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The Sensuous and Emotive Reflections of Nature in Early Indian English Poetry

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Abstract

Nature has influenced all the poets unexceptionally, but in different ways. The multi fold sensuous appeal of nature, the delight in the mystical joy and the solace experienced in landscape, waterscape and cloudscape occupy a considerable influence with profound effects and expressions in Indian English poetry. This poetry has nature and rural life as its major theme, for nature and the country have always been the major pre occupation of the Indian life. Nature has been used as a source of imagery and illustration. The poets relates nature with their imagination and feeling and link the experiences with their own life. Nature steals upon the poet with its opulence of life, colour and music. Nature in a sense becomes the source of poetic joy for these poets. The rapturous and ecstatic experiences of nature are not only sensuous but also leads towards pensive and spiritual thoughts. The present paper records the experiences and expressions of the older Indian English poets and the lucid force with which they convey their perceptions with beautiful sensibility.

Keywords: *Nature, Beauty, Visuals, Mystical, Pensive, Sensuous, Imagery*

Introduction

The poets being the innate and natural admirers of beauty and perfection are unexceptionally drawn towards all sort of beauties and charms of the earth and the sky, the moon and the star, the sun and the sunrise, trees and hills with a subjective or an objective outlook. Thus nature has served always, as the centre of all poetic output whether in native or foreign creations. It is often employed as a subject where a large no of poems are written about nature. Also nature, in many poems, is employed as a medium where similes or images drawn from nature serve to illustrate the theme of the poem.

We may largely find in poetry the expression of that simple, spontaneous, unreflecting pleasure which we feel in free open air life. Thus Nature has been used as a source of imagery and illustration. Metaphors and similes from nature are common in all poetry. The rapturous and ecstatic experiences of Nature are not only sensuous but also leads towards the more pensive, spiritual and mystical thoughts. The present paper analyses the approach and manner in which nature has been employed in the Indian English poetry.

V.K. Gokak in the introduction to 'The Golden Treasury of Indo – Anglian Poetry (1828-1965)'writes, "The Indo- Anglian poetry of nature reveals both the unique and loveliness of the Indian scene and the freshness of vision with which it is perceived....All these reveal the various sights and sounds and other aspects of nature that indo- Anglian poets have loved to write about and also the philosophic or mystical attitude with which they have responded to nature." (p 31).

The general change which has come over our attitude towards nature is to be found in the fact that whereas the older poets employed nature merely as a detached background, the modern poets tend to be subjective and sensitive in their feelings towards nature.

Henry Deozio, the first known Indian English poet was obviously influenced by the romantics. Henry loved India and Indian nature. His passion for nature is sufficiently reflected in his poems. He had an eye for nature in its twin aspect of beauty as well as fear which we find in Wordsworth's 'Prelude'. In 'Morning after a Storm', he writes:

> The elements were all at peace, when I/ Wandered abroad at morning's earliest hour,/ Not to inhale the fragrance of a flower/ or gaze upon a sun illumined sky/ to mark the havoc that storm had made/ I wandered forth, and saw great nature's power. (ll.1-6, p.64)

Derozio like other poets believe that nature can impart much knowledge to its beholders. In a sense nature is a preacher. Satish kumar in 'ASurvey of Indian English Poetry' comments, 'Derozio was the moving spirit in Indian English poetry of the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The English romantic poets Scott, Byron, chatterton, and More exercised great influence on his poetry. Oaten compared him to Keats for in both men there was a passionate temperament combined with unbounded sympathy with nature'. (p.16)

Toru Dutt had a short but very creative life. It was she who for the first time made the English public take a serious note of the poetry written by Indians in English and won an international recognition for it. As a poet Toru is notable foe her keen observation of and poetic sensitivity to the external aspects of nature – its sights, sounds and colours. The Baugmaree Garden House becomes the main source of inspiration for her nature poems. In her poem 'The Lotus' the depiction of the beauty of nature is enlivened as much with a freshness of vision as with an imaginative cataloguing of beautiful flowers. Her nature poems show how responsive she was to colour and how sharp her observations were. We may call her the first significant Indian English nature poet. She gives contrasted and evocative descriptions of nature beauty. Time and again she depicts her passionate obsession with trees. Her poem 'Our Casuarina Tree' parades her romantic imagination. The objective description of the tree mingles with the charm of association with the poet's childhood. She writes:

> But not because of its magnificience/ Dear is the casuarina to my soul/ beneath is we have played; though years may roll/ O sweet companions love with love intense/ For your sake shall the tree be ever dear. (ll.23-27, p.195)

