

A Comparative Study of the Concept of Nature in English and Marathi Romantic Poetry

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Abstract

Nature has been a perennial source of inspiration and imagination of both English and Marathi romantic poets. They composed poetry under the tremendous influence of the various objects Nature. They treated the objects of Nature as the subjects of their poetry. The Romantic Movement in English poetry was not a sudden outburst but a continuation of pre-romanticism. However, the publication of *The Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 marked the inauguration of romanticism which dominated English poetry in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As a result of this Wordsworth, Coleridge Byron, Keats and Shelley who composed their poetry under the tremendous influence of the doctrine of romanticism are came to be known as the romantic poets. Like English romantic poets, the Marathi romantic poets such as Keshavsut, Rev. Tilak, Govindagraj, Balkavi, and others composed poems under the influence of the doctrine of romanticism as well as the influence of the English romantic poets. This research paper is an attempt to analyze and compare the concept of Nature in English and Marathi romantic poetry.

Key words: Nature, Romantic Movement, English romantic poetry, Marathi romantic poetry.

Introduction: -

The movement of romanticism which dominated English poetry during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was not a sudden outburst but the result of a long and gradual growth and development. So the poets of the romantic school – Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Keats and Shelley – were not even the first romantics of England, for the Elizabethan literature and the poetry during the mid-eighteenth century are essentially romantic. In the book *Romanticism* L. R. Furst points out that the poets such as James Thomas, William Collins, Thomas Gray, Robert Burns, William Blake etc paved the way from classical to the romantic tradition. “Their emphasis”, says L. R. Furst “was mainly on the natural in contrast to the rational, the spontaneous in place of the calculated, freedom instead of regimentation” (Furst, 26). However, the publication of *The Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 marked the inauguration of romanticism which dominated English poetry in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As a result of this Wordsworth, Coleridge Byron, Keats, Shelley etc. who composed poetry under the tremendous influence of the doctrine of romanticism are came to be known as the romantic poets.

Like English romantic poetry, the Marathi romantic poetry was composed poetry under the tremendous influence of the doctrine of romanticism. The major Marathi poets who composed poems under the influence of the doctrine of romanticism as well as the influence of the English romantic poets are Keshavsut, Rev. Tilak, Govindagraj, Balkavi, and others. In his essay ‘Romanticism and Marathi poetry from 1885 to 1950’ B. V. Potdar points out that the rules and principles laid down by the classic Sanskrit poets were used by the later and lesser Marathi poets without making any change. As a result of this, the writing of poetry became a mechanical

process. However, contact with the English language and literature brought an awakening in Marathi poets so sudden that they styled their poetry under the influence of the English romantic poets. Regarding the movement of romanticism in Marathi poetry, B. V. Potdar says:

In the field of Marathi poetry, contact with English literature produced a Renaissance of Romantic nature. This does not mean that romantic qualities cannot be found in Marathi poetry before the British period. Much of the imagery of *Dnyaneshwari* is romantic; and the attitudes of *Shahir* poets under *Peshwai* were romantic, though the range of their attitudes was very limited. But the poets during the last decades of the nineteenth century came under the influence of the English romantic poets through Palgrave's *Golden-Treasury* which was a popular text book in those days (Potdar, 79).

The Concept of Nature in English Romantic Poetry:

Nature has been a perennial source of inspiration and imagination for the romantic poets. They composed poetry under the tremendous influence of the various objects Nature. The major romantic poets in English who treated the objects of Nature as the subjects of their poetry are: Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Keats and Shelley. They represented Nature as a mystical force capable of enlightening and ennobling human mind and soul. In fact, Nature as an autonomous being is first treated by the pre-romantic poets. However, in the poetry of romantic poets Nature has often played an important role. Wordsworth, who is often called as the high priest of Nature composed his poems under the tremendous influence of the various objects of Nature. To him Nature is not only a living entity with a soul but a great teacher of man. In the poem 'The Table Turned' he observes-

One impulses from a vernal wood,
May teach you more of man,
Of Moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can (Wordsworth 138).

In his essay 'Wordsworth: A Minority Report' Douglas Bush remarks, "Wordsworth identified himself, and has always been identified by his readers, with a special message concerning nature's relation to man and man's relation to nature' (Bush, 33). He further says, "His conception of Nature, the main basis of his faith and his poetry, was hardly computable with biology and struggle for existence" (Bush, 36). He is the high priest of Nature not because he gives an accurate and minute description of Nature but because he places her as the best teacher of Man. In short, Nature led Wordsworth to love of man. Therefore in the poetry of Wordsworth Nature does not remain merely a source of delight; it becomes as educative influence.

