



THE EVALUATION OF GRANDEUR OF TREES AND PLANTS AS SPIRITUAL FORTE IN EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY ENGLISH POETRY

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ABSTRACT



Literature is the replica of the times in which we are living at the same time it is the expression of hope and fortitude for the future which may be fret with unforeseen challenges. Nature, from the very beginning of literature, has been playing unalienable role in vitalizing literature with the themes of beauty, shelter, mentoring, and recourse to life. In nature there exists one pivotal aspect for which entire humanity is longing in various stages of their existential life-that is spirituality. Spirituality is related to personal experience of an individual, yet it is not devoid of surrounding nature. Nature as guide, nature as a door to realization has always been present within the reach of the seeker. Both static and dynamic aspects of the nature bestowed humanity with the keys to serenity and meditative spirituality. Trees and plants have created an aura of promise for the spiritual practitioners irrespective of their geographical locations and temporal boundaries. Early Nineteenth century English poetry has witnessed tremendous blooming of the poetic talent in respect of nature and its components. Poets like William Wordsworth, S T Coleridge, PB Shelly, John Keats, envisioned nature as their redeemer, mentor and spiritual shelter. My paper will deal with the poetry of these nature poets with the discussion highlighting the role of trees as plants and the tool of spiritual enlightenment.

Keywords: *Nature and Poetry, Romantic Age in English literature, Existential dilemma, Spiritual seeking, Redemption.*

**THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY ENGLISH POETRY:**

The Nineteenth century in English literature has experienced many unprecedented changes in terms of poetic subject and poetic diction. Themes and motives have been gathered from nature and spontaneity has become the clarion call for novelty in writing. In the hands of the Pre romantic and Romantic poets assumed the role of auguring the demands of the common reader, the poetic diction descended from classical arena to the level of common man's language of parlance. The Romantic Age has witnessed the development of interest in the times of past, the bygone ages in which human life is entwined with surrounding nature, rustic manners and living experience held high as noble way of living the life. The destructive tendencies erupted during the French Revolution of 1789 forced the men of letters to think again in the ideals which were held high so long cherished in revolution. Revolution failed to deliver its promises, terror reigned over entire Europe. Many romantics left the landscape of urban England to live in the lap of nature away from raucous life of civilization in cities. This is the beginning of spiritual seeking in men when hope turns into despair they turn towards nature for solace and spiritual seeking. It is evident in the poetry of Romantic Age in England and forests full of trees and pants embraced and solaced them as if they are waiting for the returning debilitated seeker.

GLIMPSES OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S POETRY IN RELATION TO THE ELEMENTS OF NATURE :

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) is considered as the pioneer of romanticism in England. He is well known for his poetry throughout world, he was the poet who intended to use the language of common men for poetic diction. He along with S T Coleridge published Lyrical Ballads in 1798 and their theories of poetry and poetic diction were published consequently in 1800 and 1802. William Wordsworth was the high priest of romantic poetry where nature with its full blossomed life played its role in nourishing and nurturing the human imagination and grandeur of spiritual essence.

In the poem titled *Yew-Trees* Wordsworth says ;

'There is a Yew-tree, pride of Lorton Vale,
Which to this day stands single, in the midst
Of its own darkness, as it stood of yore:
No loathe to furnish weapons for the Bands
Of Umfraville of Percy ere they marched"

The tree is standing alone as a promising feature of human life. It is the pride of the area, it is single and well grown. Its age is timeless. It has witnessed the history which took place under its shadow but remained as if itself untainted by the vagaries of human misery. The poet identified the tree as a 'living thing' full of dynamics of life in it. Human beings live with attachment and die of pain of bereavement. The tree for Wordsworth prophesies the importance of non attachment. it is the replica of magnanimity of life and life everywhere.

'Tintern Abbey' is another poem by Wordsworth in which the poet feels as if himself has become a part of nature, just like envisioning the atman as part of vishwa atman.

'Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves'

After the passage of five years, five summers poet visits the place once again imbibed himself in the beauty of the place which is nurtured by the trees and orchards. Dark sycamore symbolizes the serene solitude as an essential part of enlightened beauty of nature.

He further says

'Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,



Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire

The Hermit sits alone'.

