

Chapter IV

Image:

Some Significant Comparisons, based on the Simile and the Metaphor.

Image-making, founded on simple, direct comparisons, is almost a pivotal, poetic process in the psalms. The ancient singer is prolific with the use of the simile and the metaphor. The cause of this may be discovered in the primitive and elemental nature of the poets and their compositions and also in the ulterior purpose behind their expressions. This idea is made more explicit as this chapter unfolds. This is the first aim.

Another aim of this chapter is to focus on, select and comment on some comparisons based only on the simile and the metaphor of interesting signification. Through this discussion, we hope to detect their relevance to these valuable poems.

We can see that the psalms abound in a plethora of similes and metaphors. From the very first psalm, where the poet talks about the upright as being "like a tree planted by streams of water", we

travel through the realms of the Psalter, meeting the wicked who are "like chaff which the wind drives away" (ps.1), the enemy who is "like a lion" (ps. 7) that gnaws and rends, or, like the "howling" and "prowling" "dogs" (ps.59). The persecution of the righteous by the ungodly is strongly emphasised by such comparisons. That is not all. The evildoers seem to be plotting against the psalmists and laying traps such as the "pit" (ps. 28) or the "net" (ps.25), to ensnare him. Many times, the psalmist himself has sinned and the burden of guilt is too great. His strength fails then and his "bones" "waste away" (ps. 31) and he becomes "like a broken vessel" (ps. 31). But God has not forgotten him. The estranged find "refuge in the shadow of thy [God's] wings" (ps 36), support and inspiration in the "rock" (ps 28), the "fortress" (ps.62), the "stronghold" (ps.27), and the "shepherd" (ps.23), who is the Lord. These are some instances of how the poets of Israel expressed themselves.

"How imagery comes to the poet, how it is 'carried alive into the heart by passion' is, ultimately, too mysterious a process to analyze. It brings us back at once to the problem of creation in

general. Under the influence of the creative ferment the consciousness of the poet seizes associations - or is seized by them, for the process of association is always partly unconscious and poetry is the union of the mental and emotional excitement of the experience with the imagery which leaps to meet it, and which must be already in the memory of the poet."¹

Building pictures by comparing and associating when, ". . . what is presented to the physical eye is off-centre."², is a technique of expression not confined to poetry alone. Neither is this method of communication limited to the literati. Such poetic processes happen even to the "humblest" of men - the illiterate, the primitive, the rustic, the "coolie" and even the child. All of them represent in greater "purity", the being called, Man. Thus when we meet a farmer in the busty, who, swelling with pride informs that his oranges are "as sweet as honey!", or that his son was born the year "the mangoes grew to be almost as big as water-melons!", then, we, not minding the hyperbole, respond with a sense of pleasure born of an understanding of the actualized experience. We have only to

look around with eyes that see and ears that hear to realise that this particular "poetic process goes on incessantly in the minds of people who would never believe it, . . . " ³ The coolie talks of his load being "as heavy as stones", the old traveller finds it difficult to climb the hill which is "as steep as his nose", (cf. Nepali equivalent: "Naakh Justo Ukaalo".), the starving beggar is "a stick of skin and bones" and the servant realises that his "saheb" will "roar like a lion!", if he reports late to work. All this may be complemented with gesticulations, sometimes exaggerated, to mean, "this big", "that far", "so much" and so forth.

Even a child needs the language of comparison for a more concrete and simpler understanding of ideas. This is a conviction drawn from the personal experience of hectically conducting the growth of three, very curious children, who, many times, attempt to comprehend this world through definite, precise formulations. "Is the number twenty, as big as this room?", "Was Snow-White as pretty as me?", "Can a bear run as fast as dada?", and so the world of the simile and metaphor is constantly kept alive.

As we climb higher up in the social strata, we may not be as basic and as explicit with our terms of comparison, but the use is still discernable. Very often, we choose to "hammer home" a point on an issue which may remain as "dead as a dodo" if we are "quiet as a mouse". Depending on how well the point is taken, our hopes "soar like an eagle" or become a "collapsing balloon". We are constantly speaking the language of simile and metaphor. In an attempt to communicate an experience "alive", we are groping for tangible visualizations and from the vast treasure house of past experiences and memories, we sketch out an image best suited to concretize the present experience. Through feeling and association, an image is set beside another image. We feel a likeness, direct or subtle, between objects and situations which to a scientific mind may not appear congruous.

