Chapter - VI

Psychodynamics of Imagination
When we think of imagination in terms of kinetics, a number of questions crop up in our mind: does our imagination go from one place to another or does a place come to our imagination? Is this movement real or hypothetical? Some psychologists believe that the thoughts come into our mind in the form of fluids with which the unsettled pictures take their right shape, and then creativity of the mind gives a flow to these managed shapes in order to express emotions and feelings. It is a kind of video reel and our imagination simulates transportation of scenes. There are two simulations of imagination—(a) Kinetic and (b) Static. In dynamism the nucleus changes deliberately i.e. poet’s locus standi is uncertain and because of the changing nucleus, the objects itself change. Dynamism can be logical and sequential. While as statics of imagination is the stillness of pictures. He concentrates himself at one point i.e. his locus imaginato remains the same, but his radius changes in terms of length and direction. Imagination can be recollective, fantasia and recreative. A man tries in his imagination to fulfil those desires, which remained incomplete and in this creation his recollective images help him to form new things and through fantasia and recreative he expresses them spontaneously.

Transmigration of imagination means to convert oneself into an other object, whether living or non-living. Sometimes the poet enters into the spirit of an other person or an object like a tree, river or a bird. In other words we can say that the poet transfers himself in two ways—objectively and subjectively. Sometimes the seer converts an object in other object or assimilates them into each other i.e. both are visible, neither they are completely covered nor disclosed. It can be catagorised in objective transfer of imagination. The feeling of sympathy itself is a form of objective transmigration of imagination. It may be based on affection, fear, prejudice and hate. Moreover the approach of objective transmigration is subjective. We can call it objective transmigration of imagination but subjective approach. And sometimes the observer changes himself into other object. This transfer can be partial or total. In partial eclipse the presence of the observer and the object is compulsory, while in this transferable round of total eclipse the seer and the object both are completely covered by each other and lose their identity. So in subjective transfer of imagination we find the object oriented subjective transfer and individualized subjective transfer. It depends
on the emotion of the poet. When the poet converts himself into an object without removing his personality and emotions, it becomes purely subjective. If we analyse deeply we will find many poems of Tennyson which denote the similar theme. Such as Maud, The Brook, The Talking Oak, The Miller’s Daughter etc.

In the poem ‘The Talking Oak’ the poet has expressed his feelings and emotions through the consciousness of the tree. Here we observe a glimpse of objective transmigration of imagination, but subjective approach. At the outset the poet convert the tree into a human being and behaves with him like a friend. Even he accepts that the tree hears in quietly:

“For oft I talk’d with him apart,
And told him of my choice,
Until he plagiarised a heart,
And answered with a voice.”

Only the poet can understand the tree’s language: ‘Tho’ what he wisper’d under Haven / None else could understand.’ Here Tennyson has applied the soul of a human being in the physique of a tree, but he has not ignored the treeness and asks it to identify the particular place where he had carved his beloved’s name. Subjective transmigration dominates these lines:

“And all that from the town would stroll.
Till that wild wind made work
In which the gloomy brewer’s soul
Went by me, like a stork:”

We notice that the physiology of the tree remained the same, only human feeling has been indulged, when he tells: “And I have shadow’d many a group / Of beauties,” The poet is very much happy for Olivia has taken shelter under his shade. Though he is fixed for hundreds of years, but he is able to hear Olivia’s heart beat:

“...tho’ I circle in the grain
Five hundred rings of years-
X        X        X
Yet, since I first could cast a shade
Did never creature pass
So slightly, musically made,
So light upon the grass.”

Through recollective imagination the poet refers to the fairies that have played under its musical shade. He clarifies that the wavering leaves produces sweet sound and that is why the fairies were attracted by it.

In spite of being engaged in recollective imagination, the poet transfers himself to the world of fantasy and leaves the bodily frame of the tree:

“But thou, whereon I carved her name
That oft hast heard my vows…”

...O yesterday, you know, the fair
Was holden at the town;

Further Tennyson refers to the playful Olivia, who is running here and there touching the beautiful flowers and soon he again changes himself into the tree, for Olivia seems to him coming near the Oak;

‘And here she came, and round me play’d,
And sang to me the whole.”

With the help of these following lines we will observe that the poet has not demolished the individuality of the tree, and has imposed the human emotions. Tennyson is very much disturbed with the body of the tree for his beloved is willing to embrace him, but because of being so thick and strong, she could not do so:

“And in a fit of frolic mirth
She strove to span my waist
Alas, I was so broad of girth,
I could not be embraced.”

