

## **Appreciation of Beauty and Nature in the poems of Dylan Thomas**

\*Ms. Lekha Rani Singh<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Usha Jain<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Amity Law School Centre-II, Amity University Noida, India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, SABV Govt. Arts and Commerce College, DAVV Indore, India

Corresponding Author: Ms. Lekha Rani Singh

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to analyse and understand beauty and nature in the poems of Dylan Thomas. Thomas was truly a nature poet as he derives his motivation from the beauty of nature which was dispersed in Wales and he found himself immersed in it and his expression of nature comes from his subconscious mind. Thomas's frequent observation of immaculate beauty in nature reflects the impact of the Romantic poets on him. Thomas has skilfully used many images to beautify his poem. The vividness of images in Thomas poetry is a result of the skilful metaphorical representation of ineffable mysterious natural phenomenon. Despite the variety and vividness of his themes the undercurrent of beauty runs impeccably through all his lyrical and narrative poems. The binding force in all Thomas's poems is his immaculate aesthetic sense of beauty. Thomas's perception of beauty transforms as his awareness and his vision develops. The beauty of Thomas's poetry lies in the fact that despite his higher vision he retains his childhood intimacy with the natural world. The paper discusses and observes the appreciation of beauty and nature done by Thomas in his poems.

**Keywords:** Aesthetic, Beauty, Images, Love, Nature.

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Time held me green and dying  
Though I sang in my chains like the sea. (53-54)

Dylan Thomas

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Dylan Thomas's unequivocal love for nature cannot be circumscribed in words. Though he did not provide any philosophy of nature but the readers can view some flamboyant and exhilarating depiction of nature in his poetry. Thomas' frequent observation of immaculate beauty in nature reflects the impact of the Romantic poets on him. Thomas was truly a nature poet as he derives his motivation from the beauty of nature which was dispersed in Wales and he found himself immersed in it and his expression of nature comes from his subconscious mind. The best example is his poem "Poem in October" where Thomas demonstrates nature delightfully vibrant through day-to-day sounds and sights. When he comes out of the town on his thirtieth birthday, he realises that he is welcomed by the entire nature. The complete view appears holy to him and he perceives himself on his way to heaven. He is in absolute accord with nature. In order to revere their creator the waves of the ocean rises high, the forest appears to him as his neighbour and the herons to be the priests. The gardens are blossoming and the birds are singing. The poem portrays the vibrant natural pictures with the normal atmosphere of delight.

Many of Thomas's poems are about nature and only some are not having a direct reflection of nature. Some give equivalent or unequal significance to art and nature. Seldom are some about nature and love. The manner in which Thomas used to load his poems with greenness and regarded former poets, like Traherne and Blake, who had the same re-creative and commemorative logic of aesthetic and symbolic importance of green as Thomas.

"The Force that through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower" is a poem of four verses of five lines each and a coda of two lines; it's a short poem with a strong structure. As the title resounding the first line suggests is an ambiguous force, which the poet advances to describe, endow and study in a variety of ways. Apparently, the force behind all creation and presence – maybe even a supernatural force – eventually connects life and death and associates the poet – the "I" of the poem – to the cosmos. The force is described in a little different way in each verse, illustrating a distinct facet of its process. The effect of the stanzas is collective and uniform; each definition augments the last. Each stanza ends by ascertaining the poet's relationship with the force.

The central motive of this poem is the inexplicable paradoxical “force,” stringing in its unity of nature, life and individuals. It is a link between individuals and nature, between the poet and all other mankind. It is an agreement that links together each thing, living and dead and ends up in love. The agreement is also that of production and extinction, nevertheless, it is grave and saddening and the unity is also inexpressible. Growth and mortality, genesis and demolition, the blossoming of the smallest flower, the falling of big trees, the citizen abiding-law, the hanging man, and the person who hangs himself – all are impelled into one by the poet with its intricate arrangement of interlinking oxymoron, puns and paradoxes.

