

A Comparative Analysis of Robert Frost and Emily Dickinson’s Vision of Nature

Dr. Richa Tewari

Former Assistant Professor, Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam Technical University, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India.

ABSTRACT

Since the closing decades of the eighteenth century, ‘Nature’ has been one of the most recurrent themes of English and American Poetry. The chief exponent of this subject, William Wordsworth, explored its utmost philosophical limits and in doing so, set a trap of convention for the succeeding generations of poets. From him down to the Victorian poets in England and through them to Bryant and Emerson in America, every poet, faithfully and at times exasperatingly echoed some of the notable aspects of his attitude towards nature. From Wordsworth up to Hardy, each poet spiritualized or personified Nature. To them, nature spoke a significant language and stirred within them, profound philosophical reflections. In this group, can also be placed writers like Poe, Melville and Henry James. But the American poet Robert Frost’s (1874 - 1963) approach to nature was a fusion of all these. Sometimes he simply observed and recorded beauties of nature, at times he found spiritual echoes in it, and still at some other times he found nature to be a mirror of human soul. But he never saw nature away from nature. Frost’s treatment of nature better can be assessed by comparing his stance with that of another nature poet.

In this paper Robert Frost’s realistic approach to ‘Nature’ has been compared with another American nature poet Emily Dickinson (1830-1886). She was “the most perfect flower of New England Transcendentalism”, an anticipator of metaphysical poetry, a smeller of modernity, and an upholder of romanticism. A religious poet with keen sensibilities and a Puritan’s thorough knowledge of the Bible, she could not help being intensely aware of Nature’s glory.

FROST AND DICKINSON’S VISION OF NATURE

The present study focuses on Frost’s attitude towards nature in relation to man and his life as well as to bring out his “rich and ripe philosophy” which underlies his nature poetry. As far as Emily Dickinson’s nature poetry is concerned, the highly sensitive and creative mind of Emily Dickinson must have definitely been influenced by the nature poetry of Wordsworth. She while sitting in her little solitary world, at the windowpane, observed every minute object of nature with her keen power of observation. She expresses in the following poem how she feels towards the objects of nature:

Several of nature’s people
I know and they know me
I feel for them a transport
Of cordiality.

The poem quoted below serves as an excellent example to illustrate Dickinson’s attitude towards Nature, which very much seems to coincide with that of Wordsworth’s:

Nature, the gentlest mother
Impatient of no child

The feeblest or the way wardest-
Her admonition mild.
... ..
When all the children sleep
She turns as long away
As will suffice to light her lamps
Then bending from the shy,
With infinite affection
With infinite care,
Her golden finger on her lip
Wells silence everywhere.

To Miss Dickinson, Nature appears as the gentlest mother, very affectionate, loving, care-taking, soothing and comforting her bruised children. On the other hand, Frost does not idealize or romanticize nature but he gives us the truth about her. His poems on natural objects, such as “Birches”, “Mending Wall” or “The Grindstone” are not always concerned with them for mystical meditation or fantasy, but

on which man acts in the course of the daily work of earning a livelihood. He is not like Wordsworth or other romantics at all. Frost's nature poems tell us, not so much of rare, lofty, chosen moments of mysterious intuitions, but of his daily and common experience.

The common objects of nature like changes in the season, the sun-set and the sun-rise, birds, flowers, wind and the storm fascinated and stirred Emily Dickinson's imaginations and filled her with exultation and immense pleasure. She seems to be very anxious and curious for witnessing the bright morning. In such a mood following lines issues from her mind:

Will there really a morning?
In there such a thing as day?
Could I see it from the mountains
If I were as tall as they
... ..
Oh, some scholar! oh some sailor!
Oh, some wise man from the skies!
Please to tell a little pilgrim
Where the place called "Morning" lies.

The keen and curious eyes of the poetess ultimately catch hold of the glimpse of long-awaited "Morning" and she writes:

The day came slow, till five o; clock
Then sprang before the hills
Like hundred rubies, or the light
A sudden musket spells
The purple could not keep the east
The sunrise shook from fold
Like breadths of topaz, patched a light
The lady just unrolled.

The slow but steady arrival of morning fills the heart of the poetess with immense pleasure and ecstasy. The peaceful and tranquil moments of morning give her soothing and consoling impact like the Paradise:

The morning lit, the birds arose,
The monster's faded eyes
Turned slowly to his native coast
And peace was Paradise!

But her clear and sharp perception and insight enable her to notice the inevitable change, taking place in the world of nature. In the following lines she personifies morning fluttering and staggering for her crown:

The morning fluttered, staggered
Felt feebly for her crown-
Her unanointed forehead
Henceforth her only one.

Like Miss Dickinson, Frost also is a great lover of birds, insects, animals and seasons. But his love of nature is more comprehensive, many sided and all- inclusive. Frost, like Emily Dickinson, has an equal keen eye for the sensuous and the beautiful in nature, as well as for the harsher and the unpleasant. His flowers, trees and animals are all described with affection, yet none of his nature poem is free from hints of possible danger. "Spring Pools", for example, begins innocently enough with a description of the pools and flowers which one sees in the woodland in early spring. Then, suddenly the tone becomes grave.

The trees that have it in their pent-up buds
To darken nature and be summer woods-
Let them think twin before they use their powers
To blot out and drink up and sweep away
These flowery, watery and these watery flowers
From snow that melted only yesterday.

Dickinson's minute observation of nature led her to present image after image to describe various objects of nature. Sometimes she reacts to the day- break and morning -break in the following way:

By and by the boldest stole out of his covert
To see if time was there
Nature was in her beryl operon
Mixing fresher air,

While sitting in her solitary room at the windowpane, Dickinson gave an outlet to her fancy and imagination and perceived the dramatic element in the world of nature. The same dramatic element is visible in the following lines:

Angels in the early morning
May be seen the dew among
Stooping, plucking, smiling, flying
Do the buds to them belong?
Angels when the sun is hottest
May be seen the sands among
Stooping, plucking, singing, flying
Perched the flowers they bear along.

