UNIT 40 DILIP CHITRE AND KEKI N. DARUWALLA

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40.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to:

• discuss the poetry of Dilip Chitre and Keki N. Daruwalla;
• understand and talk about Chitre’s ‘The Light of Birds Breaks the Lunatic’s Sleep’ and Daruwalla’s ‘Hawk’ and ‘Chinar’;
• know how to discuss the style of a poem.

40.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit we shall introduce you to Dilip Chitre and Keki N. Daruwalla and their poetry. You will read one poem by Chitre and two by Daruwalla. We shall read Chitre’s ‘The Light of Birds Breaks the Lunatic’s Sleep’ and try to understand what the poet wants to say with the help of images.

While reading Daruwalla’s ‘Hawk’ we shall also try to understand the dramatic form of that poem. We shall also try to understand the poem in a wider context and try to understand the symbolism in it.

Daruwalla’s poem ‘Chinar’ relates to Kashmir where this tree grows. We will first make ourselves familiar with the kind of tree chinar is and then read the
Dilip Chitre and Keki N. Daruwalla

40.2 DILIP CHITRE (1938-2009)

Born in Vadodara in 1938, Dilip Purushottam Chitre, though known primarily as a poet in Marathi and English, was a translator, editor, columnist, painter and filmmaker. In 1951 his family moved to Mumbai where he studied taking his B.A. (Hons.) degree in English from Bombay University. After that he spent three years in Ethiopia teaching in schools.

The first collection of Dilip Chitre’s poems entitled Kavita came out in 1960. It was collection of his Marathi poems. Twelve years later, his English poems appeared in a collection called Ambulance Ride. In 1980, he published Travelling in a Cage which also includes his long poem ‘Ambulance Ride’. He has to his credit a number of anthologies of his Marathi and English poems. As Is, Where Is: Selected Poems, his last collection of English poems, came out in 2008.


Dilip Chitre made an important contribution to the ‘little magazine movement’ in Marathi. In 1954 with Arun Kolatkar and Ramesh Smarth he launched a literary magazine called Shabda. The magazine continued for six years but even in this short span of time it was able to give a new stimulus and a direction to post-independence Marathi poetry. From 1978 to 1980 Chitre worked as an Honorary Editor of Quest (later called New Quest) published from Mumbai. He resumed that editorship in 2001.

Widely travelled in Europe, North America, Africa and Asia, Chitre lectured at various overseas universities and was a Fellow and Writer-in-residence under the German Academic Exchange Programme at the universities of Heidelberg and Bamberg in Germany.

Chitre’s poetry dilates upon time and reality. If you read more poems by him you will notice a dynamic and mutual relationship between what he is saying and how he is saying it. You will also encounter in his poetry his inner world that is often the space in which he moves as a poet. However, when he chooses to write about things and happening around him, he does it in a controlled, tough and unsentimental style.

Now read the following poem.

40.3 THE LIGHT OF BIRDS BREAKS THE LUNATIC’S SLEEP

40.3.1 The Text

The Light of Birds Breaks the Lunatic’s Sleep

The light of birds breaks the lunatic’s sleep
He wakes up moving out of a million dreams
His **burning electric wires** begin to **glow**
The lunatic’s fingers extend like wires

Stretched out in the silence:
The lunatic’s veins widen: he feels
Darkness **roaring** in place of blood
That darkness is half a sleep: a wide

Awareness of a kind: even total sleep
Is a blaze in his brain: a flaming awareness
The lunatic watches a sound in the Sun:
And his eyes **paraphrase** the Sun:

Numberless sleeps and lightings awaken
A vast **lullaby** in his flesh and blood
The lunatic sees a bird...flying...and his eyelids flutter
And his eyes, drowning, begin to chirp.

**Glossary:**

- **light** : (here) sound.
- **burning electric wires** : (here) his mind.
- **glow** : (here) slow down.
- **paraphrase** : (literary) to express in one’s own words what somebody has said. (Here) his eyes remind you of the sun.
- **roaring** : (here) flowing fast.
- **lullaby** : a soft gentle song sung to make a child go to sleep.