" 'Every human mind," writes Shelley in his Essay on Christianity, 'has what Lord Bacon calls idola specus, peculiar images which reside in the inner cave of thought.'"

Whenever there is a need to express vividly and vitally, the

human mind has sought recourse to the depths of our beings to search for and project meanings. "Our minds search for the inner-depths of ourselves, we absorb the outside world into those depths as naturally as infants try to put whatever is before them into their mouths . . . all experience is an invasion of ourselves . . . But whatever enters is transformed by an inner process that assimilates it into our own natures just as the body assimilates food. Everything we experience is given human and personal meaning by means of this process, and in turn project images into the outer world again that reflect both what we experienced originally and what we have made of it because of the pressure of our own memories and needs and personalities."⁵

In the world of today, however, too often we find ourselves using comparisons without meaning. We "laugh like anything" or "play like fun"⁶ or "shout like nobody's business" and so forth. If we are to follow Eliot's stance that modern poetry should of necessity be complex because it reflects a chaotic age, then our speech sometimes could be a projection of a barren spirit. This is more

reason why we turn appreciatingly to the psalms.

The ancient Israelite singer-poets, either consciously or unconsciously, worked with a motive - to make their utterance one of directness, vividness, accuracy and enrichment. But they had to explain the inexplicable - profound, spiritual arousals and intense, emotional turbulences. These situations had to be simplified and made comprehensible and hence the psalmists, having been divinely inspired, took to familiar, simplified pictures of birds and beasts, water and sand, rock and hill, pits and nets, pots and vessels, all borrowed from the landscape of routine everyday life.

In The Sweet Singer of Israel, C. C. Martindale, S. J. asserts that to look into "the Hebrew state of mind", one has to start with "the small picturesque sentences that occur most unconsciously in the Psalms."⁷ As examples of these "small picturesque sentences" he lists, among others, some phrases and sentences of metaphorical interest - "solid rock" (ps. 26:6), "waters of refreshment" (ps.22:2), "snatched as a lion does" (ps. 7:3, ps, 16:12, ps. 9:29),

"He dug a hole . . . " (ps. 7:15), "like a bird . . . " (ps. 124:7),
"devours my people like bread" (ps. 14:4).

The Hebrew mind, it seems, was simple and untarnished by the complexities and variety of modern civilization. This was probably why, he could project images, so rudimentary, that a direct metaphor or a simile could encompass them. Take for an instance, the concept of God. He did not have to analyse or theologise in philosophical or psychological terms, as many of us of the modern, "learned" age are wont to do. A great deal of time is spent in defining God and because our heads are full of knowledge, we forget to contact the library of the Soul. But the psalmist knew his God: "The Lord is my Shepherd, I / shall not want; ... " (ps. 23:1 Bible . RSV. 484).

This clear picture of God as a shepherd , has great warmth and significance. The word, "shepherd", is a condensation of all the attributes of God - loving, kind, protecting, caring, feeding. Being nomadic and leading pastoral lives, the Israelites did not find the image of the good shepherd too difficult to visualize. A shepherd is not only one who cares and looks after his sheep. He

is also the "... one who bears in himself the spirit of a community. The great leaders of mankind were called in ancient times, "shepherds", because they did not egotistically shut themselves up in a private life of their own . . . , but let the destiny of others live in their hearts. One who met such a "shepherd" had the feeling: I am not coming to someone who is a stranger, but to myself. What is best and most individual in me is at home in him."⁸ This portrait of God has a universal colour. In the Gospel of St. John, (10:10) Jesus Christ refers to himself as the True, Good Shepherd, who, unlike the other hireling shepherds, does not flee when he sees a wolf coming. In this context, Christ says, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."⁹ The shepherd is "the giver of life", ("Jeevan-data", "Rakhwala", in Hinduism), - a universal concept. Though the "shepherd" by itself may be a fast-fading image - the quality it represents, has topical interest. (See also ps. 78:52, 70, & 71)

In psalm 18:2, we take another look at God:

"The Lord is my rock , and my
fortress , and my deliverer,

my God, my rock , in whom I take
 refuge,
 my shield , and the horn of my
 salvation, my stronghold . (emphasis added.).
 (ps. 18;1-2. Bible . RSV.480.).