The dramatic element present in Dickinson's nature poems may also be found in Frost's nature poetry. The dramatic element in Frost's nature – poems varies from characters to characters, and also according to a change in the mood,

thought, emotions, and situations of the same character, for example, in "Stooping by Woods on a Snowy Evening", "Mending Wall", "After Apple-Picking" show this dramatic element. Following are the lines from "The Mountain":

There is no village – only scattered farms.
We were but sixty voters last elections.
We can't in nature grow to many more:
That thing takes all the room!

In "Mending wall", the speaker in the poem, the poet himself, and his neighbour get together every spring to repair stonewall between their respective properties. Frost seems to be in sympathy with some elemental spirit in nature which denies all boundaries. It is suggested here that there is some supernatural power at work in nature that is against all fences and walls:

Something there is that doesn't love a wall
That sends the frozen ground swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
It might be some mysterious fairy:
Something there is that doesn't love a wall
That wants it down. I could say 'Elves' to him,
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
He said it for himself.

A minute observer of nature as Dickinson was, nothing of nature escaped her notice. Among the natural phenomena, she greatly admired were the sunrise and the sunset:

I'll tell you how the sun rose –
A ribbon at a time
The steeples swarm in amethyst
The news like squirrel ran.
... ..
But how he set, I know not
Then seemed a purple stile
Which little yellow boys and girls
Were climbing all the while.

In the above poem, Dickinson uses a series of action-verbs and domestic images to convey the quick surprises and changing colours of the dawn. A better poem on the same subject opens with an arresting conceit:

Blazing in fold and quenching in purple
Leaping like leopards to the sky
Then at the feet of the old horizon

Laying her spotted face, to die;
Stopping as low as the kitchen window
Touching the roof and tinting the barn,
Kissing her bonnet to the meadow-
And the juggler of day is gone!

In the above poem, Dickinson has sketched photographically the dramatic element present in the world of nature. Similarly, in the following poem her vivid description and minute observation of nature is worth noting:

The skies can't keep their secret!
They tell it to the hills –
The hills just tell the orchards –
And they the daffodils –
A Bird by chance, that goes that way
Soft overheard the whole
If I should bribe the little bird
Who knows but she would tell?

The above poem depicts how the poetess, riding on the viewless wings of imagination, soars higher and higher and transports the reader to the divine world of nature. The reader, as a result, shares the secrets of nature with other objects of nature.

So far as Frost's nature descriptions are concerned, these are minute, deep, accurate and precise. In the lyric "The Mountain", beautiful passages of nature-description are scattered all over the poem. A realist is one who really knows the thing he deals with, and Frost is a realist in his nature-descriptions, for he has a farmer's intimate knowledge of the natural scenes and sights of the region, lying in the north of Boston. He observes minutely and describes accurately and precisely:

When I walked forth at dawn to see new things,
Were fields, a river, and beyond, more fields:
The river at time was fallen away
And made a widespread brawl on cobble-stones;
But the signs showed what it had done in spring:
Good grass – land gullied out, and in the grass
Ridges of sand, and driftwood stripped of bark.

Emily Dickinson's love for birds and insects is quite like that of Frost. She describes different types of birds here and there in her nature-poems such as "I Have a Bird in Spring", "The Bee is Not Afraid of Me", "These are the Days When Birds Come Back", "The Murmur of a Bee", "A Bird Came Down the Walk", "Further in Summer Than the Birds", "Bees are Black, With Gift Surcingle's" and so on:

A bird came down the walk –
He did not know I saw –
He bit an Anglemorm in halves
And ate the fellow, raw,
And then he drank a Dew
From a convenient grass –
And then hopped side wise to wall
To let a Beetle pass -

The above poem describes a bird that comes across the poet in a garden. The poetess minutely observes the bird and gives the reader the details of each and every activity of the bird. Similarly, her love of birds is visible in a different nature poem, "I Have a Bird in Spring:"

Yet do I not repine
Knowing that bird of mine
Though flown –
Learneth beyond the sea
Melody new for me
And will return.

In the same way, Frost is a great lover of birds, insects and animals, especially keen and sympathetic was his interest in birds, and he observed their ways and habits, minutely and painstakingly. Birds appear and re-appear in a large number of his poems. "A Minor Bird", "Never Again Would Birds' Song be the Same", "A Blue Ribbon at Amesbury", "Looking for a Sunset Bird in Winter", "The Oven Bird", etc. are all devoted to affectionate and sympathetic study of the ways and habits of birds. "The Oven Bird" calls for a special consideration, as it brings out the best in Frost's bird-poems. The poem describes the habits of a kind of thrush which builds a nest resembling an oven, and which in its song expresses its knowledge of the changing seasons:

There is a singer everyone has heard
Loud, a mid-summer and mid-wood bird,
Who makes the solid tree trunks sound again.
He says that leaves are old and that for flowers
Mid- summer is to spring as one to ten.
... the highway dust is overall.
The bird would cease and be as other birds
But he knows is singing not to sing.
The question that he frames in all but words
Is what to make of a diminished thing

Often when dealing with the lower creatures of nature, Frost's tone becomes caressing and affectionate. For

example, the society of ants in "The Departmental" has been described elaborately, and the effect is amusing and funny. Frost constantly notes the doings, ways and habits, of these humble partners in nature's teaming family; his observation is sympathetic and loving; their ways are likened to human ways, they are interpreted in human terms; and the effect is extremely humorous and delightful. At other times, he brings out the pathos of their existence, the suffering, which they have to undergo at the hands of man and nature.

