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## The Glorification of Nature in the Select Short Stories of Manoj Das

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### **Abstract:**

The glorification of nature and landscapes in English poetry and paintings is focused on the delicate balance between man and nature. Jean-Jacques Rousseau argued that the state of nature was the purest and the best form of human existence. There is strong bond of affinity between man and nature. The present paper highlights the glorification of nature in the select short stories of Manoj Das. We get glimpses of photographic presentation of nature. He depicts rural landscapes with its simplicity, charm, serene air and eco-friendly environment in his short fiction. His stories are packed with snapshots of nature with its sublime air and spiritual elevation.

**Keywords:** Glorification, Nature, Manoj Das, Serene air, Environment, Ecocriticism.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Ecocriticism originates in an excessive exploitation of nature. It is a literary and cultural criticism from an environmentalist viewpoint. Raymond Williams in his *The Country and the City* (1973) focused on contribution of English literature to notions of nature, the countryside, poverty, seasons and the city. In the twentieth century, early writers on nature – Aldo Leopold, John Muir and Rachel Carson suggested various ways of looking at environment. Their texts have become the inspirational moments of ecocriticism. The glorification of nature and landscapes in English poetry and paintings focused on the delicate balance between man and nature. Jean-Jacques Rousseau argued that the state of nature was the purest and best form of human existence. He believed that the ‘natural’ was innocent and that civilization was ‘artificial’ and corrupt. With this discussion in mind, an attempt has been made in the present paper to focus on the glorification of nature and landscapes in the select short stories of Manoj Das.

Manoj Das is an outstanding bilingual writer who writes in English and Oriya at ease. He is well-known scholar, thinker, novelist, short story writer, poet, editor, columnist, essayist and writer of children's literature. He was born in Shankari, a coastal village of Orissa in 1934. Geographically, Orissa is the one of the most diverse states of India. The vast blue ocean at its east and the mountainous ranges and the deep forests in the western and southern zones add the beauty of its landscape. Even between his house and the sea there were two natural lakes abounding lotuses and a vast ever-green meadow studded with palm trees. He grew up in the company of Nature and experienced its splendor and fury too. He depicts rural landscapes with its simplicity, charm, serene air and eco-friendly environment in his short fiction. He glorifies world of Nature and centers his stories around the birds, animals and trees also. The flora and fauna represent village ecology. There is strong bond of affinity between man and Nature which is presented in this short stories. The birds, animals and even trees are part and parcel of Indian village life. We get glimpses of photographic presentation of nature in the setting of the villages which are changing in the course of time.

There are radical changes in the life of the people living in Indian villages in the twentieth century. Development in science and technology has changed serene and placid rural India. In the story "Son and Father" Manoj Das presents difference between the modern civilized culture represented by Samir who is a writer and the luminous, sublime and majestic aspect of rural life represented by a nameless, motherless boy living in the lap of Nature.

The action of the story takes place in the forest near the guest house. The story is centered around the character of the boy. At the opening of the story there is continuous rainfall and bright flashes of lightning. Samir, who is a successful writer sits alone in the forest guest house. He is watching drama of appearance and disappearance. There is display of long fireworks of lightning. Samir cannot understand the difference between reality and illusion. Here the writer gives beautiful snapshots of Nature in poetic language. He depicts it as:

The meadow extended up to the hills. Lush green palm trees stood in a scattered fashion, like a lyric broken into haphazard lines. There were dwarf rocks and bushes and shrubs galore for erratic punctuation marks. (MOS 17-18)

Then Samir observes the strange boy approaching at the speed of a shooting star. He has seen him for the fifth time. The activities of the boy indicate that he is a part and parcel of Nature. Earlier, Samir had seen him flying with the wind and also climbing to his verandah and spinning around a pillar. Samir is very much influenced by the boy's activities. He wants

to talk with the boy. When Samir asks the boy about his name, the boy replies, “Don’t know”. (MOS 19) He disappears beyond a mound of earth.