**40.3.2 Interpretation**

In ‘The Light of Birds Breaks the Lunatic’s Sleep’ the poet imagines what happens inside an insane person’s brain. The poem opens with the waking up of the lunatic at dawn. You will see that in the title the poet has used the expression ‘the light if birds’ instead of ‘the sound of birds’ to describe dawn. Thus he has merged one sensation into another and is able to suggest the sense of sight and hearing with the help of the same phrase. When dawn breaks, we see the growing light in the sky and at the same time hear the birds singing. He suggests the half-light of dawn and bird-song in ‘the light of birds’.

When he wakes up the lunatic’s dreams come to an end. The poet uses the metaphor of the filament of an electric bulb to describe the brain of the lunatic. When the bulb burns brightly, the filament is white but as the electric current is switched off it begins to lose its brightness and becomes a dull red (‘electric wires begin to glow’). Can we say that with the help of this metaphor the poet suggests that in the lunatic’s mind his ‘million dreams’ are brighter than the reality of this world? The poet continues the imagery of electricity when he says that the lunatic’s fingers ‘extend like wires’ stretching out ‘in the silence’. Obviously, the image is that of a person yawning and stretching his arms when he wakes up. What does ‘silence’ mean here? We can say that the most literal interpretation of silence can be that the place where the lunatic wakes up is
silent. But we can also understand ‘silence’ in a metaphorical sense. The world in which the lunatic wakes up is silent because it does not speak to him in a language that he can understand. We can also say that the poet wants us to understand that the dream world of the lunatic is more real for him than the ‘real’ world of the sane people into which he wakes up.

As the lunatic wakes up his veins widen and darkness begins to flow in them. Then the poet adds another metaphor to the idea of darkness: he describes that darkness as ‘half a sleep’. You will immediately notice that this statement has to be understood in a metaphorical sense. When we describe something in terms of something else we are using a metaphor. So what can darkness mean here? We know that darkness indicates an absence of light. But in this expression it must be the absence of something for which we can use ‘light’ as metaphor. Can we say that here darkness represents the absence of understanding or knowledge because we often use ‘light’ as a metaphor for knowledge? Then we may say that the darkness flowing in the lunatic’s veins suggests the absence of knowledge and understanding in the sense ‘normal’ people, that is, those who have not been branded ‘lunatic’, have them. The lunatic does not see things, or understands them, in the manner other people do. Again, we may also say that the darkness flowing in the lunatic’s veins represents a lack of self-awareness in him.

The next lines build on the word ‘darkness’. The ‘darkness’ in the lunatic is actually another kind of awareness. Using the images of light and darkness the poet suggests that the lunatic does not lose awareness even in his sleep. Even in his dreams there is this ‘flaming awareness’. The poet seems to be saying that the lunatic feels things very intensely though we cannot understand how his mind works and how he relates his ideas. We do not understand the logical structure of his ideas. The word ‘flaming’ in the poem recalls another related word ‘sun’. But instead of seeing the sun the lunatic watches a sound in it. Can we say that by deliberately mixing up the senses of sight and hearing the poet implies that there is another order of perception in the lunatic’s mind? Then we read that the lunatic’s eyes ‘paraphrase the sun’. It can suggest that they look as bright as the sun. But if we take the sun to stand for normal reality, the line can also mean that the lunatic perceives reality in his own terms and in that sense he ‘paraphrases’ it. Paraphrasing, as you know, means expressing in different words what somebody has said or written. Thus, the poet is suggesting here that the lunatic has his own language in which he talks about experience. What he says is a paraphrase of what others say in the sense that the lunatic says it using his own vocabulary.

In the concluding lines of the poem, you will come across many expressions that seem to be paradoxical. For instance, lullabies are sung to make someone, especially a child, go to sleep. But the poem tells you that a vast lullaby awakens in his body. You remember that the poem began with the image of a bird. It also ends with the same image. The image of the fluttering of a bird’s wings merges with that of the fluttering of the lunatic’s eyelids. His eyes become a bird and begin to chirp. We can understand such statements if we remember that each word here stands for something other than its dictionary meaning. By using ‘bird’, ‘eyes’ and ‘chirp’ in the same breath the poet seems to be saying that on waking up when the lunatic sees a bird flying and chirping, his eyes too begin to look happy and full of life.

