



A TRACE OF PANTHEISM IN THE SELECTED POEMS ON NATURAL PHENOMENA

SriVidya Narayanan

Guest Lecturer,
Department of English,
Women's Christian College,
Chennai, Tamil Nadu,
India.

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra2358>

ABSTRACT

Nature is one of the most predominant themes in Literature. Writers who are inspired by the beauty of nature write about it in different genres, especially in the form of poetry. They write poems briefly or elaboratively, about the splendid beauty of the physical world that has entranced them. In some of the nature poems, one could not only find wonderful descriptions of the natural world but also find a touch of pantheism, because of the poets' intense observation of the natural phenomena as the Divine power. In such works, the poets show a sense of gratitude to the Creator and His creations, because of the abundant blessings man has been receiving in various forms.

The poems written on nature, can also be rightly called as 'Green poems' or 'Environmental poems'. These poems not only appreciate the loveliness of nature, but also tells about the importance of man's relationship with nature. Such poems insist on the value of the environment man lives in, which is sometimes taken for granted. If only man finds time to appreciate the greatness of the physical world, would the Welsh poet have written the poem "Leisure", which appeared in his collection of poems titled, "Songs of Joy and Others", published in 1911.

*"What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.
No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.
No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.
No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night,
No time to turn at Beauty's glance,..."*

In the above-mentioned poem, the poet surrenders himself to nature admiring various things he sees around him. He states that each of the creations looks splendid in its way, but man fails to appreciate or even notice that. This is because, man has no time to spend for nature in this busy world, though he lives in the midst of it. Further, the poet also feels a communion with God when he values each of His creations. In the same way, the eleven poems mentioned in this article find a similarity, where the poets explicitly share the divinity and mysticism they find in the creations and the Creator.

KEYWORDS: Creator, Creation, Nature poems, Mysticism, Pantheism, Pantheist, Environmental poems.

INTRODUCTION

Nature has influenced and inspired not only the Romantic poets, but also writers and poets of all epochs across the globe. Nature is indispensable because it is the main source of livelihood for mankind. This dependency on nature has led man to worship the physical world. The bond between man and nature gets stronger only when man comprehends the language of nature. When that happens, it leads to pantheism. Pantheism is seeing God in every creation of Nature. A person who worships God in various forms of nature is called a pantheist. The poems mentioned in this article have a trace of pantheism, when the poets themselves have turned to be

the pantheists.

1. 'Sunrise' – James Thomson

James Thomson is a Scottish poet. 'The Season' is one of his best poems that is in four parts each is named after a season. This poem 'Sunrise' mentioned in the article, is an excerpt from his poem "Summer", that appeared in the year 1727. In this poem, the Sun is portrayed as the 'Powerful King'. The poem is about this majestic ruler who heaves in sight from the east and appears in the clear blue sky, showing the brighter side of life. The poet gives a picturesque description of how the Sun slowly projects from behind the mountain's upper edge.



" But yonder comes the powerful king of day,
Rejoicing in the east. The lessening cloud,
The kindling azure, and the mountain's brow..."

What would it be like without the Sun? The place would look lifeless. Everything around the earth would remain in darkness and the beauty of nature would not be seen at all. But, on the other hand, when the sun rises, it creates a magic on everything around. The Sun spells his golden hue from a very far away place on everything around the earth, to make each of the creation on earth shine brightly.

" ... And sheds the shining day that, burnished, plays.
On rocks, and hills, and towers and wandering streams
High gleaming from afar."

The poet has called the Sun 'Powerful king of day' because the Sun is like a King who rules the world. The Sun that rises from the eastern horizon gives hope to all creatures in the world to say it is a new day, a fresh beginning to start work after a peaceful night. The Sun indeed reigns the world! The presence of the Supreme Being is seen in the Sun because it has the power to expel the darkness. It also reassures that there is a ray of hope by illuminating the place.

2. 'I wandered lonely as a Cloud' – William Wordsworth

A poem most often quoted for the scenic effect of the poem that the poet has created through his words. "I wandered lonely as a Cloud" by William Wordsworth, is the original title of the poem, though it is often known as "Daffodils". It is one of the most unparalleled poems written by Wordsworth. He wrote this poem after being influenced by the lovely daffodils he saw in a long expanse of land. The poet is spellbound after looking at the golden daffodils, beside the lake. He feels heavenly to look at the daffodils tossing their heads in the breeze.

" A host, of golden daffodils,
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze."

More than the sparkling waves of the lake, it is the daffodils that are eye capturing. It is found in the poem that the poet is overwhelmed with joy in admiring the flowers for a long time. This gives him immense pleasure, and treasures these memories.

" I gazed – and gazed – but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:"

In the final stanza, the poet states that whenever he is alone lying on his couch, he cherishes the memories of the daffodils that gives him the blissfulness.

