a poem) communicates the 'Essential' experience to the reader (or audience) who participates in it. So, the experience of Art becomes 'Rasanubhava'. But what is of interest to me here is the term that is used to depict the Essence, the Truth - the term 'Rasa', which as I pointed out earlier, has significant gustatory connotation. Along with vision and hearing, taste also assumes deep spiritual
significance in the Indian tradition. And as, in this tradition, art itself swells from spiritual springs, the imagery of taste finds prominence. In contrast, one does not find touch or smell figuring importantly (although these senses also have their due place, it is purely as sensations and not with spiritual relevance). In fact, 'smell' seems to assume negative meanings. There are, no doubt, descriptions of marvellous fragrance, but that which divides one from knowledge of Truth is called 'Vasana'. The term 'Vasanats' is translated as 'tendencies'. They are the forms taken by the basic mistaken tendency, that of identifying oneself with the body. This makes one believe oneself to be a limited entity, separate from all others. Associated with this entity are various likes and dislikes which motivate further action and perpetrate the divisive entity. The sum total of these pulls or 'drives' (to use a Freudian term) are the 'Vasanats'. But 'Vasana' is a typically olfactory term and expanding the connotation Muruganar writes:

'Like a dog loafing up and down the streets,
Sniffing at the same stuff all the time
Much have I suffered in countless lives already,
Condemn me not to birth again.' 271

Many similar passages are to be found in the Tamil literary tradition. On the other hand, when the Lord's presence is felt it is by the sound of His footsteps, His voice, His magic flute,

''Today I heard the sound of Hari's coming.'', 272
sings Meera Bai. One longs to look and look upon Him, even while recalling Him it is what was seen that comes to mind, His attire, His lotus feet, His 'sidelong-glance'. The sight of Him or the sound of His Name thrills one's being, fills every pore with sweetness. The sandalwood fragrance from the paste He has smeared on Himself is sometimes recalled. But it is never a central image. So it is taste that joins the wonder of vision and hearing and becomes a significant, positive metaphor in Indian poetry.

The comparison with Tamil poetry points to the fact that different cultures highlight not only different aspects of social but of physical and sensory experience as well. As a corollary to this arises the question whether different epochs (having, naturally, differences in cultural outlook) in the same society give rise to different physical experiences. The other question that arises from the comparison with Tamil devotional poetry in particular would be as to what is the effect of a predominantly social, mental, or spiritual outlook on one's experience of the body (and, of course, of the senses). With reference to the first I have already commented that early man (that is, belonging to a young civilisation) is more elemental in nature. It is often explained that this is because he is over-awed by nature, unable to comprehend or control it. Besides, it may be theorised that he belongs mentally to a lower level of development.
Those factors, it is argued, result in his worship of the elements and forces of Nature. I have already quoted Cassirer who indicates this to be a misinterpretation. 'Young' man has not enclosed his 'Self' within rigid physiological boundaries. His response to the world is, thus, undivided by identity. It is because of this, that it is fresh. In any case, the identity is not so rigid as to form a dichotomy between himself and all else. If he adores Nature it is as a mark of respect to a mightier kinsman.

The 'Rg Veda' hymns Agni, the Lord of Fire, and asks of him:

''Be to us easy of approach, even as a father to his son: Agni, be with us for our weal.''

and again,

''Agni, men seek thee as a father with their prayers, win thee, bright formed, to brotherhood with holy act. Thou art a son to him who duly worships thee, and as a friend thou guardest from attack.''

So fire, personified in the Lord of Fire, is looked upon as a father, son, or a friend, one of a family to which man himself belongs and to be treated with respect even as a father aught, and trusted as a friend. Earth is looked upon as a mother. A pawnee tribal hymn runs:

''Behold! our mother Earth is lying here, Behold! she giveth of her fruitfulness
Truly, her power gives she us,
Give thanks to mother Earth who lieth here.'"275

Seeing her spreading trees, her running streams, they spontaneously exclaim:

''Behold on Mother Earth the growing fields!
Behold the promise of her fruitfulness!
Truly, her power gives she us,
Give thanks to Mother Earth who lieth here.'"276

Earth, in her bounty, is loving mother. Naturally, all her creation would be brothers and sisters. The plants that spring from her, the water that wells from her and the living beings whom she nourishes are all of one family. If fire is a friend, why worship him? If Mother Earth be so intimate, why keep expressing gratitude? Is that mere formality? Are these not really signs of fear at the face of mightier forces? Not so, it is only a recognition of the power of each thing in its place and giving respect to that potential. Sri Ramakrishna illustrates the point with a simple story. A teacher once told his students, 'All things, all beings, living and non-living, are only forms of God, all is God'. The students later went begging for food and on the streets heard a warning cry from a mahut, 'Move away, move away! The elephant has gone mad'. All but one student moved away while that one remained right in the path of the mad elephant which duly attacked him and hurt him severely before continuing
on its rampage elsewhere. When he was taken back to the hermitage and nursed to health, he was asked why he had behaved in this idiotic fashion. He replied, 'Our Guru told us that all was God. So, thinking the elephant to be God I stood on.' 'Oh my dear boy!' said the Guru, 'I told you all was God did I not? Then why did you not pay heed to the mahut God who warned you to move away?' Hence, each thing must be treated as it needs to be, given respect or loved or used at times and not at others. All this the 'primitive' man knows spontaneously. He knows where each thing belongs and how it is to be responded to. It is not an intellectual 'idea' of oneness which leads to confusions (like the student's in the story), but a natural oneness which makes for right action. The 'primitive' man is not unaware that while it is a common energy that manifests in all things, the manifestation of that power is varied. But the knowledge of mightier presences does not intimidate him. Rather, he knows how to live in harmony with them.

Only as civilization grows man strives increasingly to control nature, which is the sign of fear. You cannot call me afraid of a lion if I would live beside it, in the open. Only, I try to convey to it, in ways known to me and which I believe are communicative, that I recognise its greater might and wish to live in harmony with it. On the other hand, if I would build it a cage and tame it and bring it to the circus with a whip in hand, I am really afraid of it, of living with
it as it is. So I tame it, I change it to suit my ideas. That is the civilised fear of Nature. Also the 'primitive' man's awareness of his own might when compared to other natural brethren does not tempt him to lord it over them. There is no need to exercise power for its own sake, he uses it only for necessity. Hence, there is an immediacy, a relevance to the present moment in all his acts, a freshness in his approach to all things. He is like the child. The child also does not have a sharp, well-defined identity. Psychologists opine that a 'self-image', an identity, even an awareness of the body's limits, is created in the child only through interaction with the environment. The child defines its boundaries when it learns that a ball it grasps in its hands is something outside itself. The child first calls itself 'baby'. 'Baby wants milk', 'baby got hurt', and so on. The self is as much an object as all objects, or all objects are equally subjects as the self is. Gradually, the sense of 'I' develops clearly, comes into focus. It is before this concrete identity comes into being, even when it is still only forming itself, that we perceive the innocence and freshness of the child. Every experience is new, for it is not stored away in relation to an experiencing 'I'. In any case, it is not completely labelled and put into its respective coloured bottle in the memory chest. The labels still get mixed up and so one must experiment, one must begin afresh and know the thing. There is automatically an immediacy in every experience.
Unfortunately, children at this age do not write poetry for us to have an exact record of their experience. However, even when they do start, which is sometimes as early as when they are six or seven, one can still find the vivid freshness. Although a self-concept has been formed by this age, it is still very pliable and subject to change. It is also, therefore, open to every experience.

"Snowdrops are like little, little lights in a town at night time, only they would be in a very very little town, snowdrops are umbrellas for flies. They could be dresses for spiders and things like that." writes a seven year old girl, who, in a simple and beautiful manner, has captured not only the minuteness of snowdrops but also their shining in the sunlight which makes them like 'little little lights'. There is also a tendency to humanise Nature or to see Nature as human (so snowdrops become lights or umbrellas or dresses). This trend is evident even in the primitive man who sees Earth as mother, the sun as father and all in terms of such human relationship. Again this aspect of children is marvellously depicted in some of the questions posed by 'Deniss the Menace' (the all American comic strip typical five year old). Deniss asks, 'Why do trees get dressed for summer and undressed for winter?' To him this doesn't make sense, for, the humans, who form his scale of judgement, do the very opposite. In another
instance he explains to Joey (his younger friend), 'Joey, and switches off the lights at night to save on the current bill'. This humanising of nature becomes clearer and more pronounced as children grow.

'I sat on the barn steps and watched the black spider coming towards me.
I felt like screaming but I moved aside a little, and the dark creature went up a beam.
It stopped and turned back
And stared at me, and stared.
It said 'Move on, my business has nothing to do with you.
I shall stand here until you go'.'

Along with the humanisation there is a great clarity in the fiction of the physical (the movement of the spider standing) fused into the 'social' behaviour.

'So I moved on, looking back over my shoulder to see what it would do.
As it went on, I ran back silently to see.
After a few minutes, back the spider came proud now, with an air of arrogance, by his side, walked shyly, another spider.
A new bride.
When they came by me, they stood
And stared and stared,
Then they went on.
'Ha. A spiders' wedding', I thought.'
This also indicates the enquiring spirit, the need to know what the spider does after she leaves. This exploration, going 'into' all things with avid interest and full being accounts for the fullness of children's responses.

But man becomes civilised, the child grows. I am by no means lamenting with Wordsworth the loss of childhood or 'primitive' innocence. Quite the contrary. For things always attain their natural fullness, if, of course, they are allowed to grow unhindered. A fruit ripens and falls from the tree, it is a natural completion. So the child must grow into man and man must grow civilised. This, I believe, is because there is some vestige of identity even in the child and in natural man. I have so far argued that there is no division between subject and object, there is no limitation of identity in them only to contrast their state with the well defined and rigid identities of the adult and the civilised, the constant self-nonself perception. A fruit (be it sweet or bitter) cannot appear where there is no tree, no root, no seed. There appears to be absolutely no sense of identity in a child or in natural man because it exists only in seminal form, it is extremely nebulous so that even the one whose identity it is, is yet unaware of its presence. It is perhaps like the awareness that one has of oneself between sleep and waking. (However, it allows for a sharp awareness of all things around, of the physical being as a whole.) Since this identity exists it must grow and
become well defined. This is the civilising process, the concretisation of identity. When the cement is fresh it sustains the impression of every footprint, of every bird claw that hopped on it. Even the lines on the feet are clearly seen. As the cement hardens the impressions it can receive are fainter, until no impression can be made at all except with hammer and nail. It is the same with identity. When it is fluid, unformed, undefined, it takes in every impression deep, clear and bright. As identity hardens into shape its receptivity to sensations is lowered. Thus, an adult's perception of the world is robbed of the spontaneity and freshness of the child's. Even so, the more civilised man. This is not to say that modern man and his expression, modern poetry, are totally oblivious to the world around. It is not to say that he cannot see, hear, smell, touch, or taste. It is rather that these acts lack the eagerness, the simplicity and vibrant newness of the poet who first wrote of these experiences. In a sense, he is not to be blamed. When hundreds of poets before him (and many who are masters) have talked of the green of the grass and the blue of the sky, what more has he to say? If he uses the same words he may be termed a mere imitator. The words themselves may have hardened with repeated use, they may fail to hold the same tingle of meaning, the same richness of sense. If, on the other hand, he uses new words or more complex expressions he stands the risk of failing to
communicate, of becoming obscure or appearing self-conscious (which he probably has become, perforce). Yet, write he must. There may be a million reasons why a poet wishes to create poetry and all of them may be right or wrong, but certainly every poet composes poetry out of a need to do so, because of the necessity to write. Comprehending this predicament it seems unfair to say that the freshness of expression and experience to be found in earlier poets is lacking in the later fellows of the creed. But then, there would be recompense. Where 'innocence' is lost there 'experience' must be. With the ageing of a society poetry must have lost its exuberance (even as the people do) but it must have gained in maturity. The gentle beauty of the apple blossom may be no more, yet, in its place must be the ripe fullness of the apple.

We look for this maturity but what we find instead is a heightened self-consciousness, which in the form of 'breaking barriers' has really become exercises in negativity. The realm of physical experience, and physical imagery, has expanded to include the 'beautiful' and the 'ugly'. Boundaries have faded (or so it seems). The eye sees hard shapes, the ear is tuned to discord, the world stinks and the pen faithfully records. The poet has switched sides. The poet no longer believes in 'poetic themes', he has eschewed selective perception and (like Flaubert) acts the camera presenting truth 'as it is'. Romanticism has been buried,
Realism is new born. Man has forgotten how to dream or idealise or perhaps he has been forced to grow into awareness of stark reality. The futility of the world wars, the breakdown of humanness, the cold torture of man by man, has torn his dreams to shreds and vaporised all values. The blossom has not ripened into fruit, but has fallen prey to canker or else, plucked green and artificially ripened to fruithood it has become tasteless and devoid of all nutritive content. But it seems rather that (in modern poetry) in presenting 'reality' only the harshness comes through. It is not as if boundaries have dissolved but that the poet consciously strives to shock and hurt, to break norms alright, but (not remain normless) to adopt opposing norms. These are the negative descriptions one comes across in Roethke, in Kamala Das and Kamarujan, in Sylvia Plath. Negativity for its own sake. But they forget (conveniently) that the 'camera' is not necessarily truthful, it is as tricky as the human eye that sees through it. It can render the tall short, the fat thin, and allows for a million angles. In fact the photographer's or the film director's art lies in how he uses the camera. It is not seeing the truth of all things, but a heightened awareness of ugliness. There is indeed a world of difference between seeing things as they are (and presenting them likewise) and seeing only the seamy side.

The question may be posed whether at all there is any other side to things. Is not the death grip of indifference
and callousness, reflected also in the physical world perceived, the whole truth? Even granted that there is no positive aspect, not a chink of light in the black hole, the problem still remains. Should the poet rest content with painting a portrait of the disease? Or should he strive to make a diagnosis, perhaps even proffer a cure? For, good literature is the doctor of the mind and of the temperament. In fact, it can create the intellectual atmosphere of a whole society. The effect of literature on the French revolution is well known, to quote just one instance. And at an individual level there are many whose lives have been transformed by reading a single book or a poem. In a light hearted dialogue between a 'businessman and poet', Saklatvala defends the role of the poet with this:

"Philosophers are good. They point the way
Between the wished-for right and wounded wrong.
The poet shows it all in one small song.
And leaves it you to choose...
Oh what had sages known except for song,
Of that small gulf between the right and wrong?"