Emily Dickinson seems to be deeply influenced and fascinated by the magical movement of the rotation of day and night. Everything in the world of nature is in a state of flux; nothing is static, everything keeps changing.

The dramatic occurrences of summer, rains, lightning, and storms impressed Dickinson equally. The uncontrollable power of these storms, with their complete dominion over man's world, gave her a sense of 'Circumference' and religious fear, which deepened their picturesque effect:

The wind begun to rock the grass
With threatening tunes and low –
He flung a menace at the earth,
A menace at the sky.

The poem quoted above employs touches of local colour, which, together with fantastic array of action- verbs, exhibits the mysterious chaos of a sudden summer downpour.

There came a wind like a Bugle
It quivered through the grass
And a green chill upon the heat...

The above lines, extracted from a storm-poem, enlarge the feeling of reverence and surprise that any life can survive such onslaughts. We note a sharp distinction between the early and the later period of Emily Dickinson's poetic career especially the poems dealing with the theme of nature. In the early phase of her writing, she could concentrate only on the external phenomena of natural world and like romantic poets, she picked up any object of nature and admired and appreciated in her verse. In the following beautiful poem on 'flower', her heartaches at the worthless, unknown, life of beautiful flowers, which grow and perish unnoticed:

How many flowers fail in wood
Or perish from the hill
Without the privilege to know
That they are beautiful!
How many cast a nameless poet
Upon the nearest breeze
Unconscious of the scarlet freight
It bears to other eyes!

Emily Dickinson, in the above poem, sympathizes with the obscure fate of those flowers, which bloom and blossom, without knowing their own worth and value that they are beautiful. There is yet another poem dealing with the same theme which shows Emily Dickinson's deep-rooted sympathy with the objects of nature:

The mountains grow unnoticed
Their purple figure rise
Without attempt, exhaustion
Assistance or applause.

The description of the hesitant, almost tentative approach of the spring season, the sudden blossoming forth of the leaves and flowers delight Emily Dickinson. Spring received ampler treatment in another poem in which each line gives separate characteristics of spring season:

A wider sunrise in the morn –
A deeper twilight on the lawn –
A print of a vermilion foot –
A purple finger on the slope –

The same theme is repeated in another poem where valley, the hills, the trees are swept clean and are given what in modern cliché is called "face-left" in honour of the visiting spring:

The tidy breeze, with their Brooms
Sweep vale-and hill-and tree!
Prethee my pretty Housewives
Who may expected be?

Again, in the following poem, Dickinson repeats the idea in her characteristically witty manner:

Spring is the period
Express from God
Among other seasons
Himself abide.
But during March and April
None stir abroad
Without a cordial interview
With God.

This poem is perhaps Miss Dickinson's best analysis of the peculiar awe that the season of spring inspires. Spring was Dickinson's favorite season such as displayed the wonder of rebirth and openly promised the warm beauty of summer. She calls spring a time, sent directly from God and particularly welcomed March as the herald of spring. It is here she describes March, as the pivot of the New Year, when spring transforms the cold barren winter. Spring's

hope is compared to a rarely glimpsed light, which carries regent and religious associations to signify the psychological insights that occur at such a moment. This illumination heightens man's emotional awareness of spring's mysteries and enlarges his poignant sense of estrangement.

In the final stanza of the same poem, the poetess states the significance of the experience emphasizing its religious value and desolation that follows its departure.

A quality of loss
Affecting our content
As trade had suddenly encroached
Upon a sacrament.

In the following poem, Dickinson's love and absorption in the object of nature is vividly perceptible. She moves to more and more thoughtful consideration of the whole cycle of seasons in "New Feet Within My Garden Go":

New feet within my garden go,
New fingers stir the sod,
... ..
New children play upon the green
New weary sleep below;
And still the pensive spring returns
And still the punctual snow!

As the time goes on, the light existing in spring, slowly but steadily disappears, leaving it dull, monotonous and 'pensive'. The light that she speaks of is not the visionary gleam seen by the mystics. It is a colour, which cannot be perceived by scientific observation but can only be felt by those, who have matched the change of seasons with loving care. The spring and the summer seasons were the most stimulating and inspired a large number of her poems.

This is wrong to suppose that since Emily Dickinson had cut herself adrift from the long tradition of nature poetry, bequeathed to her generation by Wordsworth; it may seem that she did not have much to write about. On the contrary, she wrote more than 500 poems on nature and there are hardly any of nature's creatures under the sun, and within her physical reach which escaped her attention. For obvious reasons, her major themes were the seasons and the elemental forces, which brought about a change.

On the other hand, Frost is, according to some critics and writers, not regarded as a nature-poet but as a poet of country life. But John F. Lynen says in this connection: "That one can hardly avoid thinking of him as a nature-poet". Frost began as a nature-poet, and his interest in nature persisted throughout his career.

Like Emily Dickinson Frost is also a great lover of nature. He too described minutely and accurately the seasons, birds,

animals, insects, flowers, trees, hills and dales, rivers and forests, but they just form the background to his poetry. Frost can appreciate the beauty of nature; he can enjoy the sensuousness of nature, for example, in "After Apple-Picking", the intoxicating heady scent of the apples is everywhere. The scent of apples in the poem reminds us of "drowsed with fumes of poppy", in Keats' "Ode to Autumn":

The scent of apples. I am drowsing off
I can not rub the strangeness from my sight
I got from looking through a pane of glass
I skimmed this morning from the drinking trough
And held against the world of heavy grass,
It melted, and I let it fall and break.

Here, Frost is enjoying the sensuousness created by the scent of apples, but it would be a mistake to suppose that Frost is a mere painter of pleasant things. Even when revealing the sensuous charm of nature, Frost is not long unaware of the sinister and the ugly that may lie hidden beneath the surface.