That’s why he is fed up to this artificial frame and desires to be a beautiful beech where she would be able to clasp him:

“I wish’d myself the fair young beech
That here beside me stands,
That round me, clasping each in each,
She might have lock’d her hands.”
But soon he seems to be satisfied with the treeness and says: 'O yes, she wander’d round and round / These knotted knees of mine…' As soon as she observes the name of her lover carved in the boughs she began to shed tears in his memory and here Tennyson has beautifully mixed the human emotions with the individuality of the tree. We find the double nuclear circle, one is the poet and the other is tree:

“A tear drop trembled from its source
And down my surface crept.
My sense of touch is something coarse,
But I believe she wept.”

Tennyson’s sense of touch seems to be very delicate and that is the reason in spite of being roughly surface, he was able to feel her lamentation. Soon her cheeks became red with his memory and kissed his carved name and

‘Her kisses were so close and kind,
That, trust me on my word,
Hard wood I am, and wrinkled rind,
But yet my sap was stirr’d:’

The poet has not missed the consciousness of the tree and human feelings anywhere. As he has been rooted in the ground and is helpless to meet or play with Olivia, but he is satisfied to see her for he knows that ‘the day was warm’ and after playing she would take rest under his greenish shadow: ‘...At last, tired out with play / She sank her head upon her arm / And at my feet she lay.” In order to remove her tiredness he fanned upon her with leaves and here Tennyson has used his full fledged imagination in portraying the natural effect of the wind through human emotions. The poet is desirous of seeing her face continuously, which is covered by leaves and in this situation the wind is proved to be very helpful and waves the leaves, so that the ray of the sun may light her face and the poet might be able to observe her glowing and glancing physiognomy. But Tennyson wants to notice her minutely and that is why he lights on the particular physique of Olivia:

“Sometimes I let a sunbeam slip,
To light her shaded eye;
A second flutter’d round her lip
Like a golden butterfly.

A third would glimmer on her neck
To make the necklace shine;
Another slid, a sunny fleck,
From head to ankle fine."

After visualizing her, he covers her with his branchy arms in order to give her complete rest: “Then close and dark my arms I spread / And shadow’d all her rest.”

Now he speaks about his marriage and consoles her heart:

‘...I will work in prose and rhyme,
And praise thee more in both.”

‘Maud’ is the excellent example of individualized subjective transfer. In the section XXII (Come into the garden, Maud) the poet has beautifully demonstrated this theme where he invites Maud to meet him in the garden at night, so that none could see them. But all his efforts were all in vain for she did no come and in order to remove his frustration he speaks to the Lily that ‘She is weary of dance and play.’ Here we find the signs of objective transmigration. Seeing Lily’s negligence he goes to the rose and began to mutter:

...what signs are those
For one that will never be thine?
But mine, but mine:

Even the rose did not give any response. He converts himself in the rose (which was blooming near the hall) through individualized subjective transfer, so that he might be able to hear the dashing music of the hall:

“And the soul of the rose went into my blood,
As the music clash’d in the hall;
And long by the garden lake I stood,
For I heard your rivulet fall...”

He describes his critical situation in her absence and the most interesting thing was, when the poet says: “But the rose was awake all night for your sake.” It was not rose,
rather it was Tennyson who waited whole night for her. Being in the frame of the rose, he takes the lilies and the other roses, as his friends and companions and tells:

"The Lilies and roses were all awake
   The sign’d for the dawn and thee."

He assimilates himself with the rose and calls Maud as ‘Queen rose’ who is wearing satin and pearls and is engaged in dancing. Seeing so much delay the poet began to lament:

"There has fallen a splendid tear
   From the passion-flower at the gate."

Meanwhile she turned towards garden and he is full of excitement and joy:

"She is coming, my dove, my dear;
   She is coming my life, my fate."

The rose also informs him. ‘She is near, she is near.’ Suddenly the white rose sheds tears that she is late. The poet has beautifully analysed the objective transfer of imagination, for it was not rose that weeps, rather it was the sign of the morning for the dew drops are melting in the ground. Here Tennyson has assimilated the human emotions with the natural events. Further he goes in the atmosphere of recreative imagination where he would be able to hear the footsteps of Maud, whenever she would pass near by his earthly bed:

"My heart would hear her and beat,
   Were it earth in a earthy bed,
   My dust would hear her and beat."

With her passionate touch he would convert himself in the physique of the multicoloured roses:

"Had I lain for a century dead
   Would start and tremble under her feet,
   And blossom in purple and red."

