



Nature in the Poetry of Hopkins and Iqbal: An Analysis

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Abstract

Nature and natural objects are seen in all types of poetry being used with different modes of expression. Some poets use it as symbols to express other meaning and some use it as the art of God which has been created as a texture and beauty to the universe. However, in both ways the presence of nature is inevitable. The present paper will discuss about the presence of nature in the poetry of Hopkins

and Iqbal. Both albeit from different times are religious poets and have admired God for creating the beautiful World.

Keywords: Nature, Omnipresence, symbolism, Creative force, Imagery, Metamorphosis.

Hopkins and Iqbal are modern poets as it has been said about Hopkins that he was a priestly metaphor of Victorian poetry and a syntactical simile of Modern poetry. Therefore, he was radically a modern poet not merely for his technical innovations but for his way of thinking about Man, nature and God. It was an obvious fact that Hopkins poetry got published after the twenty nine years of his death by his intimate friend Robert Bridges in 1918 which emerged as uniquely novel voice in the ambience of Modern period. Iqbal and Hopkins share a lot of similarities on the basis of their religious poetry and have used natural objects and nature itself as a mode to express the creative power and skill of God. In the poem *God's Grandeur* Hopkins writes:

The World is charged with the grandeur of God...

*There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
(Hopkins, God's Grandeur)*

The whole World is charged with the grandeur of God, the nature is filled with His presence. Hopkins and Iqbal got inspired by nature. While examining the manifestation of nature in Hopkins's poetry the following aspects come to the forefront: Environmentalism and Ecologism, Picturesque in the description of nature, binary opposition between civilization and nature, nature in the light of Greek philosophy, spiritual vision and relationship between Man and nature. In his first poem *The Escorial* Hopkins is full of ecstasy at the sight of natural beauties. He observes that nature and the moment of thought is expressed as under:

Then through the afternoon the summer beam

Slop'd on the glories: upon the Wall

Rich Titans faded: in the straying gleam

*The motes in ceaseless eddy shine and full
Into the cooling gloom: till slowly all*

*Dimm'd in the long accumulated dust (Hopkins, Escorial,
stanza-12, 1-6).*

Hopkins wondered at the sight of Sun beams just like a lively boy's joy in outdoor life. He blends nature with art and could not even avoid the description of brute and wild nature. He remarks that:

*The driving storm at hour of vespers beat
Upon the mould' ring terraces amain;*

*The Altar-tapers flar'd in gusts (Hopkins, Escorial, Stanza-
13 lines 3-5).*

The sight of the Sun has inspired Iqbal as well and has made him to write a whole poem on it. The amazing function of the Sun at its assigned orbit left the poet astonished. He writes:

Aay aftar ruh ravaa hai tu

*Shiraza bund deftar koun-o-makaan hai tuu (Iqbal, Aftab-
line 1-2)*

Iqbal since his childhood was much fascinated by the natural objects and scenic beauties and it was among the main inspirations which turned him into the renowned poet. He used to read romantic poetry at the school days and even taught the same at the college level. He used to read Wordsworth, Shelley, Coleridge, William Cowper and others. Even he confessed that Wordsworth had saved him from atheism this he has mentioned in his famous diary *Stray Reflections* entry number 36. Most of the nature poetry he wrote till 1905. But like Hopkins he admired God and His attributes through poetry. As Hopkins thanks creator for creating diverse natural objects like he wrote in the *Pied Beauty*:

*Glory be to God for dappled things-
For skies of couple –colour as a brinded cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that
Swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches' wings;*

*Landscape plotted and pieced-fold, fallow, and plough;
(Hopkins, Pied Beauty)*

The natural images used by Hopkins in the above poem depict his interest and love for the nature. And he admired God for creating *dappled things*, for the firmament, beautiful spots on the Trout fishes and the process of ploughing the land. He admired the creativity of God for beautifying the World.

Iqbal has composed poems on different objects of nature; both poets through natural objects have shown the creative art of the creator. The poems, *Eak Arzoo Himalia, Phool, Abr*, when Iqbal wrote *Eak Arzoo* at that time nature acted for him as an alternative to the human World with which he was dissatisfied. That moment of life has been clearly depicted in *Eak Arzoo*:

*Dunya ki mahfilon se ukta gaya hun ya rub
Kya lutuf unjman ka jab dil hi bujh gaya ho (Iqbal, Eak
Arzoo).*

Iqbal and Hopkins considered the World as sacred and highly purposeful and its observation to be the worship of God. In *the Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* he writes:

Nature is to the Divine self as character is to the human self. In the picturesque phrase of the Quran it is the habit of Allah....Thus the view that we have taken gives a fresh spiritual meaning to physical science. The knowledge of Nature is the Knowledge of God's behaviour. In our observation of Nature we are virtually seeking a kind of intimacy with the Absolute Ego; and this is only another form of worship (Iqbal, Reconstruction...P.56-57).