The comparison of God to a "rock" occurs very many times in the psalms. (Psalms: 28, 31, 61, 62, 71, 78, 92, 94, 95, 144). He is also the "fortress" (pss. 31, 59, 62, 71, 144), a "stronghold" (pss. 27, 94, 144), and a "shield" (pss. 5, 7, 18, 28, 33, 59, 76, 84, 89, 91, 115, 144). In psalm 18, the Lord is referred to as "the horn of my salvation", while psalms 36, 55, 57, 61, 91, speak of God's enfolding, protecting and sheltering "wings". When His people sin against him, He can be an angry God. His "Jealous wrath burn[s] like fire" (ps. 79:5), and "as fire consumes the forest / as the flame sets the mountains/ablaze," (ps. 83:14.Bible . RSV. 521), the fire of His anger terrifies the sinners. But the Lord keeps His covenant with His people. His promises are "silver-refined in a furnace on the / ground/purified seven times.", (ps. 12:6Bible . RSV. 478).

These are the significant comparisons made with a view to

defining and making real, the conception of the Divine. The images are built quite naturally in the minds of a people who have lived in "a mountainous semi-arid country . . . [and who are] . . . constantly engaged in guerilla warfare and battles with their neighbours and with enemies among their own countrymen. The life of King David, in particular, provides a vivid commentary on these images. How often he was forced to seek refuge in caves, on rocky heights . . . how constantly he needed all the weapons known to his times!"¹⁰ The concept of a "rock", a "fortress", a "stronghold", is therefore not steeped in vagueness and abstractions - these were then and are today, still, symbols of invincibility and impregnability. Besides having reference to the natural environment, the picture of God is also built on images drawn from the military arena. Although it is mostly the enemy who is accredited with the "bow and the arrow" (cf. pss. 37, 38, 44, 57, 76, 78), it is almost always God who is "a shield". "The Assyrian reliefs show archers operating from the cover of enormous shields, which sometimes curved over the soldier's head to make a kind of canopy. Such bulky contraptions

required the services of a shield-bearer, although, as they were made of plaited osiers, their weight was not necessarily very great. It is just possible that the Hebrew term for a 'large shield' refers to this Assyrian type. . . ."¹¹

Because of the largeness and the protective ability of the shield, it seemed most natural for the psalmist to talk about God in comparison to this weapon. Fortresses and walls were integral to their living as the cities in Old Testament times were always built with surrounding walls and fortifications.

Then we have the image of God's tender, loving, protecting "wings", a metaphor which can be discerned quite often in the poems. (Pss. 36, 55, 59, 61, 91). These wings are over-arched above Man's head. They envelop~~e~~ him and whenever he falls or is persecuted, he regains new vigour from this caring touch. (Ps. 91:4). This metaphor of wings could trigger off a vision of a soaring eagle - strong and powerful, yet tender and gentle in all its feathery softness. The eagle also "denotes wisdom and sublimity. The eagle being the swiftest, strongest and boldest of birds, is equivalent

of the lion among animals."¹²

Fire and brimstone evoke a bold picture of God's vengeful ire. (Pss. 21, 78, 79, 83, 102). During war-time, fire was used as a powerful and dangerous weapon, especially when there was a siege. Flaming torches were hurled over the walls and a favourite manoeuvre was to dig trenches at the base, stack up the masonry with timber and then set fire to the wood. The walls would collapse into these trenches.¹³ "Fire is an ambivalent symbol representing both destruction and regeneration."¹⁴ In the psalms, it symbolises more, the flaming power of God - especially in its destructive capacity.

These are, therefore, the prominent images of God. The Shepherd, the rock, the stronghold, the shield (or buckler) and the bird. The angry God is present too but not as often as the compassionate God. In psalm 18, He has been called "the horn of my salvation", because the horns of a wild animal, besides being an adornment, was also a weapon. The horn symbolised power and honour.¹⁵

Psalm 27 begins with the proclamation: "The Lord is my light". This is a universal image of God. All religions, accept this, along with the symbols of the sun and the halo. "The enlightening power of the Divine light which penetrates the 'darkness of unknowing.' Light, in itself formless, gives form, and consequently meaning, to that which emerges from the dark, formless void (Gen, 1: 1-2). Man seeks 'Illumination' in his own lifetime, . . . In the words of St. Paul, '. . . The Lord comes , who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart.' (1 Cor. 4: 5)."¹⁶ The image of the light is therefore, very important in our understanding of the psalms.