In this subjective transferable round ‘The miller’s daughter’ stands in this theory. The poet refers to Alice, the famous miller’s daughter, who is the most beautiful Lady and tells about his previous fantastic meetings with her. He praises her with the help of individualized subjective transfer of imagination:
“It is the miller’s daughter,
          And she is grown so dear, so dear
That I would be the jewel
          That trembles at her ear.”
He wanted to be her jewel which beautifies the beauty of Alice and through it:
          ‘I’d touch her neck so warm and white.’
Now he seems to be interested in her girdle for ‘her dainty–dainty waist.’ In order to check her heart beat, whether it is right or wrong, he is willing to ‘clasp it round’:
          ‘And her heart would beat against me,
             In sorrow and in rest:
And I should know if it beat right,
          I’d clasp it round so close and tight.’
But he is not justified with these things and hopes that he might be able to feel her love and laughter sighs in the physique of the necklace. Here Tennyson has beautified his imagination with objectivity and says that with her every step her necklace would touch her bosom, so he wants to be the companion of this movement and in this way he would succeed in his aim:
          ‘And I would be the necklace
             And all day long to fall and rise
Upon her balmy bosom,
             With her laughter or her sighs.’
He warns himself that he would lie very carefully and sweetly, so that her neck might not be hurted: “And I would lie so light, so light, / I scarce should be unclasp’d at night.”

Whether dynamism is a myth or an important part in imagination is still a question. But in Tennyson’s poetry we will find it in a large scale. All our thinking depends on the transportation of imagination. Transportation can be in terms of time as well as of place. Sometimes we think recollectively and ‘The Voyage’ is the finest reference of this kind of imagination. The poem begins with the introduction of kinetics of imagination where the two seekers are taking the enjoy of travelling and it is the travel of imagination:
"We left behind the painted buoy
That tosses at the harbour – mouth;
Their eyes felt a kind of comfort as they floated towards South:
"And madly danced our hearts with joy
As fast we fleet to the South
How fresh was every sight and sound
On open main or winding shore!"
They were so pleased that desired to be sailing across the sea for ever. At once their eyelids fixed at the swelling sea which was exited ‘to meet the keel / And swept behind; so quick the run, and soon they seemed to sail into the Sun!”
Further Tennyson refers to the natural beauty in a photographic style, which they used to see in their imagination:
"How oft we saw the Sun retire,
And burn the threshold of the night,
Fall from his Ocean – lane of fire,
And sleep beneath his pillar’d light!”
As soon as the sun goes to take rest the whole of the sky seemed to be in a multicoloured robe and the twilight is full of rainbow colours:
‘How of the purple – skirted robe
Of twilight slowly downward drawn…”
It seems as if the narrators are travelling in an aeroplane and that’s why they observe minutely the horizontal changes. Now they are preparing to dash ‘into the dawn’ after a long slumber. And indicate to the newly born stars which attract them with their playful activities: “Now stars all night above the brim / Of waters lighten’d into view; / They climb’d as quickly, for the rim / Changed every moment as we flew.” Soon the sailing moon appears to be running with them in the ocean:
‘Or flying shone, the silver boss
Of her own halo’s dusky shield.”
Further in the movie camera photographic style the poet observes the atmosphorical beauty, where he refers to the mountain peaks and the towns, situated on hills. They
seem to be dim because of the long distance. Meanwhile they noticed the Northern meadows, full of greenery:

“We past long lines of Northern capes
And dewy northern meadows green.”

At once he transfers from South to the east where they faced the warm ‘the nutmeg rocks and isles of clove.’ And the stormy wind had made the peaks dimmed and blackish:

‘By peaks, that flamed, or all in shade,
Gloom’d the low, coast and quivering brine
With ashy rains…”

They were very much exhausted with such kind of stormy weather and want to get rid of it: “By sand and steaming, flats and floods / Of mighty mouth, we scudded fast.” While crossing the warm east, they at once stopped for ‘...hills and scarlet-mingled woods / Glow’d for a moment...’ So the dedicated seekers refused to be stayed either by the sober household values of the North, or by the sensual exoticism of the East:

“At times a craven craft would shoot
From havens hid in fairy bowers,
With naked limbs and flowers and fruit,
But we nor paused for fruit nor flowers.”

In order to come out of such aweary life they speak about a fair vision where they glanced an unknown girl and in her beauteous effect the voyagers chased her to catch:

‘For one fair vision ever fled
Down the waste waters day and night
And still we follow’d where she led
In hope to gain upon her flight.”

She was so charming that each faculty member of the ship tried to make her, their maid.

‘Her face was evermore unseen
X X X
But each man murmur’d, ‘O my Queen,
I follow till I make thee mine.”

Tennyson’s dynamic position continues where the voyagers are engaged in following her steppings. But she seemed to them like a glow worm for sometimes she appeared on the hills, but at the other moment she disappeared:

‘And now we lost her, now she gleamed
Like Fancy made of golden air,
Now nearer to the prow she seem’d
Like Virtue firm, like knowledge fair.”