Hopkins saw God under the World's splendour and Wonder and exclaimed that God's must be instressed and stressed. He meant that the mystery of God ought to be perceived and proclaimed. Hopkins is of the view that Christ manifests himself from nature. This describes his confirmation about the fact that He is present in the wonders and splendors of nature. He writes:

*I kiss my hand
To the stars, lovely-asunder*

Starlight, wafting him out of it; and

*Kiss my hand to the dappled-with-damson west (Hopkins,
line 1-4, stanza-4)*

The poem *That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire....* step by step unfolds fascination of Hopkins for the nature:

Cloud- puffball torn tufts, tossed pillows

Flaunt forth then chevy on an air-

But through fare; heaven-roysterers in gay-gangs

They throng; they glitter in marches (1-2)

Hopkins is so obsessed with the beauty of nature that even his visits to natural places find its place in his poetry. One of them was his visit to the water fall of *Inversnaid* situated near Loch Lomond Glasgow. A reader feels the flow of the water fall through his poem *Inversnaid*:

This darksome burn, horseback brown,

His rollrock highbroad roaring down,

In coop and in comb the fleece of his foam

*Flutes and low to the lake falls home (Hopkins, Inversnaid,
lines-1-4).*

In the same way as mentioned above the description of Hopkins' surroundings of his native Wales finds its expression in the poem *In the Valley of the Elwy*:

Lovely the woods, water, meadows, combs, vales,

*All the air things wear that build this world of Wales
(Hopkins, lines-9-10).*

The natural beauty had a spell on the aesthetic sense of the poet and he could not resist the feeling to express the natural beauty in his poems. In one of his letters dates 1863 he writes that:

I have particular periods of admiration for

Particular things in nature; for a certain time

I am astonished at the beauty of a tree, shape

effect etc. then when the passion so to speak

*has subsided, it is consigned to my treasury
of explored beauty while something new takes
its place in my enthusiasm (Hopkins, letter-1863).*

The attitude of Allama Iqbal was the blend of intellectuality and sentiments. In his nature poetry he asks for the subjugation of physical world for the advantage of man. His concept of subjugating physical world is for the revival of the spiritual domain of man as he believed that both are significant for an individual the same concept lies under the thought of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Like Hopkins Iqbal too felt the manifestation of God through nature and was of the view that taking care of nature is the other way to worship Him. He wrote that the mystery of being is revealed by the petal of a rose:

*Ilm ke hairat kade mai hai kahan uski namood
Gul ki pati mai nazar ata hai raze hast-o-bood (Iqbal).*

The poet perceived God in the phenomena of nature as is described in the *Javid Namah* (1932). By admiring the snow clad mountains of his land of ancestors Iqbal writes:

*Kohhaie khingsare ou nigar
Atashin dasta chinare ou nigar
Dar baharam lal me rizad ze sang
Khizad az khakash yaki tufani sang
Lakkahaie abr dark oho daan
Panba parran az kamane panba-zan
Kohu daryao guroobe aftar
Man khuda ra deedam unjo behijab (Iqbal, Javid Namah, p.
359-60)*

In the above piece of poetic extract from *Javid Namah* Iqbal perceives God, unmasked in the beauty of Kashmir, in fiery coloured *Chinnars*, in its clouds floating over hills and mountains, in lakes and the sun-set scene. However, the poet found the divine presence in the beauty of every object of nature. The poems that reflect the colourful scenes and prospects of nature are *Abr-i-kohsar*

(The cloud on the Mountain), *Himala* (Himalayas), *Eak Arzoo* (An Aspiration), *Insan aur Bazmi-Qudrat* (Man in the company of Nature) and *Chand* (The Moon), *Ek Pahad aur Galehri* (Mountain and the Squirrel). In *Abr-i-Kohsar* the poet shows his love for nature as he writes:

Kisi waadi mai jo manzoor ho sona mujko

Sabza koh hai mukhmal ka bechona mujko (Iqbal, line, 5-6)

In *Himala* the poet artistically describes the beauty of nature and shows how streams come down from the Himalayan Mountains. He writes:

Aati hai nadi feraaz-i-Koh se gaati huyee

Kousar we tasneem ki mouju ko sharmati huyee (Iqbal, line, 31-32)