Like Wordsworth, Coleridge, too, thinks of Nature as the teacher of man. However, towards the end of his career he ceased to see the divine spirit permeated in the objects of Nature and asserted that Nature has no life of her own and she cannot give joy to those who is joyless. According to David Daiches: "The poem 'Dejection: an ode', is the best example of his such attitude towards Nature (Daiches, vol. IV, 900). The poem shows that we receive from Nature only that which we give to her.

The other romantic poets such as Byron, Keats and Shelley have expressed their deep and passionate love of Nature in their poetry. In Byron's love of Nature there is no meditative musing but there is a very lively sense of wonder and delight in the energizing glories of Nature. As a result of this he is called as the "the rhapsodist of Nature" (Daiches, vol. IV, 922). John Keats who is often called as the poet of beauty loved Nature for its own sake and for the glory and loveliness. His poetry shows that he is content to express Nature through the sense. P. B. Shelley, like all the romantic poets, had deep and passionate love of Nature, but his concept of Nature is totally different from that of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, and Keats.

In his book 'Shelley: concepts of Nature R. de Loyola Furtado has explained in detail Shelley's concept of Nature from the early formative years of his life to the last day of his avowed Platonism. According to him, "Nature to Shelley connoted two distinct ideas: firstly, the physical reality perceived by the senses and its different manifestations; then, an abstraction, a metaphysical concepts, which was to replace the God of Orthodox Christianity" (Furtado, 3). He further quotes J. W. Beach as "In substituting the words Nature or Necessity for God. Shelley wished to emphasize his deterministic conception of the universe, especially strong in the early years of his writing, and to get rid of the theological connotations of the word God"(Furtado, 14). So he believes "Nature became a synonym of God, without the customary attributes"(Furtado, 15).

In the poetry of Shelley such as 'Ode to the West Wind', 'The Cloud', we get his love for the wild and changing aspects of Nature. His love of that which is indefinite, wild and changeable made him describe some aspects of Nature. In this connection Furtado remarks, "His favourite picture was the change in weather (Furtado, 42). Another important feature of his poetry is that he considered Nature as the healer or the great soothing balm for all human ill. In fact, Shelley deserves a very high place among the Nature poets of the Romantic Age which was deeply contemplative of the beauty and mystery of Nature and the link which connected with her universe and Man. He loved Nature with passion and sincerity because Nature provided him both love and sympathy which he could not find in the worlds of human beings. It is true that Shelley was deeply fascinated by the various objects of Nature. He has depicted the sensuous beauty of Nature. However, he had deep fascination for wilder, indefinite and changeable aspects of Nature. But during the last stage of life we get change in his attitude towards Nature. "The last five years of Shelly's life" says Furtado, "show his full conversion and belief in the idealistic philosophy of Plato (Furtado, 57). He further says. "The idealism of Plato was to led Shelley to believe in God, the one of the graceful religion of the Greeks, and consequently Nature or Power or Spirit, as mere terms, were relegated to a secondary place(Furtado, 57). In short, the concept of Nature in Shelley's poetry was a changing concept. It has passed through several phases during his brief life.

The Concept of Nature in Marathi Romantic Poetry:

Nature as an aspect of romanticism really began in Marathi poetry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The major romantic poets in English who treated the objects of Nature as the subjects of their poetry are: Keshavsut, Rev. Tilak, Govindagraj, Balkavi and others. They composed their poetry under the influence of the movement of romanticism. The poet during this period came under the influence of the English romantic poets through Palgrave's 'Golden' Treasury' and closely imitated the concept of Nature in their works. It doesn't mean that Nature was totally absent in Marathi poetry before the period of British rule in India. The idea of Nature is expressed in Marathi poetry from thirteenth century in the poetry of Maheshwar Pandit, Narayan Pandit, etc. However, they looked at Nature through the spectacles of books.