Do you think that the poem is just a record of how a lunatic’s brain works? It definitely is that, but if you replace the word ‘lunatic’ with ‘poet’ or ‘revolutionary’ you can interpret the poem in an altogether different sense. Then
you can say that the poem is telling us that there exists a vast difference in perception between how a poet sees the world around him and how other people do it. Normal people use the logic of cause and effect as the basic format in which to talk about happenings. The poet or the revolutionary may see the same things in an entirely different manner. The poem then seems to imply that other modes of perceiving reality may also be valid.

40.3.3 Images

You can study the way images have been used in this poem. An image, as you know, is an expression calculated to re-create in the mind of the reader a sense of sight, or sound, or smell or touch, or taste. The primary purpose of an image is not to make the reader understand something but to imagine, feel and experience it. Therefore, if we wanted to describe everything that an image does to a reader, we will end up writing a very long description of the image.

You will notice that in this poem a contrast has been achieved by placing words suggesting light with those indicating darkness. You can point out many expressions in the poem that suggest light: ‘light’, ‘burning’, ‘glow’, ‘blaze’, ‘flaming’, ‘the Sun’, ‘lightnings’ and ‘sees’. On the other hand, you can locate words that suggest darkness: ‘darkness’, ‘half a sleep’, ‘lullaby’ and ‘drowning’. These images in the poem give you the feeling that here things are either very bright or very dark. There are no half-lights here. This is the kind of world that the lunatic sees; it is a world in which everything is clearly outlined.

Self-check Exercise I

1) What do ‘million dreams’ stand for?

2) What does paraphrasing the sun mean?

3) Pick out two expressions that suggest a mixing up of senses.
Keki Nasserwanji Daruwalla was born in Lahore in 1937. After obtaining his M.A. in English from Punjab University, Chandigarh he joined the Indian Police Service in 1958.

In 1970, Daruwalla published his first collection of poems called *Under Orion*. The next year he published his second book of poems called *Apparition in April*. He received the Uttar Pradesh State Award for this book in 1972. Four years later in 1975 his *Crossing of Rivers* came out. The book has some of the finest river poems written in Indian poetry in English. *Winter Poems* (1980) was his next book of poems which was followed by *The Keeper of the Dead* (1982) for which he won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1984. After that came *Landscapes* (1987), *A Summer of Tigers* (1995) and *Night River* (2000). Although Daruwalla is known primarily as a poet, he has also written short stories, some of which are collected in his book called *Sword and Abyss* published in 1979.

Daruwalla’s poetry has certain unique features that set them apart from the work of other Indian poets in English. He takes poetry one step further from the inward-looking poetry of Sri Aurobindo and Tagore with which Indian poetry in English really began. It was Nissim Ezekiel who decided to write a new kind of poetry that spoke of many other things besides the inner landscape and spiritual issues, which are the favourite subjects of early serious writers of Indian poetry in English. Although the poetry of Ezekiel and others of his generation is chiefly modernist, it is not a slavish imitation of European modernist poets. Daruwalla’s poetry is different from that of other Indian poets because no one has recorded the landscape of northern India with such understanding and honesty. This single fact sets him apart from others because most Indian poetry in English has been essentially urban voicing the problems and issues of the Indian middle class. If at all some poetry on the life in villages has been written, it presents a tourist’s view of rural India. Daruwalla himself says, ‘I am not an urban writer and my poems are rooted in the rural landscape.’ This is refreshingly different in the sense that the modernist poetry that came from Europe (especially England and America) was written by townspeople and was about their problems in a fast disintegrating society. Many Indian poets simply slipped into the European mode of writing as they had somewhat similar problems. Daruwalla, on the other hand, sets out to introduce the Indian landscape to the reader. He does it in a kind of tough, unsentimental language and is seldom tempted to ascend into Wordsworthian epiphanies.

The two poems you are going to read now will tell you more about Daruwalla’s poetry.

## 40.5 HAWK

### 40.5.1 The Text

1

I saw the wild hawk-king this morning
riding an ascending wind
as he drilled the sky.
The land beneath him was **filmed** with salt:
Grass-seed, insect, bird—
nothing could thrive here. But he was lost
in the momentum of his own gyre,
a frustrated parricide on the kill.
The fuse of his hate was burning still.

But in the evening he hovered above
the groves, a speck of barbed passion.
Crow, mynah and pigeon roosted here
while parakeets flew raucously by.
And then he ran amok,
a rapist in the harem of the sky.
As he went up with a pigeon
Skewered to his heel-talon
he scanned the other birds, marking out their fate,
the ones he would scoop up next,
those black dregs in the cup of his hate!

