

Chapter - 4

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CHILDHOOD : A STUDY IN IMAGES AND SYMBOLS IN THE POETRY OF WILLIAM BLAKE AND RABINDRANATH TAGORE

"What writer has not sighed for a new vocabulary? To see the words flowing like the River of Life itself, spotless in purity, crystal in clearness, fresh as Eden — every word exact in its full meaning, unsullied by use, untainted by custom — it is an enchanting dream full of the most amiable self-gratulation."¹

"The symbol always retains the sensuousness of the original experience...."²

The use of images and symbols is the birthright of a poet and it is a matter of common knowledge as to how poetic language is permeated with images and symbols, beginning with simplest figures and culminating in the total all-inclusive mythological systems of Blake or Rabindranath. The images and symbols of a poet inseparably are linked up with his sensibility. It is not a pastiche or imitation and it lays bare the poet's temperament itself. The images and symbols of a poet change only in so far as his sensibility undergoes a change and in choosing his images and symbols, a poet is not necessarily bound to confine himself to his world of eye and ear, mighty though it is. Images and symbols should not be confused with actual sensuous, visual image or symbol-making.

Imagery (that is, "images" taken collectively) is used to signify all the objects and qualities of sense perception referred to in a poem or other works of literature, whether by literal description, by allusion, or in the analogues (the vehicles) used in its similes and metaphors. The term "image" should not be taken to imply a visual reproduction of the object referred to; some readers of the passage experience visual images and some do not; and among those who do, the explicitness and detail of the mind-pictures vary greatly. Also, imagery includes auditory, tactile (touch), olfactory (smell), gustatory (taste), or kinesthetic (sensations of movement), as well as visual qualities. Most commonly, imagery is used to signify figurative language, especially the vehicles of metaphors and similes. Recent criticism, and especially the "new criticism", has gone far beyond older criticism in stressing imagery, in this sense, as the essential component in poetry, and as a major clue to poetic meaning, structure, and effect.

A symbol, in the broadest sense of the term, is anything which signifies something else; in this sense all words are symbols. As commonly used in discussing literature, however, symbol is applied only to a word or set of words that signifies an object or event which itself signifies something else; that is, the words refer to something which suggests a range of reference beyond itself. According to Abrams :

"Some symbols are "conventional" or "public"; thus "the Cross", "the Red, White, and Blue", "the Good Shepherd" are terms that signify symbolic objects of which the further significance is fixed and traditional in a particular culture.

Poets, like all of us, use such conventional symbols; many poets; however, also use "private" or "personal symbols", which they develop themselves.... Some poets, however, often use symbols whose significance they mainly generate for themselves, and these set the reader a more difficult problem in interpretation."³

William Blake has extensively used images in his poetry, and his images are very frequently symbolic. It is important to remember in this connection that Blake's special method of publication, technically known as 'Illuminated Printing', placed his 'poetic' (verbal) imagery in an illuminatingly close proximity to the 'painterly'. In this perspective alone Blake's imagery has its full meaning. It is quite possible that the verbal-visual medium gave to the imagery its concreteness and many dimensionality. To read his poetry detached from the pictorial framework is to get only a part of the total meaning, and yet even for such a reader it is quite plain that Blake's early training as a painter-engraver gave him a sharp eye for physical details and the mechanical (constructional) ability and adequately 'body' them forth in another medium. It is true that he did not attach much importance to physical perception except as a window opening on reality and saw more with his 'second' vision than with the physical optical organ and yet the organic eye he never completely disregarded :

"I question not my Corporeal or Vegetative Eye any more than I would Question a Window concerning a Sight. I look thro' it & not with it."⁴

The corresponding reliance on the second vision (literally meaning a mystical intuitive power) which opens on the hidden dimensions of reality inaccessible to the senses necessarily gave a symbolic meaning to the actual objects rendered in his poetry :

" "Each grain of Sand, / "Every Stone on the Land,
 "Each rock & each hill, / "Each fountain & rill,
 "Each herb and each tree, / "Mountain, hill, earth & sea,
 "Cloud, Meteor & Star, / "Are Men seen Afar." "5

His constant preoccupation is with these hidden 'forms', often clearly suggested to be somewhat platonic, as for instance, in the poems already cited. Thus, his major preoccupation was distinctly 'spiritual' and this gave to his imagery a representative value.