The Lord is also the "King of Kings" and He "sits enthroned over the / flood; the Lord sits enthroned as King / for ever." (ps. 29:10, Bible . RSV. 487). He is, thus, the monarch of the spiritual and of the temporal.

Living in partly mountainous terrain, the poets of the Old Testament looked around them and saw the hills tell them of God. It was easy to identify the majesty and stability of these mountains,

with the might and glory of God:

As the mountains are round about
 Jerusalem,
 so the Lord is round about his
 people,
 from this time forth and for ever-
 more. (ps. 125:2. Bible . RSV. 548)

When the psalms speak of mountains praising "Yahweh", (ps. 89:12), or melting "like wax" (ps. 97:5) before Him, we comprehend the idea of the Creator's superiority in greatness.

We turn from these ardent portrayals of God, to the portrait of the enemy . In the drama of the psalms, three characters must be given due prominence. They are - God, the Enemy and the Psalmist. So vital a role does the enemy play that most of the psalmist's sorrow stems from a fear of being persecuted constantly by the wicked. "Whoever the enemies are, they haunt the psalter."¹⁷ This is the enemy, the evil-doer, who has been compared to a "lion" (Pss. 7, 10, 17, 22, 34, 35, 57, 58, 91), a "bull" (ps. 22:12) or a "unicorn", "wild oxen" (ps. 22:21), a being with "horns" (ps. 75:4) , a "serpent"

and an "adder" (ps. 58:4), (ps. 140), "water" which vanishes (ps. 58:7), the "snail which dissolves into slime" (ps. 58:8), the howling and prowling "dogs" (ps. 59:6). The wicked have tongues like "a sharp razor" (ps. 52:2). their speech is "smoother than butter" (ps. 55:21), "their teeth are spears and arrows, / their tongues sharp swords" (ps. 54:4), and many times they have surrounded the psalmist "like bees" (ps. 118:12). So forceful and telling a rendering that we feel bound to stay a great distance from such "plotters of iniquity". The note of optimism comes in when the psalmist realises the transitoriness of evil in the face of Divine intervention. The wicked will wither "like a dream" (pss, 73, 78, 90). From the variety of animal comparisons, we select first, the most emphasised - the lion - image. For some of us, the lion projects strength, might and ferocity as in Hinduism, where the Goddess Durga for instance, in all her potent power rides astride a fierce, roaring lion. The psalmists recognised this aspect of the lion's strength but he saw it, quite often, from another angle too- from the point of view of the lion also having destructive powers. "From the most ancient

times, demons have been portrayed in the form of 'lions' . . . The adversaries of the psalmists are repeatedly compared to lions (Ps. 7:2). Like lions, they lie in ambush . . . , then suddenly fall upon the unsuspecting victim (Pss. 10: 9-10; 17:12;) . . . The lion was feared, and therefore demons were endowed with its features; but the lion was also admired, as evidenced by its appearance in the decoration of combs and seals. The lion often served to represent victorious power. . . ."¹⁸ C. C. Martindale asserts: "The Psalms are full of references to being 'snatched, as a lion does (e. g. Ps. vii 3; xvi 12, ix 29, etc, etc): but these 'lions' are definitely the Psalmist's enemies, and you collect the picture of rocky roads where in any shadow an enemy may be lurking - enemies, moreover, who have the habit of digging holes in the path and above all of tying cords across it so that in the dusk, the travellers should be tripped and easily set upon. Nothing delighted the caustic humour of the Hebrew more than to see his enemies fall into the pit they had dug for *him* . . . "¹⁹

Once in a way, the poet alludes to other animals like the bull

and the stray dogs. Like the lion, the bull has an ambiguous nature: it is powerful but aggressive. Hence certain aspects of the powers of the bull were also attributed to a number of demons. The pariah dogs were often considered by the Hebrews to have an affinity with ungodly spirits, though hunting dogs were valued in Palestine at the beginning of the second millennium B. C.²⁰ E. W. Heaton, however, is of this opinion: "The Assyrians and the Egyptians used hounds in the chase, but this possibility must be excluded for the Israelites, since all the Old Testament references to dogs suggest only the despicable and vagrant scavenger."²¹