The poet is thus, the painter of Truth, of the various options open to mankind. Of wrong he writes, no doubt, but of right too. That is the important part of Saklatvala's depiction. The poet is not a partial presenter of facts (which on account of their very partiality would cease to be true and thus 'facts'). If he sees negativity he depicts it, but not just because it's there. He presents it as a warning,
as an indication that it is time people became aware of it and outgrew it, this last is important. In his rough draft of a preface for a book of poetry Wilfred Owen writes:

"Above all I am not concerned with Poetry. My subject is War, and the pity of War. The Poetry is in the pity. Yet these elegies are to this generation in no sense consolatory. They may be to the next. All a poet can do today is warn. That is why the true Poets must be truthful."

One of the striking points is that Owen's concern is not with poetry. This means all self-consciousness is cut asunder at one stroke. The poetry is a natural outcome of the deeply lived experience. Naturally, the poetry will be truthful. When war means meaningless death and destruction, it is the duty of the poet to point it out. This is not negativity because it is not an experience peculiar to the poet only, specially chosen out from among the available positive and negative realities. This is not negativity because the very purpose of the poem is to transcend existing decay and make for positive values. In order to reiterate, to bring home something worthwhile, the poet may even take the liberty of being untruthful says Tomlinson:

"... The artist lies For the improvement of truth. Believe him."
By believing the artist's lie it may become possible to convert it into reality. This is what is exemplified in the methodology of traditional art which never presents the 'actual' but only the 'ideal'. The 'ideal' would be a lie when compared to the 'actual', but not a lie when one considers the potential of the actual (and not just of one actual but of all actuals put together — which is really what 'ideal' means). Again, it must be remembered that the 'ideal' means not just what is pleasant or 'positive'. It only means that the crux of the experience is represented and not its actual manifestations. There may equally be ideal portraiture of war as of tenderness and love. The point is that traditional art serves to present essential truths of experience without being bounded by subjectivity and identity which often mark individualistic creations. Hence, there too the purpose of art is to communicate, to awaken awareness of truth. Since literature, particularly with the advent of the printing press, has been more readily available to more people than any other art form (particularly in nations where literacy is high and even otherwise as in India, through oral traditions), the role of literature in awakening the people to truth becomes marked. 287

It is literature which can create an awareness in the reader of the failings and strengths in the world around, and even in himself. Certainly to highlight the decadence is one part of the task. It is like a doctor making a
patient aware of the fact that he has cancer. But the doctor who stops there is not much of a doctor, he must be able to offer some form of relief, really, a cure. Yet, if he too is not aware of the causes of the disease he finds himself unable to cope with it and so cancer remains fatal (like so many terminal diseases whose causes are unknown). If the poet sees the prevalence of negativity, he must no doubt depict it in his poetry, but, moving further, must also explore the sources of the decay.

Why is it that instead of a ripening mature sensitivity to the physical loveliness there has grown in man a brutal, negative, an overconscious and imbalanced physicality (as in other aspects of his development too - in the social, mental and spiritual - which I will deal with in the relevant chapters)? Where has civilisation gone wrong and boomeranged upon itself? Where is the unbound innocence of the child? The answers lie in the questions themselves. The child's attitude, as we have seen, is 'unbound', unlimited to identity and so there is no selfishness that leads to a warped vision, there is an immediate experience of all things. Then, the root of the problem must lie in identity. Where there is no identity, where there are no iron barriers between man (the barrier being his own concrete identity) and all else, there is real, simple and straightforward experience. The answer then should be in Rousseau's return
to simplicity, to primitivity. But the answer is not so simplistic. For, the child who is not 'selfish' is, strangely, totally 'self-centred'. The difference, one could say, is this. To be selfish is to know of others, their wants and needs, and yet to disregard these in order to satisfy oneself. To be self-centred, on the other hand, is to naturally believe that the world revolves around oneself. It is a total unawareness of other needs than one's own, in the manner in which a child believes that the mother has no other business but to attend to her and cannot understand even a slight preoccupation with anything 'other'. This is because the child does not even properly understand the 'other', not having clear boundaries of its own self.

Of course the two (selfishness and self-centredness) are not totally different from one another. In fact, they may be described as the negative and positive aspects of the same tendencies (negative in the sense of disregard for others and positive for the presence of self-regard). And it is possible that one grows into the other. So a return to the state of undefined identity is not the solution. If identity is to be really transcended, it must first be clearly defined. What does not exist cannot be dissolved. What is not understood cannot be eliminated.

This seems to lead into a vicious-circle. Identity creates barriers. Yet, the nebulous identity of a child (and possibly of primitive man) will eventually concretise
itself, as a natural result of growth. And it is in the
rightness of the things that it should thus take shape,
for else, it cannot really be understood or conquered. Then
where does the solution lie? One, obviously, in transcending
the identity once it is allowed to be formed. And for this
solutions are offered at different levels (at the social,
the mental and the spiritual, as also, of course, at the
physical itself). But what if the identity is so distorted
that it cannot even envisage the need to overcome its limi-
tations, let alone actually transcend them? So, the first
step is to have an identity that is not distorted or imbalanced.
The crucial word is, indeed, balance. And it is not as if
our poet-doctors, through the ages, have been unaware of this.
While some merely describe this problem, others define it
in such a way that its causes are implied in the very descript-
on (if only one would be sensitive to it).

And of modern poetry, it would be absurd to claim that
all of it is negative (seeing only the ugliness) or burdened
by too much self-consciousness. In fact, there is much
poetry that also depicts the problem of life and selfhood
in a sensitive manner. A case in point is Eliot's 'Wasteland'.
The first section of 'A Game of Chess' brings marvellously
powerful light imagery:

"The chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Glowed on the marble, where the glass
Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines
From which a golden Cupidon peeped out
(Another hid his eyes behind his wing)
Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra
Reflecting light upon the table as
The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,
From satin cases poured in rich confusion;
...
Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair
spread out in fiery points
Glowed into words, then would be savagely still. 289

A modern day Cleopatra seated on a 'burnished throne'? Here
is just an ordinary prostitute probably wearing artificial
jewellery. The light, in any case, is totally artificial,
not an ounce of sunlight anywhere. The light creates
illusions on reflection within reflection, speaking its own
language, particularly in her brushed hair, a fiery language,
savage even when it ceased to glow, like smouldering embers.
A woman's hair, the symbol of her womanhood, when left loose
speaks an open invitation to man. It is a statement that
all restraint has been done away with. Draupadi, in the
'Mahabharata', vows not to tie her hair but to leave it loose
until the insult to her womanhood is avenged. But here the
lady loosens her hair to sell her womanhood. Another woman
there was who, unable to bear the shame of being raped by
a barbarous king, transformed herself into a nightingale.
Ironically that 'change of Philomel' hangs here adorning the
wall as a picture.
'Yet there the nightingale
Filled all the desert with her inviolable voice.
And still she cried, and still the world pursues.
'Jug Jug' to dirty ears.'

The whole atmosphere is saturated with artificiality,
unchecked, 'unstoppered', like her perfumes:

''In vials of ivory and coloured glass
Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,
Unguent, powered, or liquid-troubled, confused,
And drowned the sense in odours.'

Cleopatra's throne was truly burnished, her natural perfumes
pressed from flowers, her jewellery valuable and real like
her love for Antony. All this is contrasted to the present
picture with subdued irony. There are hardly any negative
terms, only a few, carefully hidden within the 'savage'
shining of her hair, the dirt ('dirty ears') drowned by
'synthetic perfumes', the very control adding to the power
of depiction. Yet, the irony itself is not simple.
Cleopatra herself belonged to Caeser but loved Antony. Love
might be a 'supreme' value but the seeds of deceit were sown
even then between man and woman, between friend and friend.
It is the decadence which began long ago ('change of Philomel')
that continues, for the world pursues not only now, but
'still pursues'. Only, now the artificiality is complete,
and something must be done to close it up, to put an end to
it. For, as the doorman suggests:
''Hurry up please, it's time.'
It's time to change, time to stop and take a look at the decadence and find answers for it. Eliot offers spiritual answers, the rolling of the thunder, its saying 'Da, Da, Da'. But the point here is that when a serious attempt is made to go to the roots of a problem, the negativity disappears in the very seriousness. If the undertone of sadness and pain a questioning of norms and values, still persists, it is not on account of a negativity in the poet's approach. It is because the time is out of joint. The time is rotten for want of purpose, for a blanking of values, for the sheer automatism of mankind (much of war poetry deals with this aspect). In short, the disintegration of society is due to the breakdown of identity, not to its dissolution but to its distortion. Without a cohesive centre (provided by balanced identity), things fall apart. But what constitutes distortion in identity? How does it become responsible for a breakdown of values and distortion of the perceived world and reactions to it? The answers are provided by literature, in its faithful recording of life, of experience.

Having said this much one must turn to the actual examples of such poetry which have thrown light on the problems of imbalanced identity. As my concern in this chapter is with the physical aspect of identity, I would pose the question, "What constitutes an imbalance in the physical aspect of identity?". And the Veda answers, 'A preoccupation
with the physical aspect to the degree of forgetting the whole truth about oneself'. This answer is not given simply as a didactic statement but after the typical manner of literature is narrated through story, the story of Indra and Virochana in the Chandogya Upanishad. The story goes that Prajapati Brahma (the Creator) once made an open statement in his assembly for all to hear, regarding the nature of the Atman. He proclaimed that the Atman is free from every evil, unaffected by old age or any form of decay, free, it is from every kind of grief or turmoil, from hunger and thirst, and untouched by death. It is immortal. Having thus described it Prajapati declared:

"This Atman is to be investigated into. This Atman is to be known. Whoever investigates into this Atman and knows the nature of this Atman attains all the world and fulfills all desires. This is the great benefit accruing to the knowers of the Atman."

This naturally aroused the interest of the gods and demons assembled there and on returning to their lands each held conference and decided to send their representatives to learn about the Atman from Brahma and thus become invincible. Indra came as the representative of the gods and Virochana as that of the demons. Neither revealed his purpose to the other (being sworn enemies) but both made their offerings to Brahma and remained in his abode for several years undergoing austerities before Brahma addressed them and enquired about the
purpose of their visit and life of self-discipline. When he learnt that they both had come to know about the Atman he said to them:

"That Being which you see in your eye is the Atman."^{294}

Both the students misconstrued his statement and reasoned that as only the body could be reflected in the eye the Atman must be the physical body. To confirm their understanding they asked, 'Is it reflected in water?' And he said, 'It is reflected in all things!' Again they failed to understand his meaning and believing their misinterpretation to be right went happily their ways. But the real comment of the Upanishads on taking, thus, the body alone to be the Self (Atman) follows in three forms. The first is Brahma's thought on the sorry state that will befall one who leads life believing the entire truth about himself to be just the body. The second is the mocking note in which Virochana's perpetration of this mistake is described, and of his imparting it to his people as a doctrine. The third and most important, is Indra's recognition of the inadequacy of this notion (that the body is Atman), subsequent return to Brahma, and further understanding that the Self is not just the body. It is not also the mind or the nescience of deep sleep but that which includes all these and transcends them. This, in fact, constitutes a major part of the teaching of the Chandogya. Even as Indra and Virochana move out of sight
Prajapati thinks:

'What a pity! They have mistaken my teaching completely. They are thinking that their body is the Atman, and if anyone... regard it as the ultimate Reality, and teach others a doctrine that this material body is the Atman ... those who follow this doctrine are going to be defeated everywhere.'

But Virochana, oblivious of these thoughts arising in Prajapati, proudly declares to his people that he has acquired the secret wisdom, he has known the Atman. It is but the body which must, therefore, be well adorned, cherished and taken care of and protected by all means, being the most real thing. It was only through the body that all things (or any thing) could be achieved. But the Upanishad mocks at this doctrine:

'Those people who think that the body is very valuable, adorn even a corpse, decorate it beautifully... cover it with silk, gold etc., and keep it as if it is very valuable, falsely thinking that it is the true self of man.'

While the Upanishad's emphasis is on what is the nature of the Self, the Atman (if one says that the body is not), in a sonnet (where the first two quatrains have merged into a single stanza), Aurobindo satirises the over-physiologising of all things. The satire, in this sonnet on 'a dream' of 'surreal science', is incisive, but the laughter is also very
much there:

''One dreamed and saw a gland write Hamlet, drink
At the Mermaid, capture immortality,
A committee of hormones on the Aegean's brink
Composed the Iliad and the Odyssey,
A thyroid, meditating almost nude
Under the Bo-tree, saw the eternal light
And, rising from its mighty solitude,
Spoke of the wheel and eightfold path all right.''

Here we have Shakespeare, Homer and even the Buddha reduced to physiological organs that are thought to be responsible for the creative and spiritual inspirations. But, of course, the punch comes in the concluding couplet. It seems as if the physiology is all powerful, being responsible for all activities, all behaviour, from the writing of poetry to the waging of war. Yet, how fragile is this physiological world that it cannot protect itself from the onslaught of the physical, that is wrought by itself. For:

''Thus wagged on the surreal world, until
A scientist played with atoms and blew out
The universe before God had time to shout.''

The scientist also (or rather his 'playing') must really be a 'gland' or a 'brain'. But here he is called 'scientist', why? Because this marks the transition from the surreal world (which is only a dream) to the real world, the dream is shattered (and along with it the very universe) by one
who is called or calls himself 'scientist'. When sheer physiology rules, then there can be no control, be it in the dream world or in the real. As the glands and hormones and brain and stomach may be at random activated or not so, their results in the form of actions would also be arbitrary and could lead, in the most unpredictable manner, to creativity, spirituality, mere 'playfulness', experimentation and destruction. For, as the laws of the physical universe are well set, they will react in predictable ways to the impulses of physiology. If a brain is tempted to 'play' with atoms, atoms will not join the 'game' and perhaps create or perhaps destroy. They will blow up. Unless there is some factor that can regulate physiological impulses, even 'God' cannot save the universe when these impulses accidentally destroy it - for God will not even have 'time to shout'. There is a mixture of seriousness and laughter over here. It is as much making fun of such a conception (of a purely physiological universe with the thyroid meditating and the gland drinking at the Mermaid) as a warning as to what might happen if this is believed to be true. Aurobindo's poem 'plays' with the possibilities of a completely physiological vision.

Oscar Wilde's satire reveals the mental leanings behind an overly-physiological self-orientation, or an exaggerated 'body-image' (when we say 'image' the mind is automatically
implied). Using the 'Western Virochana', Narcissus, as his subject and with a typical twist of irony, Oscar Wilde exposes the Narcissistic tendency that lurks in every one.

''When Narcissus died the pool of his pleasure changed from a cup of sweet waters into a cup of salt tears, and the Oreads came weeping through the woodland that they might sing to the pool and give it comfort...

'We do not wonder that you should mourn in this manner for Narcissus, so beautiful was he.'

'But was Narcissus beautiful?' said the pool.

'Who should know that better than you?' answered the Oreads. 'Us did he ever pass by, but you he sought for, and would lie on your banks and look down at you, and in the mirror of your waters he would mirror his own beauty.'