The similar description of nature is found in the poem titled as *Insan aur Bazmi-Qudrat* (Man in the Company of Nature) Iqbal praises the nature in the following verses:

Subah khursheed derakshah ko jo dekha mai nay

Bazm-i-memora hasti se yeh pochha mai nay

Partav mehar ke dam se hai ujala tera

Seem-i-seyaal hai pani teray deryavu ka

Mehar nay noor ka zavar tujay pehnaya hai

Teri mehfil ko isi shama nay chamkaya hai

Gul we gulzar teray khild ki tasweeray hai

Yeh sabhi surah wal Shamash ki tafseeray hai

Surak poshak hai phoolu ki daraktu ki hari

Teri mehfil mai koie sabza koie lal pari (Iqbal, lines, 1-10)

The above poem in detail depicts the blessings of God on man through nature. He has kept diversified natural objects like Moon, flowers, Trees etc in the service of mankind. A man must be very thankful to His unparalleled creation.

Like the praise of nature and divine creativity the same undercurrent of thought exists in the poetry of Hopkins. In his poem *Winter with the Gulf Stream* Hopkins has used images loaded with meanings and has described the warm day in winter. He writes that:

*I never saw her so divine
But through black branches, rarely drest
The webbed and the watery west
Where younder crimson fireball sits
Looks laid for feasting and for rest (Hopkins, winter with the
Gulf Stream)*

The manifestation of nature in Hopkins' *Richard- IV* is beautifully described as under:

*There was a meadow level almost: you traced
The river wound about it as a waist
Beyond the banks were steep; a brush of trees
Rounded it, thinning skywards by degrees
With parallel shafts-as upward-parted ashes;
Their highest sprays were drawn as fine as lashes,
With centers duly touch'd and nest like spots-
And oaks,-but these were leaved in sharper knots (Hopkins,
Richard-IV, Lines-18)*

In the same manner Hopkins revives the call of the Cuckoo in the poem *The May Magnificent*;

*And magic cuckoo call
Caps, clears and clinches all (Hopkins, The May
Magnificent)*

The presence of Cuckoo bird is found in most of his writings like in the other poem *Duns Scouts's Oxford* and the prose writings too are not devoid of it. He writes:

Cuckoo-echoing, bell-swarmed lark charmed

Rook-racked, river-rounded (Hopkins, Duns Scouts's Oxford)

Like in the poetry of Hopkins the bird imagery is used by Iqbal as well. *Shaheen* is the bird that he has often used symbolically in his poems, to make readers understand his concept of *Khudi*. He writes about *Shaheen*:

*Kiya mai nay uss khakdaan se kinara
Jeha razq ka naam hai aab-o-daana (Iqbal, Shaheen)*

The poem ends with the following couplet:

*Parindu ki dunya ka dervaash hu mai
Ki shaheen banata nahi aashiyana (Iqbal, Shaheen)*

Hopkins in the same manner likes the beautiful eyes of the peacock. In the poem *The Peacock's eye* he writes:

*Mark you how the Peacock's eye,
Winks away its ring of green,
Battered for an azure dye (Hopkins, Lines-1-3).*

Hopkins admires the beautiful blue body of Peacock, eyes encircled with green colour. However, in the case of Dove he perceives him as a Holy Spirit. To naturalize the spiritual act of Dove, Hopkins emphatically proclaims through his poem *Peace*:

*He does not come to coo.
He comes to brood and sit (Hopkins, Peace, lines-10-11)*

In addition to the poetry on birds Hopkins is much more fascinated with the beauty of nature. He about the season of *Spring* writes that:

*What is spring?
Growth in everything-
Flesh and Fleece, fur and feather;
Star-eyed strawberry-breasted
Throstle above her nested
Cluster of bugle blue eggs in thin*

Forms and Warms the life within (Hopkins, Spring, Lines 15-22)

Iqbal about the season of Spring writes:

Mumkin hai ke tu jis ko samjta hai behara

Aouru ki nighahu mai woh musam ho khizan ka (Iqbal, Zameem we Aasmaan, lines, 1-2)

In the above couplet Iqbal by the word *Behara* meant revival of nature like Hopkins the growth in everything. During that season the fragrance of flowers and greenery of trees and meadows attracts the senses of every beholder.

Hence, both the poets have used natural imagery in their poetry. They have praised World due to its natural beauty and texture and have admired the creative art of God for beautifying the place of man with diverse natural objects. Besides their similarities on the basis of nature poetry they share close affinity on writing their poetry in relation to the religious subjects.

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