The best of Dickinson's poetry belongs to the metaphysical poetry. Metaphysical poetry is the type of poetry written in the 17th century of Donne and his followers and revived in America and England in the twentieth century.

The greatest strength of Emily Dickinson's poetry lay in the freshness and unconventionality of her imagery, where she reflects her metaphysical temperament. Emily Dickinson's metaphysical eye catches startlingly new images while looking at the familiar and common-place nature.

A color stand abroad
On solitary Fields
That science can not overtake
But Human Nature feels
Then as Horizon step
Or Noons report away
Without the Formula of sound
It passes and we stay -

A few of Frost's nature poems also exhibit the symbolic metaphysical structure of modern verse. Such opposites as fact and fancy, observation and imagination, earth and heaven, reality and ideality, combine to enrich the texture of his poetry. For example, in the poem "Birches", the lyric can be read and enjoyed as a plain, simple description of the habits of birches. But it is also possible to interpret it symbolically. The upward climb towards heaven of the birch swinger symbolizes human ideals and aspirations, the human desire to withdraw from harsh reality, the dream-world of fancy into which man would like to escape from wearisome conditions of life on this earth.

I'm weary of considerations,
And life is too much like a pathless wood
When you face burns and tickles with the cobwebs
... ..
May no fate willfully misunderstand me
And half grant what I wish and snatch me away
Not to return. Earth's the right place for love:
I don't know where it's likely to go better.

The poet, in the above lines, is fed up with the problems of human life but at the same time, he is not willing to leave this world, for, he dares to face the complexities of life and want to live more on this earth with love and happiness.

Emily Dickinson used to go out on picnic parties in her girlhood. She gradually withdrew to her garden, house and finally to her room from where she observed the outer world. From an "ample crack" in the window curtain, she saw the branch of the apple tree:

Like a Venetian- waiting
Accosts my open eye -

How minutely she watches the change occurring in the world of nature:

Dear march, come in!
How glad I am!
I looked for you before,
Put down your hat -
... ..
Who knocks? That April!
Lock the door!

She reacts to changing seasons differently. While she welcomes March, she is not prepared to show any hospitality to April. She draws affinity between the activity of children and the movement of beautiful flowers:

As children bid the guest good night,
And then reluctant turn,
My flowers raise their petty lips
Then put their nightgowns on
As children caper when they wake
Merry that it is morn,
My flowers from a hundred cribs,
Will peep, and prance again.

Dickinson was fascinated by the phenomena of nature, by the variety of its colour and the sound, and with her characteristic analytical mind she explored the complex

implications of her experience. In this, as in various other respects, she anticipated the modern attitude, which refers to make up any facile assignment of man in relation to the cosmos, and views nature as something shorn of all sentimentality. It would be wrong to believe, however, that Emily Dickinson did not occasionally slip into the prevalent convention of transcendentalism, but more often than not, her conventional thinking was coloured by the whims of her thought and expression.

Dickinson, however, never claimed to have understood the deep mystery of the phenomena of nature. Even though gifted with acute power of observation and the intensely sensitive mind of a great artist, she did not succeed in entering the innermost sanctuary of nature. For her, nature and God were two unknowable entities, which were beyond the range of human knowledge. She did not pretend to read ultimate meanings in nature. For her, nature was an endless carnival of entertainment. It was also a source of metaphor to illustrate the truths of her interview with the world.

The external loveliness of the forests and the hills are only the outer fringe of the tent:

We spy the Forest and the Hills
The Tents to Nature's show
Mistake the outside for the in
And mention what we saw.

Again, Dickinson argues in another poem that nature is 'sedate' at times and 'grand' on other occasions, but our observation should end there, as nature's practices extend to necromancy:

To Necromancy and the Trades
Remote to understand
Behold our spacious citizen
Unturned juggler turned.

Dickinson was cramped by the limitations of her expression to delineate in words. Like T.S. Eliot who emerged on the poetic scene almost a century later, she also felt the inadequacy of words, not only in the formulation of philosophical abstractions but also in the communication of what senses perceived:

Nature is what we see
The Hill – the Afternoon
Nay – Nature is Heaven –
Nature is what we hear
... ..
Nay, Nature is Harmony
Nature is what we know
Yet have no art to say

So impotent our wisdom is

To her Simplicity.

Nature's ostensible simplicity and artlessness is deceptive and conceals the illusive complexity, which we have neither the discerning wisdom nor the competence of art to describe.

Emily Dickinson's departure from romanticism was thus complete. In rejecting the Emersonian assumption of merging of man, nature and God, she went a step further to ridicule the transcendentalists in one of her poems.

A little madness in the spring
Is wholesome even for the king.

Unlike Frost, Emily Dickinson declares her monopoly over the enjoyment of the attractions of nature and exclaims in a mood of superiority over other human beings:

The sun went down –
No man looked on,
The earth and I alone
Were present at the majesty.
Not only this, she goes to the extent of saying:
Heaven has different sign to me
Sometime I think that noon
Is but a symbol of the place
... ..
All these remind us of the place
The man called "Paradise".

The poetess feels proud of herself because she can look deeper in the heart of things and also, can share the moods of nature.

Emily Dickinson must have been familiar with Wordsworth. The spectacle of nature did not urge her to philosophize on her own or on human predicament and more than anything else. It was for her a feast for the eye, which she hopes to recreate in her poetry. She loves the natural world, her earthly paradise, for its winds and storms, its black-bees, its robin which eats its worm raw, the snake in its boggy acre, bats and rats, and spiders, the humming-bird and fifty other creatures, sights, sounds and sensations. If we attempt to summarize the poet's responses to natural sights and phenomena, it excites a feeling of wonder in us. "What Mystery Pervades a Well!" is a poem, in which images of the deep well and "floorless sea" lead to the following comment –

But nature is a stranger yet
The ones that cite her most
Have never passed her haunted house
Nor simplified her ghost.