And the pool answered, 'But I loved Narcissus because, as he lay on my banks and looked down at me, in the mirror of his eyes I saw ever my own beauty mirrored.'

While we are on the subject of over-consciousness about the marvel of one's own visage we cannot forget the pretty village maid's declaration to her suitor (in the popular rhyme) that her face was her fortune. And on a more serious note we have Yeats discounting too much beauty as an unwanted ill that clearly leads only to imbalance.

In 'A prayer for my Daughter' the prayer, prayed in the loneliness of a tower with the wind screaming upon it, rushing from the sea under the bridge, over the flooded stream, through
the elms, the very first prayer, is:

''May she be granted beauty...''

But immediately he adds:

''... yet not
Beauty to make a stranger's eye distraught.''

and, more important,

''Or hers before a looking-glass, for such,
Being made beautiful overmuch,
Consider beauty a sufficient end,
Lose natural kindness and maybe
The heart-revealing intimacy
That chooses right, and never find a friend.''

Here Yeats both makes and does not make, the crucial point about too much physical beauty in relation to the self-concept. Yeats believes that the very existence of too much beauty necessarily makes its possessor vain and he has his mythology all right, of course, so illustrates:

''Helen being chosen found life flat and dull
And later had much trouble from a fool,
While that great Queen, that rose out of the spray,
Being fatherless could have her way
Yet chose a bandy-legged smith for man -
It's certain that fine women eat
A crazy salad with their meat
Whereby the Horn of plenty is undone.''}
Yeats is here forgetting that Aphrodite, in choosing a 'bandy-legged smith' might, in fact, be looking deeper than the physical and could, therefore, be truly unaffected by her own physical beauty. She was not intoxicated by her own beauty but seems to have chosen out of the very natural kindness and 'heart-revealing intimacy' which Yeats extols. So it seems strange that he should describe her as eating a 'crazy salad' merely because she married an apparently unattractive man. After all, the point he wishes to make is that 'beauty' (that is, the physical kind) is not an end in itself. And it is in the simplicity of the first stanza and not in the allusions of the next that Yeats really succeeds. He makes his point in the sentence:

"Consider beauty a sufficient end." 304

The real problem lies not in too much beauty but in being conscious of it and that to the degree where it is believed to be an end in itself.

If we turn to fairy tale the idea is well illustrated in 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs'. Snow White is a great beauty, but so is her step-mother. Only, the latter is less beautiful because her aim is solely to perpetrate her beauty, to reign supreme in physical loveliness. And in order to ascertain her supremacy she keeps a magic mirror which constantly assures her that she is 'the fairest of all'.
So obsessed is she with her fairness that she cannot stand another being fairer and desperately tries to do away with the threat that exists in the form of the lovelier Snow White. Snow White is more beautiful because she is totally unconscious of her own beauty and being so, is filled with love for all beings. The place of the mirror in the fairy tale is a significant image for, self-consciously, constantly looking at the mirror creates a consciousness of beauty. Without seeing oneself one cannot, naturally, know how beautiful one is. It is, however, possible that one can have an inflated image of one's own beauty even if one's reflected image is not very boastful or for that matter, not known at all.

An imbalance in the 'physical identity' could arise not just from too much 'beauty' and an inflated body-image. It might well exist where there are only powerful physical cravings not harmonised with other aspects. The disastrous effects that would be produced by the predominance of lust or violence in a temperament need not be enumerated. Again, the very physical ugliness of a person could result in an imbalanced physical sensibility, just as a serious physical handicap could. (But Helen Keller stands as the prime example of how a balanced and mature identity can be achieved inspite of handicaps, even perhaps because of them). As a grotesque combination of these aspects stands the figure of Caliban in *The Tempest*. Half animal, half man, almost as if belonging
to the earth, perhaps to water. But there is nothing really
elemental about Caliban. He does not enjoy any of the
elements. He has no longing to roll on earth or to swim
in the sea. Although he is often interpreted as Shakespeare's
representation of the 'primitive' man, he is very different
in lacking elemental sensitivity. He does not worship any
of the forces, nor is he awed by them, in fact, unlike the
'primitive' man, he has no real relationship with any of
the elements. In this sense he is not 'of the earth' as
Ariel is 'of air'. Yet, he has a strong sense of identity,
strong enough to wish to people the earth with Calibans. 306
There is an equally strong need to assert himself, his identity
over that of Prospero's, which takes the shapes of cursing
his captor in the vilest terms he knows and resenting his
authority. 307 In total contrast is Ariel, almost without
form, so one could say the physical identity is minimal. Yet,
it is Ariel who is truly elemental, who exalts in his partici-
pation in every aspect of Nature:

'Where the bee sucks, there suck I,
In a cowslip's bell I lie;
There I couch when owls do cry,
On the bat's back I do fly
After summer merrily:
Merrily, merrily shall I live now,
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.' , 308

Yet, Ariel too has identity enough to long for freedom, a
longing evident in the joyous 'merrily shall I live now'. A longing which makes him constantly yearn for freedom and remind his master of the promise to free him, though (again unlike Caliban) he is well prepared to earn his freedom. Thus, both in himself and as contrasted to Ariel, Caliban's character effectively brings home the problems of an overphysical identity coupled with an underdeveloped mind, or a mind that is imbalanced with reference to the identity (Caliban's mind can think only in terms of asserting his physical self through propagation and physical authority). Caliban's mind is underdeveloped even with reference to physicality, for he is unaware of the full potential of physical existence. Yet, even when the mind is developed too much, self-consciousness, as we have seen, would lead to the same problem of imbalance. These are some of the imbalances that could occur with reference to the self-orientation (and automatically the orientation to the object) of the physical aspect of identity. But the physical aspect of the self-concept has several other orientations as well, in relation to which also imbalances might (and do often) occur. These are, of course, only variations on the basic self-orientation as time, space, norms and motives are all only for the self. However, it is interesting to note their relation to the whole as they sometimes even play a major part in forming it.
The body has no norms, in that, for it there is no good and no bad. It is the mind which forms the norms for the body which is its identity. And yet, in this sense, it is the mind which holds an image of the body and thus all aspects would be only mental. However, I have called all aspects that pertain to physical experience and the body-image 'physical'. Looking at it this way, what could be the norms for physical experience? This too I have already pointed out - balance is the only norm. And I have also considered the effect on the entire identity of breaking this norm. In this sense the normative orientation affects every other orientation and could be seen as an important part of the self-orientation itself. Again, the nature of the physical self-image, whether it is balanced or not so, affects the other orientations as well. One who has a balanced physical self-orientation would be motivated to taste every experience, to live through every experience fully. He does not run away from physical pain or into physical pleasure. On the other hand he would not invite pain on himself either. He is neither a sadist, nor an escapist, therein lies the poise. He is the one whom Blyth describes when he says that to a poet all things are poetical. At the other pole is the man who is so dependent on this physical image, so motivated to pamper the image that he would allow it only the 'softness' and 'sweetness', only what are considered the positive sensations and protect it from the rest.
He becomes, sadly, a lotus eater. He is lured into a land between sleep and waking where all things linger in ease and he wishes to be away from the toil of life symbolised by the sea and its dark waves. Casting anchor on an island of languidity he would not wish to ever lift anchor again.

"Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea
Death is the end of life, ah, why
Should life, all labour be?"309

He convinces himself that his endless toil is futile and he may well die on the sea without reaching his wife and children, in fact they would all have, in all probability, forgotten him with the passage of many years. How the mind supplies convincing 'reasons' to support its own escapes and imbalances! Motivated to wallow in sloth, it would carefully construct logical edifices to take shelter under. 'Is not all nature filled with ease?' the lotus-eater asks himself. Why does man alone work like one mad? And we have a beautiful description of 'easeful' Nature:

"Lo! in the middle of the wood,
The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud
With winds upon the branch and there
Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
Sun steep'd at noon, and in the moon
Nightly dew-fed; and in turning yellow
Falls, and floats adown the air."310
How beautiful this philosophy of naturalness, when all things occur in their rightness of time and place. Why should man alone strive to choose and fight?

'All is allotted length of days,
The flower ripens in its place,
Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.'

How deceptively close this comes to that immediacy and spontaneity of one without identity, who lives every experience as it comes, in its fullness. Yet the world of differences lies in the phrase 'hath no toil'. So, here is a choice, in the lop-sided manner of identity. The man who really has no identity, in the sense that his is every identity, a moment to moment living, would not choose at all. He would toil if the situation called for it, not toil if it did not.

The flower, if it does not toil, does so 'by nature, not by choice.' The lotus-eater, on the other hand, certainly chooses and chooses an unbalanced option. In justifying himself through examples from nature he forgets the struggle for survival, the constant fear of being killed by another, the need to keep active, to search for and obtain food in order to survive. Perhaps, he chooses the plants as his ideal for their passivity. But he would not pause to think that this passivity is also only apparent. The leaf cannot grow 'green and broad' if the photosynthesis factory within the plant ceased to chug. Its relationship with the sun is
far from passive, it is intensely active. It is enlivened and creates its own food deriving energy from the sun. It is when its due share of work is done that it yellows, fades and falls. Its apparent ease and great grace comes from its naturalness, it is active by nature. It does not choose to be active or inactive. It has no identity that would make it choose. But man has an identity which makes it imperative that he either abandon it and then, truly becomes like a leaf or flower, or if he must cling to it at least try to keep it balanced. A life of constant strife would certainly not be worth it (that is one extreme of identity where body and mind are sacrificed to some particular motivation). But equally unhappy would be a life of total sloth. What happens when the body is totally 'protected' from all hardness and exercise (toil) is that it fast decays and along with it, so does the mind, both rusting like the unused machine. And so one finds the lotus-eaters not exquisitely happy for all their ease but heavily sad:

''And round about the keel with faces pale,  
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,  
The mild-eyed melancholy lotus-eaters came.'',313

Their paleness almost reminiscent of the ghastly paleness of the nightmare 'Life-in-Death' who haunts Coleridge's Ancient Mariner:

''Her skin was as white as leprosy  
The nightmare Life-in Death was she.'',314
Indeed, the life of the lotus-eater is practically a life in death for their sense; of all activity, all 'aliveness' is dead. But they are so dead that they do not even have the sharpness of the Mariner's Nightmare, with red lips, yellow gold locks and free looks, she 'thicks man's blood with cold'. But here is neither cold nor heat but an insipid warmth that neither shocks nor enthuses:

''but evermore
Most weary seemed the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.'',315

Even reading of this utter weariness (that blankets all) one is almost tempted to lay down the book and stretch into languid dreams. Why, the land itself is lost in this dream:

''All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream,
Full-faced above the valley stood the moon.'',316

almost as if weary to wane. How much work, what constant strain for the poor moon to wax and wane and wax again. So it stands, weary of change and motion, 'full-faced' and even the normally gay and tripping, stream, 'like a downward smoke', mistily

''Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem',317

Sadly, seeking to avoid unpleasantness the self loses all
experiences, and physical experience of the pleasant as well. And this unhappy motivation goes the way of all imbalances. While, 'pleasant' experience is one aspect of the body's motivation, it is really motivated only to maintain itself. If it rejects pain and harsh experience it is because it believes they would be detrimental to itself. It is this very motivation that figures in the space-time field of the self-orientation as well. In time (linked with space) the body grows, blossoms and finally fades. But as the body is motivated always to maintain itself and there is always a resistance to the changes wrought by time, old age and death are ever unaccepted, at least saddening. Yet, to be troubled by these does not constitute an imbalance in identity. Even a desire to fight time springs naturally from the motivational aspect of identity. Rarely do we come across a poem which can laugh at time and death while at the same time recognising their real power. (It is only in spiritual poetry that death is often-times defied, and sometimes by art, the realm of creativity). Andrew Marwell's 'To His Coy Mistress' is one of those rare poems. The movement of time and the vastness of space are both captured in their pulsating rhythm. He concedes the ravages of time, in fact emphasises them, yet turns around and is face to face with Time.

There is the slow and vast movement of eternity in limitless space in the first part of the poem with Marwell patiently explaining:
"Had we but world enough, and time,
This coyness, Lady, were no crime.
We would sit down and think which way
To walk and pass our long love's day."318

In fact, so quiet, so slow and almost passive would all things then be, 'vegetable love' growing

"Vaster their empires, and more slow."319

But in contrast to this long drawn out timelessness is the sudden racing of mercurial Time:

"'But at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near;"320

(It is worth noting that the chariot is not 'drawing near' but 'hurrying near' emphasising more the sense of its speed).

"'And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity."321

Eternity is not a longed for joy. Why, in eternity all the wonders of the live present would lost, all would decay and fade away. But Marvell is able to think laughingly even of this decay and to tease his mistress:

"'... then worms shall try
That long preserved virginity,
And your quaint honour turn to dust,
And into ashes all my lust:
The grave's a fine and private place,
But none I think, do there embrace."322
Wherefrom does this lightness of spirit come? How is it that Marvell is unsaddened by the thought of time's spoils? Because he is prepared and equipped to grasp the present completely, in fact, to consume it.

''And now, like amorous birds of prey
Rather at once our time devour
Than languish in his slow-chapt power.''.323

Here is no lotus-eater but a liver of life so that he need no longer worry about Time, rather, Time would have to keep pace with him. Living every moment so fully, he would take from Time much more than it can actually give, leaving it in debt, lagging behind:

''... though we cannot make our sun
Stand still, yet we will make him run.''.324

What a cheery thought. Time symbolised by the sun all flustered and hurrying because he is behind time!

Talking of Time hurrying one cannot help recalling a short poem by Harindranath Chattopadhyaya where Time is not the hound but the hounded, chased for ever by the cycles of the sun and moon. For, physical time must move relentlessly with the movement of the earth round itself and the sun (day and night and the seasons that make the year). Based on this idea Chattopadhyaya gives us a description of physical time that effects this extraordinary reversal:
'Time like a hind in sore distress
Travels on solitary ways
Across a tangled with nights and days
Dappled and stained with nights and days.
I see that hind, a-trembling run
Tracked without respite late and soon
By the red blood-hound of the sun,
The spotted leopard of the moon.'

Getting back to Marvell and the normal vision of Time as the chaser, not the chased, in the 'Coy Mistress' he dismisses the pain of future change finding full meaning in the present. And 'Coy Mistress' depicts a wonderfully light-hearted balance of the physical and mental perfectly oriented to time and space. Herrick's poem 'Gather ye the rosebuds' while stressing the same theme of making the best of present, lacks the laughter of the 'Coy Mistress'. The emphasis, in the more wanton manner, is on the losses of the future than the immensity of the present. The poem is also far simpler than Marvell's with the fading flower as the prime image (unlike Marvell's direct attack 'worms shall try your virginity').