2

The tamed one is worse, for he is touched by man.
When snared in the woods
his eyelids are sewn with silk
as he is broken to the hood.
He is momentarily blinded, starved.
Then the scar over his vision is perforated.
Morsels of vision are fed to his eyes
as he is unblended stitch by relenting stitch.
Slowly the world re-forms:
mud walls, trees burgeon.
His eye travels like the eye of the storm.

Discovering his eye
and the earth and sky
with it, he leaps from earth to ether.
Now the sky is his eyrie.
He ferocious floats on splayed wings;
then plummets like a flare,
smoking, and then a gust of feathers
proclaims that has struck.
The tamed one is worse, for he is touched by man.
Hawking is turned to a ritual, the predator’s passion honed to an art:
as they feed the hawk by carving the breast
of the quarry bird and gouging out his heart.

3

They have flushed him out of the tall grasses,
the hare, hunted now
in pairs by mother hawk and son.
They can’t kill him in one fell swoop.
But each time the talons cart away
a patch of ripped fur.
He diminishes, one talon-morsel at a time.
He is stunned by the squall of wings above.
His heart is a burning stable
packed with whinnying horses.
His blood writes stories on the scuffed grass!
His movements are a scribble on the page of death.

4

I wouldn’t know when I was stolen from the eyrie
I can’t remember when I was ensnared.
I only know the **leather disc**
which blots out the world
and the eyelids which burn with thwarted vision.

Then the perforations, and yet
the blue iris of heaven does not come through.
I can think of a patch of blue sky
when shown a blue slide.
But I am learning how to spot the ones
crying for the right to dream, the right to flesh,
the right to sleep with their own wives—
I have placed them. I am sniffing
The air currents, deciding when to pounce.

I will hover like a **black** prophecy
weaving its moth-soft cocoon of death.
I shall drive down
with the compulsive thrust of gravity,
trained for havoc,
my eyes focused on them
like the sights of a gun.

During the big drought that is surely going to come
the doves will look up for clouds, and it will rain hawks.

Glossary:

- **filmed**: covered with a very thin layer of something transparent.
- **parricide**: the crime of killing one’s father, mother or a close relative.
- **barbed**: a barb is a point of arrow or hook that is curved backwards to make it difficult to pull out.
- **skewered**: a skewer or some thin, pointed object pushed through something.
- **dregs**: the last drops of a liquid, mixed with little pieces of solid material that are left at the bottom of a container.
- **broken**: trained to hunt.
- **unblended**: allowed to see.
- **eyrie**: a nest that is built high up among the rocks by a bird of prey such as a hawk.
- **honed**: developed to perfection.
- **quarry**: quarry means a bird or an animal that is being hunted or followed.
- **squall**: a sudden, strong gust of wind.
- **leather disc**: hood that is placed on the eye of a hawk.
- **black**: evil.
40.5.2 Interpretation

‘Hawk’ has been taken from *The Keeper of the Dead* published in 1982. You will see that it is about how a hawk is trained as a hunting bird but you can also read it as describing human behaviour. You will notice that throughout the poem the poet has used ‘he’ for the hawk giving it a kind of human identity. This bird of prey projects an image of violence that is a common pattern of behaviour in human society. You can take the hawk as a symbol of the destructive instinct in man. But you may also feel that the bird objectifies the spirit of rebellion against the established order.

The poem, as you must have noticed, is divided into four sections. The opening section catches the hawk at an intense moment of killing. The wild hawk, a powerful bird of prey, is seen hunting other birds in the morning. It has speed. When it flies up in the sky it seems to drill a hole into it. Then we are made to see the world as appears to the hawk from the height. To him the land seems covered with a thin film of salt. You know that if there is too much salt in the soil, no vegetation will grow there. Similarly, when the hawk is prowling about in the sky, no ‘grass-seed, insect, bird’ can thrive. We are told that this hawk is driven by hatred which is like the burning fuse of a bomb ready to go off.

