

**POETRY OF EXILE, ALIENATION AND DISILLUSIONMENT:
AN EVALUATION OF ADIL JUSSAWALLA'S *LAND'S END***

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Abstract: *Adil Jehangir Jussawalla was born in Bombay in 1940 in a Parsi Zoroastrian community. He grew up in a multilingual environment. Jussawalla's youthful life is marked by mobility. This borderline region of culture initiated a sense of in-betweenness early in his life, and this is strongly reflected in his writings. Jussawalla went to England in 1957 and stayed there till 1970. Jussawalla's first book of poetry, *Land's End* was published in 1962. Jussawalla's poems in *Land's End* are preoccupied with the theme of exile, alienation and disillusionment. These poems express disillusionment and defeat, the agony of struggle and loneliness. These themes are characteristic of Jussawalla. *Land's End*, with its lilting rhythms and lyrics, is largely tentative, exploratory and fragmentary. But it is genuine poetry is none the less poetry used as a medium for seeking truth; the poetry of Jussawalla arises from his personal needs and circumstances. The central metaphor, through which Jussawalla explores self and society in his poems, is that of a missing person. Jussawalla's world, is one of suffering and chaos; his immediate environment is that of a protected middle-class intellectual who is not directly subject to the physical hardships of the world.*

Keywords: *Jussawalla, *Land's End*, exile, alienations, disillusionment, loneliness.*

Adil Jehangir Jussawalla was born in Bombay in 1940 in a Parsi Zoroastrian community. His father was born in Lahore, and his mother in Jalna in Maharashtra which at that time was in the state of Hyderabad. Jussawalla grew up in a multilingual environment. His mother, Mehera Jussawalla (**née Mehta**), finished her schooling in an English medium school in Pune. She had part of her education in Santiniketan in Bengal. Jussawalla's father came from a more Anglicised background. In an interview given to Vivek Narayanan and Sharmistha Mohanty, Jussawalla talks about the medium of conversation at his household during childhood: “. . . my mother's English has never been a very good English. And much of the time my brother and I would talk to her in Gujarati” (“Before and After” 4). Jussawalla went to Cathedral School in Bombay. At Cathedral School, Jussawalla came into contact with a British teacher, Ryder Salmon; Salmon himself wrote poems and didn't mind sharing them with the class. He taught Jussawalla various aspects of the modern poetry. In an interview with Eunice de Souza, Jussawalla acknowledges his debt to the teacher: “None of the poems I wrote in England would have happened without this initial training” (De Souza, *Talking Poems* 69).

At home, Jussawalla had to learn how to read Gujarati, because Gujarati was not taught in school. In the interview with Eunice de Souza, Jussawalla says about his growing up as a child around different languages:

If I just consider the languages I heard as a child, it would be . . . Hindi from the people who came to see us, to sell their wares; there would be Marathi because my mother spoke fluent Marathi to the servants and my father also spoke Marathi to his staff. There would be a smattering of English, and perhaps more and more English between my brother and myself. (“Before and After” 4-5)

The Parsis in India never wrote in their own particular kind of Gujarati; perhaps, this could be due to the immigrants' desire to identify with the native people in Gujarat. Jussawalla and his brother had to learn

prayers, because they had to get those prayers by heart for Navjot ceremony a ceremony through a boy or Girl is inducted into Zoroastrian religion. Thus, Jussawalla exposed to a multilingual environment in his childhood. This borderline region of culture initiated a sense of in-betweenness early in his life, and this is strongly reflected in his writings.

Jussawalla's youthful life is marked by mobility. Jussawalla went to England in 1957 at the age of seventeen to study architecture. Jussawalla was eager to get away from India. In another interview with Eunice de Souza, Jussawalla says "as for me, I was longing to get away from here, but I expected the wrong things from England. England was not what the movies made it out to be and there was immediate revulsion" (De Souza, "Interviews with Four Indian English Poets" 79). He got himself admitted in Architectural Association School of Architecture, London in 1957. However, after one year of study, he decided to give up his study of architecture, and left the school without completing the course. After completing the A-levels course, he took admission in University College, Oxford in 1960, and studied English. Jussawalla completed M. A. from University College, Oxford in 1964. His stayed in England for thirteen years from 1957 to 1970.