In the afternoon a watchman arrives with tiffin and tea for Samir. When asked about the strange boy, the watchman informs that the boy is his son. The memory of the nameless boy haunted Samir. Then he looks at the boy who is coming with the dogs onto the verandah. Here the writer throws light on the rural poverty. He pens the character of the boy as, “The boy was in loose shorts, perhaps gifted to him by a well-wisher, and bare for the rest. He was talking, but it was not possible to say whether with dogs or with the trees.” (MOS 20) The boy’s talking with trees and dogs indicate that he has become inseparable part of the Nature. Samir wants to talk with the boy. But the boy promises him that he will meet him in the evening. Then the boy runs through the rain. The writer gives very wonderful picture of the boy’s relationship with nature. He pens it as: “A fresh blaze of crisscross lightening tore the sky apart like a demoniac wizard spreading all his ten fingers and hypnotizing the prostrate earth. The boy raised his arms and scampered off, as if to catch hold of the lightning or to wrap himself up with them! He ran through the rain. The two dogs kept pace with him. The wind seemed to change its course suddenly so that it could blow in his favor. Or was the boy pulling the wind with him?” (MOS 21)

Samir is astonished to observe the deep relationship between the boy and the nature. He becomes restless. He cannot concentrate on his writing. Then the watchman comes with tiffin at the late evening when Samir asks him about his son, he reports that his son is no more. He was whisked away by the lightning. Samir collapses in his chair. He doesn’t understand “What was the purpose in his appearing like a string of lightning, playing like a string of lightning and disappearing like a string of lightning?” (MOS 22)

Samir cannot forget the deeper, luminous eyes of the boy. Next morning Samir joins the watchman in burying the dead body of the boy. As the watchman’s native hamlet was on the other side of the forest and no relative of the watchman lived nearby. After the burial of the dead body of the boy, the father in his calm and candid voice observed, “Whatever the sky had left, was taken over by the earth.” (MOS 23)

Then Samir leaves the place the same day. But he cannot forget the son and the father. They appeared to him like the elements of majestic horizon.

The story is a masterpiece of man’s intimate relationship with the Nature which is the dominant characteristic of rural culture. The Son and the Father are the inseparable parts of the Nature. The boy is born, lived and died in the company of the nature. He used to talk with dogs and the trees which are the members of Nature. He used to laugh during a lull in the

thunderclap. He had formed intimate relationship with the breeze, the rain, the lightning and the thunder. Though he is motherless boy in literal sense, he is nurtured in the lap of Nature. He takes his final rest in the lap of mother earth which is a sublime source of solace. His father represents the natural calmness and confidence, a greater sense of duty which is rare in modern city culture. On the other hand, Samir who is wrapped in the costly Kashmiri Shawl represents pride of the intellectual world of the city culture. But his pride is hurt before the deeper and luminous eyes of the boy. The writer pens it as: "Hello, boy!" he called rather loudly. A hurried glance was all he received as the boy's response. He realized, unhappily, how futile his Kashmiri shawl, his well-built personality and carefully groomed moustache were. Even his baritone voice failed to elicit the respect it deserved. (MOS 19)

In this story, Manoj Das depicts the sublime power of Nature. The story is notable for its presentation of rural landscape which represents serene air and eco-friendly environment, rustic innocence, simplicity and charm.

There is intimate relationship between human world and world of nature. Manoj Das glorifies nature and landscapes in his fiction and highlights the delicate balance between man and the environment. He condemns wickedness and artificiality of urban world. His "Birds in the Twilight" highlights man's eternal quest for freedom. It also suggests man's aspiration for spiritual elevation.

The action of the story is centered around Kumar Tukan Roy, one of the illegitimate sons of the late Raja sahib of Mandarapur. The rural sensibility is evoked by the very setting of the story, with its marshland on the river, the red sun behind the hills, the old banian tree and green pigeons.