While writing on Tagore as an artist Carol Cuthbertson observes that the nature of a true artist is

"To see with detailed sensitivity, to capture the essences of life, and simply to feel, these abilities are found in an artist, They can be fostered or matured, but never manufactured. A truly great artist focuses his abilities on one aspect of what he senses, be it line and color, form, or rhythm and sound; but he is capable in all aspects. Those upon which he does not focus he uses to augment, to provide overtones, or to strengthen. An artist must be a "Universal man" in a real sense, for true greatness in art rests upon two levels ;

that of the particular is of interest in itself for it is directed specifically at our senses; just as important, however, is our ability to capture the essence of the particular within our souls. Here it is that depth lies. In the audience, rapport and understanding are achieved here; in the artist, creativity."⁶

If the gradual evaluation of expressive images and symbols of Tagore is noted historically in the light of the above-stated comment, one should find that various dimensions and transformed creative process of the poet's mental make-up have been distinctly exemplified. Whenever a poet's experience has got a stature through images, they are not simply information but truth. The principal quality of Tagore's images is transformation of total poetry through minimum vibration. They have flourished in the world of Tagore's own. In images suggesting motion, travelling, sailing, speeding, and the like, the poet finds symbolic actions expressive of the soul's dynamism and these dynamic symbols are most fully exploited. Thus he celebrates the joys of the universe.

In Blake's Songs of Innocence and of Experience physical details frequently carry symbolic suggestions. The cloud-borne child in the introductory poem to the Innocence volume has been concretely rendered, but it is evidently a symbol of the poetic muse or inspiration. For Blake, Inspiration is another name for Poetry; the poetic power is the ... "Imagination, the Divine Vision."⁷ The 'child' image has however been otherwise interpreted : the child is easily taken as Jesus Christ. It has also been suggested that Blake's is always the ideal child who can

look at the Heavenly father in the face. The drift of Blake's thoughts abundantly suggests that the divine attribute is incarnated in a relatively pure 'form' in the innocent child, and this divine attribute in its most important earthly or human manifestation is the Imagination : "Man is All Imagination. God is Man"⁸ Or "Imagination is the Divine Body in Every Man".⁹ Or, "The All in Man. The Divine Image or Imagination."¹⁰ Or most importantly :

"Jesus considered Imagination to be that Real Man & says I will not leave you Orphaned, I will manifest myself to you; he says also, the Spiritual Body or Angel as little Children always behold the Face of the Heavenly Father."¹¹

The 'child' symbol in the introductory poem signifying imaginative inspiration, incidentally, relates Songs (Songs of Innocence) to the short-lived eighteenth-century tradition—the tradition of moral stories, in prose or verse—for children. It is thus a pointer to a major inspiration (motivation) behind this bunch of poems. The 'child' image is, however, central to Songs of Innocence. It is a symbol for the spiritual state which Blake calls innocence. Bowra is of the opinion :

"Blake's state of innocence, set forth in symbols of pastoral life akin to those of the Twenty-third Psalm, seems at first sight to have something in common with what Vaughan, Traherne and Wordsworth say in their different ways about the vision of childhood which is lost in later life, and it is tempting to think that this is what concerns Blake. But he is concerned with the loss not so much of actual childhood as of something wider and less definite. For him childhood

is both itself and a symbol of a state of soul which may exist in maturity. His subject is the childlike vision of existence. For him all human beings are in some sense and at some times the children of a divine father, but experience destroys their innocence and makes them follow spectres and illusions. Blake does not write at a distance of time from memories of what childhood once was, but from an insistent, present anguish at the ugly contrasts between the childlike and the experienced conceptions of reality."¹²