The opening line of “The Force that through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower” is a strong statement that instantly unites nature with human race:

The force that through the green fuse drives the flower  
Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees  
Is my destroyer.  
And I am dumb to tell the crooked rose  
My youth is bent by the same wintry fever. (1-5)

The energy that the poet speaks of is the same energy that is present in a flower and also in human beings and this is the force, which brings both life and destruction. The force or energy is so overwhelming that when realised by human consciousness merges the entity of the self. 'And I am dumb' indicates that the speaker is so overpowered by the revelation of this force. The fate of the rose and every person is same. The rose is a symbol of love and the tree could be the tree of life. In the first line the words: force, through, fuse and flower, there are musical tones running through a drive of power; as if the season of spring has all of a sudden blasted into action.

Again the stanza two of “The Force that through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower” has the opening “the force” and the speaker brings in the element of water and compares it to the red blood flowing through his veins:

The force that drives the water through the rocks  
Drives my red blood; that dries the mouthing streams  
Turns mine to wax.  
And I am dumb to mouth unto my veins  
How at the mountain spring the same mouth sucks. (6-10)

The natural world and the human body appear to be the reflections of one another. The force acts in the same way on both and the movement and imagery of nature is same as the movement and imagery of human body. Here Thomas comes very close to the Indian philosophy of ‘Yat Pinde Tat Brahmade,’ means that whatever exists in universe exists in human body too. Indian philosophy speaks of the five elements earth, air, water, fire and space. Thomas poetry is abundant with the references of these natural elements too. However his images are so sensuous that they have an immediate appeal to our senses. By using personification Thomas highlights the connection between the natural imagery and the imagery of human body. The natural imagery used is vibrant, as in, water, rocks, mouthing streams, spring, blood, wax, veins and mouth etc.

Barbara Hardy in her book *Dylan Thomas An Original Language* again talks about the use of art and nature by Dylan Thomas in the poem “The Force that through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower”:

Art and nature are inextricably fused in the poet’s new creation story, which remakes Milton and uses the child’s wild and brave imagination to present the bizarre image of those horses “walking warm.” It brings together the extremes of creativity, the great English poet’s epic, and the child’s- play dream: both are creative, and also re-creative, as they remake the Bible story. It also brings together the extremes of unprofessional creativity, in memory and dream. And of course the modern poet binds the epic, the play, the dream, and the memory together, in a lyric which rings with the joy of knowing nature and art. (136-137)

“This Bread I Break” was included in the *Twenty – five Poems* published in 1936. The speaker in the poem is eating bread and drinking wine and while doing so the speaker seems to be indulging in expressing the process of creation in his meditative tone he expresses that the bread that he is eating was in the form of oat and the wine in the form of grape in a foreign country. The poet’s perception of bread and wine brings this simple process to the next level where one can easily perceive the presence of the natural phenomenon which is awe-inspiring.

The similarity between bread and flesh, and wine and blood, is a clear reference to the biblical story of the Last Supper in “This Bread I Break”:

Once in this time wine the summer blood  
Knocked in the flesh that decked the vine,  
Once in this bread  
The oat was merry in the wind;  
Man broke the sun, pulled the wind down. (6-10)

The poem "This Bread I Break" has many connotations. The poem talks about nature at the preliminary level, the nature's voice is reminding individuals that they are destroying and consuming her. At the philosophical level, there is an echo of the voice of Jesus Christ advising his followers to remember his sacrifice. The poem in whole tells us that for our life we are dependent on different sources, for our food, for thinking, for an aesthetic livelihood and societal life. This poem is also notable for its music, genre and word game.

Thomas's "Fern Hill" is an autobiographical poem written by him with a specific end goal to take a gander at the subject of an excursion from innocence to experience and utilizes the recollections of youthful days. The poem can be separated into two sections: the initial three stanzas are identified as the experience of the poet during his summer vacations at his aunt's farm Fern Hill and the last three stanzas are around an enlivening in the child that expresses the loss of the world of innocence. The main point of this loss of innocence is the illusion of the fall of the first humans i.e. Adam and Eve. The child, the world of innocence, depicted in the initial three stanzas resembles the Garden of Eden and this is the world in which the child is in entire unity with nature.