In the evening too, the hawk hovers above ‘the groves’ looking for prey. From the ground he looks like a speck but he is a speck of ‘barbed passion’, always ready to kill. Birds like crows, mynahs or pigeons are roosting below. When a parakeet becomes aware of the hawk’s presence it flies away ‘raucously’. You will notice that by hinting at the silence of the roosting birds and describing the noise made by a flying parakeet, the poet creates a sense of lurking danger in the form of the hawk. We feel that at any moment, the hawk may swoop down on the birds. He has been compared to a rapist in the harem of the sky. He picks up birds at will. As he holds a pigeon in his talons, he scans the other birds and tries to decide which bird he will pick up next. The wild, predatory hawk is burning with hatred which is like a cup in which the smaller birds are the ‘dregs’ that he scoops up.

The second section describes how a hawk is tamed. Such a hawk is much more destructive because he has been ‘touched by the hand of man’. What does the expression mean? Does it mean that because man has trained the hawk to kill, it has become more lethal that the one in nature? Or, could it mean that anything that man touches grows worse than what it was? You will see that both these interpretations are plausible. These two interpretations will take your argument in two different directions. The first interpretation will make you believe that training leads to greater effectiveness; the other will suggest that the poet has a rather unflattering view of the moral qualities of the modern man.

The poem then describes how a hawk is trained to hunt. The training is a painful and frustrating experience for the hawk. His eyes are covered: ‘his eyelids are sewn with silk’. The word ‘sewn’ suggests the pain that the young hawk has to go through. You must have come across the expression ‘eagle-eyed’. The hawk’s most precious possession is his remarkable eyesight but that is taken away from him temporarily so that he can be trained. The next few lines describe how the hawk is given back his sense of sight bit by bit. The poet uses the metaphor of food when he says that ‘morsels of vision are fed to his eyes’. When the hawk can see again, he is fully trained to kill at the command of his master. The hawk’s destructiveness is suggested when his eye is described as ‘the eye of the storm’.
The hawk then begins to hunt. He is described as leaping up into the sky, hovering on ‘splayed wings’ and then suddenly plummeting ‘like a flair’ and striking the quarry in a ‘gust of feathers’. Notice how the poet has suggested a sense of sudden, violent movement. You will also notice that the word ‘storm’ with which the previous movement ended appears to anticipate ‘gust’ in this movement. Man has made hawking a fine art and a ritual. The section ends with the image of a hawk being fed morsels of meat from the body of the bird he has killed.

The third section describes how a pair of trained hawks, ‘the mother hawk and son’, hunts a hare. They attack it repeatedly, and its death is slow. This section also suggests how the hunted hare feels. Its heart is pounding with fear; it is like a stable full of whinnying horses. The last two lines describe pictorially how the hare’s blood can be seen scattered on the grass where it was killed.

You will see that in the final section the hawk himself is telling his story. He begins by saying that he has no memory of the time when he was ‘stolen from the eyrie’. The only thing he remembers is the leather disc that was put on his eyes. He mentions the painful stitching of his eyelids.

But now the hawk is trained. He is learning how to spot the birds he has to kill. Like the young hawk when he was captured, these birds too have a right to live and to procreate. But the hawk has been trained to take that right away. In the closing lines of the poem, the hawk tells us how he feels when he hunts other birds. His presence in the sky means certain death of a bird. There are a number of expressions here that suggest it. You immediately think of ‘black prophecy’, ‘moth-soft cocoon of death’ and eyes focussed like ‘the sights of a gun.’

In the concluding two lines the point of view changes from that of a hawk to a dove’s. There will be a drought and instead of rain the doves will find hawks raining down on them.

You will remember that we often use the word ‘hawk’ for a person with an aggressive and violent approach to problems and a ‘dove’ for one who wants peace at all costs. Do you think that the last two lines suggest that in times to come, violent people will become dominant in society and the peace-loving ‘doves’ will be at their mercy? You will realize thus that this poem can be understood in a wider context too.

40.5.3 Form and Imagery

Now that you have read the poem, how would you like to describe it? Most poems have a single voice but ‘Hawk’ has two voices: one of the narrator and the other of the hawk; therefore you can call it a dramatic poem.

You will see that in the poem there are many images that suggest something that is pointed and has a tendency to hurt. The hawk ‘drill(s)’ the sky, he is seen as a speck of ‘barbed passion’, the pigeon in his talons is ‘skewered’, his eyelids are ‘sewn with silk’ suggesting the use of a needle, his vision is ‘perforated’ and he is fed with morsels of meat that are carved from the breast of the quarry whose heart is gouged out, suggesting the use of a knife. All these images suggest the violent nature of the hawk.