The slithering serpent, more often than not, revives (especially for the Christian), the memory of the fall of Man and is therefore looked upon as the "embodiment of primeval evil".²² Insidious, insinuating, subtle, sly and venomous, the wicked enemy, of whom the psalmist protests strongly about, finds himself projected in the image of poisonous vipers. Like the lion, the serpent is a symbol of contradictory forces. In Egypt, the monarchs wore head crowns often twisted in the shape of a serpent which was

regarded as a saviour God. (It may be noted here that "Nag" among the Hindus is also a deity.). The psalms, however, concentrate on the dangerous venom of the serpent, thus reminding us that it is one of the most feared of all animals. With such harmful surroundings, the poet is led to pleading and crying out to God:

Deliver me, O Lord, from
 evil men;
 preserve me from violent men,
 who plan evil things in their heart,
 and stir up wars continually.
 They make their tongue sharp as a
 serpent's
 and under their lips is the poison
 of vipers." (ps. 140:1-3. Bible . RSV. 553).

(see also ps. 64:3 Bible . RSV. 507)

Clarity, simplicity and familiarity make the psalmists' comparisons assume the tone of universality. The reference to animals, (lion, bull, hart, mule, dogs, serpents,), is a reference to "known" images, for neither of these animals are too unfamiliar as the dodo or the dinosaur.

God, the Enemy and then, finally, the multifaceted picture of

the Man himself. (The speaker in the poems.). Life exposes the psalmist to the ebb and flow of joy and grief and its waves sometimes lift him to heights of ecstasy and at other times to depths of suffering. Whenever the poet is miserable, he expresses himself thus:

1) "But I am a worm, and no man;" (ps. 22:6 Bible . RSV. 483)

2) "I become like those who go down
to the Pit." (ps. 28:1. Bible . RSV. 486)

3) "I have become like a broken vessel." (ps. 31:12. Bible .
RSV. 488)

4) "Be not like a horse or a mule, without
understanding," (ps. 32:9. Bible . RSV. 489).

5) Many bulls encompass me,
strong bulls of Bashan surround
me;
they open wide their mouths at me,
like a ravening and roaring lion.

I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax,
it is melted within my breast;

my strength is dried up like a pot-
 sherd, (ps. 22:12-15.Bible . RSV. 483)

- 6) "Keep me as the apple of the eye;" (ps. 17:8.Bible .
 RSV. 479)

When fortune is kinder, when the Lord remembers and in the calm after
 the turbulent storm, the poet's expression is:

- 1) But I have calmed and quieted my
 soul,
 like a child quieted at it mother's
 breast;
 like a child that is quieted is my
 soul. (ps. 131:2.Bible . RSV. 549).
- 2) "The righteous flourish like the palm
 tree,
 and grow like a cedar in Lebanon." (ps.92:12Bible .
 RSV. 502)
- 3). "But I am like a green olive tree in
 the house of God." (ps. 52:8.Bible . RSV. 502)
- 4). "Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
 are the sons of one's youth.
 Happy is the man who has
 his quiver full of them!" (ps. 127:4-5.Bible .
 RSV. 548)

- 5). "Those who trust in the Lord
are like Mount Zion, " (ps. 125:1. Bible . RSV. 548)

(See also pss. 128:3, 144:12, RSV, for more comparisons - "like a fruitful vine", "like olive shoots" and "like corner pillars".)

Amidst such expressive variety, prominent, in terms of significance and relevance, are the images of the tree, the vine, the pit, the net and the broken vessel.

The righteous are like the upright tree, such as the olive, the palm or the cedar (though in ps. 37, the wicked is compared to the cedar - may be, ^{the} reference is to the "strength" of the tree). Besides being the characteristic features of the countryside, the trees represent an important aspect of Nature and Life. "It was Tagore who said a tree is an eternal traveller. Not only that, it is also 'the silent foster mother of all life on earth,' who leads 'all living creatures on the road of time'." ²³

Like the big, strong tree, the godly stands firm and tall, notwithstanding storms of trials and tribulations and bearing sole witness through the past, the present and hopefully the future, to

the multitudinous acts in the drama of civilization. As an "eternal traveller", the tree is a powerful component of life: a force without which there is not only aesthetic or environmental loss, but also a soul-felt barrenness. Thus the tree-image is a powerful one.