"Gather ye rosebuds while ye may
Old time is still flying.
And the same flower that smiles today,
Tomorrow will be dying."

In emphasising the significance of the present Cecil Day Lewis's description is noteworthy for it considers the poet's approach. If Marvell believed that as lovers he and his mistress could race ahead of time by being fully in time,
Lewis says that a post is not unlike a lover in this. He begins confidently:

"For me there is no dismay
Though ills enough impend
I have learned to count each day
Minute by breathing minute.

'As lovers count for luck
Their own heart-beats and believe
In the forest of time they pluck
Eternity's single leaf.'" 327

Yet Lewis goes on to describe the moon behind the clouds, a 'swan's maiden flight' and a climb to a crest and at the end of it is unhappy with his poem and exclaims:

"Love, tear the song from my breast!
Short, short is the time." 328

The moon, the swan, the climb are all not themselves but symbolise aspects of poetry, the visionary light, the flight of imagination and the effort to find the right communicative words. And the whole poem thus belies its opening, for, if the poet really lived 'minute' by breathing minute he would not be thinking of symbols for anything, not even poetry, he would be expressing, rather, that living experience. As he is not, he lives not in every moment, the sadness of time's passage must strike him. But here too there is not that power of the time's winged chariot hurrying near. If one is looking for a powerful expression of the phenomenon
of time in a physical sense, Edmund Blunden's 'October Comes' is where one can stop looking

"... the vole watched too.
He watched, and ate his chosen leaf well-furred,
Well fed he felt for water, winter, all,
Whoever else came by, midge, moth or bird
The time was easy, not did one leaf fall

With such wild flame as evening shot abroad
To warn that even this calm was not perpetual."329

There is a compelling immediacy about these lines, the startling contrast of the ease of the vole, the quiet comings and goings of midge, moth and bird, the unfailing leaves, on the one hand, and the burning of all the leaves, aflame in the evening sun on the other. There is something almost frightening, in fact, the flaming of the leaves is 'wild' and it is 'shot' as a warning of the end of calm. Yet, that is time in an intensely physical sense, the changes wrought by the seasons, the calm and storms, the quiet and the ringings, the soft-sweetness and harsh cold. It is all there as time's rhythms. And that is the way time plays on the human body as well, making and breaking, nurturing and destroying. Time always fills one with awe or fear, if not at least with sadness. The mystery and fear, unsaid, perhaps, only half-understood or not at all, an unrecognised silence of awe that fills the mind when one suddenly becomes aware of time as an immense physical force, is remarkably created
by Blunden with subdued power.

For, the sharp sadness when time racks the human body, one must turn to Shakespeare. Shakespeare's 'Seven Ages of Man' is one of the most painful representations of the physical human time. From Marvell's laughter we have come a half circle to the opposite, bitterness. Not just bitterness at the aging process but at every stage of life where it is time that plays with man, not man who moulds himself. The infant 'mewls' and 'pules', the school-boy whines and snail-like creeps to school, then follow the lover's woeful sighs, the soldier's strange oaths and courting death for fleeting reputation, the 'justice' with the round belly and bookish knowledge, the shrunken old man, bespectacled, paunchy skinned. These are all only allotted parts on the world stage. Allotted by Time who is the playwright and director, and each must play his role in accordance with that called for in the rightness or 'wrongness' (if there be such a word) of Time. For, not one part as Shakespeare here depicts them, seems worthy of playing. One is left, rather, with the utter sense of futility of all life. But if one should still have doubts about the worthwhileness of life, Shakespeare seems to say that his description of the final stage should clinch the issue (in disfavour of life):

"Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."330
Of course, this cannot be quoted as Shakespeare's view on Time, for, as it is well known Shakespeare's presence is nowhere obvious in his plays (and therefore must in fact be everywhere). But even out of context of the play it reads as spoken by one who has experienced some of the dismal aspects of human life. There is bitterness, perhaps the bitterness of a young man disappointed in love or of one with fading faculties. In any case it depicts the tragedy (for it is fully tragic in a sense to lose all one's faculties and freedom, to become totally dependent) of the physical ravages of Time through age. In a physical sense, death has already arrived in parts when one can no longer see, hear or taste. Is it possible at all to live with such partial death? Can one possibly accept it in any way? And if one does not 'accept' it, one is bound to become bitter, frustrated. Imbalance in some form will hold sway.

On the other hand, we have seen that people like Helen, who have not some faculties all through life can still make it fragrant. Then it must be possible to accept (in the real sense of the word) and live through old age also gracefully. This positive attitude comes about if the identity is not totally physically oriented to begin with and if there is also a positive orientation to time.

We have Tennyson's Ulysses, whose yearning for knowledge is left undimmed with the passage of time. And this yearning
infuses him with strength to face physical hardship as well. If Ulysses's courage is mocked as unrealistic foolhardiness (how can an old man and his old friends face and tackle the rough seas as they did in their youth?), two things must be pointed out. One that the negative and the positive attitudes are both only that, 'attitudes' and it is always better to hold the latter, at least the person holding positive attitudes is happy and is able to emanate this happiness to those around. The person embittered by the 'realistic' losses of old age, on the other hand, makes both himself and everyone who comes into contact with him, bitter, irritable, unhappy. The second point is that Ulysses's is not a sentimental romanticising. He is fully aware of his limitations, of the difference between those days when he had known,

'... cities of men
Myself not least, but honoured of them all.'

and this day when his grey spirit keeps the company of his aged wife. Not only he but his companions too are old, and he is aware too of their misgivings about their capacities. He anticipates them and says, 'My mariners, you and I are old' but what if we be, for,

'... every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more
A bringer of new things.'
It is only death that 'closes all', not old age. The capacities of old age may be lower than those of youth, yet undeniably there are the capacities. If these be strengthened by a unifying will then much can still be achieved:

''Though much is taken, much abides; and though We are not now that strength which in old days Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are; One equal temper of heroic hearts, Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.'',333

Not quite so full of exuberance, and confidence in the will to fight and seek, on a much more muted note comes Arthur Waley's translation of Po Chü-i's 'The Chrysanthemums in the Eastern Garden'. Here the sadness of old age predominates:

''The days of my youth left me long ago; And now in their turn dwindle my years of prime, With what thoughts of sadness and loneliness, I walk again in this cold, deserted place!''

''The sunshine,faint; the wind and dew chill ... The fair trees are blighted and withered away. All that is left are a few chrysanthemum-flowers That have newly opened beneath the wattled fence.'',334

The cold desolation of the winter only reflects the desolation of old age in him. The thought of youth and its quick gaiety (always gladdened at the sight of wine, easily lifted from sorrow) only deepens the sadness of age.
'But now that age comes
A moment of joy is harder and harder to get
And always I fear that when I am quite old
The strongest liquor will leave me comfortless.'",335

But amidst all this unhappiness blooms a bit of gentle strength in the late chrysanthemums. When even trees have withered, these flowers have had the tenacity to open their petals. Nature, ever careful of its own preservation, has herself defied time. It is not a great act of defiance a massive attack on Time, just a small soft smile at Time even as he destroys. An almost imperceptible act of courage it seems, this late blossoming of the flowers, yet the image is all the more beautiful for its unobtrusive simplicity.

"Therefore I ask, you late chrysanthemum-flower,
At this sad season why do you bloom alone?
Though well I know that it was not for my sake,
Taught by you, for a while I will smooth my frown.'",336

It may be possible to face old age, to reconcile oneself to it, to discover even its strength and wonder. But what of Time's final blow? What of death? How is one to come to grips with death that 'unknown country' from which 'no traveller returns'? How would it be possible to reconcile oneself to the death of a dear one? Can one accept the inevitability of one's own death? How can one tackle Time's trump card? Physically, one's own death cannot be a reality. All our thoughts on death can only be mental
projections based partly on our own imagination and partly on what we have seen of death among others. Hence, death as depicted in literature is not a purely physical experience. But the way it is understood and depicted can be in physical terms. For instance, while considering the elemental nature of the self-concept I dealt with Shakespeare's passage 'Those are pearls' and with other passages that perceive life and death as a physical extension of and absorption into the elements. There were also others who were unable to reconcile themselves to the idea of the body dissolving into elements. This was to do with the elemental nature of the death of a loved one. Can one conceive of the actual experience of death? There is a serious attempt by Sacheverell Sitwell in 'Agamemnon's Tomb':

''It was too late to weep, this was the last of time, 
The light flickered, but tears would dim it more; 
It was better to be calm and keep the taste of life; 
But a sip or two of life, and then, forever, death. 
Oh! The cold, the sinking cold, the falling from the edge 
Where love was no help and could not hold one back, 
Falling, falling, falling into blackest dark, 
Falling while hands touched one, while the lips felt warm, 
If one was loved, and not left alone.''

The description is convincing in the sense that it corresponds strikingly with what one could imagine of death. But is death really like that? How can one say who has not died?
To actually live through death, to face it and survive becomes a spiritual experience and not a physical one for it implies the transcendence of time. But at the purely physical level death can be experienced in the dying of the dear one. What happens when such an event occurs? Can one still love that physical being, that body that was so dear? No, that is the finality of death. Physically death means decay:

"O kiss it no more, it is so cold and pale,
   It is not of this world, it is no part of us;
Not the soul we loved, but something pitiful
The hands should not touch. Oh! Leave it where it lies;
Let the dead where they die; come out among the living;
Weep not over dead bones; your tears are wasted."

It is not old age but death that is sans everything. Whether the body is to be buried and consumed by earth or cremated and devoured by fire, its connection with the social and mental world is totally severed. It is merely matter, dead matter. And who will then care for this much loved being?

"Arranging for a four foot plank,
Mounting on this horse, the death plank,
Lighting with fire the four corners
Fanning the flames to rise, ...
The bones burn like logs
The hair burns like grass
The golden body all burnt to ash
And not one came close by."
sings Kabir. No, not the affectionate brother and sister, nor the beloved wife, not even the loving mother, none would come near. For, the body that was him till now is no longer he but just a body. Then arise the questions, 'Where has he gone? Nowhere? Somewhere? Is this really the end?' But these are spiritual questions, as I pointed out. As for the rest, it is a mental reaction to death. Whether and how the survivors face death becomes an experience in their minds, an emotional trauma to be succumbed to or fought, perhaps. If there is a physical effect it is the effect of the emotion, of the grief that flows in tears, that chokes the voice or moans in loud lament:

"And from within arose a cry,
A wail of grief and woe.
There noble dames shed heart-wrung tears,
And rent their glossy hair,
And cried aloud for him the dead,
And beat their bosoms bare."

when the news of their lord being slain reaches the wives of Pokurna's chief. Else, death may make cold the body of one yet alive, grieving make listless, rob hunger and sleep, or totally make the body benumbed as in the bride of the warrior who was 'brought home dead'. And all said she must cry or she too would die. But speak as they would to her of his exploits, remind her of his love, nothing availed and she remained numb, stricken without a cry, without a tear to shed.
It was only when her child was brought before her that the dam broke and tears poured down.

Far deeper even than the 'tears of blood' wept by the mother of a dead child, just newly born, is the dumb eloquence of her physiological state, so vividly and movingly captured by Kenneth Rexroth in his translation of Mei Yao Ch'en's poem. It is an experience that seeps into our very bones as we read. So direct and heart-rending it is that to use adjectives about it is merely to sully the beauty of its immediacy:

"The flowers in bud on the trees
Are pure like this dead child
The East wind will not let them last.
It will blow them into blossom,
And at last into the earth.
It is the same with this beautiful life
Which was so dear to me.
While his mother is weeping tears of blood,
Her breasts are still filling with milk."

It is the last line, the simple physiological observation, that carries all the power of the poem. Nothing more need be said, no comment made. Here is the perfectly natural response to time in its most harsh form, death. A grief that swells not only from mind but from the body itself. This is by no means imbalance. Grief over death (like depression on ageing) is natural, that is balance. Not to feel any grief, not to be sensitive to pain or not to allow its entry
into consciousness would, in fact, be the imbalance. In that experience, at that moment, pain is the reality, it is the truth and to live fully is true balance. But to cling to the grief over a disproportionate period of time is unnatural, for, in naturalness time heals its wounds with the changes that it brings, what was the reality of one moment ceases to be the reality of the next. If sorrow is to be lived as the reality of this moment, joy might well be that of the next. But to live every moment fully and yet be unscarred one must have totally given up identity. Then every experience comes as itself and the next would not be coloured by the previous or the present by the future. There would be only the present and time itself would cease to be.

However, so long as identity persists so do the scars of time. Grief does not pass in a moment, it remains, often as a subtle companion. If it is thus allowed to be, as a background song and not permitted to disrupt life, that then would be a striving for balance. But if one should cling to the body of the dead and not allow it to be buried or burnt, that would be sheer madness. In other words, being balanced does not imply walking on clouds all the time (nor believing one will be drowned by every shower). It means the capacity to face realities and to accept them as such with reference to the identity. To know death when it comes. To know even before it comes that it will come and that one must take it
whether one will or no. Edmund Blunden's poem 'The Midnight Skaters' comes startlingly close to this balance, where death lurks sinister in the dark waters of a frozen lake, under the thin ice. Any unwary skater has but to 'break the ice' to fall into icy death.

"... is not death at watch
Within those secret waters?
What wants he but to catch
Earth's heedless sons and daughters?
With but a crystal parapet
Between, he has his engines set."

Yet, the skaters dare death and laugh and frolic as they move on their steel sharp skates on this crystal parapet. This is a picture of life itself, balanced precariously on just a pair of skates. The balance is the key to life. To lose balance is to fall, and the thin ice cannot bear the weight of the fall, it will crack and surrender one unto death, to lose balance is to die (if not physically, then socially, mentally, spiritually). Life is the joy of skating which lies in achieving perfect balance. Then death himself can be laughed at, no, even courted:

"Then on, blood shouts, on, on,
Twirl, wheel and whip above him,
Dance on this ball-floor thin and wan,
Use him as though you love him;
Court him, elude him, reel and pass,
And let him hate you through the glass."
Here is death, dark, fearsome, lurking on the one hand, on the other is life laughing, twirling, wheeling, coming ever-close to death, but staying as itself, poised on a pair of skates. Life is the skater and the very picture of a skater brings to mind a graceful figure, perfectly in control of his or her movements, with complete poise. Life and death are the two aspects of time that are here held in their balance. When this balance is lost, as I said, death results. But death does not necessarily come in its own final form, it may even strike in parts. Old age may mean, as we have seen, a partial physical death. Death could also be of mental faculties, of memory, etc. or of feelings and emotions hardening, a total absence of human or natural feelings. A most powerful depiction of such a death, resulting from an imbalance, disorientation in time, was the film 'Fedora'. A beautiful actress, Fedora, keeps herself looking young through repeated plastic surgery and other methods. When there is a sudden failure and she has aged, she gets her daughter to impersonate her. Even though actually old she would have her image as 'ever young', a total distortion of the time orientation with respect to the physical image. The most unbearable point in the film comes when the daughter, unable to continue the farce, disallowed to break it, commits suicide under the wheels of a train. The body of 'Fedora' is displayed to the admiring thousands. And the mother (still very much alive, old and ugly), the real Fedora's only concern is
to have the body looking beautiful for the viewers, complaining that she had killed herself in a 'messy way' and they had to spend much time and money to restore the beauty. My account, of course, hardly does justice to the depth of agony in the daughter (very powerfully portrayed) and all that anguish and even her death which a mother could watch with absolute callousness just to maintain her own physical image as untarnished by time. Here we seem to have come a full circle and are almost back to Narcissus. But, Fedora is more powerful and also interesting from the point of view of this study in that it is a case in point for a distortion at various levels of the self-concept. The over-physical, imbalanced self-orientation to begin with, the distorted motivation to perpetuate it over time at all costs, the unreal approach to time and the giving up of all norms to satiate these orientations. Another point of interest here is that the disorientation is not wholly physical, it is linked with the social aspect as well. Fedora is really not so much concerned with how she herself looks but really with how people think she looks. That is why she is happy enough to have someone else called beautiful in her name. So long as her image in the minds of fans is that of a beautiful woman, she is content. In this sense, her self-concept is imbalanced socially as well.