Blake's innocence appears to be a somewhat comprehensive, multi-dimensional concept signifying many qualities generally associated with the child — *tenderness, spontaneity, idealism, selflessness, lovingness, gracefulness, simplicity* and an essential piety :

1. "He is meek, & he is mild;
He became a little child.
I a child, & thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb, God bless thee!
Little Lamb, God bless thee!"¹³
2. "Sweet joy but two days old,
Sweet joy I call thee :
Thou dost smile,
I sing the while,
Sweet joy be fall thee!"¹⁴

3. "I'll shade him from the heat, till he can bear
To lean in joy upon our father's knee... ."15
4. "O! he gives to us his joy
That our grief he may destroy;
Till our grief is fled & gone
He doth sit by us and moan."16
5. "The little boy lost in the lonely fen,
Led by the wand'ring light,
Began to cry; but God, ever nigh,
Appear'd like his father in white."17
6. "Then every man, of every clime,
That prays in his distress,
Prays to the human form divines
Love, Mercy, Pity, Peace."18

These excerpts, taken at random, may suggest how the imagery of the Innocence book reflects the mental (spiritual) state which is part of Blake's thematic preoccupation in Songs.

A large number of poems, intended for children, may be found in Tagore's Shishu (published in 1903, its english rendering entitled The Crescent Moon was published in 1936), the earliest of them all and the later Shishu Bholanath (1922). He did not make the selections himself. One is rather surprised by the serious purport of many of these poems until one remembers that he disliked "babying" children and firmly believed that growing children should reach out to

what is just beyond them rather than have the ends dragged down to their level. Children are capable of understanding deep thoughts if couched in simple language. Whether this theory applies to the pampered boys and girls does not concern the readers at the moment. Actually, the poems are superb and never beyond the comprehension of normal youngsters. The Shishu and Shishu Bholanath poems may be divided into two groups. They are all concerned with children and the wonderful world around them. An undercurrent of wry humour may be discerned even in the more serious ones. Almost half are "for" children and the rest "about" children, the later could sometimes embarrass the children's guardians and tutors. But all are delightful, for he is never didactic and frequently writes with his tongue-in-his-cheek.

The poems, appeared in Shishu, are often philosophical. In these poems one frequently comes across a lonely dreamy imaginative gentle little boy, who has no congenial companies, except his own thoughts. The poet's well-meaning elders are often a wee bit harsh and un-understanding, but there is always a tender loving woman in the background, who makes up for everything. It is said,

"Soon one recognizes the little boy. He is Rabi, who lost his mother when he was 12 and who never saw the face of nature except a corner of it out of a little upstairs window. This little boy never climbed trees, or bathed in ponds, or fought with other little boys or kept pet-dog, and saddest of all, never had the opportunity to be truly naughty."¹⁹

In the words of Tagore himself,

"Going out of the house was forbidden to us, in fact we

had not even the freedom of all its parts. We perforce took our peeps at nature from behind the barriers. Beyond my reach there was this limitless thing called the Outside, of which flashes and sounds and scents used momentarily to come and touch me through its interstices. It seemed to want to play with me through the bars with so many gestures. But it was free and I was bound — there was no way of meeting. So the attraction was all the stronger. The chalk-line has been wiped away to-day, but the confining ring is still there. The distant is just as distant, the outside is still beyond me; ..."²⁰

The enforced confinement within a room, with glimpses of nature outside, roused in the boy's mind a keen desire to have direct contact with nature. It seemed to him that nature was beckoning to him but he could not respond. This yearning for freedom from confinement would rouse strong emotions of disappointment in his immature mind. No wonder this became the theme of one of Tagore's poems composed in later life :

"The tame bird was in a cage, the free bird was in the forest,

They met when the time came, it was a decree of fate.

The free bird cries, 'O my love, let us fly to the wood.'

The cage bird whispers, 'Come hither, let us both live in the
cage.'

Says the free bird, 'Among bars, where is there room to spread
one's wings?'