Another set of images are related to wind suggesting the swiftness with which the hawk attacks. He is seen ‘riding an ascending wind’, his eye travels like ‘the eye
of the storm’ and he ‘floats’ on splayed wings. When the hawk attacks there is ‘a
gust of feathers’. The hunted hare is stunned by ‘the squall of wings above’.

To suggest the violence of the hawk, images like the burning ‘fuse’ of a bomb
and his eyes focused on the quarry ‘like the sights of a gun’ have been used.
There are also images that suggest fire. The ‘burning’ fuse of his hatred, the
hare’s heart like a ‘burning stable’ and the hawk’s eyelids that ‘burn with
thwarted vision’ are such images.

**Self-check Exercise II**

1) Describe how the hawk is trained to kill.

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2) Do you think the hawk represents the violence in man?

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3) Point out images of violence in the poem.

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**40.6 CHINAR**

**40.6.1 Introduction**

Chinar (Platanus Orientalis) is an exotic tree that is said to have been brought to
Kashmir from Persia. It is said to have originated in Greece. Kashmiris call it
‘Boune’. Its present popular name Chinar is a Persian word. It is said that when
the Mughal emperor Jahangir first set foot in Kashmir on an autumn day he saw
from a distance a number of chinar trees covered with crimson leaves and in
sheer joy he cried out ‘chi naar’, which in Persian means ‘What a blaze!’

Legend has it that the chinar tree was first brought into India at the time of
Ashoka the Great. It is a very majestic tree growing to the height of 30 meters or
The tree has fan-shaped leaves that are green in spring, become yellow in summer and then turn crimson in autumn. The fall of chinar leaves in autumn spreads a crisp, crimson carpet around its base. It is a very long living tree and a chinar tree may be many centuries old.

40.6.2 The Text

The chinar confronts the sunset with its own dusk.
You can hear the drip of crinkled leaf.
Isn’t this what they call dry rain,
this slow, twisting dead-moth descent from the sapless branch?

In the eye of the lake
and the running eye of Jhelum
it holds you, this bonfire death
that slowly drips fire,
these smouldering rusts
without the clank of metal.
A wind alights on the tree
and the eye cannot follow
each bronze-scale severed from the mail of the dying giant,
each clenched child-fist of a leaf,
the largesse of it
the aching drift of it
the flame and the fall of it.

Glossary:

confronts : matches.
dead-moth descent : coming down like a dead moth.
bonfire : a large outdoor fire.
rust : the reddish brown substance that is formed on iron by the action of water and air.
clank : the sound made by metal striking metal.
mail : a chain mail. A protective coat of iron that warriors in the past wore during battles.
largesse : the act or quality of being generous with something.

40.6.3 Interpretation

The poem describes a chinar tree in autumn. It celebrates the onset of autumn in Kashmir. The poem opens with the image of sunset. As the sun sets, the sky takes on shades of crimson and orange. The chinar leaves too are of the same colour and match the sunset in majesty and beauty.

The poem then focuses on the falling leaves. The soft sound of the falling crinkled leaves can be heard. You find that this falling of the leaves has been compared to the falling rain but this is ‘dry rain’ as there is no water. The tree sheds its leaves as its branches lose their sap. The falling leaves look like dead moths descending slowly to the ground.
The poet’s glance then travels away from the chinar. He can see the lake and the running Jhelum. In the clear water of the lake and the river the trees are reflected. You are transfixed by its breathtaking beauty. The use of phrases like ‘the eye of the lake’ and ‘the running eye of Jhelum’ personifies the lake and river. It seems as if these water bodies had eyes in which the russet colour of the chinar leaves is reflected. Why do you think the poet has used the adjective ‘running’ here? Obviously it suggests the flowing water of the Jhelum. But one also feels that the running water represent the flowing tears of joy that the river experiences when it sees such a beautiful sight.

The poem reminds you of the colour of flames. The trees are full of crimson leaves and look as if they were on fire. You are also reminded of the death of the death of the leaves when you come across the phrase ‘this bonfire death.’ Then there is another comparison. The poet feels that these red leaves are like the brown red rust falling off from the chain mail of a warrior. This can happen when in a battle someone strikes the mail with a sword. But here there is no such sound and that is why the poet says that here it happens ‘without the clank of metal.’