In her poems about nature Toru expresses an almost romantic feeling for nature in its Indian setting. Lovely and poetic descriptions of nature cover a large space in 'Ballads'. There are some wonderful descriptions of trees and flowers, gardens and fields, forests and hills, booklets and rivers, in this memorable volume. Her poems 'Savitri', 'Buttoo', 'Lakshman', 'Sita' and others are suggestive of the poetic beauty of nature. Toru's response to external nature is more in the manner of Keats than in that of the Wordsworth. It is a concrete approach proceeding from her minute observation of the various charms of nature. As a poet of nature she is more a poet of trees and flowers, rather than of the seasons and landscapes. They moved her poetic sensibility to write that of them with poetic beauty and sensitivity.

Rabindra Nath Tagore enjoys the singular distinction of having been awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. His 'Gitanjali' made him an international literary celebrity. Early in life he developed his abiding and his passionate love for nature. Living in his father's house at Bolpur, he came in close association with the external objects of nature. Nature was a great source of poetic joy to him. This love for Nature remained deeply seated in his heart throughout his life. All sort of beauties and charms of the earth and the sky, the moon and the sun, colours and fragrances attracted his poetic vision and imagination. Tagore's collection 'The Gardener' contains some of her notable na-

ture poems. Tagore presents in these poems the most beautiful images of the beauties of the earth and the sky. V. Rammurty writes, "his attitude to nature is more Vaishnavite than Advitist. He accepts nature as real and expresses his love of it, which equals only his love of god." (p.91)

Tagore loves nature because he is a contemplator and painter of beauty. Nature to him is a source of inspiration and manifestation of beauty. Tagore loves nature because he is a contemplator and painter of beauty. His poems are expressive of the poet's love of nature and his minute observation of the beauties and charms of nature give these works a pastoral touch and a nature freshness.

Sri Aurobindo is not a nature poet nor is nature a dominant poetical subject for him but he believed in the beautiful communion of nature. His mighty imagination and his capacity to portray the charms of nature is splendidly put forth in beautiful phrases in his poems. Aurobindo believed in the spirit which pervades nature. As in Toru Dutt's ballads, there are in his narrative and epic poems brilliant flashes of nature poetry. The conclusion of his brilliant poem 'Savitri' depicts his lofty imagination and minute observation.

Night splendid with the moon dreaming in heaven/ In silver peace possessed her luminous reign/ She brooded through her stillness on a thought/ deep guarded by her mystic folds of light/ and in her bosom nursed a greater dawn. (epilogue p.69)

His descriptions of the various seasons in 'Savitri' are remarkable. His descriptions of the summer and the rainy seasons have elicited much praise from his critics. This indicates his powerful grip of nature descriptions. Aurobindo presented nature images vividly and whole panorama was presented in beautiful phrases. His power of the descriptions of the poetic beauty of nature is revealed in his poems. His sensitivity to the seasons is wonderful. If Toru is poetess of trees, Sri Aurobindo is a poet of seasons. His presentation of nature is luminous, vigorous and poetically strong'.

Sarojini Naidu wrote one hundred and eighty four poems, many of which are lyrics. There is the rampant sensuousness that pervades both theme and treatment in a big cross section of her strikingly poetic works. It was her desire for beauty that made her a poet. Nature's beauty has a special charm for her and excites her poetic imagination. Her passionate and sensitive response to the beauty of nature can be obtained from her writing to Edmund Goose, 'Come and share my exquisite march morning with me: this sumptuous blaze of gold and sapphire sky, the voluptuous scents of neem and champak and sirisha that beat upon the languid air with their implacable sweetness; the thousand little gold and blue and silver breasted birds bursting with the shrill of life in resting time. All is hot and fierce and passionate, ardent and unashamed in its exultant and importunate desire for life and love'. (Quoted here from Rameshwar Gupta's 'Sarojini, the Poetess', p.80)

Her nature poetry is abundantly sensuous. In all kind of poems, she evinces uncontrolled hunger for the varied charms of nature. She has shown an uncommon sensitivity to the wide varieties of colour and fragrance and delicate feel of flora and fauna, of the Indian landscape. The cataloguing of sarojini's nature poems reveal many interesting facts. She is mainly a poet of seasons like Aurobindo but the only season which captivated her imagination is spring or basant. In the poem , 'The Joy of the Springtime', she writes:

> Springtime, O springtime, what is your secret/ The bliss at the core of your magical mirth,/ the quickness, the pulse of the morning to wonder,/ and hastens the seeds of all beauty to birth,/ That captures the heavens and conquers to blossoms/ the roots of delight in the heart of the earth. (ll.1-6, p.89)

Sarojini's nature poems are remarkable not only for the loveliness of the Indian nature but also for the beauty of imagery and descriptive details. Thus they are not poems of fiery lyricism but imagination, sensuousness and romanticism are all resplendent in her poetry. Being an ardent admirer of Keats, she was to a considerable extent influenced by him. Like him, she responded to the beauty of nature passionately and sensitively.