'Alas,' cries the cage bird, 'I should not know where to sit
perched in the sky.' "21

The poem, stated above, speaks about two birds which once made contact— one confined in a cage, which evidently represented him, and the other enjoying complete freedom outside, which represented the condition he yearned for. Tagore's basic concept of imagination has been originated from this point of view.

In these sensitive, often fanciful and entirely delightful poems appeared in Shishu (The Crescent Moon), Tagore gives the readers the different worlds of the mother, the child and the father. As delicate as the crescent moon, these poems sympathetically explore the private world of the mother and her child and the fulfilment that each finds in the other. The poet has a powerful insight into childlife. One aspect of life which has engrossed him, as perhaps none else, is the treatment of child-psychology. The innocence and harmless curiosity of the young touch him, and his fertile imagination supplies in its turn a pile of images of the child as it plays, imagines, creates, destroys, and builds. The poems on childhood reveal his great capacity to look at the world through the eyes of a child. In a letter written in the month of April to Pramatha Chowdhury, Tagore wrote :

"I have already been promoted. ... I have got the portfolio of a friend in the court of the Shishu Maharaj (The Child King). ... Having been crossed over the noon of youth, the span of my life has come down to the evergreen childish

horizon. My master has appeared as a child, I have also been awarded. There is less punishment but more peace in his works, but there is no holiday. For this, I hope you successful sitting here, but I have no time to follow your rhythmic expedition. I have accompanied them who will be the youth of tomorrow."²²

Tagore's concept of eternal childhood, having certain simplicity and naive openness, appeals to children as well as to adults. But the simplicity is deceptive. The poems are not as easy and obvious as they look. Behind the song-like rhythms, the child-like questions and answers, the short lines and bright images, lies a subtle complexity of meaning that the readers only gradually learn to penetrate. In fact, the readers never penetrate it completely and that is why the poems in Shishu (The Crescent Moon) remain a source of renewed pleasure all through life.

The symbol of eternal childhood has been revealed through images in the poem composed as a preface to Shishu (The Crescent Moon). Here, Tagore sees the wonder and beauty and goodness through and beyond all that he actually sees and touches, and it fills him with the spirit of worship, of self-consecration and aspiration. He nicely sums up his philosophy of children in the preface to Shishu (The Crescent Moon) :

"On the seashore of endless worlds children meet.

The infinite sky is motionless overhead and the restless water is boisterous. On the seashore of endless worlds the children meet with shouts and dances.

They build their houses with sand, and they play with empty shells. With withered leaves they weave their boat, and smilingly float them on the vast deep. Children have their play on the seashore of worlds.

They know not how to swim, they know not how to cast nets. Pearl-fishers dive for pearls, merchants sail in their ships, while children gather pebbles and scatter them again. They seek not for hidden treasures, they know not how to cast nets."²³

Now an auditory image merges in :

"The sea surges up with laughter, and pale gleams the smile of the sea-beach. Death-dealing waves sing meaningless ballads to the children, even like a mother while rocking her baby's cradle. The sea plays with children and pale gleams the smile of the sea-beach."²⁴

The child-image comes at random in different poems of Shishu (The Crescent Moon). It also symbolises different activities of innocence saturated with heavenly bliss and simplicity :

1. "Heaven's first darling, twin-born with the morning light, you have floated down the stream of the world's life, and at last you have stranded on my heart."²⁵
2. "Who state sleep from our baby's eyes? I must know. I must find her and chain her up.

I must look into that dark cave, where, through boulders
and scowling stones, trickles a ting stream.

I must search in the drowsy shade of the bakula grove,
where pigeons coo in their corner, and fairies anklets tinkle
in the stillness of starry nights."²⁶

3. "When the marketing is over in the evening, and the village
children sit in their mothers' laps, then the night birds will
mockingly din her ears with :

'Whose sleep will you steal now?' "²⁷

4. "Say of him what you please, but I know my child's failings.
I do not love him because he is good, but because he is my
little child.