Dickinson has very vividly depicted her own confused conception of nature in the following little poem:

Not knowing when the dawn will come
I open every door
Or has it feathers like a bird
Or billows like a shore?

Some of the romantics, notably Wordsworth and Walt Whitman, had turned to the homely aspects of the natural scene, but it was either to find God in natural objects or to preach the democracy of all created things. Miss Dickinson found both these philosophies alien. She sought new approaches, as in a group of poems celebrating aristocracy of leisure in nature's humble forms. In one of these, she went to the extent of praising a weed for being unconscious of its low station, at summer's close, sweep "as lightly from disdain, as lady from her lower". Her poem on grass, usually recorded as merely as amusing is a celebration of the majestic leisure of Nature:

The grass so little has to do –
A sphere of simple grass –
With only Butterflies to brood
And Bees to entertain.

The treatment of natural object, like "Grass", no matter how insignificant it looks yet Dickinson's thinking and keen observation has made it significant. No doubt, her approach to nature is unique, and has avoided the theme of nature – as healer, which had grown hackneyed in the poetry of her country.

A companion poem on the pebble, supplements her tribute to grass by emphasizing more insistently nature's separateness from man. The stone is carefree because it fulfils "absolute decree". Its perfect serenity results from its "simplicity" as with grass. But such happy stable of affairs is impossible for human beings, whose consciousness separates him from this harmony.

Gradually a change is perceptible in Emily Dickinson's treatment of nature. Her early period of creation follows the conventional trend of nature poetry, depicting it like "the gentlest mother," soothing and comforting her bruised children. In fact, in these poems she delights in nature's external pageantry and expresses a sentimental enthusiasm about the red breast of the robin, and the beautiful colours of the butterfly. But his latter poems show the distrust of such analogies and depict an ironic contrast between nature's ordered majesty with man's doomed mortality. Unlike Wordsworth but just like Frost, her view is that nature mocks rather than comforts man. Some of her poems analyze nature's betrayal of those hearts that love her most:

The morning after woe,
This frequently the way,

Surpasses all that rose before
For utter jubilee
As Nature did not care
And piled her blossoms on.
The further to parade a joy
Her victim stared upon.

The above poem clearly explains the indifferent part played by Nature. This reminds us of Frost's famous lines from "The Runaway":

A little Morgan had one forefoot on the wall,
The other curled at his breast.
... ..
'I think the little fellow's afraid of the snow.
He isn't winter-broken ... He's running away.
... ..
And now he comes again with clatter of stone,
And mounts the wall again with whited eyes
And all his tail that isn't hair up straight.

It clearly brings out Frost's love and sympathy for the creatures of nature, despite his view that man and nature are not one. Nature is not a kindly mother watching benignly over her creatures, rather she is an unfeeling, cruel alike to man and animal. The colt is a fugitive in nature because she does not take care of it. It is as much afraid of nature as of man.

The same vein of thought continues in the following poem of Emily Dickinson:

I dreaded that first Robin, so,
But He is mastered, now,
I'm some accustomed to Him grown,
He hurts a little, though –
... ..
I dared not meet the Daffodils –
For fear their Yellow Gown
Would pierce me with a fashion
So foreign to my own –

Miss Dickinson's treatment of nature in her poetry distinguished her from other nature poets. While some of her earlier poems are conventional praise of nature, as "The gentlest mother" but her mature outlook is absolutely different. In one of her nature poems "What Mystery Pervades a Well," She examines the mystery associated with a deep well:

What mystery pervades a well!
The water lives so far
Like neighbor from another world
Residing in a jar.
... ..
But nature is a stranger yet:
The ones that cite her most
Have never passed her haunted house,
Nor simplified her ghost.
And, finally she concludes the poem by exclaiming:
To pity those that know her not
Is helped by the regret
That those who know her, know her less,
The nearer her they get.

Nature, according to Dickinson, remains mysterious and elusive. The more we scrutinize nature's processes, the more complex and bewildering they become. Essentially, nature exists as an alien baffling force that defies full comprehension. Thus, her approach is wide apart from that of visionary pantheists like Wordsworth. Her outlook on nature in her mature lyrics is quite much like that of the particular attitude of Frost towards nature in the poem "Design":

I found a dimpled spider, fat and white,
On a white heal-all, holding up a moth
Like a white piece of rigid satin cloth –
Assorted characters of death and blight
Mixed ready to begin the morning right,
Like the ingredient of a witches' broth –
A snow-drop spider, a flower like a froth,
And dead wings carried like a paper kite.

In the end, the poet concludes that there is some awful power at the back of things. Frost rejects the romantic, complacent and optimistic view of nature as kind and benevolent. He ends the poem saying that:

What but design of darkness to appall? -
If design govern in a thing so small.

Thus, Frost's world-view is a terrifying one and certainly challenges the romantic view of nature.

A number of Emily Dickinson's poems reveal to us the truth that her description of nature illuminates her philosophy. Her mind-set on nature is something complex like that of Frost and does not fall into a neat philosophy as that of Wordsworth. She had no faith in nature as a guide of formal behaviour. No doubt, she has observed the charming and fascinating

aspects of nature, yet she, like Frost, is well aware of the destructive and corruptive aspects of nature. Her attitude to nature is not lop-sided or biased at all. Wordsworth says that 'nature never betrays the heart that loves her', but Emily Dickinson as well as Frost find nature the betrayal of those hearts that love her most, and nature 'does not always lead from joy to joy'. It is where both Emily Dickinson and Frost stand in sharp contrast with Wordsworth, who holds the view that 'nature brings food for future years.'