The colour scheme is obstructive and stagnant and the ballad has all possible shades of nature: green, brilliant, white and blue which adds flavor thus making it tasteful advance of the lyric. Thomas over and over projected the shading green all through the ballad. Green which is considered to be the shade of nature mirrors the child's surroundings as he is exuberant through his childhood. In the main stanza the speaker was "upbeat as the grass was green" in his young days, actually newly and brilliantly cheerful, now utilizing another examination for which there are well known analogs, particularly "glad as the day was long". There is a complete change of phase to greenness. The second stanza is the one and only in which "green" shows up two times as though to strengthen the start and showcase the key picture, yet in both appearances the shading gets to be allegorical: "as I was green and cheerful."

Dylan Thomas is a wonderful poet and even before the readers start enjoying his words, they are fascinated by the music of his words. Although "Especially When the October Wind" is an intricate poem but the sound is beautiful and enchanting:

Especially when the October wind  
With frosty fingers punishes my hair,  
Caught by the crabbing sun I walk on fire  
And cast a shadow crab upon the land,  
By the sea's side, hearing the noise of birds,  
Hearing the raven cough in winter sticks,  
My busy heart who shudders as she talks  
Sheds the syllabic blood and drains her words. (1-8)

Thomas has skillfully used many images to beautify his poem. This poem is full of nature imagery and a visual image is described by Thomas in the beginning where the wind is punishing his hair, that is, his hairs are exposed to the wind and there is personification as if the wind is given fingers and the poet feels the chilling wind. The second image is of the sun, it's a visual image, because of the colour of the fallen autumn leaves it's appearing as if the poet is walking on fire. The poet's shadow casted upon the land is also a visual image. The sound of the birds can be heard in the winter sticks, which is an aural image. The first stanza is closed by the personification of the poet's heart that the heart is talking and the sound of the shudder is heard. The poet hears the raven's "cough" which affects his heart and he is the only one who can understand the language of the raven, a bird which is conventionally related with the evil prophecy or occurrence and motivates the poet. All these images of nature induce aesthetic appeal in the readers.

The poem "Into Her Lying down Head" Thomas thinks of nature as intense and profoundly sensuous. He even uses humanly voluptuous language to describe the physical attraction towards nature. The words used are "libidinous," "love," "longs," and "lost" appropriately conveys the idea of physical orientation of overpowering beauty of nature. This is one of Thomas's best nature poem and the nonhuman characteristics and associations are by no means romantically shown in this poem though the poem is an extremely unique and strange love lyric. The poem sketches the sensuality through abruptly terse language.

While elaborating the aesthetic of Thomas's art Barbara Hardy remarks in her book *Dylan Thomas An Original Language*:

The poem's images are particular and complex, and sometimes synaesthetic, joining the mineral and animal in that wonderful spitting image, which is sandily dry, wet, and stinging. In that personal and radical revision of Yeats's singing school, the green singing house, there is a fusion of what is literally animal and vegetable and metaphorically human. As the sand grains spit life into each other, as I've mentioned, they sting sharply and grittily like actual sand, and they are also given an imaginary method of reproduction animistic but also physically apt, thoroughly felt. (147)

The vividness of images in Thomas poetry is a result of the skilful metaphorical representation of ineffable mysterious natural phenomenon. Thomas's perception rises above the sensuousness and employs his sensibility in animating human expressions - "spat life into its fellow" – so metaphors aptly convey the mood of the poet and by using metaphors "Where once the waters of your face," he seamlessly transforms a love poem into nature poem.

## II. CONCLUSION

None of the poems of Thomas can be categorize and compartmentalize under the various segments. Despite the variety and vividness of his themes the undercurrent of beauty runs impeccably through all his lyrical and narrative poems. His musical poems like "The Force that Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower" and "A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London" inhabits profoundly on sensation and human emotions whereas his poems like "A Grief Ago" and "From Love's First Fever to her Plague" has a depressive melancholy undercurrent suggested through the fusion of colours. The binding force in all his poems is his immaculate aesthetic sense of beauty. Again his poetry mirrors his journey from consciousness of physical to the metaphysical consciousness. It is a journey of human evolution from gross to subtle. Thomas's perception of beauty transforms as his awareness and his vision develops. The beauty of Thomas's poetry lies in the fact that despite his higher vision he retains his childhood intimacy with the natural world. The realization of nature emancipates him from his physical limitations; his aura seems to grow with his every new poem and finally becomes one with the supreme reality.

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