

The Magnificence of Mother Nature in the Poems of Emily Dickinson and Kamala Das

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ABSTRACT

Many writers have depicted the relationship between human beings and Mother Nature. Our harmonious life with nature offers us the power to develop as individuals with unusual power. This paper tries to analyse the magnificence of Mother Nature in the poems of two women poets, Emily Dickinson and Kamala Das. This study makes a comparative assessment of a few poems of both the poets to decipher the differences and resemblances in their representation of landscapes. Dickinson tries to view nature from a mystical standpoint and associates it with Divinity. Though Das' poems do not show the manifestation of God in nature, she reveals how she experiences solace in the hands of nature during her life in cities.

KEYWORDS:

Mother Nature; mystical; divinity; manifestation; solace.

Introduction

Literature has shown the gentleness of Mother Nature in several ways. The Romantic poets have drawn their inspiration from nature to illustrate their imagination. It is doubtless that nature has played the role of a motivator to inspire gifted writers like Emerson, Thoreau, Wordsworth, and Robert Frost. Mother Nature protects its offsprings and offers comfort to them. She, in fact, acts as a splendid source of energy. Both Dickinson and Das approach nature in diverse ways.

Nature plays a significant role in Dickinson's poems. Since she was the

inhabitant of the nineteenth-century New England, the spirit of American Renaissance is visible in her verses. Her attraction towards the natural objects shows us that she has been an extensive reader of writers like Keats, Shelley, Emerson and Thoreau. "Thoreau's influence on the work of the other poets of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially Emily Dickinson and Robert Frost, has been noted . . ." (Witherell 28). She demonstrates the vitality of human relations when unified with nature and personifies nature as a caring mother. "Nature- the Gentlest Mother", keeps an eye on her children when they are asleep. She saves them from all perils and offers her

tender care and warmth. In the following poem, Dickinson depicts the benevolence of the natural world to pamper and protect its progeny. She utters:

Nature– the Gentlest Mother is,
Impatient of no Child,
The feeblest–or the waywardest–
Her Admonition mild– (lines 1-4, Poem
790 *The Complete Poems of Emily
Dickinson* 385)

Dickinson evokes compound emotions in readers with her dominant nature imageries. Her poems allow the space for manifold readings and they hurl questions to the readers which enable them to ponder over the subtleties of nature, society and the spirit of human beings. Her idea of nature and environment is truly linked to God and human beings. Dickinson proposes the idea of divine growth that one attains when unified with the natural world. In fact, she appreciates the simplicity of natural world:

“Nature” is what we see–
The Hill–the Afternoon–
Squirre1– Eclipse – the Bumble bee–
Nay–Nature is Heaven –
Nature is what we hear–
The Bobolink – the Sea–
Thunder – the Cricket–
Nay–Nature is Harmony– (lines 1-8,
Poem 668 *The Complete Poems of Emily
Dickinson* 332)

She talks about the omnipotence of nature that its inhabitants ignore. As a poet, she reveals the magnificence of Mother Nature in offering an ideal condition for mankind to live in this world. She says that nature is exactly like a “heaven”. The poet wants everyone to appreciate the splendor that Mother Earth shows us. Nature presents us the delightful music of the “Bobolink” and the “cricket”. Here, the poet talks about the harmonious relationship among natural objects. Dickinson was truly the follower of American Renaissance. She says that the vivacity of

nature is inexplicable and mankind can never undervalue it. This knowledge makes her say:

Nature is what we know–
Yet have no art to say–
So impotent Our Wisdom is
To her Simplicity. (9-12, Poem 668 *The
Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson* 332)

Dickinson finds solace in Nature. “Indeed, during her lifetime, Emily Dickinson was known more widely as a gardener, perhaps, than as a poet” (Carter and Farr 3). Apart from narrating the majesty of Mother Earth, she depicts the loveliness of the natural objects as well. She establishes a strong connection with nature and its living things. She presents the beauty of the flowers that wither away without being seen and says:

How many Flowers fail in Wood
Or perish from the Hill–
Without the privilege to know
That they are Beautiful– (lines 1-4,
Poem 404 *The Complete Poems of Emily
Dickinson* 192)

As an appreciator of nature and its splendor, Dickinson has shown her skepticism towards the process of scientific discoveries and industrialization. During her time, “[S]cience...was overtaking natural mysteries and turning them into intelligible phenomena” (Vendler 380). When we try to reach and discover the secrets of Mother Nature, she herself unveils her mystifying stature which we can never disregard. The light in springtime is ahead of science and that can be experienced by mankind. She stunningly narrates the timid arrival of the springtime in the poem “A light exists in Spring”. The “light” she mentions here is none but God or Heaven. Her spiritual understanding enables her to perceive the presence of God in nature. The manifestation of God in nature is clear in the following lines:

A light exists in Spring
Not present on the Year
At any other period–

my hair smells of spruce
There are creatures in the undergrowth
I smell the swamp and the loam (lines
20-30 *Selected Poems* 153-54)

Though Dickinson and Das represent the majesty of nature in different ways, the images of the sea and the sun profusely appear in their poems. Both the poets try to find solace when united with the sea. Dickinson portrays herself as a river that runs to the sea. She implores the sea, her lover, to accept her and says:

My River runs to thee–
Blue Sea! Wilt welcome me?
My River waits reply–
Oh Sea –look graciously–
I’ll fetch thee Brooks
From spotted nooks–
Say – Sea – Take Me! (lines 1-7, Poem
162 *The Complete Poems of
Emily Dickinson* 76)

Like Dickinson, Das is also attracted to the magnificence and warmth of the sea. In the poem “The Suicide”, she expresses her desire to be one with the deep sea by embracing death. She even talks about the warmth that the sea possesses in its inner chambers. She sings:

The sea’s inner chambers
are all very warm.
There must be a sun slumbering
at the vortex of the sea. (lines 60-63
The Descendants 8-9)

The image of the sun appears in the poems of Dickinson and Das. In the following

poem, Dickinson praises the splendor of the sun that washes the banks of the yellow sea. The mysterious appearance of the Mother Nature is revealed in these lines:

This – is the land – the Sunset washes–
These – are the Banks of the Yellow Sea
–

Where is rose –or whither it rushes–
These – are the Western Mystery! (lines
1-4, Poem 266 *The Complete
Poems of Emily Dickinson* 122)

Like Dickinson, Das, in her poem, “Summer in Calcutta”, describes the beauty of the April Sun that appears to be crushed like an orange in her glass. The image of the orange sun is clear when she asks:

What is this drink but
The April sun, squeezed
Like an orange in
My glass? (lines 1-4 *Summer in
Calcutta* 50)

Conclusion

Both Dickinson and Das emphasise the magnanimous character of Mother Nature and they portray the diverse aspects of nature. They depict nature as a gentle mother who pacifies them in miserable conditions. Mother Nature acts as a protector in their lives. She accepts her children and alleviates the mental torments they experience in their lives. When the former tries to find God in nature, the latter reveals the lively traits of nature. To them, nature appears as a pool of happiness, solace, gentleness, wisdom, and divinity.

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