Like Frost, Emily Dickinson is preoccupied with the destructive aspects of nature. The violent, devastating forces of nature, like storm, lightning, thunders, attracted her most. She had a keen eye for the repulsive, ugly, decaying and corruptive power in nature.

Emily Dickinson deviated from the conventional appreciation of the objects of nature and emphasizes the decaying and corruptive authority lying hidden in the world of nature. The following poem on such theme is remarkable:

Apparently with no surprise
To any happy flower
The frost beheads it at its play
In accidental power.
The blond assassin passes on
The sun proceeds unmoved
To measure off another day
For an approving God.

In the above poem, she describes how mercilessly the frost kills a happy flower. She even questions if nature has any meaning at all because the universe that proceeds indifferently and is untouched by such crimes, haunts one with terror. Similarly in another poem, "A Lady Red upon the Hill," she concludes by stressing the hostility of nature:

And yet how still the landscape stands
How nonchalant the wood
As if the "resurrection"
Were nothing very odd!

One of the important poems "A Narrow Fellow in the Grass" deals with the terror and awe of snakes in the grass. Like the humming birds, the snake's route is one of the instantaneous appearing and disappearing:

A Narrow Fellow in the grass
Occasionally rides –
You may have not Him – did you not
His notice sudden is –
... ..
But never met this fellow

Attended, or alone
Without a tighter breathing
And Zero at the Bone –

Perhaps it is only in this poem that Miss Dickinson treats nature as actively hostile. The above poem offers a rather disturbing investigation of Nature's mystery. Here the poetess examines the terror and awe that a snake's presence can cause. A series of artistic progressions develop the snake image into a symbol of the unknown. At first, the snake is treated very playfully; his sudden 'notice' and quick moments fascinate the observer and conveys a sense of regality and power as his coiling body is compared to a 'whip lash unbraid the sun'. Thus, the image of the snake develops the association with man's fear of the unknown and evil itself. Here the sense of hidden terror behind nature's surface beauty fascinates and frightens the onlooker. Thus, the above poem on snake effectively draws the attention of the reader to the stark realities of nature in the form of sudden terror behind nature's external appearance. On the contrary, Wordsworth's immense love and adoration for nature blinded him to such realistic aspect of nature. Thus, the poem considers the ambivalence of nature's beauty and grace having such a destructive core. Beneath its tranquil surface exists a world of fear and continuous warfare. Dickinson feels that bat is an ugly creature, seems to mock the beauties of nature and writes in an ironic tone:

The Bat is dun, with wrinkled wings –
Like fallow Article –
And not a song pervades his lips
Or none perceptible ...
Elate philosopher.

Nothing in the vast range of nature could escape her microscopic perception and her eyes caught view of every single object of nature, not leaving the dark-wrinkled winged bat, roaming about in the dark and silent hours of night. Similarly, the same playful note is struck in another charming poem, on an object of nature, seldom chosen for conventional poetic treatment. The poem is:

The mushroom in the elf of plants
At evening it is not
At morning in a truffled hut
It stops upon a spot
Is vegetation's juggler
The germ of Alibi.

The fantastic comparisons and mock- heroic phrase like "vegetation's juggler", "germ of Alibi" enhance the humorous effect while underlying the baffling nature of the mushroom seems to defy nature's rules. Thus, the above poem on mushroom offers an excellent blend of humour and mysticism.

Like Frost she found nature to be complex, mysterious, not fully comprehensible, on the whole, an alien force.

Similarly, Frost's "Good-Bye and Keep Cold" is a lyric in a whimsical, humorous vein, but as usual with Frost, his light, playful manner is combined with deep philosophy. The poet makes the readers laugh, but he also makes them see common objects of nature in a new light. The poet-farmer is going away with the fall of winter season, and at the time of departure, he bids good-bye to his orchard and also advises a bit to be followed in his absence:

This saying good – bye on the edge of the dark
And the cold to an orchard so young in the bark
Reminds me of all that can happen to harm
An orchard away at end of the farm
All winter, cut off by a hill from the house.
I don't want it girdled by rabbit and mouse,
I don't want it dreamily nibbled for browse
By deer, and I don't want it budded by grouse.

The poet does not want all this to happen. If he could do so, he would certainly call mouse, rabbit and grouse, make them stand by the wall and warn them not to harm his orchard, threatening them with his stick as if it were a gun, but it is rare idle fancy, and he knows very well that this can not be done. Continuing in the same light and fanciful vein, the poet-farmer warns the orchard not to get warm in his absence. Nothing, not even the "winterest storm", can harm an orchard more than getting warm. In order to protect the orchard from the heat of the sun, he had taken care to plant it on the northern slope of a hill. He warns it again and again to keep cold, for heat can cause the greatest possible harm to it.

To Frost, there is no oneness or identity between one creature of nature and another. Thus, the young orchard has as much to fear from earth as from sky. The poet does not consider nature as a benign mother though he has an implicit faith in God. The poet bids good – bye to the orchard, and goes away leaving it under the care of God. After all, one has no alternative but to have faith in 'divine love and mercy':

Its heart sinks lower under the sod.
But something has to be left to God.

Thus, Frost's attitude towards nature is pessimistic and negative while his credence in the Supreme power is fairly optimistic.

Nature's superiority and self-sufficiency over man's fumbling awkwardness has been illuminated by Dickinson in the lyric, "A Bird Came Down the Walk". In this poem she touches the spring of difference to the two words i.e., the word of nature and world of man. the remarkable line is – "He did not know I saw," as long as the poetess is unobserved, the life of nature

goes on with such spontaneous informality as to give her some hope of participating in it. But nature is alien to man because the external world is ultimately unknowable by the mind, even its forms vanish before man's eyes. Thus, she seen nature not only irrevocably separated from man but indifferent to man's feelings and emotions also. She wrote, "Nature must be too young to feel or many years too old". This view is in sharp contrast to the nature poetry of her heritage and this belief underlines her best work.

