Dilip Purushottam Chitre was one of the foremost Indian writers and critics of the post Independence India. Apart from a being a writer, he was also a painter and a filmmaker. He graduated from the University of Bombay in 1959. He won the Sahitya Akademi Award (1994) for his Marathi book of poems *Ekun* *Kavita*. *Father Returning Home* is a short and appealing poem about an old man in a cosmopolitan city where his own sons and daughters treat him as an alien. He himself is estranged from the man-made world. Through this poem, Chitre has denounced urban rootlessness and alienation.

**Imagery in the poem:**

The poem is particularly striking because of its images. Chitre uses some fine imagery to describe the lurking loneliness in the man’s soul as he travels in the local train. To convey the ‘twilight atmosphere’ the poet has used a number of descriptive words in the poem, like evening train, yellow light, unseeing eyes, his eyes dimmed by age, fade homeward and gray platform.

The first stanza describes the father’s train journey while returning home one evening. He stands among commuters in the yellow light of a local compartment. The poet describes the father’s reaction against the sights of the suburbs that pass by. In the opening lines, the pathos of an old father, returning to his mundane home late in the evening, is highlighted. A striking image is used to describe the father getting down the train. The poet says that he can see his father getting down the train ‘like a word dropped from a long sentence.’ The sentence is highly unique and it provides an evocative image of an old man who gets down from the train as if he is no longer relevant to it. It again shows the alienation of the father and just as we remove a word ( a word which is not important) from the sentence because it is not going to affect the meaning of the sentence, in the same way father is shown that he is not relevant to the crowd. This image is used to depict the monotonousness and meaninglessness in the father’s life.

The poet then describes his father’s pathetic condition, as he travels during the rainy season. His clothes become damp and dirty. The black raincoat that he wears becomes stained with mud. His bag crumbles with the heavy load of the books. Due to old age, the poet’s father’s eyesight has become poor and therefore he finds difficulty to move about in the dark. The poet says that he can see his father getting down the train ‘like a word dropped from a long sentence.’ The sentence is highly unique and it provides an evocative image of an old man who gets down from the train as if he is no longer relevant to it. The poet then sees his father hurrying through the long, grey platform. The man seems to be as old as the platform. He crosses the railway tracks and hurries home through muddy lanes on a rainy day. This is indicated by his chappals which are sticky with mud. This stanza portrays the monotonousness of the old man, who sustains the vagaries of weather as well as the estrangement from the man-made.

The poet goes on to represent the father’s sense of alienation in his own home. He drinks a weak tea and eats a stale chapatti when he comes back home. This shows that even his basic requirements are not properly carried out by his family. A sense of pity for the father arises in us.

The father is then seen going into a contemplative mood over man’s alienation from the man-made world. The children do not interact with their father; they do not share their joys or sorrows with him. To compensate their company, the father listens to the radio. Acoustic imagery of the static is used to strike another discordant note. In his sleep, he dreams about his ancestors and grandchildren. The image of the dream has been used to show the connection the poet’s father has with his past and his future. He dreams about his ancestors and his grandchildren. Thus the poem, ‘Father Returning Home’ focuses on the theme of alienation or estrangement experienced by the aged in their twilight years. Through the poem, we get to know the alienation, isolation and misery experienced by elderly people, especially in cities.