

## A Study of Nature in the Works of Manoj Das

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**Introduction:** A writer deals with his backdrop and humans around him in his literary work. Manoj Das, who has been compared with O'Henry by many scholars, is undoubtedly a very distinguished writer of India in English. He is a bilingual writer as he writes in Oriya as well as English. Manoj Das's literary works which are basically set in rural villages not only depict the community life as a whole but the nature as a significant force. His works show his observation of nature. Nature plays crucial role sometimes in the stories of Das. It has been employed skillfully by the writer. Nature and human beings are interconnected with each other. It affects the life of humans sometimes positively. This is the force that offers solace, solitude and what not. European Romantic poets also used nature as a significant motif in their poetry. Even as Wordsworth says, 'It is "a friend, teacher and guide" for us. The present paper is an attempt to highlight the use of nature in the works, particularly in short stories of Manoj Das. It is to discuss here the role of nature in Das' stories.

### **Treatment of Nature in Das's stories:**

The nature is used differently in the short stories. While talking about the Nature in poetry V. R. Kanadey rightly says "*Nature will have varying functions in the poem. It may serve as background scenery, providing a sort of framework for a picture. It may be employed to enhance the effect of the poem. It may become the very center of the poem propped up here and there by flimsy, fragile details.*"(2) Similarly, nature can be used in short stories. It has been used as a background of the event in the story. It plays significant role in creating the atmosphere as per the situation in the story. Though nature has its value in any literary work, it depends on the writer that when and how to use it. It is used to create special impression on the readers. It is handled creatively by Das. Sometimes it is used to create horror or to arouse tender feelings of love in the character and Reader. It is used as a force that changes human being internally. Nature is sometimes humanized by Das in his stories. The writer makes us aware about unseen treasure and beauty of the nature in his stories. One can understand and experience the different aspects of Nature. From the beginning some of the stories are highly influenced by nature. Some are partly concerned with nature. Somewhere it plays active role while in some other it hasn't.

### Use of Nature in the stories:

The short story '**Son and Father**' is about the son and his father in the story. It is a tragedy of a father and his motherless son. The story is fused with the atmosphere of fear to display the passing away of the son. In the beginning of the story Samir, the protagonist of the story watches the dangerous nature. He is all alone in the forest guest house. He was unaware about the energy of the sky. It is because of the nature he wonders about the reality and illusion. The sky is displaying long fireworks of lightning, blooming all at various scales. Lush green palm trees were standing in scattered fashion like lyric broken into haphazard lines. The nature is instrumental for creating different feeling in Samir's mind. When he sees the unusual nature of the sky and forest, he imagines and asks a question to his mind unknowingly "*What kind of theme and plot can make the best use of such a scene?*"(166) It is that face of the nature which figures out a writer in Samir. At the same, for the same situation he feels thrilled and he says

*"Can this be the backdrop to a romance- for a chance meeting between the hero and the heroine, both taking shelter under a banyan tree, the heroine shivering partly because of cold and partly for fright?"(166-7)*

Thus, the nature is used variedly. Same situation is interpreted differently through the thoughts and feelings of the protagonist. It is the art of the writer to create such atmosphere. The nature is used as a force that changes the life of human beings. It provides tranquility not only for composition of literary work, but to the true life. The father in the story is now accustomed with rule of nature. That is why perhaps the death of his own son doesn't make him uncomfortable. Instead the father teaches the law of nature to the protagonist of the story. He comes to know that why the father is so comfortable after losing his son. He knows now that face of nature he has seen never. He *understands "The earth to be so sublime a source of solace"* (171).

'**The Murderer**' is an allegorical story. It is the metaphorical murder of Dabu Sahukar. He turns into hermit and emerges after ages from the Himalayas. The forest in the story is responsible for this. The writer has used it just once but is the base of the story. Dabu and Binu both were returning from the sub-divisional town. Dabu won a victory in the court. They cover lots of distance by boat and only seven miles to be trekked. The sun was supposed to set. They were in hurry so they take risk to go through the jungle. The narrator exclaims "Both entered the woods. But Binu alone came out!" (44) Perhaps it was already night by the time Binu emerged in a locality. Dabu Sahukar was disappeared while coming out of the jungle. Many stories have been invented by the locality. The narrator tells that the most credible among the several hot

stories was that *“while crossing the forest, Dabu Sahukar had felt an irresistible urge to go inside a deserted shrine. He asked Binu to wait outside and entered the enchanted compound.”*(46)

The nature is the most powerful force that changes the life of both the characters. Dabu Sahukar has been turned into a Hermit and Binu a murderer. The forest is the center at the story because it is instrumental for developing the story. People have various mysterious stories regarding Dabu's disappearance. The jungle is the only witness of the truth. The short cut of the wood is the idea of the writer for further development of the story. The Nature is appeared in form of the major force that changes the life of the protagonist as the tragic flaw in tragedies of the Shakespeare. Binu comes out of the wood alone and becomes murderer for people of the village.