" They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,

And dances with the daffodils.

This poem is one of his most celebrated lyrics. He has revealed that he has been mesmerized by the lovely yellow flowers that made him feel heavenly. This poem has a trace of pantheism because he is awestruck by the heavenly creation.

3. 'Loveliest of Trees, the Cherry' – A. E. Housman

A.E. Housman in the poem "Loveliest of Trees, The Cherry", states how the floral tree has captivated him. The charming wonder has captured his attention that nothing else could divert him from looking away from the tree. The snow-covered on top of the tree makes the tree look even more beautiful. It also reminds him of the purity that associates with the festive season.

" The Loveliest of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide."

The poet also wishes to spend the rest of his lifetime only to admire the lovely floral tree. He knew it is a seasonal tree, still, he wishes to see it throughout his life only for the beauty of the flowers. This is one of the poems that appeared in "A Shropshire Lad", a series of 63 verses published in 1896. Though, this collection of poems are known for its pessimistic tone, this particular poem, can be viewed optimistically. The Easter season is the time for the rebirth, to feel the presence of the Lord. The poet does not only admire the tree but the creator of the tree as well, with whom he feels the communion, that he wants to spend the rest of his life only to experience that happiness.

4. 'Green Mountains' – James Russell Lowell

James Russell Lowell in his poem "Green Mountains" writes about the splendid beauty of the high mountains that seizes his attention. The poet shows his amazement at the grandness of the mountains, that he views from a distance. Yet, he is discontent, because he could not get a closer view of the majestic mountains.

"Ye mountains, that far off lift up your heads
Seem dimly through their canopies of blue,
The shade on my unrestful spirit sheds
Distance – created beauty over you;
I am not well content with this far view;..."

His ancestors or his contemporaries must have astonished as he has for these magnificent mountains, that has been there for ages and leaving everyone wonder at its presence. Just as how Emily Dickinson states in her poem "The Mountain", a majestic figure (the mountain) sits upon the plain which is its eternal chair, so does Lowell feel there is this greatness that man could hardly understand about this wonderful creation of God. The mountain is eternal as God, and the grandeur presence is inexplicable.



5. 'Summer Clouds' – Sarah Willis

The American novelist and short-story writer Sarah Willis has written this poem "Summer Clouds", in which she states how she spends her time gazing at the clouds on a quiet summer day. She is astounded by the variety of shapes it takes. The clouds look soft and pillowy and float in the air. The poet happens to see various shapes in the formation of the clouds. She lists out them one by one, a bird upon a ship, a whip, a flower like a rose, a rooster, a colt and a litten kitten having fun. She feels serene just by watching them move.

" I love to watch them when they drift
Into the many shapes as they shift
What a peaceful, pleasant way,
To spend a quiet summer day."

This poem is one of the most beautiful poems to tell about how a person can escape from the routine life and just lose oneself admiring the wonderful clouds floating by. Clouds are the source to bring in rain. They are not only found on rainy days but even on other days, just suspended in the air moving leisurely. Clouds paint themselves beautifully in different forms only to give happiness to those who observe their movements. Anything that creates tranquility and gives inner peace, is sure to be filled with the presence of God. Here the poet is stupefied of being lost in paying attention at the clouds that are floating.

6. 'April Rain Song' – Langston Hughes

Langston Hughes the American poet expresses his love for the rain in the poem " April Rain Song". He shows his happiness just like a child would, to share his experience of the rain showers on him. It is a wonderful feeling to sense the raindrop fall on a person's head. He calls the raindrops as the silver liquid drops. There is something harmonious about the sound of the rain that it is compared to a lullaby by the poet.

" Let the rain beat upon your head with silver liquid drops

Let the rain sing you a lullaby,..."

The whole place changes when it rains. It leaves little pools here and there and finds a place to run through the gutter. Its song on the roofs of their houses at night creates a peaceful atmosphere for the people to sleep happily as they listen to its music.

" The rain plays a little sleep song on our roof at night
And I love the rain."

This poem also states the presence of God that is felt in the form of rain. It is one of the blessings of God to man. This reminds of the couplet in Thirukkural –

"The world survives because of the rains and therefore
rain is known to be the nectar of immortality."

(Bk 1, Ch 2, V 11).

7. 'The Rainbow' – Charles Lamb

Charles Lamb, the famous essayist has also written poems and this is his colourful poem, "The Rainbow". The poet is mesmerized by the beauty of the rainbow after a storm. He counts the colours in the perfect half arch-shaped rainbow. He is puzzled because even a person with good vision could hardly make out where the finely blend colours begin or end. He is awestruck seeing the distinct colours in it and loves them all.