The emergence of the concept of Nature took place into Marathi poetry under the influence of the English romantic poets. In his book "आधुनिक मराठी काव्याचे अंतःप्रवाह" V. B. Pathak points out: "अव्वल इंग्रजी आमदानिकत (१८२५-१८७४) होऊन गेलेल्या मराठी कवींनी निसर्ग हि एक श्रेष्ठ प्रकारची शक्ती आहे असे मानिले. निसर्गाकडे ते भित्तीयुक्त आदरभावाने पाहू लागले. काव्यामध्ये नितिवाद प्रबळ झाला" (पाठक,84) (The poet during the British rule in India considered Nature as a great power and looked at Nature with an awe. As a result of this the principles of Morality became prominent in poetry (Pathak, 84)). The best examples of such poetry are "गंगावर्णन" (The description of the Ganges) by Chintamani Pethkar, "षडऋतुवर्णन" (The description of six seasons) by Pandurang Govindshastri Parkhi etc. However, the various aspects of Nature as separate, living entities occurred for the

first time in Marathi Poetry in the late nineteenth century especially in the works of Keshavasuta. It was from Keshavasuta onwards the objects of Nature became the source and inspiration for the romantic poets in Marathi poetry. The major romantic poets in Marathi poetry are Keshavasuta, Rev. Tilak, Rendalkar, Balkavi etc. let's consider the concept of Nature in these romantic poets.

The poets before Keshavsut describe Nature in their poetry only for the sake of sheer delight. There is not any depiction of human feelings nor any representation of the personification of Nature in poetry. However, from Keshavsut onwards a new type of Nature poetry came out. It has reflected the various changes in human life and painted human feelings and emotions. According to Keshavsut the glory of Nature has tremendous power for bringing a permanent calmness to the mind of man. For him Nature was a splendid, magnificent and an accomplished thing. She is a mystical thing for him. Like Wordsworth, Keshavsut expected moral instructions from Nature. Regarding his attitude towards Nature V. B. Pathak says: “मानवात अपूर्णता दिसून येते आणि सृष्टी स्वयंपूर्ण असते. तिच्या ठिकाणी ईश्वरता वास करते. अशा श्रद्धेने केशवसुतांनी सृष्टीकडे पाहिले आहे” (पाठक,101). (Nature is an absolutely accomplished thing where as there is imperfectness in human life. God always lives in the heart of Nature. He looked at the glory of Nature as a perfect, accomplished thing). He further points out that Keshavsut always finds solace in the company of Nature. In order to prove this he quotes lines composed by Keshavasuta as:

“जेथे ओढे वनराजी ! वृती रमे तेथे माझी कारण काही साक्ष तिथे, मग त्या श्रेयाची पटते.” (पाठक,102)

Another well-known Nature poet is Rev. Tilak. His attitude towards Nature is very playful. Through his poetry he tried to establish the relationship between human passions and flowers, feelings and butterflies. He looks at Nature not from a philosophical point of view but from the point of view of a loving friend. Like Keshavsut, he never gets fascinated towards Nature for forgetting the everyday humdrum of life but to enjoy the beauty of Nature in a purely selfless manner as far as possible. He finds beauty even in horrible things of Nature.

Balkavi, the great devotee of Nature, has depicted the enchanting picture of the various objects of nature in his poetry. He loved Nature with passion and sincerity. He considered Nature not as means to escape from the hard realities of life but as a mean to make the life happy and meaningful. He gave life and passion to Nature and described the beautiful picture of the every aspect of Nature. One of the remarkable qualities of his Nature poetry is that, it shows love-affairs between the objects of Nature such as the sun and the West direction, the moon and the night, the sun and the flower etc.

Balkavi had the great attraction for the beauty of Nature because he had got his early education in the lap of Nature. Nature provided him solace and comfort. As a result of this he considered Nature as his teacher. Like John Keats he was content to express Nature through senses. Another important feature of his concepts of Nature is that Nature provided him joy and comfort. His poem “आनंदी-आनंद” (Anandi-Anand) is the best example of this. However, in the later period of his life a note of Melancholy became the subject of his Nature poetry. He expressed happiness as well as unhappiness, hopes and despairs through the various object of Nature.

Conclusion:

Nature has been a perennial source of inspiration and imagination of both English and Marathi romantic poets. They composed poetry under the tremendous influence of the various objects Nature. They expressed their emotions, feelings and passions through Nature images. In the same way both English and Marathi poets

had firm faith in the power of Nature to soothe the human heart. Here we can conclude that both English and Marathi poets were deeply influenced by the movement of Romanticism and the various objects of Nature which is also one of the principles or features of romanticism. As a result of this the concept of Nature became the watchword in English and Marathi romantic poetry.

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