**“The Tree”** is another short story by Das in which nature plays vital role. The story revolves round the huge banyan tree in the village. The tree, in the story is a part of nature and connected with the life of the people of the village. During calamity the villagers take shelter under the banyan tree. As the narrator narrates *“The leaves of banyan tree chattered incessantly their familiar language of hope and courage. Its innumerable boughs spread out overhead had been the very symbol of protection for generations, affording shelter not only to those who bore love and regard for it, but even to those who had proved impudent towards it, of course, so far as the latter were concerned, only after humbling to their knees.”*(57) The tree, an element of nature is treated as a symbol of protection for generations. It has been saving generation from natural calamity. The villagers take shelter beneath the tree during their hard times. The tree has considered as a savior who speaks of hope and courage through its leaves. The mound near the tree was mark of its temperament. Once the mound was a palace and was destructed because of the encroachment of the anonymous king. It had happened because the king wanted to cut down few branches of the tree to make room for an extension of his palace. The Royal family saved after taking shelter under the same tree. Thus, the tree itself was a power within its limit. The twofold but justifiable spirit of the tree is highlighted by the writer.

The tree is only a giver as Coleridge writes in his Dejection, An Ode

*“We receive but what we give  
And in our Life alone does Nature Live”()*

Human beings are always in debt of Nature for they receive everything from nature. The tree has that quality in the story. It has been savior for the generations in the village. The tree was immortal and godly for the villagers. The decisions taken under tree are to follow everybody

strictly due to the invisible and inaudible power of the tree. Though the tree not human it was no less Human, Judge, God etc.

The tree is very much like God for the villagers. At the end of the story when the tree collapses in the river, the villagers felt guilty for it. They believe deeply in the tree as power affecting their life. Even Shrikant Das one of the characters of the story raises his voice and says *“Hearken, you all! Not only the boys, but we all have our shares of sin. And if the tree has decided to collapse, it is because it can't bear the burden of our sins any longer. Let everyone of us confess his sins, addressing the spirit of the tree, silently in our hearts! Let us pray to be pardoned. Hari Bol! Glory to God!”* (61)

Das has depicted the tree in form of nature. Deep faith and feelings of the villagers related to the tree. The old tree acquires sort of godhood in eyes of the villagers. The tree itself is the focal point in the story. The treatment given to the tree is one of worthy to take notice.

**'The Birds'** is set about the life of birds and Roy, a son of the late Raja Sahib of Mandarpur. Roy likes to shoot birds. It was his hobby. He had been killed hundreds of bird at the sunset since last many days. It gives him thrill to shoot the birds at the twilight. Since the past year Roy had been slowly losing faith in the sharpness of his own vision. The moment he was very close to his prey, it used to fly away by this or that reason- Sometimes a sudden lightning across the cloud or the thunderclaps across the valley. It would annoy Roy every time. On a different day again Roy was out for hunting facing the similar condition of his last few days. But this time he felt no irritation at the failure. He started running as the birds were flying over his head. This was not a new thing for him but he remembered his fifty years past at that time. He recalls his memory *“When the Raja who exercised over him all the authority of a father but was not willing to allow him the status of a prince, had suddenly collapsed of a heart attack”* (154-5) It was the thrill of freedom.

The birds give him insight regarding life, the life of birds and animals. He has been transformed into a gentleman by the birds. He doesn't feel disgust for the vegetarian meal on the dinner table which he usually used to feel. He was, by being in different region of ecstasies unknown to the happiness. In reality he was very much happy in this state. On another day he went through the same experience. He relieves the caged parrot that he caught few days ago. The parrot hovered over his head twice or thrice and flew away. This gave him immense pleasure. Now, the changed Roy is wishing to make every captured bird free. He thinks *“he had many birds to free; or rather he had the power to make every creature o earth run or fly to its heart's content towards the God-knows-where of freedom.”* (155) He remains silent drowning deep in

his thoughts. He has a Tiger captured from his father's time. Giloo, his step-brother used to take care of this tiger. The tiger was put in a cage. Roy now has changed and wanted to make the tiger free. He opens the gates of the cage. He orders the tiger to go anywhere he wants. But to his surprise the tiger is no more than the intimate cat. He makes few actions for the tiger to run but the tiger copies him. He runs and the tigers with him. He stops and then tiger stops with him. Roy expects that the tiger should run away in the jungle but he has become habitual to Roy and other people of the royal family. He runs through the village to teach him running. He finds unable himself to teach the tiger. He ran towards the forest along with the tiger. He exclaimed the tiger "Go ahead, you fool! Here is the forest, spread over miles- over districts. Now you must make it alone!" (158). All goes vain; the tiger is not capable to understand what actually Roy wanted to tell him. Police are running behind them thinking a tiger is following Roy. At the end the police caught them under the jeep's headlight. They shot the tiger dead. The tiger falls down and rests on Roy's chest.

**The birds** in the story as nature bring change in Roy's life. He changes internally and dies at the end of the story. Here in this story nature has been employed by Das differently.

The story "**Son and Father**" shows that nature is place of solace. It has been depicted as a place that teaches humans to live life in the real sense. It offers us strength and power to face daily problems in our life. It is symbol of power and God in this sense. The story "**The Murderer**" depicts that how nature plays crucial role in bringing the change in Human's life. Nature is presented as a force that affects the life of humans. "**The Tree**" explains that how nature is inseparable part of human life and how human have faith in nature. Danger to the tree is considered by the villagers as danger to their life. The tree has received sort of godhood in the eyes of the people. "**The Birds**" again highlighted as the power which brings total change in someone's life.

#### References:

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