Similarly, "Further in Summer than the Birds" is a fine example of Miss Dickinson's Nature poetry dealing with the well-known insect, the cricket:

Further in Summer than the Birds
Pathetic from the grass
A Minor Nation celebrates
Its unobtrusive Mass...

The poem shows Dickinson's fascination for nature's odd creatures and the mysterious passage of summer into winter. She associates the cricket's song with the sadness of seasonal change, as in this poem. Basically, the poem records her response to the monotonous chirping of the crickets on a hot August noon, near the end of summer. The image of cricket is transformed into a striking symbol of the estrangement and sorrow that man feels with the approach of winter, an echo of his own intimations of mortality. In a sense, their song shows the cleavage of man from nature. Man can perceive that his isolation is not a unique phenomenon but cosmic and universal.

In order to explore the separateness between man and the natural world, Frost in the lyric "I Will Sing You One - O", explores the ghastly height of the sky and brings out the terrifying loneliness and isolation of man. In the poem, one winter night the poet lay awake and wanted the clock-tower to strike the hour so that he might know what time of night it was. Outside, snow was falling and the poet could also hear the hissing of the wind. A violent storm was blowing, and it seemed as if the winds blowing from opposite directions were struggling with each other. The storm outside is symbolic of the conflict and agitation within the poet's own soul. The poet, impatiently, waited for the clock to strike, but it did not strike. This long wait made him scared that, perhaps, the intensity of the cold had stopped the movement of the golden hands of the clock:

But feared the cold
Had checked the face
Of the tower clock
By tying together
Its hands of gold.

Then suddenly the tower - clock struck 'one'. The clocks seemed to be speaking to the poet of the sun, the moon,

the stars, Saturn and Mars and Jupiter. The striking of the clocks reminded him that like the clocks, the universe is also a machine, though much vaster and more immense. It is so vast that in it huge stars are constantly breaking up and exploding, but to the human eye they seem stationary. They are so distant that:

In that grave word
Uttered alone
The utmost star,
Trembled and stirred,
Though set so far.
It whirling frenzies
Appear like standing
In one self station.

The poem fully brings out that the universe that Frost conceives of is a terrifying universe. The poem is certainly remarkable for the energy with which emptiness is perceived and the immensity of outer space is brought home to the readers. In the above poem, Frost used objects of nature to express the terrifying loneliness and isolation of man in an inhuman and ghastly universe.

Both Frost and Miss Dickinson considered nature to be on the whole an alien force, but nature never ceased to fascinate her. They were not Wordsworth in their viewpoints. They found nature to be complex, mysterious, and not fully comprehensible. Yet Emily Dickinson delighted in nature's colours, grandeur, immensity and diversity. The following poem is an excellent example of her enthusiastic response to various objects of nature, for example, the sky, the meadows, the mountains, the forests, the stars, the motions of the dipping of birds, the morning's amber road:

Before I got my eye put out -
I liked as well to see -
... ..
But were it told to me today
That I might have the sky
For mine - I tell you that my Heart
Would split, for size of me
... I could take
Between my finite eyes -
The motions of the Dipping Birds -
The Morning's amber Road -
For mine - to look at when I liked-
The News would strike me dead-

Nature's overwhelming impact on her soul is clearly visible in the above poem. This is not a simple sentimental love for

nature. Miss Dickinson here dwells upon the profundity and infinity of nature and human soul's incapacity to embrace nature in its entirety.

Emily Dickinson is amazed at the vast panorama of the natural world and is curious and anxious to embrace as much as she can. Everywhere in the lap of nature, something or other seems to fascinate and invite her:

There are signs to Nature's inns
Her invitation broad
For whomsoever famishing
To taste her mystic bread
These are the rites of Nature's house,
The hospitality
That opens with an equal width
To beggar or to bee.

This poem again deviates from benign nature of the tradition of Emerson or Wordsworth. Dickinson's predecessors conveniently ignored the destructiveness of the natural phenomena and even when they did not notice it, it was more or less with tacit approval, for nature could not construct without destroying what was tainted or rotten. Emerson covered it further by having recourse to Hindu mythology to Brahma, one of whose attributes was destruction. That attribute, however, was on much higher and philosophical level.

Nature, on the ostensible level, remained a benevolent manifestation of a being which watched the human drama with infinite sympathy, ready to guide man through the tangled web of his physical and ethical existence. Emily Dickinson cleared the cobweb of this confused pathetic fallacy. She saw man pitied against the terrifying brutal forces occasionally let loose by natural forces, which in the blindness of their fury did not recognize the sanctity of man's existence, or his manifold interests. It was quite appropriate that she saw a thunderstorm as a monster, chuckling over the roof – tops, whistling in the air, shaking his fist, gnashing his teeth, and swinging his frenzied hair. Similarly, elsewhere she writes:

The last summer is delight
Deterred by retrospect
Its ecstasy revealed review.
Enchantment's syndicate.

Inanimate Nature is also animate, like animal's or person's ghostly presence:

An awful tempest mashed the air
The clouds were gaunt and few –
Even the machine, the railroad, train is animated.

Like trains of cars track of plush
I hear the level bee
A far across the flowers goes
Their velvet masonry.

Frost, in the manner of the romantic poets, often speaks directly to objects of nature.

In the lyric "Tree at My Window", he directly addresses the tree just outside the window of his bedroom at night. The poet does not draw the curtain over the windowpane, for he wants to have sight of the tree. The tree seems to be fascinated him. This is so because the poet has discovered close similarity between himself and the tree. Just as he, himself, is torn and agitated by inner conflicts, worries, and anxieties, so also the tree is torn and tossed about by the wind. In this respect their fate is the same. But here the analogy ends. Essentially they are different, for the tree is concerned only with "outer weather" – storm and gusts of wind, while the poet is torn and tossed by "inner weather" i.e. spiritual anguish, doubts and conflicts.