This brings us to the impact of the social and other aspects of the self-concept on the body-image. How does a
socially oriented person, for instance, experience his or her physical self? If in Fedora we find an agonisingly distorted impact of the need for a social image, in Pope's 'Rape of the Lock' we find the light hearted parody of the same. A whole battle rages and all for the rape of a lock of hair (like the battle that was lost for want of a horse shoe-nail in a popular rhyme).

"Belinda burns with more than mortal ire,  
And fierce Thalestris fans the rising fire.  
'O wretched maid!' she spread her hands and cried,  
(While Hampton echoes, 'Wretched maid!' replied)  
'Was it for this you took such constant care  
The bodkin, comb, and essence to prepare?  
For this your locks in paper durance bound,  
For this with torturing irons wreathed around?  
For this with fillets strained your tender head,  
And bravely bore the double loads of lead?'..."  

Incidentally the physical receptivity of a socially oriented person is normally towards the human responses, he sees human expressions and manners, hears the intonation of their voices, smells the perfumes they wear.

"Each fresh force, each figure, my spirit drinks like wine -  
Thousands endlessly passing. Violets daisies,  
What is your charm to the passionate charm of faces,  
This ravishing reality, this earthliness divine? '"  

The social poet may simply describe human beings in their occupations. This he would do if he also has a marked physical
sensibility, as in:

"Naked men, fishing in Nile without a licence, kneedeep in it, pulling gaunt at stretched ropes."

... The splendid bodies are stark to the swimming sand, taut to the ruffled water, the flickering palms, yet swelling and quivering as they tug at the trembling ropes.

Their faces are bent along the arms and still." 346

Wholly and vibrantly physical is the description, the human note taking ascendance with

"A plunge in the turbid water, a quick joke, stirs, a flashing of teeth, an invocation of God. Here is food to be fetched and living from labour. The tight ropes strain and the glittering backs for the haul." 347

This is simple, physical existence, with comaraderie between man and man, man and nature. But the social comment has already been hinted at in the very first line, the men are fishing without licence, and the poem concludes:

"'Round the bend comes the police boat. The men scatter. The officials blow their whistles on the golden sand. They overtake and arrest strong bodies of men; who follow with sullen faces, and leave their nets behind." 348

The poem points through sharp physical description to the fallacy of a social system that will not allow men to live
simply, to work and find their food and eat. Men 'living from labour' are disallowed by a society where men should 'live from laws', for laws. This is serious social comment through physical description.

Sometimes the description is simply of a social custom, of social behaviour, in physical terms, as in Milton's personification of L'Allegro:

"Haste thee nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful Jollity,
Quips and Cranks, and wanton Wiles,
Nods, and Becks, and Wreathed Smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek;
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides..." 349

Of which the last line is truly inimitable. Or else we have Herrick:

"A sweet disorder in the dress
Kindles in clothes a wantonness:
A lawn about the shoulders thrown
Into a fine distraction;
An erring lace, which here and there
Enthralls the crimson stomacher;
A cuff neglectful, and thereby
Ribbons to flow confusedly;

Do more bewitch me than when art
Is too precise in every part." 350
Poor Herrick was probably unaware of careful art employed to create a look of artless innocence. Or perhaps such things were not wontan in his time. Anyway, his is a light-hearted description that gives us a vivid visual of the womanly attire of his age. Equally vivid 'pictures' of social customs are to be found in Pope but with a difference. Pope is always the satirist, while Herrick is not. Pope is constantly laughing at the mannerisms that he so 'precisely' notes. So we have:

''And now, unveiled, the toilet stands displayed
Each silver vase in mystic order laid
First robed in white, the nymph intent adores,
With head uncovered, the cosmetic powers.
A heavenly image in the glass appears,
To that she bends, to that her eyes she rears;
The inferior priestess, at her altar's side
Trembling begins the sacred rites of pride.''

Belinda, bedecking herself as if she were a 'Goddess' is mocked by terming her handmaid a 'priestess at the altar' and she herself is sent various 'offerings' from the world:

''This casket India's glowing gems unlocks,
And all Arabia breathes from yonder box,
The tortoise here and elephant unite,
Transformed to combs, the speckled, and the white
Here files of pins extend in stunning rows,
Puffs, powders, patches, bibles, billet-doux.''

The Bible itself is equal to the love-letters and to powders
and patches. And beauty is merely cosmetic:

"Now awful beauty puts on all its arms
The fair each moment rises in her charms,
Repairs her smiles, awakens every grace,
And calls forth all the wonders of her face,
Sees by degrees a purer blush arise,
And keener lightnings quicken in her eyes?" 353

But in mocking these Pope does not suggest any other epitome of beauty as being true. Neither is the human world really loved and the natural world rejected in favour of it, as does Manmohan Ghose:

"O murmur of men more sweet than all the wood's caresses,
How sweet to be only an unknown leaf that sings
In the forest of life! Cease, Nature, they whisperings,
Can I talk with leaves, or fall in love with breezes?
Beautiful boughs, your shade not a human pang appeases.
This is London. I lie, and twine in the root of things." 354

Of course to reject either the human or the natural, one for the other, would be equally termed a partial vision. But in both cases if there be an intensity of feeling that would make for a dissolution of identity. But the satirist clings to his identity every moment. He writes of society not because he is deeply involved in it, because it is meaningful to him, but because he knows not to write of anything else. His response to the elemental and natural world is very low and, if at all it exists, is also oriented socially.
For instance, 'Sol' (the Sun) shoots 'timorous rays' through 'white curtains' to open those eyes 'that must eclipse the day'. Or else:

''Not with more glories, in the ethereal plain,
The sun first rises o'er the purpled main
Than issuing forth, the rival of his beams
Launched on the bosom of the silver Thames.'',

If ever by mistake he should take a few lines off to talk of Nature,

''The sun-beams trembling on the floating tides:
While melting music steals upon the sky,'',

(The social has already made entry)

''... Smooth flow the waves, the zephyrs gently play,'',

he suddenly remembers that he has spoken too long about irrelevant things and quickly makes amends:

''Belinda smiled, and all the world was gay.''

Neither could the reader have put up with many more lines on Zephyrs and Sol, whose presence was really unfelt, not even vaguely recalled. But that such a one, on occasion, if the social situation demand it, is capable of vivid physical description comes as a surprise. Describing the nymphs that protect Belinda, Pope begins:
'Some to the sun their insect-wings unfold,
Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold;
...
Their fluid bodies half dissolved in light.'
in every way one's equal or better. It may be that only in those aspects that one mocks one enjoys a sense of superiority, but its presence is undeniable. So, what we have here is not a sensitive portrayal of the physical experience, but an experience that is once removed, as the poet plays conscious observer. This type of social poetry bears very clearly the stamp of the poet's identity. There is another type of social poetry, very serious in intent, yet bearing equally the imprint of the poet's identity. This is where the poet is conscious of his social duty, of his social obligation as a poet. Like Shelly in his 'West Wind'. This poet uses poetry as a vehicle to communicate his social convictions. The physical world, the physical experience here becomes a symbol for the social motto, the social message, and the intensity of physical experience in itself is lowered.

Not that poetry should not have a purpose. Not that it should not communicate something of value to the reader. On the contrary, I have already indicated that poetry should be meaningful, should infuse a proper approach to life itself in the reader. But this it should do spontaneously, just by being itself completely, and not by announcing its message. Owen does not exclaim 'O! how horrible and meaningless is war!', he does not need to do so. His poetry makes the horror, the utter callousness of it seep into our very bones,
through a living vivid description of the situation as it is. Though this poetry has purpose, it has no identity, it is just one experience translated into another, the physical into the social. Hence, it becomes not a narrowing, but a widening of horizons. Sometimes the experience is both intensely physical and social. Naturally, the use of physical imagery here is most appropriate, as in Mary Erulkar's 'For a Child in Time of Famine':

''Once down the hills of laughter he raced
With the sun like a golden kite sailing from his shoulder,
And the valley corn like a yellow river at his feet,
Till night with stars and torches came, and a dream
Of low morning rays like shining horses to ride.''

This gay picture of childhood is contrasted with the moving sight of that boy who 'danced in the golden dust of the gathered grain' and must now 'for ever songless be':

''For O the cornlands like singing bonfires have died away
And the fields are dark and the laughter loth,
And from the body's hollows the white bones creep,
Edging like hungry owls into the sun.
And no, not all his anguish will find that field
Golden, like a cloak, his thin skeleton to cloth.''

The description is touchingly, vividly physical. Yet, in that it deals with a human condition, it is social. And though not a word is spoken about the social implications of the situation, the poem stands as a mute comment on other lands
where the golden corn must be overflowing but who will not share it with the dying child. His bony structure is mute comment on overfed people elsewhere overfeeding their dogs and, like Pope's Belinda, believing the greatest calamity to be a lap-dog's constipation or the loss of a lock of hair. Erulkar is also a modern poet. But there is sensitivity here, not negativity. The social awareness does not obliterate all else, rather it makes for an immediacy of physical awareness as well. Which only reiterates that when identity is completely given to, merged in an experience, whether that experience is physical, social or mental, the truth wells forth, vividly, completely. This leads one to the conclusion that real physical experience is possible either when identity is yet unformed or is lost in the intensity of an experience. This intensity must not, however, be the intensity of an imbalanced approach (as to be intensely preoccupied with one's own physical self). The intensity should be, on the contrary, such that identity is, at least temporarily, lost in the experience.

At the mental level this 'dissolution of identity' occurs when there is great joy or immense sorrow. In the latter, when the mind has been numbed with pain and has no strength to cling to its wontan patterns of thought, and perhaps drops all thinking altogether, then the physical world seems to impinge on sensibility with greater sharpness and clarity.
Gabriel Charles Dante Rossetti's 'The Woodspurge' is a striking case in point. Even the description of this grief is effective in its simplicity and direct physical imagery:

"The wind flapped loose, the wind was still,
Shaken out dead from tree and hill!
I had walked on at the wind's will,-
I sat now, for the wind was still.
Between my knees my forehead was,-
My lips, drawn in, said not Alas!
My hair was over in the grass,
My naked ears heard the day pass."363

The hair in the grass, the sound of the day passing are all immediate experiences presented with direct clarity, the clarity that comes from 'thoughtlessness', that is, the absence of interfering thoughts blocking experience. But the best follows:

"My eyes, wide open, had the run
Of some ten weeds to fix upon;
Among those few, out of the sun,
The woodspurge flowered, three cups in one."364

Yet intense mental experience, be it anguish or joy, doesn't always result in such immediacy and fullness of experience, which fact the poet recognises when he adds:

"From perfect grief there need not be
Wisdom or even memory:
One thing then learnt remains to me, -
The woodspurge has a cup of three."365
Whether the mind becomes clear and 'empty' depends on the nature of the mental experience. If the mental experience is of intense guilt, for instance, it would only confuse the mind and thus warp physical experience as well. Peter Grimes, a wretched man, is condemned to a life of aloneness for his crimes:

''The dark warm flood ran silently and slow;
There anchoring, Peter chose from men to hide,
There hang his head, and view the lazy tide
In its hot slimy channel slowly glide;
Where the small eels that left the deeper way
For the warm shore, within the shallows play;
Where gaping mussels, left upon the mud,
Slope their slow passage to the fallen flood;...''

Here the experience is direct alright but then the experience is not Peter's but of the one who reports on his plight. It is the reporter who says:

''Here dull and hopeless he'd lie down and trace
How sidelong crabs had scrawl'd their crookedness;
Or sadly listen to the tuneless cry
Of fishing gull or clanging golden eye;
...
He nursed the feelings these dull scenes produce,
And loved to stop beside the opening sluice;
Where the small stream confined in narrow bound,
Ran with a dull, unvaried, sadd'ning sound;
Where all, presented to the eye or ear,
Oppress'd the soul with misery, grief or fear.''
What Peter Grimes himself saw there was none of these things but apparitions sprung from guilty hallucinations.

Even to the observer it was obvious that there was something amiss with Peter Grimes. For, one boat on the river was seen:

"... day by day, now anchor'd, now afloat,
Fisher he seem'd, yet used not net nor hook;
Of sea-fowl swimming by no need he took,
But on the gliding waves still fix'd his lazy look:
At certain stations he would view the stream,
As if he stood bewildered in a dream,
Or that some power had charmed him for a time,
To feel a curse or meditate on crime."368

Then, in his extreme madness they took him to a parish bed where he spoke of his guilt and talked of being plagued by the ghosts of his father and the two slave orphan boys he had harrassed to death. And those who watched him in this state shuddered themselves for:

"... his limbs with horror shake,
And as he grinds his teeth, what noise they make!
How glare his angry eyes, and yet he's not awake;
See! what cold drops upon his forehead stand,
And how he clenches that broad bony hand."369

So George Crabbe gives us in 'Peter Grimes' the effect on body and physical perception of an extreme mental condition (the power and effectiveness of Crabbe's depiction is obvious from the poem itself). At the other extreme is Wilfred Owen's
'Insensibility' where a physical experience completely numbs the mind. But the mental outlook can affect the experiencing of a physical stimulus at various levels. It can make an experience seem dull and painful. As in time of war the dawning of day itself seems heavy and dreary:

''But now the light has broadened,
I watch the farmstead on the little hill,
That seems to mutter: 'Here is day again'
Unwillingly. Now the sad cattle wake
In every byre and stall,
The ploughboy stirs in the loft, the farmer groans
And feels the day like a familiar ache
Deep in his body,...
... The lonely stream
That rode through darkness leaps the gap of light,
Its voice grown loud, and starts its winding journey
Through the day and time and war and history.''