She was beautifying the sea with her fantastic and magical appearance:

‘Now high on waves that idly burst
Like Heavenly Hope she crown’d the sea.”

At once they dismissed her and regarded her as a liberty girl: ‘And now, the bloodless point reversed, / She bore the blade of Liberty.”

The poet is very much conscious of the atmosphorical changes and through kinesis of imagination he transfers to the stormy weather where one of the travellers tried to recognise the fair lady, but could not find her and in this dejected mood the seekers decided, not to sail ever more and returned to the materialistic world:

‘And never sail of ours was furl’d,
Nor anchor dropt at eve or morn;
We lov’d the glories of the world,
But laws of nature were our scorn.”

The most surprising thing was that the disastrous and icy North became more comfortable for them where they found out the missing personality: ‘Again to colder climes we came, / For still we follow’d where she led.” Though they faced many kinds of calamities in their voyage and many of the companions were badly affected with blindness and lameless, but still they had a ray of hope and in this exciting mood they again began to follow her, knowing that they would have to sail forever to catch her:

“But blind or lame or sick or sound
We follow that which flies before
We know the merry world is round
And we may sail for evermore.”
Through this kinesis of imagination the poet wants to tell about the continuity and infinity of life.

With the help of this poem ‘The Merman’ the poet has analysed the recreative of imagination where he hopes to be a merman who would sing all the day, entertain others by his playful and mischievous activities. But at the entrance of the twilight he would not like any kind of interference between him and mermaids:

‘But at night I would roam abroad and play
With the mermaids in and out of the rocks...’

Here we find a glimpse of statics of imagination when he adds to decorate her with sea-flowers: ‘Dressing their hair with the white sea-flower.../ I would kiss them often under the sea.”

Now he fantasizes that the mermaids and he have become one and there remain no formalities between them and smiles: “...we would wander away-away / To the pale-green sea-groves straight and high / Chasing each other merrily.” The poet does not want any outward hinderance in his futuristic world when the beautiful fairies are with him. Even the moon and the stars are proved to be as the source of disturbance:

“Neither moon nor star
We would call aloud in the dreamy dells.
Call to each other and whoop and cry
All night, merrily, merrily.”

But he comes out of this imagination for a moment and speaks out its merriness:

‘Oh! what a happy life were mine
Under the hollow-hung ocean green!”

And again decides to go in the world of recreative imagination: “Soft are the moss-beds under the sea / We would live merrily, merrily.”

We find a beautiful combination of kinetics of imagination and objective transmigration of imagination but subjective approach in the poem ‘The Brook’. Tennyson has transferred himself in a brook and has adopted all the qualities and the continuity of the brook. The poem begins with the birthplace of the brook where the poet says that he starts his travel ‘from haunt of coot and hern’ and makes a sudden attack to go to the valley. While roaming among the hilly areas he chatters sweetly...
‘over stony ways’ and is anxious to join the shining river. He produces many kinds of voices and bubbles ‘into eddying bays’ and babbles ‘on the peeples. He makes the fields and lawns green and with the touch of his waves, many useless and harmful plants began to grow:

“With many a curve my banks I fret
By many a field and fallow
And many a fairy foreland set
With willow-weed and mallow.”

Now the poet wants to attract the attention towards his chattering sound which he makes at the time of flowing and compares himself with the human being whose entrance and exit are pre-determined, whereas he has been gifted as eternity and one can hear his melodious sound:

“I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on forever.

The poet is very much upset at the interference of the blossom or fish in his flowing, or rather he is frightened with these obstructions. He does not want any kind of hindrance and even the soft flower and a multicoloured fish disturb his continuity

“I wind about, and in and out,
With here a blossom sailing,
And here and there a grayling.”

Meanwhile a foamy flake comes across his; ‘And here and there a foamy flake / Upon me, as I travel / With many a silvery water break / Above the golden gravel.” But Tennyson does not care these outward things and feels a kind of relief at his immortality. Further he tells about his importance in the grassy plots and lawns and even the young lovers make his banks, their meeting place. The sun beam was always, a point of attraction to the brook and that is why he began to dance with its appearance:

“I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,
Among my skimming swallows
I make the netted sun beam dance
Against my sandy shallows."

But he is unwilling to flow under the moon and stars and the black berry bush tortures him. In spite of this he likes the pebbles lying in the sea shores and so he dawdles to enjoy them and feels comfort in its lap. After staying for a long time he again flies in the world of imagination and goes to mix with the river for he is not for stay:

‘And out again I curve and flow
To join the brimming river…’"