The romantic poets, following the lead of Wordsworth stressed the similarity between man and nature. Frost, on the other hand, emphasizes the contrast between the two. There might be superficial resemblances, but the differences are basic and essential. Thus, the tree may vaguely resemble a human head, but in reality, it is quite different. To Frost, man is a separate entity, an alien in this universe, and the poet is never tired of stressing this fact in his nature lyrics.

At times, Dickinson's reaction to beauty in nature stands like the lyric cry of pain that had become a convention since the early nineteenth century.

Beauty crowds me till I die
Beauty mercy have on me
But if I expire to-day
Let it be in sight of thee –

But this has less kinship with her romantic predecessors. She rejected the theological dogma, as she kept God and nature sharply differentiated even while she seized for her own purposes its aesthetic doctrines.

Dickinson's poems on nature are an exploration into the undiscovered continent of the poet's self. To the Transcendentalist and Romantics, however, nature is an intermediary between the human soul and the Divine soul. But to Emily Dickinson's "Compound Vision", nature is an exquisite blend of the human spirit and the divine, the finite and the infinite. The image of fusion of the opposites is clear in the following poem:

'This a compound vision –
Light enabling light
The finite – furnished

With the infinite
Convex and concave witness –
Back – toward time –
And forward –
Toward the God of Him.

Nature, in her earlier poems, becomes an incarnation of the human self and the divine self. Since nature includes the divine and the human, she is beautiful. Emily says, "Beauty is Nature's fact" and that "Estranged from Beauty none can be" and the beauty in nature is not an effect, but a cause, not becoming, but a being.

Emily Dickinson's keen observation of nature led her to believe that man and nature are separate and this can be perceived in her latter poems. It also made her believe that rain is accompanied by gentle breeze, tapping the door like a visitor. Similarly, the wind is often accompanied by thunder-storm and tempest:

An awful tempest mashed the air
The clouds were gaunt and few
A black, as of a specter's cloak
Hid heaven and earth from view.

But the impact of such an awful tempest on the world of nature is not a permanent feature, rather it is temporary and short-lived because;

The morning let, the birds arose
The monster's faded eyes
Turned slowly to his nature coast
And peace was Paradise!

Similarly, in another poem, she conceives of the wind that does –

... working like a hand
Whose fingers comb the sky
Then quiver down, with tufts of tune
Permitted gods and me.

In spite of the various functions performed by the wind, Miss Dickinson's mind is incessantly haunted by its monstrous picture of destroying and affecting everything in the world of nature. She does not seek shelter and support of the wind, for she doesn't have in faith in it. On the contrary, how anti-romantic she seems when such poem as given below issues from her head and heart:

The wind drew off
Like hungry dogs
Defeated of a born
Through fissures in

Volcanic cloud
The yellow lighting shown
The tree held up
Their mangled lenites
Like animals in pain,
When Nature falls
Upon herself.

Thus, the poetess has very dreadful associations with the wind, the storm causing chaos and confusion everywhere:

The duties of the wind are few –
To cast the ships at sea,
Establish March
The floods escort
And usher liberty.

Sometimes Dickinson becomes amiable and cordial, forgetting the hostility and cruelty, shown by the wind and shows due hospitality to it as a guest:

The wind tapped like a tired man,
And like a host, "Come in".

I boldly answered: entered then
My residence within.

Thus, like romantics, Emily Dickinson does not stick to some particular rigid dogma or theory, concerning the treatment of nature. From time to time her outlook to some objects of nature keeps changing. There is no hackneyed track for Emily Dickinson to follow. Her mind like a good receptive, keeps welcoming change after change. Thus she avails the opportunity to enjoy or criticize the rare scenes of nature.

Miss Dickinson's treatment of nature in her poetry distinguished her from other nature poets. While some of her early poems contain a conventional praise of nature as the "gentlest mother", her mature attitude is absolutely different. For her, nature remains mysterious and elusive and suffers a challenge to explore her hidden secrets. The more we scrutinize Nature's mystifying processes, the more intricate and bewildering they become.

Thus, Frost's attitude towards nature is certainly influenced by the mature vision of Dickinson's nature poetry. In the lyric "Snow", Frost exhibits his realistic approach to nature:

I know that winter death has never tried
The earth but it has failed: the snow may heap
In long storms an undrifted four feet deep
... ..
In water of a slender April rill
That flashes tail through last rear's

That dead weed, like a disappearing snake.

Nothing will be left white but her a birch,

And there a clump of houses with a church.

The poet's hope is based on precedents, on his earlier observation of the cyclic change in nature. Through different nature-images Frost states that nature is terribly awful and devastating. The use of word 'hissing' makes the snow a symbol of death and evil and links up with the snake-image. He resigns himself to death, and gives up his fight against evil. But at last, he notices that winter is always followed by spring, which is the symbol of life. Good and evil are both facts of life, and just as Evil can not annihilate Good, so also Good can not completely be eradicated. He always advises man to be hopeful for the victory of good over evil.

CONCLUSION

Frost's plea is for a realistic approach to Nature and its relation to human life. Emily Dickinson in her Early works

portrays nature as Wordsworth and other poets of romantic era do. On the other hand, we can see a different outlook adopted by Emily Dickinson in her mature nature poetry which depicts nature as an alien, mysterious force that defies full comprehension. Here, we can see the resemblance between the two. Although most of Frost's poems are filled with nature images, his real subject is humanity. Frost himself admitted that he "had only three or four pure nature poems. The rest were human portraits with a nature setting." However, his work is enough to assess his true revelation of nature.

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