How should you know how dear he can be when you try to
weigh his merits against his faults?

When I cause his tears to come my heart weeps with him.
I alone have a right to blame and punish for he only may
chastise who loves."²⁸

5. "I wish I could take a quiet corner in the heart of my baby's
very own world.

I know it has stars that talk to him, and a sky that stoops
down to his face to amuse him with its silly clouds and
rainbows."²⁹

6. "Child, how happy you are sitting in the dust, playing with a broken twig all the morning.

I smile at your play with that little bit of a broken twig.

I am busy with my accounts, adding up figures by the hour.

Perhaps you glance at me and think, 'What a stupid game to spoil your morning with!'

Child, I have forgotten the art of being absorbed in sticks and mud-pies."³⁰

7. "Why are those tears in your eyes, my child?

How horrid of them to be always scolding you for nothing?

You have stained your fingers and face with ink while writing-

- is that why they call you dirty? O, fie! Would they dare to call the full moon dirty because it has smudged its face with ink?

For every little trifle they blame you, my child. They are ready to find fault for nothing."³¹

8. "Mother, the folk who live up in the clouds call out to me —

'We play from the time we wake till the day ends. We play with the golden dawn, we play with the silver moon.'

I ask, 'But, how am I to get up to you?'

They answer, 'Come to the edge of the earth, lift up your hands to the sky, and you will be taken up into the clouds.'³²

Tagore's philosophy, laced with the eternal note of joy, is a type of dynamic

Vedanta. He had a positive view of life, and he loved humanity as the manifestation of God. He did not believe that the supreme reality was an impersonal Absolute. He looked upon the supreme as a person. The supreme person is characterised by unexcellable bliss (Añand), unconditioned existence (Sat), and supreme life-force (Chit). The infinite supreme person for Tagore was the concretion of the three values : Truth, Beauty, and Goodness (Satyam, Sivam, Sundaram). The universe with all its colour and beauty is the joyful expression and manifestation of the Lord. It is His supreme Leela (His supreme sport). It is not an illusion nor a dream to be set aside. Creation is the manifestation of the Lord in all His glory. As a result, joy prevails everywhere :

"Thus it is that thy joy in me is so full. Thus it is that thou hast come down to me. O thou lord of all heavens, where would be thy love if I were not?

Thou hast taken me as thy partner of all this wealth. In my heart is the endless play of thy delight. In my life thy will is ever taking shape."³³

Like many other artists William Blake employed a central group of related symbols to form a dominant symbolic pattern : his are the child, the father, and Christ, representing the states of innocence, experience, and a higher innocence. These major symbols provide the context for all the minor, contributory symbols in the songs. Blake often used symbols to express increasingly subtle and complex intellectual distinctions. However, as his system developed, he found it convenient and even necessary to reinforce the symbolism with an elaborate mythology,

which does not easily explain itself. This is not to suggest that Blake's symbols are always easy to understand. For instance, it is very difficult for the readers of poetry to dissociate stars from brilliance, however much Blake may try to restrict their meaning to denote tyranny. The problem for readers of Blake's poetry is to maintain a balance between what he is trying to say and what the words commonly convey. The symbolism of the Songs of Innocence and the Songs of Experience is successful, because Blake is able to maintain this balance.

F. W. Bateson³⁴ has listed some principal symbols in Blake's poetry, which should help the reader understand his double vision :

1. Innocence Symbols (pre-sexual and amoral as well as Christian): Children, sheep, wild birds, wild flowers, green fields, dawn, dew, spring — and associated images e.g. shepherds, valleys, hills.
2. Energy Symbols (creative, heroic unrestrained as well as revolutionary righteously destructive) : Lions, tigers, wolves, eagles, noon, summer, sun, fire, frogs, swords, spears, chariots.
3. Sexual Symbols (from uninhabited ecstasy to selfish power over the beloved, and jealousy) : dreams, branches of threes, rose, gold, silver, moonlight associated images, e.g. nets, cages, fairies, bows and arrows.