And the mind that remembers, 'man's mortality' can suddenly lose the joy and vibrancy of the immediate experience. The contrast between the effect on the physical of different mental states is succinctly brought out by W.R. Rodgers's in 'Stormy Day':

''Our hearts rise and race with new sounds and sights
And signs, tingling delightedly at the sting
And crunch of springless carts on gritty roads,
... The swipe of a swallow across the eyes,
Striped awnings stretched on lawns. New things surprise
And stop us everywhere. In the parks
The fountains scoop and flower like rockets
Over the oval ponds whose even skin
Is pocked and goosefleshed by their niggling rain...”

All things so full of joy and excitement become suddenly
saddened by a single thought, a single awareness of sadness:

’... at jetty's jut, roped and ripe for hire,
The yellow boats lie yielding and lolling,
Jilted and jolted like jellies. But look!
There! Do you see, crucified on palings,
Motionless news-posters announcing
That now the frozen armies melt and meet
And smash? Go home now, for try as you may
You will not shake off that fact today.
Behind you limps that dog with tarry paw,
As behind him, perfectly-timed, follows
The dumb shadow that mimics him all the way.”

The exhilarating sights have not ceased to exist but the eye,
now clouded by gloomy thoughts, fails to see them. All it
can see is a limping dog, sad as itself, and a mockery of
a shadow miming its limp. When one is sad the very moon
seems sad, with 'wanface', climbing the sky with 'sad steps'.
And so saddened, it seems, by the very cause of one's
sadness, unrequited love:

’'Sure, if that long with love acquainted eyes
Can judge of love, thou feel'st a lover's case;
I read it in thy looks; thy anguished grace
To me, that feel the like, thy state describes .”
And even if one does not obviously say or perhaps even know consciously that one's own mental state seems to be reflected in the physical phenomenon one observes, one may still continue to read one's mind into that seen (or heard, or touched and so on). And one may ask the moon:

"Art thou pale for weariness
Of climbing heaven, and gazing on the earth,
Wandering companionless
Among the stars that have a different birth,
And ever-changing, like-joyless eye
That finds no object worth its constancy?", 374

But this very moon, the crescent 'infant queen of the night', is seen as brimming with exuberance by one whose own heart wells with joy:

"Like a great gold bee
She feeds on starry flowers; -
And big she grows in glee
Humming in joy for hours.'', 375

So, the Ancient Mariner's attitude made the water-snakes seem wretched one moment for they were alive when his friends were all dead. At another moment in the mental journey he could bless them as 'happy living things' and admire their glossy, light-reflecting movements. Thus, even as the mind can turn the sweet to bitter, it can make the bitter sweet.
"The herb itself I like not, but for certain
I love it, as some day the child will love it
Who plucks a feather from the door-side bush
Whenever she goes in or out of the house.
Often she waits there, snipping the tips and
shrivelling
The shreds at last on to the path, perhaps
Thinking, perhaps of nothing, till she sniffs
Her fingers and runs off ...
And I can only wonder how much hereafter
She will remember, with that bitter scent ...
A low thick bush beside the door, and me
Forbidding her to pick.'';376

The bush has a bitter scent, and associated with it the
memory of a father 'forbidding her to pick'. How can a
child grow to love such a bush? Yet, the poet believes
she will, for he loves it, inspite of its bitter scent:

"'I cannot like the scent,
Yet I would rather give up others more sweet,
With no meaning, than this bitter one.'';377

As the mind moulds experience, even physical experience,
Sylvia Plath seems to proclaim that all experience is sub-
jective with the complaint of the frogs in 'Frog Autumn'.

"'Summer grows old, cold-blooded mother.
The insects are scant, skinny
...
Mornings dissipate in somnolence.
...
... Flies fail us.
The fen sickens."
Frost drops even the spider. Clearly
The genius of plenitude
Houses himself elsewhere. Our folk thin
Lamentably.''

But even the 'pessimistic' Hardy points to a different possibility. For, though

"The ancient pulse of germ and birth
   Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
   Seemed fervorless as I.
..."

At once a voice arose among
   The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
   Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
   In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
   Upon the growing gloom.''

Hardy presumes that this must be because the bird knew of some 'blessed Hope' which he himself could not discern in the gloom that prevailed on earth. Otherwise, how could he sing so joyously though frail, and gaunt and small, being aged besides and blasted by the wind? Yet, it is really evident that the bird sings unfettered by identity while man loses himself in the despair of identity. Hardy expands this idea in another poem where he wonders how a bird can sing so zestfully though blinded, and calls it 'divine'.

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An absence of identity can make one aware of even sorrow's beauty, in that 'she' becomes sweet sorrow and a sad loveliness clothes all things seen and felt. That this is not a sadness of self-pity but sadness itself lived as it is, felt directly, could not be better brought out than in Frost's 'My November Guest':

''My sorrow, when she's here with me,
Thinks these dark days of autumn rain
Are beautiful as days can be; ... ... 
She's glad the birds are gone away,
She's glad her simple worsted grey
Is silver now with clinging mist.
The desolate, deserted trees,
The faded earth, the heavy sky,
The beauties she so truly sees,
She thinks I have no eye for these,
And vexes me for reason why.
Not yesterday I learned to know
The love of bare November days
Before the coming of the snow;
But it were vain to tell her so,
And they are better for her praise.''

Here is a tenderness in dealing with 'Sorrow' and her vision of things physical which may be said to have a parallel only in Keats' gentleness in painting 'Autumn'. Here too, of course, is an autumn, the sadness of the ending year. Yet, a sadness which has its own soft beauty when seen with eyes
cleansed of the colour of relativity which must see all things that are not 'gay' as 'dark', as something to be avoided or lived with only due to the absence of options.

Again and again one comes to the same point, that only in the absence of identity (whatever be the nature of identity) can there be real experience. For, the vessel that is full cannot receive anything new, that which is empty can receive all. So, when there is identity it is only the identity that finds expression in the poetry and not the experience. When, even momentarily, identity vacates the place, experience steps in in all its fullness. It may be with this awareness that not only poets, but all artistes in Christian and Oriental tradition consciously strove to keep identity out of their works. Their representations, therefore, were highly stylised and symbolic. This implies that in their works the physical experience is not itself, but becomes the symbol of a transcendent experience (transcending identity). Which raises the questions 'Does a predominantly spiritual outlook rob physical experience of its reality? What is the effect of a spiritual leaning on the physical aspect of the self-concept?'

I have defined the term 'spiritual' as an effort to transcend (or an actual transcendence of) identity, or an intimate relationship with a transcendent entity. If to be spiritual is, thus, to be without identity, and (as earlier concluded)
if being without identity alone permits an immediate and full experience of the physical self (and of other aspects as well which will be discussed in the later chapters), then being spiritual must mean being fully sensitive physically. This, in fact, is the Zen approach, where the transcendence of identity lies in the very experience, in fully experiencing every moment, the zeroing of identity. Walter de la Mare's:

"Our restless senses leap and say,
'How marvellous this! — How ugly that!'
And, at a breath, will slip away
The very thing they marvel at.
Time is the tyrant of their fate;
And frail the instant which must be
Our all of actuality."

typifies the Zen approach. In labelling experience we have already lost it and given ourselves to abstraction, to conceptualisation, the immediacy of the experience is gone.

"'The thing that makes a blue umbrella with its tail — How do you call it?' you ask. Poorly and pale
comes my answer. For all I can call it is peacock.
Now that you go to school, you will learn how we call all sorts of things;
How we mar great works by our mean recital.
You will learn, for instance, that Head Monster is not the gentleman's accepted title;
The blue-tailed eccentrics will be merely peacocks; the dead bird will no longer doze
Off till tomorrow's lark, for the letter has killed him.
The dictionary is opening, the gay umbrellas close."
For, in our anxiety to name experience we often forget to know it. And once we have succeeded in naming it, we cast it away in labelled compartments. So Enright laments:

''Oh our mistaken teachers! -
It was not a proper respect for words that we need,
But a decent regard for things, those older creatures and more real.'',384

Words are concepts which generalise all things. All peacocks are, thus, the same, peacocks. In fact, they are further abstracted by being categorised with birds. The specific is lost in the general which is the basic process of conceptualising. But, for Zen the specific alone is the truth, the specific alone matters (the 'general' is falsification by the mind, by identity). Now is the moment, the only reality. There is no general, and, if we put it in spiritual vocabulary, there is no transcendence, in the sense that there is no 'underlying entity', the 'essence that must be perceived' as opposed to the appearance. For, the appearance is the essence, every appearance is the essence. Robert Frost, half laughing at those who taunt him with seeing only his 'shining surface picture' reflected in well waters, looks for something deeper and discerns, once, ''a something, white, uncertain''.385 But soon he loses it:

''One drop fell from a fern, and lo, a ripple
Shook whatever it was lay there at bottom,
Blurred it, blotted it out. What was that whiteness?
Truth? A pebble of quartz? For once then, something.'',386
Frost is obviously making out that it is absurd to look 'for something deeper', missing what is clearly and directly seen. As Christian Humphreys writes, specifically reiterating this very point:

"A rose is absolute; not evidence
To man of life's impermanence,
That all that grows must fade and fall.
It is a rose, a scented absolute,
Itself entire, and not a mute
Appointed symbol of the all."

One need not, rather, should not, look 'beyond' but must look 'into' each thing, each experience. For, every moment is new, it is complete in itself and is only itself.

Therefore, to link a thing with the past and the future is to conceptualise it. That is, if we see a beautiful rose and are lost in its beauty, so that at that moment there is only the rose, that is Zen. But after a few days if we long to see the rose again that would be destruction of Zen.

Or, if we see another rose and say, 'But this is not so lovely as that', there is absence of Zen. For, in longing for something else, in comparing with something else, we would be failing to live that moment fully. Equally, if we wish to pluck the rose, or to photograph it, to possess it in any manner, there Zen is lost. For, when we wish to possess we have become concerned with our identity and its need to possess
and we have, naturally, forgotten the experience. So it is that Blake writes:

"He who binds to himself a joy
Does the winged life destroy:
But he who kisses the joy as it flies
Lives in eternity's sun-rise."

To live in every moment is to live in eternity. And if each moment is fresh, then the world is more varied than we would imagine. In this sense, Zen lies with Louis MacNeice when he writes:

"The room was suddenly rich and the great bay-window was
Spawning snow and pink roses against it
Soundlessly collateral and incompatible.
World is suddenner than we fancy it."

This very 'suddenness' is characteristic of Zen experience with its stress on immediacy. Naturally, this suddenness implies that every moment is sudden, hence, the

"World is crazier and more of it than we think,
Incorriginibly plural. I peel and portion
A tangerine and spit the pips and feel
The drunkenness of things being various."

In this variety of things, in their suddenness, contraries can co-exist. The world is both more 'spiteful' and yet more gay 'than one supposes'. So one is ever surprised by the unlikely yet perfectly true, as MacCaig is surprised by
the 'Nude in a Fountain':

''Light perches, preening, on the handle of a pram
And gasps on paths and runs along a rail
And whitely, brightly in a soft diffusion
Veils and unveils the naked figure, pale
As marble in her stone and stilled confusion.
The drops sigh, singing, and still sighing, sing
Gently a leaning song. She makes no sound.
They veil her not with shadows, but with brightness;
Till, gleam within a glitter, they expound
What a tall shadow is when it is whiteness.''

To ask, 'How can a shadow be whiteness?' is to ask with the mind which has slotted experience into fixed categories and says 'shadows must be dark'. To see the shadow as whiteness is Zen. Because, when identity barriers are removed the 'more than likely' is true:

''A perpetual modification of itself
Going on around her is her; her hand is curled
Round more than a stone breast, and she discloses
The more than likely in an unlikely world
Of dogs and people and stone shells and roses.''

For, the dissolution of identity means not only that each experience becomes complete in itself, but also that each experience is absolutely equal to any other or all others. The complete must necessarily be equal to the complete. So one can say with perfect truth that:
An invisible drone boomed by
With a beetle in it...''393

The beetle can be the drone and the drone can be the beetle. Each thing is itself and all else, and every experience is transcended by being completely itself.

Describing the Zen experience Christmas Humphreys writes:

"It lives and moves. It changes not. It is, Within and without ...
It is divided, indivisible.
It is the whole of all, yet each thing still. It shines in no-self-ness, ...
Fades when one is falsely rent in two.
It waits, a moment stretched into forever, ...
Why seek it, then, in market place or mind? Let it be lived and loved and deep enjoyed,
It is, we are, with nothing left behind.''

If the spiritual approach is, thus, the Zen approach, then all perception becomes heightened, sharper, and one becomes deeply aware of one's physical self in the sense, that one becomes deeply aware of every experience, hence, of physical experience as well. This intensity itself springs, however, from an annihilation of selfhood, of identity, either consciously or unconsciously, steadily or momentarily. Again, to quote from Humphreys:
There was a shining wind upon the hill
A sudden wind that brightened all the air,
And I was purified, made free
Made luminous and passionless until
Of self itself divinely unaware
We ran, the wind and I, with sudden glee
Down to the undivided sea.'" 395

It is the unawareness of self that is 'divine' and enables
him to become skiey, free like the speeding wind. In fact,
the very running of the wind is his own gleeful running.
The emphasis in Zen is on this resultant fullness of experience,
immediacy in the physical as in other aspects of experience.

However, in traditional art, spirituality led to a
symbolic rather than a realistic or immediate expression of
physical experience. In fact, one approach to spirituality
is indeed a negation of physicality, a denial of or an abstinence
from sense experience. While the Zen approach is denial of
identity, it is affirmation of experience. But in other
traditions as, for instance, in the yogic practices, denial
is not only of identity but also of the validity of experience.
Physical experience is seen as a falsification of the Truth.
But it must be remembered that physical experience only if
identity based is regarded as an obstacle. Since what is
normally known of physical experience is identity based, it is
classified as a hurdle to the perception of the Truth. In
fact, identity is deeply rooted in physicality. So, those
who follow this path look upon the body and sense attractions as a hindrance to spiritual progress. Control of the senses becomes then an integral part of spiritual life.