Jussawalla has written only four books of poetry *Land's End* (1962), *Missing Person* (1976), *Trying to Say Goodbye* (2011), and *The Right Kind of Dogs* (2013). *The Right Kind of Dogs* is written for children; in Jussawalla's words, for readers who are "not more than fifteen years old" (*n. pag.*). Jussawalla's poetic output so far has been limited, may be because it was very selective, but he was recognised as "one of the most authentic and promising" Indian poets by Linda Hess in "Post-Independence Indian Poetry in English" in *Quest* (36). Jussawalla's first book of poems, *Land's End*, was published by Writers Workshop, Calcutta in 1962. Dom Moraes, in the 1970s, quite aptly wrote in "The Future of Indian literature in English is Pretty Dim" for *Onlooker* that "seemed [to him], and many other poets in England, one of the most brilliant first books published since the war", thereby subtly marking it as belonging equally to the twentieth-century history of British and Indian poetry (13).

It should be noted that though Jussawalla belongs to the Parsi community, in his writing there is little about his own religion or community. Vasant A. Shahane in "The Poetry of Adil Jussawalla" mentions two dominant characteristics of Adil Jussawalla's poetry that are very innovative and distinctively individualistic: "First, the poet's personal predicament often articulated as the middle class, British-educated intellectual's dilemma in relation to his own self, society and country, and secondly, the attempt at resolving this dilemma or exploring and transcending this limitation in terms of creativity and art. Jussawalla's personal predicament is rooted in his environment, and creates and develops the basic tension out of which his poetry has grown" (23). There is a kind of ambivalence which envelopes his poetic composition, and, he himself is quite conscious of it, in terms of values or certitude. In the essay "The New Poetry" in *Readings in Commonwealth Literature*, Jussawalla made the following statement:

In my own poems, mostly written abroad, I have tried to show the effect of living in lands I can neither leave nor love nor properly belong to, and despite the occasional certitudes of poetry I am not at all sure where both my own work and the poetry I have described will lead. (89)

The quoted passage refers to *Land's End* and his long stint in England. Adil Jussawalla's poems are preoccupied with alienation, with not being part of the society in which he lives and with the emotional need to be part of a community. The feeling of being an 'outsider', of being on the fringe of things, could have set in during his childhood. His disillusion is recorded in "Indifference", an essay he wrote in 1965. Jussawalla implies in another context that living in England had become unpleasant as well as unproductive, and therefore he returned to Bombay. He returned to India only to find himself out of place; meanwhile he had turned sympathetically to the Third World politics of the New Left. While *Missing Person* was written during this period, its themes, although set within a larger political context, develop from his earlier *Land's End* poems. Bruce King in *Modern Indian Poetry in English* says: "Missing

Person' contains similar feelings of alienation and cultural chaos, but suggests a Fanonite-Marxist rather than Christian explanation for their occurrence" (244). As Jussawalla was educated at an Anglican school, although raised in a Zoroastrian family, the Christian vision of *Land's End* can be seen as an example of the continuing effects of colonialism with which *Missing Person* is concerned. Reiterating what he had said in "The New Poetry", Jussawalla told the critic, Bruce King, in an interview: "In writing *Land's End* I did not have a conscious intention of writing poems only about being washed up. Now when I look at the poems, they seem to be about going astray, about a wasteland abroad, and out a resentment at being in England, not liking it there ("An Interview with Adil Jussawalla" 4).

In the introductory note to *Land's End*, Jussawalla says that "all the poems in this book were written in England, or some part of Europe; that is, away from the land where I first learnt what a poem is, what poetry, and what brings both to fruition" (n. pag.).¹ The Indian poet, writing in an alien language in an alien land, has been regarded by many as an anomaly. When he writes in English, it is presumed he has no roots in the intellectual and cultural life of his own country. Later on Jussawalla talks about the poems in *Land's End* in his interview with Eunice de Souza:

My first book is about life as I saw it abroad. It seems to me important to respond to one's immediate surroundings rather than to take cultural attitudes. But I don't think the origins of my work can be attributed to any one country. When I began taking myself somewhat seriously as a writer, it was the feeling of being alone in a London park that I wanted to write about. (De Souza, "Interviews with Four Indian English Poets" 76)