4. Corruption Symbols (hypocrisy, secrecy as well as town-influences, including abstract reasoning): Looms, curtains, cities, houses, snakes, evening, silence, disease.
5. Oppression Symbols (personal, parental, religious, political) : priests, mills, forests, mountains, seas, caves, clouds, thunder, frost, night, stars, winter, stone, iron.

But to justify the use of these images, and preserve their traditional value in fact, a highly organised context is necessary. It must be such that the one value of innocence, and no other, is permitted to them. The homogeneity of imagery has a structural function additional to the immediacy of relation which it allows. Confront the lamb with a wolf, and it becomes an image of more than love and less than innocence. Any insistence to the contrary would destroy the unity of the poems, for it would be an attempt to deny a relationship which the poem itself had established by bringing these two worlds together. For the most part the Songs succeed in preserving unity by the strict exclusion of all images of fear and doubt. In the world which Blake has created by a restriction of the Christian and pastoral traditions, there are no beasts of prey or lust, disease is unknown, and old age only means an access of dignity, not the approach of death. There is no need to exclude sorrow, for in another's distress, like joy in another's happiness, is an expression of innocence so long as it does not lead to fearful questioning :

"Can I see another's woe,
And not be in sorrow too?"³⁵

is as true to the note of innocent love as :

"Thou dost smile,
I sing the while."³⁶

Fear, on the other hand, comes only from experience, and only by experience can it be reconciled with love. Words can not, of course, be cut away from experience, but by the strict control of context all reference to individual experience can be excluded, so that only the typical experience remains. Here, the context is devised to cut away all conditional meanings. Within the Garden of Eden enclosure of the Songs of Innocence, names have the same freshness which they had when Adam first gave them to the creatures.

The suggestion implicit in the image is that "experience" (materialism) stands as a threat to "innocence" (idealism), and this dramatic opposition between the two spiritual states is worked out into the full argument. The threat which in the child's psychological situation lies latent as a recognition of the reality of pain and suffering (note "The Chimney Sweeper" or "The Little Blake Boy" or "A Dream"), requires his world to be well-protected. This theme is recurrently touched on and is fully treated in the most representative poems of the innocence volume — "Night" — which opens exactly where "The Echoing Green" ends :

"The Sun descending in the west,
The evening star does shine;
The birds are silent in their nest,
And I must seek for mine."³⁷

The similarity in details between the ending of "The Echoing Green" and the beginning of "Night" is too close for the readers not to link the two. Thus related,

the later poem would read like the child's image of the sport-land at night. The threat to the echoing green is now too great for the angels to keep aloof; they protect the flock, and the child-speaker must seek his shelter or protection.

In terms of the symbolic language, the child's world is too fragile to survive on its own, the child-like condition of the human mind being extremely susceptible to experience. The divine protection which is granted to the child's fragile existence points to the Christian meaning of Blake's vision; the major images (Father, Mother, Angel, God, Shepherd, Lamb) are essentially Christian symbols. God is evidently the 'father' figure in the seven poems on the restoration of missing children in the joint-publication : the loss obviously symbolizes deviation from faith (errancy) and the restitution means restoration to faith (salvation). The state of errancy easily suggests the image of the erring sheep. The association is Biblical. In the Bible, God is the Shepherd and Christ is the Sheep, and Christ (Blake's highest God) is the Shepherd³⁸ and the pious man is His sheep. The straggler is evidently the sinful man (sin meaning separation from God) who weeps his way back to the fold ('piety' through 'penance'). The weeping child (sometimes, it is the weeping parent = an equally solicitous God) is an iterative archetypal figure in Blake's Songs.

The first native nakedness suggests innocence, and the soul's journey towards the second nakedness (organized innocence at the final stage) is through experience, but experience is the outer clothing (The Natural Body is an Obstruction to the Soul or Spiritual Body")³⁹ but from this sinful contamination the inner 'vest' of divine mercy protects the pilgrim soul. The outer clothing is to

be cast off before the innocence is regained ('identity' that never changes, or essence as distinguished from accidental accumulation — experience). The two states thus become assimilated and permanently fixed up in the all-inclusive divine body of the Supreme and our essential 'identity', in the spiritual essence with God (who is the Imagination Human / Divine) is unalterably (eternally) established.