" Each precious tint is dear to me,
For every colour find I there,
Which flowers, which fields, which ladies wear:
My favourite green, the grass's hue,
And the fine deep violet – blue,
And the pretty pale blue – bell,
And the rose I love so well,..."

Though the rainbow stays only for a short while, he finds the hues in every creation of God, he sees all around him. He also states that everything He created has a tint added to it from the rainbow.

"In all their tints, in every shade,
Are from the rainbow's colours made"

It is very clear from the poet's description that he feels the presence of God in everything he sees around him, which he not only admires, but also adores.

8. 'Looking Glass River' – Robert Louis Stevenson

Robert Louis Stevenson wrote "Looking Glass River", is a poem from the collection of "A Child's Garden of Verses", published in the year 1885. The title of the poem itself states that the river is as clear as a looking glass, and a smooth flowing one. Since it is like a crystal, a person can see his reflection in the river, can look at the silver fishes that live in it, the gravel at the bottom of it and the flowers that have fallen from the trees in the river bank, float on it. The place looks attractive, that even a child wishes to live near the river.

" Sailing blossom, silver fishes,
Pave pools as clear as air -
How a child wishes
To live down there!"

The poet also mentions about the shimmering beauty of the river that is seen during the day when the sun's rays fall on it. There is something magical to look at the river when the ripples on the water are formed, and when the wind blows. All these could not be seen in the night, still, the river continues to flow like how it does during the day. Here the poet says that the river keeps flowing quenching the thirst of all the people who are dependent on it, just like the Lord who always gives abundant blessings for mankind.



9. 'It is a Beautiful Evening, Calm and Free' – William Wordsworth

This is one of the most beautiful sonnets of William Wordsworth, in which he makes a direct reference to the presence of God, in the form of the waves. He mentions about one calm evening he spent at the sea-shore, at the time of the sunset, when only the sound of the swash was heard filling him with tranquillity.

" It is a beautiful evening, calm and free,
The holy time is quiet as a Nun
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity;..."

He addresses to his little companion who walks along with him on the seashore, about the movements of the waves and the sounds produced by the waves are everlasting, just as the Almighty, who is eternal.

" The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea;
Listen! The mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder – everlastingly."

He is poet par excellence, known as nature worshipper. The two poems by Wordsworth mentioned in this article states that the poet is a pantheist, who sees the Supreme Being in all the beautiful creations found in the physical world.

10. 'Child Moon' – Carl Sandburg.

American poet, Carl Sandburg in his poem "Child Moon", states that the child is fascinated looking at the moon that shines in the sky which is far from reaching. Her attention is completely grabbed by the moon and nothing distracts her from it until the time she goes to sleep. She keeps sweetly telling tales of the moon till she falls asleep.

"Crying with her little tongue," see the moon!
And in the bed fading to sleep
With babblings of the moon on her little mouth."

The child is astonished at the old moon that appears night after night. The moon has been referred to as 'old' because, it has been there for ages and will remain so, an eternal beauty. God's presence is felt in that shining, silent moon because it makes people cheerful, every time they look at it. This poem proves that age never matters, when it comes to admiring nature and that God gives pleasure to all, either they have felt his presence or not.

11. 'The Starlight Night' - Gerald Manly Hopkins

The poet asks his reader to look up at the stars in the sky, at the very beginning of the poem. He states so because he feels that man has failed to notice the beauty of the stars that shine brightly in the sky during the night.

He marvels at the stars that are placed in a very high position. He exults at the creation of God. They sparkle and glitter like pieces of the precious jewels in the sky. Hopkins calls the night sky as a grey lawn where one would find the luminous stars.

"Look at the stars! Look,
Look up at the skies!
Oh look at all the fire-folk sitting in the air!
Down in dimwoods the diamond delves the elves'
– eyes!
The grey lawns cold where gold, where quick gold
lies!"

Poet conveys that this creation of God is wonderful that it gives hope for mankind even in the complete darkness, as they shine brilliantly. Poet clearly expresses that the twinkling stars make the dark sky heavenly where His presence is felt.

" O Lord, how manifold are your works!
In wisdom have you made them all;
The earth is full of your creatures.
Here is the sea, great and wide,
Which teems with creatures innumerable,
Living things both small and great."
Psalm 104: 24 – 25 (ESV)

"In all things of nature there is something of the marvellous," said Aristotle. This quote is proved true in the selected poems mentioned in this article that deals with eleven different creations that are unique in this physical world, that are found from morning to night. The poets have brought alive the scenic beauty they have seen, and have shared their inner feelings in the poems, giving a visual treat to their readers. The picturesque details in the poems reveals how blissed the poets have felt experiencing the different forms of nature. In these works, the poets have felt the Supreme presence in the natural phenomena which has influenced them to become nature worshippers and to write such distinct poems.

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