Land's End was published by Writers Workshop in 1962. Unlike the poems in his second collection, *Missing Person*, which have a strong single focus, these poems range over a large area, and explore a variety of themes. In *Land's End* there are poems about time, about nature, about-man-woman relationship and about larger themes which reveal the poet's social concerns. The poetic impulse varies from the intensely meditative and lyrical to the objectively descriptive and dramatic. These are the poems of a young man, largely experimental but often sharp and strikingly powerful. There are exquisite little poems in the Imagist manner, like "Gauntlet", "Fog", and "Bats". The powerful use of images gives a picturesque quality to the poems, but they contain a great deal of keen observation and comment. He shows these powers in his poems about the poor. "Les Clochards" is a poem which creates almost the effect of like "Evening on a Mountain", "Frost", "The Moon and Cloud at Easter", "The Suburb", and "Halt X". N. M. Rao in "The Poetry of Adil Jussawalla" says that "in these poems he achieves effects which bring to our minds the landscape poetry of Movement poets like Philip Larkin, D.J. Enright ..." (150). We have, for instance, this description of a small town in "smudged Derbyshire" in "Halt X". The atmosphere is dreary, the weather dripping, the landscape blurred. The poet has no idea of "what station it is" or Why the "journey broke" (1, 2):

Rain fell like a drizzle of fine slag
On an anonymous town in smudged Derbyshire.
I counted sixty chimneys in a quarter
The size of a burgher's courtyard, wondered at smoke
Sliding edgeways through the dawn's widening slats. ("Halt X", II. 1-5)

The poem, anticipates *Missing Person* in its theme of anonymity, and lack of purpose. There is no celebration of reverence for nature here as in the Romantic poetry of the nineteenth century. This is empirical and ironic, and is sometimes enlivened by wit, but unlike Movement poetry it does not show any concern for the preservation of this separate non-human world. Nor are they mere realistic pieces; in poems like "The Flags" and "A Bomb-site" observation and description culminate in an incisive comment. The flags, "flying planes of colour" waving the breeze, seem "more beautiful than swan or water bird" ("The Flags" 6, 5). But, when winter ends it is: "Time for retribution: for the natural order to assert. / The bland, unchanging blaze of artificial things / That cannot moult or die" (10-12). In "A Bomb-site", the

broken buildings and dusty rubble are contrasted with the “spotless skies of peace” (11). The wrecked town becomes a playground for children who play the game of war. The poem concludes with the comment: “Violence is a culture found on playgrounds. / Cities fall to let their children breathe” (13-14).

One of the best-known poems in this first collection is the title poem, “Land's End”. It reflects the poet's reactions, apparently on a first visit, to this spot in South England well-known since Roman times for creating the strange feeling of having reached the last outpost on land. About the poem, G. S. Amur in “Poetry of Exile” remarks:

Where through an enactment of subtle interaction between the world of nature and the world of man, the poet seeks to arrive at meanings. . . . 'Land's End' is a good example. If for Whitman the relationship of land and sea is a reconciliation of opposites in an undulating rhythm, for Jussawalla it is an unequal relationship, detrimental to land. (49)

The “brute power” of the sea is such that that land is constantly pounded and broken (8), and: “No man, beast or fowl / But needs a rock's assurance in this hour” (29-30). The sea, lashing this “pig's-footed” piece of land has also pleasant surprises; it startles the tourists with free showers and “manna” (1, 15): “Lord, your netted round of deep lifts / Its sweet fish to our lips” (19-20). The sense of wonder and mystery deepens as the poet thinks of Christ: “will he walk your Tumult's first creation?” and Saint Peter and the Church “Rock Peter” (24, 25). Land being slowly eroded by the sea is like faith shattered by life's forces. There are faint echoes of Matthew Arnold's “Dover Beach” here. Perched on faith's end, as on land's end, the poet pays a tribute to the mystery of life, itself older than any faith, as the sea is more ancient than land: “No church stands on water; though land sings / Its consecrated rock, the sea sang earlier, / To form the rock, to christen and to wreck” (33-35). “Land's End” is the point of confrontation, the end of faith and defined belief. The rocks disintegrate the waters grip, explode and drag: “The sea renews itself as old rocks break / Atlantic breakers pound our ended, power” (36-37). The individual is swept by external forces to the point of disintegration. He has no inner resources to channelise his imagination. The poet is face to face with a *primaeval* force. The clang and din of sounds, the alliteration, the sharp, striking, at times violent imagery, all remind the reader of Dylan Thomas's sonorous verse; but these opening lines are brilliantly evocative of place:

Here in the cramped, pig's footed county at last
Where seas grip, the airs kick and squall,
Atlantic breakers boom, the sea-gulls fall
Downwind to sheets of spray, the fast
Seas race, roll, slump and shower
Across the thrusted coastland; where brine-wings beat . . . (1-6)

Among the most interesting poems of place are Jussawalla's poems of the city. The city has been a persistent theme in modern poetry ever since Baudelaire. No wonder since many modern poets are city bred. In “A Prospect of Oxford” Jussawalla sees not the Arnoldian city of dreamy spires and towers, but a city which could be bombed any time, which “some Terror pitch the towers down” (16). This “City's made unreal by the height” (19), and yet the prospect has a fascination for the poet:

Towers crowd a broad, open palm,
Trees and rooftops scribble up its fingers;
A river cut in black: coloured, calm
Rafts flow up and down this asphalt Styx;
A train goes cutting through the stones with smoke. (5-9)

In a lighter mood he writes about another European city, Geneva, “metropolis: one of the neutral cities”, where one can come “from shattered lands/ Troubled statesmen” in hope of reaching “Peace a turbine humming in the deep” (3, 16-17, 24). More interesting are poems thematically related with a city nearer us, Bombay. “In Memory of the Old School” recalls happy childhood moments: “Jerusalem rang some

mornings in / Sweating schoolboys yelled for golden / Spears, chariots of fire” (1-3). Another fine poem of recollection and recreation of experience is “A Letter for Bombay.” Addressed to “Devi” (“the Muse?”), it recalls the golden days of childhood, “Yellow triangles of butterfly, grey dragon-flies” (3). Then came World War II, the later years of which were full of uncertainty and political turmoil for us:

Crowds rolled out on the street, like a bullock's tongue
 bellowing War; then Partition, fought
 With sickles and knives in markets (my father working, away)
 Afraid if he did not return before the curfew bell tolled
 seven up the hill where I stayed. (10-14)

Those days of “Fear and Love” were quickly over when the poet left his home in Bombay and went to Europe (24). But he could never forget, his own home city: “I wander like a mediaeval apothecary / Abroad. In a pouch wriggling against my ribs, I carry / a quintessence of you, not wholly without potency” (33-35). Later he suddenly realizes that he has come “of age” and seeks poetic power (37). The poem ends with a fine invocation to the Devi, Bombay: “instruct me in my art / Lacking a legendary muse, give my chaos form” (39-40).

In his poems about time, Jussawalla touches upon a theme of deep concern for modern poets from Baudelaire to Eliot. “Seventeen” is a poem of reflections as the poet stands poised on the threshold of manhood He feels he has lost childhood joys and illumination, for then:

and like a,
 birth of flames
 one by one
 as candles are
 lighted
 things unseen before
 came to life and
 communicated. (6-13)

While now, the poet, detached and defiant, feels the light has gone. The poem recollects the joys of childhood, and tells about the poet's initiation into the world of experience. Things which he never thought of earlier, or unknown to him, begins to happen one after another. The delights of childhood are out of his life now:

one by one
 the lights are
 snuffed
 dead
 things talk no more
 though I listen, (24-29)

The poem laments the gradual passing away of childhood days. The speaker can no longer enjoy those happy days, and plunges into a state of darkness.

“The Moon and Cloud at Easter” is also “built round a contrast between time past and time present, but the contrast here is more complex and more meaningful. . . . The movement of this poem is elliptical and distinguished by a deft use of imagery” (Amur, 47). New symbols call for attention, while the old ones die. This change comes with redoubled force to the poet's consciousness in “31st December, '58”. The old year is dying and the New Year is about to be celebrated: “Useless the ritual's massive complexity, / Useless the carols, useless the city / with the old bitch dying in the shadows” (5-7). The rituals and the symbols of Christmas have lost their meaning, and cannot stop time: “What is the timeless here / Sea, a paper star of Bethlehem / Caps a Christmas commercial” (26-28). A more powerful poem on the theme is “What's the time?” Is time shown by “a faceless O by the old church clock” (3)? Or, is it what any passer-by on the street

might ask, “*What's the time, mister, hey, what's the time?* (7)”. But time has a more sinister aspect for the poet, who associates it with “evening” and “a man with a scythe” (9, 10), coming unexpectedly on the frail grandmother: “*The scythe and the pendulum cut her together*” (14). The poem concludes with many meanings and images of time:

Time is the X between place and necessity
 Time is a bar on the old Shadow Line.
 The hours are running like sand in my veins
 It's striking midnight in my mind
Time and the Charioteer whistling behind:
What's the time, mister, hey, what's the time? (24-29)

Against this view of time, human love, even human life, seems transient and illusory. Words such as “shift”, “shifting”, “float”, “drift” recur in “A Letter in April”. April is, the beginning of hope, fertility, rejuvenation, the destruction of things gone stale and old: “Wildbloodstreams wreck our footed facts” (16). In “A Letter in April”, he writes of the spring season as “the shifting days of weather”, “the tempting minutes of hope”, and asks his beloved: “Love, tell me you'll last the spring / Shift this shifting weather out” (23-24). The poem anticipates *Missing Person* in its theme of anonymity and lack of purpose. Jussawalla's conception of time, space and objects is relative: it charges with individual necessity and predilection. This idea is symbolized in “The Model” where the woman has no clear identity. Art students will fashion her into a symbol of beauty and love, evil or sorrow. “Poker-faced” is both a poem and a pun. The poet says:

I am deceiving you. But think that it is merely at cards;
 Think love is excluded from hands we hold apart
 As fate deals us.

.....

Yes, love for each other is out of it. (1-3, 9)

Poems like these which express disillusionment and defeat, the agony of struggle and loneliness, are characteristic of this poet. *Land's End*, with its lilting rhythms and lyrics, is largely tentative, exploratory and fragmentary. But it is genuine poetry none the less poetry used as a medium for seeking truth, poetry arising from personal needs and circumstances and vitalized by what Linda Hess in “Post-Independence Indian Poetry in English” writes as “a transforming personal vision” (36). Bruce King states that “these poems of Jussawalla's are . . . examples of a mode established by T. S. Eliot, and used by such writers as Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene, in which the banalities of modern life are juxtaposed with Christian symbols to show the vitality and superiority of a former sacred to a present secular culture” (*Modern Indian Poetry* 245).

Land's End thus evokes a picture of dissolution. The scenes are hazy and the theme is of transition and illusion, of things taking form merely to melt again. But behind the disillusionment is Jussawalla's own sense of exile, of alienation from Europe, especially England, which has disappointed him and in which he feels rejected. In his second collection of poems, *Missing Person* (1976), Jussawalla continues to write poems describing highly personal states of mind, but they acquire a depth and an intensity that are remarkable. The symbolism of the wasteland reflects a personal sense of being a castaway, of having gone astray in England and Jussawalla's own estrangement there. It is the unhappiness which results from culture shock, from lack of friends, from youthful loneliness and aimlessness which has been sharpened by being in a strange country which in if had earlier thought would be home, the promised land of those who sought the Eden of British literature. Jussawalla is one of the few Indian writers in English who have sought to give full expression to the predicament and failure of the middle class intellectual who is aware of the burden of the past but wants to play some role in changing the course of history in his own immediate political and social context. His poetry is inevitably the poetry of in-betweenness. The central metaphor,

through which Jussawalla explores self and society in his poems, is that of a missing person. Jussawalla's world, as described above, is one of suffering and chaos; his immediate environment, however, is that of a protected middle-class intellectual who is not directly subject to the physical hardships of the world. This is one of the two main aspects of the missing person tragedy: that as a wealthy perpetuator of an unjust society who is at the same time on the side of the masses in terms of what he thinks is right, Jussawalla's position is ironic. The second aspect is his cultural identity crisis: he finds he belongs neither in England nor in India, his Indianness preventing him from becoming completely English, and his Westernness preventing him from being a traditional Indian.

Note

1. Adil Jussawalla's first book of poems, *Land's End*, published by P. Lal's Writers Workshop in 1962, does not have any page number.

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