"Casting aside all things external
With mind and breath controlled,
Meditating, the Yogi sees
Your glory shining forth, O Arunachala!"³⁹⁶

Normally, the example given is that of a tortoise. Even as a tortoise draws in its limbs so must one draw in one's senses and dwell on the Truth. But when does a tortoise draw in its limbs? Only when it senses danger. For fear of being hurt it withdraws into its shell. So also the snail and the armadillo. These are Nature's protective mechanisms. Yet, what is the need for one to withdraw one's senses? What is the danger that a human being faces from his own senses? The danger of getting carried away by the body-identification and the resultant sensory pursuits. The danger is of falling into the 'Virochana trap'. Although one feels strongly identified with the mind, with one's patterns of thinking, with one's own ideas, likes and dislikes the mind itself functions mainly through its identity with the body. Even in dream the mind identifies with some body, albeit other than the waking one, yet a body, a name and form nevertheless. Hence, the 'body image' becomes a crucial part of identity, of the limitation which one imposes on oneself.
So when Ezekiel Cohen writes of the Devil, he pictures him as using the body as his chief tool in binding man:

'The Devil:
Wrap him round with his father's flesh,
   With bone and sinew and blood and nerves,
Live, yet centuries-old, enmesh,
   Plaster him over with quickening curves;
And, to round off all its loveliness,
   Deftly stretch o'er the blue-veined jelly
Sweet-grained vivid skin, and press
   Thumb-marks over the breast and belly!'

Gnomes:
Bind, bind him, and bind him again:
The spirits we bind fast bound remain!'

But why should the body be considered a bondage? Because it is seen as the divisive agent. When I identify myself with a particular form, I immediately perceive all other forms as being 'other than' me, the body identity creates a wall between 'myself' and the 'rest of the universe'. Chattopadhyaya uses the allegory of pot and potter to express this idea, with the pot sadly stating:

'I felt a conscious impulse in my clay
   To break away
From the great Potter's hand that burned so warm,
   I felt a vast
Feeling of sorrow to be cast
Into my present form'.

Why this sadness, this 'vast sorrow'? Because the form robs me of my universal awareness, the consciousness of my limitless nature, it robs me of the harmony of all things. For, "'Before that fatal hour
That was me captive on the potter's wheel
And cast into his crimson goblet-sleep,
I used to feel
The fragrant friendship of a little flower
Whose root was in my bosom buried deep'."

'But now I have been cut away from that unity with life, with the living', cries the clay, 'and have been cast into a rigid lifeless form':

"'The Potter has drawn out the living breath of me
And given me a form which is the death of me,
My past unshapely natural state was best
With just one flower flaming through my breast.'" 

The 'formless' clay nurtures life, the growth of a flower, a grass, a root, in it. It feels the wind upon its face, cool water in its being. But on being made into a vessel it is glazed so that water will not seep through it. Never can plant grow on it. It loses all contact with the living and becomes dead.

Yet, few would bemoan their 'formed' plight. Many are those who, caught in this trap of identity, are beguiled by the senses to a partial vision:
"Our senses are tremulous and fearsome
and cling to the empty littleness of the surface moments
they heed not the vast surges of Infinitude
that sweep and pass by." 401

It seems to be this plight that Walter de la Mare also laments. Our senses, restless, are constantly intent on labelling experience, on categorising it, thus ever strengthening the divisive, the comparative, the relative outlook:

"'Two worlds have we: without; within;
But all that sense can mete and span,
Until it confirmation win
From heart and soul, is death to man.'" 402

De la Mare is not decrying the sensations, only pointing out that when a sense-based life takes predominance, the balance is lost and disorientation results. Because the physical is obvious and its impact strong on identity, there is the danger of its overshadowing the other aspects of the self as Yeats's 'self' (which refers to the body, the physical self) dominates over the 'soul'. To 'prefer' either the 'self' or the 'soul', the 'within' or 'without' (as de la Mare divides) is only a perpetration of the divisive outlook and is detrimental even from the identity point of view as it does not make for a balanced identity. In the properly oriented identity, the physical, mental, social - all have their proper place. So Walt Whitman takes care to say:
'I believe in you my soul, the other I am must not abase itself to you, And you must not be abased to the other.'

But for the spiritual man there is no 'other', at least he seeks to obliterate the sense of 'other' and the very division of 'within' and 'without', of 'self' and 'soul' spells danger. He perceives this division as created only by identifying wholly with the body and forgetting that it is a part of a universal principle. When one recognises this folly, the first reaction is to lament this identification, to ask oneself, 'How could I have taken myself to be just this, this body?':

''How did you believe it to be,
O mind! How could you believe this?
Thinking on it not the least,
How did you come to believe
That this body, subject
To disease and decay, is abiding?
Bestowing on it interest with capital
Of blind attachment,
Forgetting the Lord Venkateswara,
How could you believe this to be?''

And Kabir wonders why with such care we pamper the body. When one sees it burning in the cremation ground, the hair consumed like unto grass, the bones seeming wooden, it is a saddening plight he says. Han—Shan also seems to paint the same picture in an image of physical withering, of ageing,
the transience of physical loveliness:

"Her face like a blossom of peach or plum...
Spring mists will cover the eastern mansion,
Autumn winds blow from the western lodge,
And after thirty years have passed,
She will look like a piece of pressed sugar-cane."405

The transience of the body is thus highlighted by different spiritual thinkers so as to break one's identification with it, one's overwhelming attachment to it. But it must be remembered that negation of physical experience and the performance of physical austerities are not ends in themselves. They are only means, means to attain union with God, or to attain awareness of one's true nature which transcends and envelops the physical. So, casting away externalities, the steadfast, single-minded meditator perceives Arunachala Siva's glory, writes Ramana Maharshi. For every negative there is a far vaster positive. Adi Sankara writes:

"I am not the intellect, the ego or the mind,
Neither ears, nor tongue, nor throat, nor eyes,
Neither space, nor earth, not fire, not wind..."406

All this is negated. Why? Only to say:

"'Bliss incarnate, Siva am I, Siva am I.
Bliss incarnate, I am Siva, I am Siva."407

Mere negation alone would only lead to a void, just as negativity in itself leads nowhere as a mental attitude. But the
negation of certain values in order to replace them with others is not really negativity. In fact, here there is not even the negation of one to be replaced by another, which would still be relativity, but the negation of the partial and realisation of the whole. Even at the intellectual level, during practise, before one experiences the 'whole' (in order to ward off the danger of falling into voidness), in these spiritual practices when negation is employed it is balanced by affirmation. The particular is negated in order to recognise the unlimited. This kind of negation is not unknown to Zen either, where experience is affirmed. Zen also speaks of a zeroing of identity. Zen believes that identity can be zeroed if an experience, if every experience is wholly lived. Yoga thinks that due to strong, long habit, the hold of identity cannot be broken so easily. Hence, identity must first consciously be broken by repeatedly negating it. Then what remains will be the experience. In this sense, the tortoise example doesn't give us the whole story. For, the tortoise emerges from its shell much the same as it withdrew into it. But the ascetic, who withdraws into meditation, is transformed, transmuted by the experience, from the finite to the infinite. It is more like the caterpillar enclosing itself in a cocoon and emerging as the brilliant butterfly, free honey-sipping inhabitant of the air. This process begins with negation, the caterpillar first cuts out the external world by enclosing itself. Then follows the
metamorphosis (not the Kafkan variety but a positive change). While the transformation in the caterpillar is physiological, that in the ascetic is spiritual (also physical, but chiefly spiritual). Hence, the question may arise, 'Why control the body and its reactions to attain a spiritual end?' This is because the spiritual experience consists in the transcendence or dissolution of identity and identity is an integrated unit of the physical, mental and social. And, as I have pointed out earlier, the body image forms a crucial aspect of this identity. In fact, at the very beginning of the chapter I have discussed how the mind itself is termed 'subtle body'. The mind and body are closely interlinked. In Chapter 1, I have noted the effects of food habits and the breathing patterns upon the mind. The idea in performing physical austerity is to be able to control the mind and turn it inward in search of its own true nature.

When one subdues physical experience and becomes aware, briefly, of the transcendent Truth, one may still return again to identified experience. This is because the habit of identity is so strongly rooted. This return to identity could be very painful. For, one has negated physicality and glimpsed an infinite reality, to return to finite existence seems a curse, almost as if one is being bound once more in heavy, cruel chains:
'Then dawns the Invisible; the Unseen its truth reveals; My outward sense is gone, my inward essence feels: Its wings are almost free - its home, its harbour found, Measuring the gulf, its stoops - and dares the final bound.
Oh! dreadful is the check - intense the agony - When the ear begins to hear, and the eye begins to see; When the pulse begins to throb, the brain to think again; The soul to feel the flesh, and the flesh to feel the chain.'

But this strong reaction to physicality is only initial. As the awareness of the Infinite Truth that is within and without becomes steady, the body, or consciousness of it, is no longer viewed negatively. In fact, the body itself is permeated by that awareness and is transformed by it:

'My breath runs in a subtle rhythmic stream It fills my members with a might divine: I have drunk the Infinite like a giant's wine. ...
Now are my illumined cells joy's flaming scheme And changed my thrilled and branching nerves to fine Channels of rapture...'

and the whole body is 'God's happy living tool'. The beauty of the body when the human becomes divine is described by Aurobindo in his depiction of Savitri:

'All mights and greatnesses shall join in her; Beauty shall walk celestial on the earth, Delight shall sleep in the cloud-net of her hair And in her body as on his homing tree Immortal Love shall beat his glorious wings.'
A music of griefless things shall weave her charms,
The harps of the perfect shall attune her voice,
The streams of Heaven shall murmur in her laugh,
Her lips shall be the honeycombs of God,
Her limbs his golden jars of ecstasy,
Her breasts the rapture-flowers of Paradise.
...
And from her eyes the Eternal's bliss shall gaze.
...
A branch of heaven transplant to human soil."411

Here is indication that the human may be 'divinised'. In fact, the human is divine. The physical limitations, the temporal limitations, indeed, all limitations, are all only so long as one remains bound by them, bound by identity. If identity is transcended then even the physical becomes not just a vehicle for the divine but the divine itself. But while one is still bound by identity, the constant recollection of one's relationship with the divine, would lead to a realisation of the unity.

The body may thus be perceived as a vehicle to attain the Supreme, or to attain Self-Knowledge. Otherwise, it may be thought of as a vehicle of the Supreme or an instrument with which to serve and love Him. This could be referred to as the way of sublimation. Tirumoolar sings:

"'Once I thought the body was something vulgar and mean. But now I know that inside the body and only through it Can I get at Reality.'"412
And again:

"After wandering over the land, far and wide,
    I discovered our Lord
    In the land of this body!"  

The body itself is perceived as a temple of God and is, therefore, cared for. It is only through time that time is conquered.  

All aspects of the body become dedicated to God and no part is seen as one's own. In this way, identity is again dissolved and physical experiences lose their importance except in relation to God. The body is meant for God's service, the feet given to walk to His temple, hands to worship Him, ears to hear His glory, mouth to sing it and eyes to see His beauty. Meera sings:

"With dancing bells round ankles tied,
    Meera dances in ecstasy."

Or she asks of Nanda's son:

"Come, live in my eyes, with your alluring form,
    Dark face and eyes writ large."

It is the repeated prayer of His devotees that every part of their body should be sanctified by being dedicated to Him, filled with His presence, His name, His fragrance. Purandaradas prays:

"Narayana, let the memory of Your Name's Nectar essence dwell ever in my tongue."
Muruganar affirms:

"Lord, incomparable bliss filled me on attaining You.
Yet, even if I should forget you, my tongue
Would ever chant Your Name."

So habituated would the body be to serving the Lord that it
would continue to do so even if the mind played truant!

In this manner, when every aspect of physical experience
is seen in relation to Him, gradually one's own physical
identity gets dissolved in His physical glory. The glory
of His name, the wonder of His look. He is one of the 'cool
tresses', of 'golden hue'. He is wondrous sweet in every
limb. There is a tender and exceedingly lovely picture of
the beauty of Sri Rama's eyes in a poem by Tulsidas. Rama
as a child comes sobbing to Mother Kausalya with the complaint:

"Mother, they will not let me play,
For, when we play at hide-and-seek
My eyes too large cannot be
Covered with my little hands
And I can see where they hide."

It may be the Mother Goddess who is so adored and her gentle
smiles or slender figure described:

"Of moon's fame the despoilers
Of splendours new the creators,
The subdued smiles of Skanda's mother..."
Thy figure is slight and fair,
Thy speech is soft of tone,
The sweet cane is Thy bow,
Thy hands are passing tender.
...
Thy eyes ever tremulous
A state of fear proclaim;
The universe is in Thy hold:
Who in this credence can feel?" 

'Seeing your large doe-eyes, seemingly fear-filled, your surpassingly slender frame, it is hard to believe that you are Supreme Ruler of the Universe, Mother', sings Kavyakanta Ganapati Muni. In another composition, a poet, speaking for the milkmaids of Brindavan, lodges their complaint against Krishna. 'Mother Yashoda', they say, 'don't imagine that your son is just an innocent child.':

'With anklets tinkling endearments to His feet,
With bangles laughing in His hands,
Pearl necklaces swaying to the rhythm of His gait,
He comes on the streets.
'Child!' I call and hug him.
He kisses me till I blush.'

Is He just a child? 'No Krishna, don't prance around like that, for, as You dance, the very cosmos sways to your rhythm', they sing. 'Well, if I must not dance, let me play my flute', He seems to say and begins to pour forth magical melody from a simple bamboo reed:
''As if intoxicated with liquor,
   With eyes closed, lips parted in wonder,
   We stand statue-like and listen...''\(^{422}\)

Why! Even the birds and the beasts of the jungle stand trans-fix-ed. The cattle forget to chew grass and all stands still as if in a picture.

   Some see His beauty in Krishna's form, others love Him as the Dancer in the golden hall of Tillai, the Dancing Siva, Nataraja, for whose dance Krishna played the flute:

   ''A thousand eyes were not enough
    To see that great Dance!'':\(^{423}\)

With the young crescent moon flashing from His tresses, the cool Ganges sprinkling her waters on all assembled, the snake-garlands dancing with raised hoods around His sapphire throat and the tiger-skin swaying at His hips, He dances the dance of Creation, Sustenance and Destruction, the Cosmic Dance.

Almost always an awareness of the Lord's physical magnifi-
cence and inexpressible beauty also reminds one of His powers. His dance is the rhythm of the Universe. All things are His Creation. Naturally, that which is created by one so captivating must also share, to some extent at least, in His loveliness. So, the spiritual man who perceives the world as His creation is sensitive to its marvellous grandeur, to its
varied charm, for 'the world is charged with the grandeur of God':

'Glory be to God for dappled things –
   For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
   Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;
   Landscape plotted and pieced - fold, fallow, and plough;
   And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.
   All things counter, original, spare, strange;
   Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
   With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers forth whose beauty is past change:
   Praise him.'\textsuperscript{424}

A more vivid physical description would be hard to come across. The very language of Hopkins sounds dappled, which speaks both for his powerful, unique style as also for the deep feeling, the intensity with which he experiences what he describes. He truly sees in all creation the hand of Him who is infinite beauty, a beauty of which only an infinitesimal part is reflected in His handiwork.