The Hermit is the person who dwells among the woods for the sake of spiritual enlightenment far from the madding crowds. He is an ascetic at the same time he could enjoy lavish nature which remains out of reach for a city dweller. Woods in other terms trees are providing shelter to the homeless families, they lush green making the men feel content with the aroma of life they are showering on.

THE REVOLUTIONARY ZEAL, THE EVIDENCE OF UNPARALLELED FAITH IN NATURE - P B SHELLY'S POETRY :

The poem "Ode to West Wind" is filled to the brim with revolutionary zest and reformative tone pleading the elements of nature to renew decayed life.

'Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!

I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bow'd

One too like thee: timeless, and swift, and proud'

Poet laments that the time as laying its weighty hand on him which has become unbearable and he is sinking down to the bottom of earth, he is pleading the west wind to lift him up. Life has fallen upon the thorns of kindless consequences of machinations of man.

The mention of forest in the following lines evidences that the woods and dales and mountains remained choiced places for the poet to redeem his burden of life. the thick forest is shedding its leaves with the anvil of winter to renew life in spring. Like a trees renews its life every time, the poet witnessing the magnificent process of renewal seeks his own redemption by saying....

'Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:

What if my leaves are falling like its own!'

Finally the elements of nature fortified his soul by making him say...

'If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?'

The trees and plants played no little role in guiding the poets of the yore to pronounce the life with renewed spirit. In a letter written on January 3, 1811 he directly declared 'I think that the leaf of a tree, the meanest insect on which we trample, are in themselves arguments more conclusive than any which can be adduced that some vast intellect animates Infinity.'" It resonates with the philosophy of Romanticism that trees and plants are spiritually uplifting parts of nature providing the humanity with solutions to existential travails which they suffer.

JOHN KEATS - AN YOUNG SEER OF ROMANTIC POETRY :

John Keats lived his life only for a brief period of time, that is about twenty five years. He is famous for his Odes which are meditative in nature and Hellenistic in themes. He was a nature poet. He surrendered himself to the grandeur of nature by declaring 'Beauty is Truth and Truth is Beauty' . He suffered from disease and bereavement during his early young years, he has drawn solace and the power of spiritual meditateness from nature and its promising embrace.

In 'Ode to Autumn' he sonorously explains the ripeness of the juicy fruits in the branches of the trees. He says..

'To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,

And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;'

The cottage trees are bent with weight of blossoming apples which promises un-supplanted taste to the guts. They ripened to the core.

'Ode to Nightingale' is another beautiful poem in which we can see the mellifluousness of the music flowing through the throat of the nightingale is result of nestled trees in the vicinity where poet is lounging. Amidst the concrete jungles of modern times we cannot visualize the density of trees in a single place so that a nightingale can sit among the branches and sing the full throated song. The vitality of the presence of the trees is emphasized in the poem.



'That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees

In some melodious plot

Of beechen green, and shadows
numberless,

Singest of summer in full-throated ease.'

The beechen green and shadow of the trees are necessary for the nightingale to sing with full-throated ease. The generation now and the generation which are coming can never enjoy that easeful song nightingale. we destroy nature, we cut down trees, we kill birds and animals, we have become so self engrossed that we even unable to understand the calamity we are creating around us.

'Darkling I listen; and, for many a time

I have been half in love with easeful Death'

Even impending death could not perturb the author as he was deeply immersed in realms of nature enjoying the nectar of life essence it is providing. The temporality of breath in mortal frame is boon given by the tree. man is not an island he is the very much part of everything in nature.

CONCLUSION

The romantic poetry makes us realize the vitality of the truth that destroying nature is destroying ourselves. Industrialization, increase in the demands of man spelling a death toll on nature. With the erosion of forest land with death of trees and plants, the tendency of the spiritual seeking would also die. Man will lose his essence of being humane. The line of difference between beast and human being will become so thin that there will remain no difference between the two. Literature and nature both together try to inculcate the attitude of 'live and let live' but mere materialistic approach to education is laying devastating effect on the concept of preserving nature. Separated from natural environment we surely will lose our essence of being a human. Grow trees and save the planet otherwise we cannot predict the ferocity of death and destruction which would engulf all of us.

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