Another Nature comparison is one of the vine. It is said that when the Israelites first came to Palestine, among the first things which impressed them was the vine-plants.²⁴ After they settled down in the new land, they adopted the Canaanite agricultural preference for growing large crops of grapes. The season of grape-gathering was an important occasion for every Israelite. No wonder then, when the psalmist wants to express the idea of fruitfulness and prosperity, he thinks of the vine. In psalm 80, the vine becomes a symbol of God's chosen people whom he led out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses. ("Thou didst bring a vine out of / Egypt." ps. 80:8.Bible . RSV 520). As the vine which climbs upwards and flourishes, the Israelites also grew into a nation.

From the happy pictures of the tree and the vine, we shift our attention to mournful pictures of the psalmist's misery. The

enemies are set to ensnare him with "nets" or "pits" and if he has already been trapped, he beseeches God to "draw him up" and save him from the "depths". If God has intervened as saviour, then, the psalmist rejoices, for the wicked fall in their own traps and "as smoke is driven away" and "as wax melts before fire", they "perish before God;".

In the psalms and much of wisdom literature, there is a tendency to view things in a clear-cut manner. An instance of this is the way the psalmist looks at the guilty party as being completely evil. There was no compassion for the wicked who had sinned against Man and God. Therefore, it was natural that such men be imprisoned in pits or prisons like dark holes and cisterns. These deep, dark holes became symbols of the conception of Sheol (Death). To the suppliant, his deliverance seems like being drawn up out of a precipitous shaft-tomb.

Nets and snares, probably images based on the chase, play a frequent role in the life of the suffering psalmist. "Even though hunting was not so highly organized in Israel as it was in Assyria, and even though it was not the sport of Kings, it is difficult to

believe, on general grounds, that the men (and particularly the young men) of Palestine were never infected by the excitement of the chase."²⁵ Various kinds of traps were used in the hunt, even for fowling. The net is a symbol of ". . . the binding snares of the world. . . ." ²⁶

Distress and great suffering make the poet, "become like a broken vessel" (ps. 31:12.Bible . RSV. 488) , and he is weak, wasting and sore. His very bones seem to waste away. This is a sorrowful portrait of one who is lost and broken. The "broken vessel" culls up a scene of God, the potter and Man, the clay. What the loving hands have formed, now lies in pieces: it is only the Divine Potter who can pick up the pieces again and make the vessel whole. A very common picture is this, drawn from the rudimentary, industrial life of the Hebrew. Pottery was an important occupation for the contemporaries of the psalmist as is evidenced from the fact that ". . . digging in Palestine has unearthed pottery as old as any known in the world."²⁷

Though the image of the 'broken vessel' is not used too often

in the poems, this seems nonetheless to be an apt representative of Man's broken spirit. This phrase, part of an influential simile, is more effective, more comprehensible and more aesthetic than the stark, gloomier and less pleasant pictures of falling into dark, miry pits, of bones "(burning) like a furnace" (ps. 102:3) and of the flesh becoming weak and infected with sores.

Various are the similes and metaphors that come into play in the hands of the psalmist. He continues to juggle with, among others, images of the vulture, the owl (ps. 102), and other birds (pss, 11, 50, 74, 102, 103), the hart (ps. 42), the tent (ps 61), the widow (pss. 94, 109), beasts and sheep (pss. 73, 74, 95, 100, 119), the dew (ps. 110), the womb (ps. 110), bread (pss. 14, 53, 102) and the moth (ps. 39).

The content of these poems would lose half its interest and meaning had not the poets interwoven within the fabric, the pattern of vivid, bold images, more remarkable in their straightforward simplicity. And because our life is so much an exquisite texture of finely interwoven images formed of comparisons, we respond, quite

spontaneously, to the way the Hebrew poet constructs his comparative pictures. "Images are our readiest instruments for abstracting concepts from the tumbling stream of actual impression . . . They are our spontaneous embodiments of general ideas . . . Image making is, then, the mode of our untutored thinking."²⁸ The psalms, as we have discovered, depend largely on the technique of image building on the simile and the metaphor, to communicate the message and experience, more vividly and afresh. Every instance when we enter into such poetic scenes as:

"From the womb of the morning
like dew your youth will come to
you." (ps. 110:3 Bible . RSV 539)

or,

His eyes stealthily watch for the hap-
less,
he lurks in secret like a lion in his
covert; (ps. 10;8-9. Bible . RSV. 477)

or,

"As a hart longs
for flowing streams,

so longs my soul
for thee, O God." (ps. 42:1. Bible . RSV. 496),

we come to the enthralling realisation that there is more magic in the simple metaphor and the simile than one dreams of. Herein lies their importance to the psalms.

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