Kumar T. Roy was a bachelor. He lived with Giloo who is also an illegitimate son of late Raja. In the course of the time feudal system collapses. The old palace of Mandarapur lay largely deserted. The step-brother of Kumar Roy, the present Raja who was sick lived in a city. Kumar Tukan Roy used to spend his every afternoon shooting the birds in the marshland on the river. One evening he aims his gun at a pair of pigeons. Just then a third pigeon comes and settles with a flutter on the next branch. As he becomes eager to press the trigger, there is sudden lightening across the clouds which dazzled him and the birds fly off and melt away in the infinite. He does not feel irritation. But he feels thrill of freedom. The writer gives very beautiful snapshots of nature. Pacing with the flight of doves, Kumar Roy experiences that he himself is spacing inwardly. There is inner transformation of the character of Kumar Roy in the company of nature. He experiences elevation of his soul. The writer pens it as:

The birds were in too much of a hurry. It was not possible to keep up with them. Roy stopped and rolled his eyes across the sky—from horizon to horizon. He had never known that his eyes were so big – that they could see so much of the vast sky – that they were, in fact, as vast as the sky. The birds which had just flown across the sky—across his eyes—had brushed away from them the accumulated dust of many years and had left them pure and young.

In spite of the deepening dusk, he spent nearly an hour in the valley before he returned to the palace. And while dining, he did not feel the agonized distaste that he usually felt at a vegetarian meal. His whole being was elsewhere – where, exactly, he did not know. But he was happy to be there. (CL 58-59)

Kumar Roy experiences sublime power in the vast valley. This experience develops his inner power of soul. A week before, he has captured a parrot. The next morning, he frees the same parrot from his cage. He wishes that, “he had many birds to free, or rather, that he had the power to make every creature on earth run or fly to its heart’s content towards the God-knows-where of freedom. He stood enchanted in his own thoughts for a long time.” (CL59) Further one midnight he frees the tiger in their personal zoo. He addresses the tiger, “Come on, my boy, you are free. Now run into the forest. Well, don’t waste your time run into the forest ...” (CL61) Roy points his finger at the hills and the forest and tells the tiger to run. But the tiger has forgotten to run, he has to set an example to a tiger. Both run into the forest for about a quarter of an hour. Roy realizes that people are pursuing them in order to rescue him from the tiger. He runs till he comes to a dense part of the forest. Then tired Roy stretches himself upon a block of rock. He experiences a wave of freedom into his veins and feels tranquility. The tiger also experiences the spirit of freedom and gives out an impressive roar which produces echoes in the hills. Roy pulls the tiger to hide it. The tiger sits down with its forelegs on him. Roy observes intimacy in the eyes of the tiger and closes his eyes with satisfaction. The writer very effectively depicts the sublime experience of Roy. He states it as: “And in his vision were flying hundreds of birds – blue, white – of many a hue. The hundreds became thousands. They were scattering into ever-expanding heights and horizons like silver arrows and golden bullets. Roy, his eyes still closed, recognized them as the vibrations of the freedom that electrified him - freedom vast and vaster still.” (CL 64)

Further they are noticed under the jeep’s headlights. The tiger slowly lowers its head on the Roy’s chest. The rescue party notices both of them dead. They confuse when they see Mr. Roy without a scratch. They suppose that he died because of heart – failure due to fear. Thus, Kumar Roy’s death has nothing to do with the speculations of the rescue party. Kumar

Roy dies in perfect peace and satisfaction. He identifies himself with birds and experiences total liberation. The writer personifies tiger and highlights intimacy between the tiger and Mr. Roy.

The story is a masterpiece of interconnectedness of man and nature. The entire atmosphere of the story is packed with snapshots of nature with its sublime air, spiritual elevation. The flight of birds symbolizes quest for freedom. While reading the story, the readers get a breath of fresh air and experience a thrill of freedom and yearning for emancipation of soul.

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