The image of a warrior wearing a mail continues. The wind makes the leaves fall and it is happening so fast that the eye cannot follow each leaf as it falls to the ground. The tree then becomes ‘dying giant’. Each scale of his mail seems to be cut off from his armour as it is drops to the ground. The small leaf looks like the clenched fist of a child. The word ‘clenched’ also suggests that the fists of the dying giant are clenched in pain.

You will notice that the last three lines of the poem suggest a different mood. The viewer is grateful to the tree for having given him such a glorious sight with so much generosity. The leaves that drift to the ground look so beautiful that one feels an ache of joy in one’s heart. When you reach the final line you find that the two dominant images have been blended together: the colour of flames (‘the flame’) and the downward movement of the leaves (‘the fall’). This single line makes you visualize the crimson leaves floating lazily down to the ground. The last three lines are not complete sentences; they are phrases only. They suggest the breathless ecstasy of the viewer when he sees the chinar full of red leaves.

40.6.4 Style

After having read the poem when you think of the poem you will remember many words suggesting red or brown colour. You can think of words like ‘sunset’, bonfire’, ‘fire’, ‘smouldering’, ‘rusts’ ‘bronze-scale’ and ‘flame’. All these words bring to you the colour of the chinar in autumn. Many of these words also indicate the presence of fire. Fire dries up moisture. Therefore, the dryness of the leaves has been indicated by the word ‘crinkled’. However, along with the presence of dry leaves, there is also a hint of the presence of water. You come across such phrases as ‘dry rain’, ‘the eye of the lake’ and ‘the running eye of Jhelum’. These expressions bring to you the image of the tree standing near water bodies. Taken together these images suggest the colour of autumn in Kashmir which also has lakes and rivers.

The red colour also reminds you of blood. But we do not see blood unless it is shed. This happens on the battlefield. The image of a dying giant warrior wearing a bronze chain mail indicates flowing blood. You will also notice that the idea of death runs through the poem. This has been expressed by phrases like ‘dead-moth’ and ‘dying giant’. This idea of death is in keeping with the fact that the falling leaves are dead, that is, they have lost their sap.
When you read the poem aloud you will notice that there is a musical quality in it. This music has been created by the use of liquid consonants like /l/, /m/ and /n/ that are the most pronounced in the poem. You can think of phrases like ‘the running eye of Jhelum’, ‘smouldering rusts’, ‘clank of metal’, ‘a wind alights’, and the final line: ‘the flame and fall of it’. The title of the poem, ‘Chinar’, itself has a powerfully stressed /n/ sound in it. Again, you will also notice many prominent sibilant sounds (/s/) in the poem. You can locate many words like ‘slow’, ‘sapless’, ‘smouldering’ ‘severed’ and so on that recreate the soft sough of the wind. These sounds have been balanced by heavy consonants such as /d/ /h/ and /b/. Look at the first movement of the poem carefully. In the second half of each of lines 2, 3, 4, and 5 you come across words such as ‘dusk’, ‘drip’, ‘dry’ and ‘dead-moth’. You will realize that this is a very sensuous poem that makes you see the beautiful sight of the chinar tree and also enables you to hear the soft sounds that are there.

**Self-check Exercise III**

1) Pick out three phrases in the poem that suggest fire.

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2) Point out the words that have been used to describe the shape and colour of the chinar leaf.

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3) Comment on the music of the poem.

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**40.7 LET US SUM UP**

In this unit you read one poem by Dilip Chitre and two poems by Keki N. Daruwalla. You also learnt how to interpret these poems and how to comment on the imagery and music of the poems.
40.8 ANSWERS TO SELF-CHECK EXERCISES

Self-check Exercise I
1) ‘Million dreams’ imply that there is constant activity going on in the lunatic’s mind, even when he is asleep.
2) The lunatic understands and talks about things in words that other people cannot make sense of.
3) The two expressions are: ‘The lunatic watches a sound in the sun’ and ‘his eyes, drowning, begin to chirp.’

Self-check Exercise II
1) See the interpretation of the poem (40.4.2.).
2) See the interpretation of the poem (40.4.2.).
3) See Form and Imagery (40.4.3.).

Self-check Exercise III
1) ‘bonfire death’, ‘slowly drips fire’ and ‘smouldering rusts’.
3) See ‘Style’ (40.5.4.)

40.9 SUGGESTED READINGS


