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Treatment of Nature by Muhammad Iqbal and William Wordsworth

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*All the wonderful booklore in your library is not worth one glorious
sunset on the banks of the Ravi.*

Iqbal

*Books! Tis a dull and endless strife, Come, hear the woodland linnets,
How sweet his music; on my life, There is more of wisdom in it.*

Wordsworth

Abstract:

Iqbal and Wordsworth are nature lovers and their verses touch its various dimensions. Both the poets sing the beauty of the green meadows, hills, gushing streams, stars, tulips and daffodils. They believe that nature can teach man such lessons of life which one cannot find in the books. If one spends sometime in the company of nature, according to the poets, it is a kind of worship. Both poets treated nature as teacher and friend. They believe that nature can cure all the diseases of humanity in this materialistic world. People have succumbed to hatred, disharmony and tribulations. If man learns to live in nature, he can regain the old peace of mind and soul, he can learn the lesson of peace and love which the humanity needs desperately. Nature has the ability to sooth the bruised heart of humanity with its pulsating beauty. Iqbal and Wordsworth aspire to run away from the big and noisy cities. They want to live simple and peaceful life in the company of nature. They crave for green meadows, hills, and streams & listening to the beautiful songs of cuckoo and nightingales. This paper will focus on few works of Iqbal and Wordsworth and their treatment of nature.

Keywords: Nature, Spontaneous, Meadows, Booklore, Worship, Guide, Hills, Powerful feelings, Cuckoo, Nightingales.

Iqbal and Wordsworth are two poetic voices who have soothed the hearts of their readers. Both the poets drew attention of their readers towards mountains, rivers, stars and deserts. Iqbal and Wordsworth infuse new soul to the dead bodies via their poetry, both the poets not only have similar ideas about nature, but also have similar idea about the function of poetry. Wordsworth says poetry is “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings”(Lyrical Ballads 2003,8) and he also says “poetry comes from the heart and goes to the heart”(Rickett-Compton 2011,302). Like Wordsworth, Iqbal believes that a word whenever comes from heart, penetrates the heart directly, not only this it travels beyond the skies. He says in *Jawab-e-Shikwa* (The Answer to the Complaint):

“When word comes out from the heart it penetrates,

It travels beyond the skies without wings.(1,2)
Iqbal further says in Payam-i-Mashriq (The Message from the East):
My singing lends colour to the petals of the rose,
My verse is a drop of my own blood.” (26,27)

The above verse of Iqbal clearly reflects his source of poetry like Wordsworth. Both the poets believe that it is the heart which is the centre of poetry and like Wordsworth, Iqbal believes that “the human heart, feelings and emotions constitutes the essence of poetry”.(Malik 2009,87)

Wordsworth is well known as “poet of nature and priest of nature”. His heart is enriched in the company of nature and he does not want to leave its company, he says in *My Heart Leaps Up*:

“ My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky”(1-2)

He further says in ‘*Ode on Intimation of Immortality*’:

“The rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely in the Rose;
The Moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair”(10-16)

Wordsworth believes that nature is the source of inspiration and one can enrich one’s spirituality in its company. He wants to fill the gap between heart and nature among his readers. Materialism, urbanizations and globalization by and by engulf natural beauty and has made man a spiritual dead entity. In order to regain the spiritual touch with nature Wordsworth says in “*The World Is Too Much With Us*”:

“The world is too much with us: late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in nature that in ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!”(1-4)

Like Wordsworth, Iqbal has written beautiful nature poetry. He believes spending time in nature is a kind of worship. Nature, for Iqbal, is an open book which teaches man some brilliant lessons of the life. He also believes that spending one moment in the company of nature is greater than whole library. He says “All the wonderful booklore in your library is not worth one glorious sunset on the banks of the Ravi” (Shafique 2010,69) and he also says “God! I thank thee for my birth in this world of rosy dawns, flame-clad sunsets and thick forests.”(Shafique 2010,69). *The Himala* (The Himalayas) is one of Iqbal's first poems which shows his “deep and abiding interest in nature”.(Mir 2011,24)

Iqbal writes:

“O Himalaya, Bulwark of the Kingdom of India,
The sky bend down to kiss you on the forehead!
Mark, how it sways and swings, the cloud on your
mountain peaks,
As if an elephant just free from fetters.

*Singing stream flows down from the mountains
Even Kaunsar and Tasneem feel shy before it.
This stream shows mirror to the world of nature,
It is singing and confronting in rocky tracks.”(1-2...17-22)*

The above lines clearly show the influence of English romantics on Iqbal and according to K.C. Kanda “nearly all the salient characteristics of the Romantic Movement are present in the early poems of Iqbal”.(Kanda 2009,6). English romantic poets love nature and celebrate in its various dimensions. After writing this poem “the editorial note to ‘*The Himalaya*’ in the first issue of *Makhzan* also introduced Iqbal as the Indian Wordsworth”.(Shafique 2011,39) According to G.R. Malik “It is, however, significant that the nature poetry of Wordsworth has a tremendous influence on Iqbal in the formative days of his life(Malik 2007,98). Iqbal had so much respect for Wordsworth and he said that “Wordsworth saved him from atheism in the student days”. (Shafique 2011,39). Nature talked to Iqbal like it did with Wordsworth. For both the poets, everything in nature represents mystical secrets to them. Poets are not ordinary watchers and listeners. They explore nature’s mystery and connect to the vibrations of the Divine rhythm emanating from the world of nature. Iqbal believes that “knowledge of nature is the knowledge of God’s behavior”.(Iqbal 2008,45)

Iqbal's nature poetry, like Wordsworth, creates pictures in the mind of a reader and prepares him for action as well. Iqbal welcomes the spring in “*Saqi Nama*” as:

*“The spring’s caravan has pitches its tent,
The hillside become a sort of paradise.
Narcissus, Lily, Jasmine, Rose
Martyred tulips ruddy-robed
A riot of colours, the earth adorns,
Blood pulsates in veins of stones.
Intoxicating in the air, light-blue the sky,
Birds in their nests preparing to fly.”(1-8)*

Iqbal further says in “*The Assembly of Stars*”:

*“The departing sun hit the sable eve,
With ruddy tulips stolen from the horizons.
The horizon decked her up in gold ornaments,
Nature cast off her silver in which she
lay enclothed.”(1-4)*

Both poets treated nature as teacher and friend. They believe that nature can cure all the diseases of humanity in this materialistic world. People have succumbed to hatred, disharmony and tribulations. If man learns to live in nature, he can regain the lost peace of mind and soul, he can learn the lesson of peace and love which the humanity needs desperately. Nature can sooth the bruised heart of the humanity with its pulsating beauty. Iqbal and Wordsworth aspire to run away from the big and noisy cities. They want to live simple and peaceful life in the company of nature. They crave for green meadows, hills and streams and want to listen the beautiful songs of cuckoo and nightingales. They become unhappy in crowded cities. Both poets want to live life as free birds. Wordsworth says in “*The Prelude I*”:

*“To none more grateful than to me; escaped
From the vast city, where I long had pined
A discontented sojourner: now free,
Free as a bird to settle where I will.
What dwelling shall receive me? in what vale
Shall be my harbour...”(6-11)*

Iqbal has similar lines in “A Wish”, which have a striking resemblance with the above lines and he wishes to have a small place at the foot of a mountain. The humdrum of cities made Iqbal sick at heart. He wants to go to a place where:

*“Where the chirping of birds gives the pleasure of music,
And the spring’s murmurings are like an soothing piano.
Where my arm is my pillow, and the grass my bed,
And where solitude puts company to shame
Where the view of the mountain is so charming
That the water itself jumps up in waves to take a look;
Where the green grass lies asleep in the earth’s lap,
Nightingale of evening and the flower of the dawn,
I am his companion, may she be companion.”(2,5-16)*

Iqbal, according to G.R. Malik, “was essentially a Romantic both as a thinker and a poet. One can safely say about him what his great contemporary, Tagore, said about himself that he was a Janamo romantik (a born Romantic)”.(Malik 1988,3) Iqbal's early nature poetry shows tinge of “Romantic nature poetry particularly that of Wordsworth and Shelley”(Malik 1988,26). Iqbal and Shelley are the poets whose attitude towards nature approaches nearest to Wordsworth than other romantics. They want moral lessons to be learnt from nature, and they believe that in the company of nature, a man can recognize his real inner essence. So, both the poets celebrate nature in their poetry as guide, inspiration and peace giver which ultimately prepares human soul for higher flights.

Iqbal and Wordsworth are didactic poets. Both had a tendency to generalize their experiences, understanding and to draw moral lessons from them so as to ensure that reader and listener did not miss the point. They want to correct wrong ones and to console the afflicted, to add fragrance to rose and tulip, to rain the drought, to teach the humanity, to teach the young of every age to ponder and feel, to become torch bearers of peace and prosperity. Their poetry imparts their readers a set of moral lessons. Both the poets believe that man can learn truth, joy and sincerity from the world of nature. Wordsworth writes in “The Tables Turned”:

*“One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.”(21-24)*

Iqbal, like Wordsworth, gives the message of a moral and virtuous life in his poetry and in fact he prepares his readers for action for the betterment of humanity. Both the poets try to develop a sound character in human beings. Iqbal moves little further when he says that good

human being is the foundation of building of a good society. Iqbal writes in “*The Dawn of Islam*”:

“Read the lesson of truthfulness, justice, bravery again,
You will be given the tusk to lead the world.
This is the aim of nature, secret of submission,
Universal brotherhood and world full of love.”(25-26)

Iqbal and Wordsworth are philosophical poets. Their faith is based on intuitions. They speak from their hearts rather than mind, because both poets are not in favour of reason much. Both the poets use personal pronoun ‘I’ recurrently and which is also one of the characteristics of romantic poets. G. R. Malik in *The Western Horizon* writes:

“Iqbal's art and thought have for their Basis his cult of the Ego. In his view even philosophical theories, religious convictions and Moral values can acquire the status of creative art if they become a part and parcel of our personality.....This ‘I’ is quite recurrent in Wordsworth too, but Iqbal's ‘I’ has a wider signification for being connected with his philosophy of the Ego. According to this philosophy self-affirmation and the realization of individual potentialities are the ultimate end of human endeavour.....Wordsworth's ‘I’, on the other hand, has not only no such philosophical background behind it, but also in his later poetry he even speaks of self-abnegation. Iqbal rejects this kind of self-abnegation although he believes that some kind of self-control is inevitable for self-realization and the self cannot, therefore, be left absolutely free, God is the only Absolute Ego and the human self needs to be disciplined for the attainment of perfection. Thus both Wordsworth and Iqbal are conscious of selflessness.....This emphasis on selflessness is inductive of the classical tendencies in Wordsworth and Iqbal.”(Malik 2009,91)

Conclusion:

Iqbal and Wordsworth, no doubt, have different cultural background but the message with which they have written is nectar for the lovers of nature. They believe that real human beings can be developed in the company of world of nature. When a person spends sometime in the company of nature, he develops a sort of communion with it. His inner eye opens up and he sees what his inner wants to see and relish. His spiritual intensity enhances in nature, which gets mortified every passing moment. Both the poets have this message which they want to infuse among the people, so that they could lead peaceful and happy life.

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