Harinder chattopadhyaya is one of the famous five of the older Indian English poets. Harin's poetic corpus consists of lyrics, short poems and songs on a variety of themes and experiences. One also finds in his poetry variety of and richness of form coupled with a marvellous imaginative poetic expressions. Various references, descriptions, details of nature are scattered throughout his poetry. Harin's poetry is in the tradition of Indian English romanticism. It is manifested in his delineation of external nature and its inner spirit. His poem 'Noon' illustrates this,

> The noon a mystic dog with paws of fire/ runs through the sky in ecstasy of drought, / licking the earth with tongue of golden flame / set in a burning mouth (ll.1-4, p.194). His nature details appeals to us and make us think.

Nirodbaran's , 'Sun Blossoms' is a collection of ninety nine lyrics. He is an explorer of the territory beyond the visible world of the good and evil. He invokes the invisible in terms of visible by drawing the imagery from nature. Nolini Kant Gupta's meditative poems forcefully utters the parallels in the world of nature. Joseph Furtado, the Goan poet has distinctively contributed to Indian English poetry. Nature references were very natural to him. In nostalgia, he remembers his boyhood which was spent in close companionship with naure.

Nature can also solicit the pleasures of melancholy. Manmohan Ghose expresses the thought in the poem Poplar Beech and Weeping Willow

Willow sweet willow sad, willow by the river

Taught by pensive love to droop, where ceaseless water shiver,

Teach me steadfast sorrower, your mournful grace of graces (25-28) (p.118)

If Manmohan's vision is attracted to the poplar, the beech, the butterfly, the seasons and the landscape, the spirit of rapture and tranquillity permeates in his poems. Manmohan's poems are distinguished by maturity, depth, meditative and melancholic beauty. He resorts to nature to express his innermost thoughts. His broodings over his sorrows includes the different objects of nature which reflects his passion. He reflects through beautiful images drawn from nature. Intensity of feeling, spontaneity of expression and inspiration prominently reflect through the nature images.

Brajendranath Seal who was primarily a philosopher and later turned to poetic expressions exhibits in his poems the beauty of nature in its varied and extensive form. In his poem Nature Unveiled he expresses his love of nature thus

I was one with the woods; my body, the earth;

I budded in the buds and burgeoned fresh

In the green shoots; the tendrils were my veins;

My eyes blossomed on every bush (7-10) (p.113)

The mighty world of nature attracts his senses and he craves to be united with the soul and beauty of nature.

One of the most striking characteristics of Indian English poetry is the profusion of nature imagery. Most of the poetic and illustrative images are largely drawn from nature. These poems are expressive of the minute observations of charm and beauties of nature and whole panorama of nature is presented in sensuous and luminous phrases. The reflection of nature are the keen sensory impress of these poets in the context of Indian English poetic scenario. Nature is no doubt a welcome contrast, even a better alternative, to the urban reality but it also serves a metaphorical or symbolic function to focus our attention on the poet's inner feelings and senses. Images of nature in these poems embody something deeper than the sensuous and emotional responses. The poets seem to be never out of tune with the green world of the countryside. This certainly embodies the relief and release the poet enjoys in nature.

Conclusion

Nature, as we have studied in the above analysis is an overwhelmingly sensuous and impassioned expression in Indian English poetry. Various references, descriptions and details of nature are scattered throughout in this poetry. It is manifested in the delineation of external nature and its

inner spirit. Nature is seen in its lonely, remote, grand and profound spiritual meditation. Most of nature poetry apart from its scenic descriptions serves a metaphorical or symbolic meaning to draw our attention towards deeper and serious aspects. Nature poems have an easy to flow sequential development of ideas to the movement of the poets' ideas in the poem. But these poems certainly embodies something deeper than the sensuous emotional responses. They undoubtedly embodies the relief and release the poet enjoys in the beautiful, aesthetic, sensuous and concrete world of nature.

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