Yet, how breathtaking is even this fraction, every part of creation breathes its own loveliness:

'He sends the snow in winter,
The warmth to swell the grain,
The breezes and the sunshine,
And soft refreshing rain.'\textsuperscript{425}
And:

"The murmur of a bee
A Witchcraft yieldeth me
If any ask why,
'Twere easier to die
Than tell.
The red upon the hill
Taketh away my will;
If anybody sneer,
Take care, for God is here
That's all.
The breaking of the day
Addeth to my degree;
If any ask me how,
Artist, who drew me so,
Must tell!'" 426

Although Emily Dickinson says she cannot explain why the murmur of the bee, the red upon the hill or the break of day move her, add to her, make her feel complete, the answer is implied in the reference to the Universal Artist. Why we respond to Nature is because humankind and Nature were all painted as one picture by the same Hand. So, we belong with the rest of creation. Naturally, when we become aware of Nature's immensity and loveliness, to that measure we become aware of our own as well and sunrise 'adds to our degree':

"'For the dear God who loveth us
He made and loveth all.'" 427
Which means that to be true to Him one should love all things created by Him. But this is possible only when one sacrifices identity. It may be possible to see Him in the beauty that one finds abundantly in Nature. To see the Mother Goddess in the white lotus, to hear Her in the music of the veena, and the child's lisp, may be natural to the one who loves Her. But to see God's artistry in water snakes, when every friend lies dead on a rotting deck? That takes nothing short of the destruction of identity. The removal of all sense of difference which makes me love 'my' friends, now dead, and hate the water snakes that can still live. And it is only when the Mariner drops his identity unawares and blesses the happy living things, when he feels a harmony with all life, that he himself is blessed.

To see the hand of God in the beautiful and the ugly, the loved and the detested, in all things, is considered to be true worship of Him. Not just to see 'His hand' in all but to see Him in all things and all things in Him, adds the Advaitin. (Then, of course, it would not be seeing Him in the 'beautiful' and 'ugly', for, no thing would be ugly):

"He who with Heart to you surrendered,
Beholds for ever you alone,
Sees all things as forms of you
And loves them as none other
Than the Self, O Aruna Hill,
Triumphs because he is immersed
In you...".429
To see the Lord as pervading all things means, each thing is only a part of Him, every thing only His manifestation. And if He is in all, He must be in each one of us too, so He is the Self, the Self and He are non-different. To be aware of this, His all-pervading nature, is to be aware of the unity of oneself with Him. In fact, there is no self, in the sense of identity, for, all is only He. Or there is only the Self, that is Him, including and transcending all things. Hence, His perfection, or the perfection of the Self is evident in every thing and each thing. And so in Tagore's poem, the loss of the most beautiful star of creation is ever bemoaned, the search continuous to find that perfect star. In the silence of the night, however, the stars remark to one another:

"Vain is this seeking, unbroken perfection is over all." 431

So also Whitman declares:

"All truths wait in all things,
I believe a leaf of grass is no less
than the journey-work of the stars." 431

The Self or God is thus perceived as immanent, in all things, but simultaneously also known to be transcendent. For, all things are in the Self, all things are in God.

In the Purusha Sukta of the Rig Veda, the Lord is seen as the primordial Person, the eternal principle, "immanent
in a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, and a thousand feet, Master of Immortality,... Sacrificer, sacrifice and its object, origin and end of all that is - Absolute.'"432

"All beings are part of Him.'"433

"The moon was produced from His mind. Out of His eye the sun was born, Lightning and fire came from His mouth And from His breath the wind was born.'"434

The Hymn goes on to describe how every aspect of creation springs from Him. As all things are made of Him and are in Him, He envelopes and transcends all. In simple, remarkably poetic manner the Bhagavatam presents a small incident that highlights this idea, an incident that has been referred to and formed the central theme of many later compositions as well. In one such, the poet represents Mother Yasoda as calling to her child Krishna. She knows not that He is the Lord incarnate, to her He is only her son, yet, calling Him, she remembers:

"Come Krishna, let me see your dear face: The face smeared with stolen butter. 'All the cowherds say you ate mud', I scolded. 'No mother, I did not', So saying you opened your mouth And revealed the universe within! Come that I may see that face, Come Krishna, let me see your dear face.'"435
The Lord playing as child in human form, on earth, yet still holds within Himself all the universe!

Emerson attempts to describe this immanence in his own terminology when, he says:

"There seems to be a necessity in spirit to manifest itself in material forms; and day and night, river and storm, beast and bird, acid and alkali pre-exist in necessary ideas in the mind of God, and are what they are by virtue of affections in the world of spirit." 436

Of course, the Advaitic standpoint differs in that fact is 'spirit', there is no end point that is different from the starting point, for 'in my end is my beginning' and 'in my beginning is my end'. All manifest things are God, not merely in their original form like platonic 'ideas', but now, always, as they are. Hence, all things are Self (God and Self being one). Emerson, however, represents this very Advaitic concept of immanence in his 'Brahma'. If the same spirit runs through all things, each particle reflects all of that spirit:

"The world globes itself in a drop of dew." 437

and

"When me they fly, I am the wings." 438

exults Brahma. Hence, the final spiritual experience does not imply a divorce from life. Rather, it brings about a
spontaneous and perfect response to all things including the physical. Even when the body and senses are rejected as standing in the way of real experience, as 'untrue' or 'not self', it is finally to realise their existence as a part of the all enveloping reality. Explaining this with wantan clarity, Sri Ramana Maharshi says:

"'Both the wise and the ignorant regard the body as 'I': The ignorant limit the 'I' to the body, For the wise, the Self shines in the heart, Limitless, including the body and the world.'"^{439}

Identified physical awareness, even if the identity be balanced, forms a barrier to the perception of Truth, the fullness of the Self. This is the spiritual approach to the physical aspect of the self, be it the way of negation or the way of affirmation. There is another manner in which the spiritually oriented poet represents physical experience. This is as allegory or illustration where physical experience becomes a means for explaining the Truth. I will be dealing with the symbols used to denote spiritual experience in the fifth chapter of my thesis, regarding the spiritual self. But here, I would like to consider one instance, the 'Hymn of Dawn' in the Rg Veda, where the coming of Dawn is the kindling of Divine Fire:

"'The dawning of the light of Truth, ... bringing in her wake abundance of cows, horses and chariots - that is, of knowledge, strength, energy and health.'"^{440}
'Like a youthful maiden, Dawn shines brilliantly forth,
Stirring to motion every living creature.
Divine Fire was kindled for the use of man;
Dawn created light, driving away the dark.'

'Sending out her beams, she rose up facing all,
In brilliant robes, resplendent, radiating -
Golden-colored and glorious to behold,
Mother of plenty, mistress of the days she shone.'

Though Nature is used as a symbol, yet, these Hymns reveal
a deep sensitivity to Nature. The symbolic level of meaning
is nowhere explicit, but only implied, which makes each level
of meaning complete in itself. Such use of symbology may be
equated to sublimation. Just as the body is viewed in
relation to God in a direct manner, even so Nature is related
to the Truth at the symbolic level. Thus, the spiritual may
lead apparently to negation, sublimation or affirmation, but
in each case, the result is a merger of identity in the
immediacy and fullness of Existence. In fact, negation and
affirmation are themselves relative, opposites that are
dissolved with the dissolution of identity in the experience
of the Self:

'At the still point of the turning world
   Neither flesh nor fleshless;
   Neither from nor towards; at the still point there the
dance is
   But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it
   fixity,
   Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement
   from nor towards,
   Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point,
   the still point
   There would be no dance and there
   There would be no dance and there.'
Thus, Eliot includes in his portrayal of the Self, both action and inaction, stillness and movement, contemplation and experience:

"... the way up is the way down..." 444

For, all dualities are dissolved in the Self. At the same time, viewing it from the relative point also, the way up and down are the same in that they lead to the same experience. Whether it is 'negation', austerity, solitude and contemplation, or 'affirmation', the seeing of Truth in all things and loving all as the Self, the crux is to do away with identity. Hence:

"If you came this way
Taking any route starting from anywhere
At any time or at any Season
It would always be the same; you would have to put off Sense and notion." 445

'To put off sense and notion' is to extinguish identity. All means are for this and the final experience results from this.

The final experience is that identity with its limited form ceases to exist, one is every identity and no identity at all. Every moment, every thing, becomes complete in itself. But the ways do differ. Some may prefer, like Whitman and Yeats, the way of affirmation, where the 'Self' (standing for the physical life and experience) rejects as
'escapism' the advice of the 'soul' to 'contemplate'. Others may believe in asceticism, in withdrawal. But both are only in order to destroy identity and recognise the immanent, transcendent Truth that is the fullness of experience as well. Of course, both the means may have their typical obstacles. In the way of affirmation there may arise the problem of an inflated identity in place of a zero identity, in the way of negation the problem of falling into a void may result. But, it must be remembered that an effort to transcend is not actually transcendence. While the effort is on (be it negation or affirmation) there is very much present an identity who makes the effort. And until identity is completely dissolved identity-linked problems are bound to arise. However, even then, while the effort is being made, there may be momentary absences of identity, just as there occur in the intense physical, social and mental experiences. Only, here they would be consciously experienced. When these glimpses of Existence have become steady awareness, then identity would be truly dissolved. Then, steadily every experience would be perfect and the physical world experienced in its directness without the colouration of various imbalances and disorientations. Then ideal portraiture would reflect every particular experience and the particular would contain the whole.

Yet, if identity is to be fully dissolved in this manner, identity must first shape itself, become balanced and mature.
It is the ripe fruit that falls from the tree of its own accord. The innocent lamb must turn into a 'tyger' and cross the night forests of 'experience', meet the hazards of distorted identity and tackle them until it finally comes out into the light of Existence, of unidentified, full living, and finds the 'lamb' within itself.

If it is the poet who gives up identity (momentarily — while writing, or, for good) who can give form and expression to the living depth of experience, it is equally the reader who surrenders identity who can participate fully in the experience thus given. One who reads with identity reads not the poem but that identity only into it. In a parable, Sri Ramakrishna says that seeing a man lying in a ditch a drunkard passing by took him for a drunk, a thief thought him to be another thief in hiding and a sage believed him to be in spiritual ecstasy. As one is, so one sees. If we would read with our identity we would read only as we are and the poetry would pass and leave us untouched. (It may be because of this that every piece of art affords as many interpretations as there are those who interact with it). At the same time to say that only one who is prepared at least to suspend identity has the right to approach literature would also be unrealistic, even as one cannot say that only one who has given up identity has the right to create. We could only say that his creation will be more true and more meaningful to all people always. Likewise, it may be said that the
reader who can 'get into' the poem makes it his own, but even one who sees it only as a reflection of himself cannot really be left untouched by truly great poetry. In some way, somewhere, perhaps unknown even to him, it is bound to awaken a greater degree of self-awareness, more intimacy with experience, registering itself somewhere deep within like a hazy dream or a song heard from afar. If the poetry is powerful enough it will compel one out of oneself.

And poetry about physical experience should heighten physical sensitivity and awareness in the reader. Not in the sense of being bogged down by one's bodily experience, but by widening the horizons of physical experience (to create an elemental awareness, an awareness of one's physical contiguity with the universe), at the same time, to make each experience complete in itself. It is impossible for an individual to have every experience under the sun even with reference to any one aspect of the self. But through literature, one can contain the universe. One can see a hundred sunsets, smell a thousand flowers, know the smiles, the laughter and tears of hundreds of people as if they were our own. One can also see those hundred smiles in the cheeky smile of the boy on the street with curly hair and grimy face, plucking flowers from one's favourite tree. For, unless the experience from literature is poured back into life it would only hang around the eyes in misty fancies. The million
intimate joys and pains that are thrown open to the reader must be as if they have indeed been actually lived, then life itself is transmuted. Like the man who listens to the story of the Ancient Mariner, one can never be the same again. Whether the change is in the physical, social, mental or spiritual sensitivity depends on the nature of the poetry and which aspect it deals with.

In this chapter I have considered the various levels of awareness in poetry of the physical aspect of the self. The essential points that I have made in this chapter are as follows. We are often unconscious of our own nature, be it of the physical sensibilities or otherwise. These sensibilities could be awakened in us through literature (as it could also be through participation in the world of children whose identity is yet unformed, or in the world of spiritual men who have eschewed identity and thereby experience the fullness of things). Literature serves a double purpose in this. It not only heightens the self-awareness of the reader but helps the writer also to know himself or herself better. The physical self may be experienced with elemental awareness that springs from a recognition of the unity of all things. The human body is really contiguous with the rest of the physical universe. This awareness is present in the relatively 'uncivilised' man, as in children. It has a twin effect on the self-concept. One, that it prevents
a lop-sided interest in the 'bodily self' and too great an importance being given to it. On the other hand, it also allows for a harmony with all things. As all things are made of the same elements a marvellous unity is perceived in the universe, and life is lived on the basis of this perception. However, it is only rarely that literature displays this awareness. Rather than the unified sensibility one finds the divided sensibility. Divided, that is, into experiencing subject and experienced object. Hence, the experience of the physical self is not elemental but 'sensational' (that is, through the senses). The body is perceived as receptor of various sensations, both internal (as in the awareness of breathing, pain, and so on), and external. The receptors of these sensations are, naturally, the sense organs of which vision and hearing are dominant. So much so, it seems that the fullness of physical experience is often denied to the sighted man who often translates almost all physical experience into the visual or the auditory. On account of this perhaps it is that we find a sharper physical awareness and greater sensitivity to physical phenomena in the writings of the physically handicapped. They cannot afford to 'mentalise' as the sighted person would. Interference of identity thus being minimised, the freshness and completeness of experience is maintained. This beauty of experience and its presentation comes when either a handicap or an intensity of experience has pushed identity out, or else where identity has been consciously
kept at bay. The intrusion of identity not only robs experience of its wholeness but may also distort a person's entire outlook. This is when identity becomes distorted or imbalanced, when, for instance, only the physical aspect dominates over all others. Then, motivation and other orientations also become lop-sided getting totally geared to the physical. Thus, while the complete richness of experience comes only in the absence of identity, a balanced identity, is the first step towards a constructive life (otherwise negativities of various kinds would set in). A balanced identity would also be a necessary prelude to the very transcendence of identity. To achieve this balance all aspects of the self must develop in co-ordination. In the next chapter, therefore, I will deal with the social aspect of the self. For, if the physical sense is primal it is the social sense that must develop immediately after. In fact, the social philosophers contend that the social sense occurs simultaneously with the feeling of selfhood. At any rate, if we take the child or primitive man as symbolising the beginnings of identity, which is elemental, we find that growth is characterised by increased social consciousness. This is the crux of the 'civilising process'.