The 'contrariness' in Blake is mainly worked out in the imagery. The 'garment' image, for instance, may link up the early thoughts with the mature. One explanation of the phrase "clothing of delight"⁴⁰ in "The Lamb" is that "delight" is like the cloth of "innocence" and recalls "And Secrecy the Human Dress"⁴¹ in "A Divine Image" or the next line of the same poem : "The Human Dress is forged iron"⁴² or "They clothed me in the clothes of death"⁴³ in "The Chimney Sweeper". Most important, however, seems to be the derobing of the lost little girl :

"While the lioness / Loos'd her slender dress, / And naked
they convey'd / To caves the sleeping maid."⁴⁴

The lioness, apparently frightful but really so tender, is derobing the girl, and the process is the sloughing-off that is essential for a bodily creature to be entitled to a fuller spiritual existence.

The 'child' image in Songs of Innocence symbolizes the good in the sub-heavenly terrestrial existence; the same image occurs recurrently in Songs of Experience where it signifies the evils of a post-lapsarian state-man's sinfulness and consequent insecurity. Thus, the contrariness between innocence and

experience is projected by means of the iterative central symbol. The contrast is directly counterpointed in sets of corresponding (supplementary) poems : "The Chimney Sweeper" (Songs of Innocence) / "The Chimney Sweeper" (Songs of Experience) : "Infant Joy" (Songs of Innocence) / "Infant Sorrow" (Songs of Experience) etc. One set may be examined here in some detail : in "Infant Joy" child-birth is an occasion for universal jubilation :

"Sweet joy I call thee :
 Thou dost smile,
 I sing the while,
 Sweet joy befall thee"⁴⁵

and in "Infant Sorrow" the same event is an occasion for pain, anguish and terror :

"My mother groan'd! my father wept;
 Into the dangerous world I leapt :
 Helpless, naked, piping loud :
 Like a fiend hid in a cloud."⁴⁶

Blake's full theme (i.e. the antitheticality between innocence and experience being gradually subsumed in the inclusive pattern of an emerging final existence) is finely suggested by the imagery :

"The modest Rose puts forth a thorn,
 The humble sheep a threat'ning horn;
 While the Lilly white shall in Love delight,
 Nor a thorn, nor a threat, stain her beauty bright."⁴⁷

The theme is, however, more finely worked out in the symbolism which Blake's imagery very frequently carries. Sometimes, the symbolism is quite

traditional. Blake has succeeded not only in exploiting the scriptural associations but also in exploring new possibilities latent in the symbolic imagery of 'light' (day) and 'darkness' (night). This has given to his twin concepts of innocence and experience just the requisite extent of religious dimension.

One who opens his eyes and tries earnestly to see the world, to him the world puts off its mask of vastness and becomes small. This is what Tagore has preached through the images and symbols of his poems especially written for children. This is the feeling that Blake has crystallised in the lines :

"To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour."⁴⁸

When Blake writes, "Infant smiles are his own smiles",⁴⁹ Tagore echoes,

"Bless this little heart, this white soul that has won the kiss
of heaven for our earth.

He loves the light of the sun, he loves the sight of his
mother's face.

He has not learned to despise the dust, and to hanker after
gold.

Clasp him to your heart and bless him,"⁵⁰

Lower self ("Jibatma") has been dissolved into Higher self ("Paramatma"). The images and symbols in Blake's poems for children and about children seem to be resplendent in the celestial light, the glory and freshness of a dream. Tagore's

images and symbols identify at once the ecstasy of the revelation with the state of mind of a child, believing deeply that —

"it is the same life that shoots in joy / through the dust of
the earth in / numberless blades of grass and breaks / into
tumultuous waves of leaves and / flowers."⁵¹



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