

CHAPTER - II

THE ROLE OF NATURE IN THE LIVES AND WORKS
OF BALKAVI AND P.B. SHELLEY

CHAPTER-II

II.1: INTRODUCTION:- T.B. Thombare alias Balkavi and P.B.

Shelley are well-known nature poets in Marathi and English literature respectively. They were born and bred in different ages and in different national traditions, but shared the same literary tradition viz. romanticism. Both Balkavi and Shelley suffered severely during their short span of life. However, Nature provided them love and sympathy, solace and comfort which they could not find in the human world. In this chapter I propose to work on the role of Nature in the lives and poetic works of Balkavi and Shelley in brief.

II.2. LIFE OF BALKAVI:

Tryambak Bapuji Thombare, later to become famous as Balkavi, was born in a religious Brahmin family on August 13, 1890, at Dharangaon in Khandesh. He was the third child of Bapurao Thombare, a police inspector, and Godutai, a virtuous woman, who taught the child Balkavi stories in the 'Ramayana' and the 'Mahabharata' and the poetry of the great Indian saints. As he was born in a religious family, Balkavi became devout and virtuous by nature'¹. He received his early education in different villages due to the frequent transfers of his father there. However, he got education in the lap of nature rather than the formal education in schools.

While in the school of Erandole, he used to get up early in the morning and go into the garden to collect beautiful and fragrant flowers. Sou. Sushilatai Saptarshi has expressed Balkavi's attraction for Nature as follows:-

"Balkavi had great attraction for the beauty of Nature. While at Erandole, he always went to the streams to listen the gentle song of it. He could often see the beauty of the sunset. He got his early education in the lap of Nature like Wordsworth's Lucy"²

After some schooling at Erandole, Balkavi went to Dhule for education in English (1902-03) but he soon came back and joined in the school of Erandole as a teacher (1903). During the same year he wrote his first poem on the beauty of the garden which is entitled as 'वनामुकुट' (Vanamukunda). However, his poetic career really began when he was honoured with the title 'BALKAVI'³ in the 'First Maharashtra Conference on poetry' held in Jalgaon in 1907. A few months later his father died and all the responsibilities of the family fell on his shoulders. Soon he was persuaded by his mother to get married as early as possible and then, his marriage took place with Parvatibai, the daughter of V.B. Joshi, in 1908. Although married, he wanted to continue his education. He went to Nashik and then to Baroda and received higher education there.

In 1910, Rev V.N. Tilak, the great Nature poet contemporary to Keshavasuta, requested Balkavi to stay at his own home at Ahmednagar to continue his further study there. Balkavi stayed at Ahmednagar many days and then was employed in the service of a teacher at 'Union Training School' where he taught Sanskrit and Marathi languages to Englishmen. These Englishmen used to bring Balkavi to Mahabaleshwar, a scenic place, in every summer vacation. As a result of this, Balkavi came in a close proximity of Nature, enjoyed her beauty and wrote several poems based on the various objects of nature. In the biography of Balkavi, K.B. Marathe has expressed that Nature was the main source of inspiration to Balkavi. He was accompanied by Nature till the end of his life. There was a perfect unity between Nature and Balkavi. In one of his letters, he wrote that every object of Nature had provided him love and joy. His love for Nature can be well seen in the following argument with his friends:-

'सृष्टीची सौंदर्य उकलून दाखविण्यासाठीच माझ जन्म आहे. तारकांचे संगीत मला नेहमी ऐकू येते. आकाशाची शोभा आणि जलाशयाची गतीस्थिती यातून मला सारखे संदेश येतात.'⁴

("I am born for the expression of the beauty of Nature. All the time I listen to the notes of music sung out of the stars. I often listen to the messages coming from the blue sky and from the movements of the waves in the lakes.")

Balkavi suffered severely in his life time due to poverty, incessant wandering for services and unhappy married life. His life was filled with sadness and despair. He always thought over the meaning of life. But whenever he came into close contact with Nature, he forgot sadness and got indulged in the beauty of Nature. Sometimes he expressed his sadness and despair through the medium of Nature. He developed a sense of deep attachment with Nature and wrote a number of poems in her lap. He also received love from some of his friends. It is out of this love he was going to friend, Sonalkar. However, while crossing the railway, he was crushed into pieces in a railway accident on 5th July 1918, and thus he became a victim of death at an early age of life.⁵

THE PRINCIPAL POETIC WORKS:-

Balkavi, the great devotee of Nature, composed 'one hundred and sixty three poems' on various subjects among which Nature is predominant. His principal poetic works can be classified as follows:-

A) Nature Poetry:-

Balkavi loved Nature for the glory and loveliness which he found in the various objects of Nature. No other modern poet has ever been as nearer to the poetry of the earth and the sky as Balkavi was. He looks at Nature as the source of beauty and joy. In some of his poem, he has personified

Nature and depicted the love-affairs of the various objects of Nature. Some of his poems present the power of Nature to soothe the human heart. His famous Nature poems are: 'Phulrani', 'Shravanmas', 'Sandhyarajani', 'Nirzaras', 'Arun', 'Paaus', 'Meghancha Kapus', 'Balvihag', 'Taday Asto Tar', 'Audumbar', etc. These poems contain a variety of Nature pictures and Nature imagery.

B) LOVE POETRY:

Balkavi has not only composed Nature poetry but love poetry also. In love poetry, too, he has depicted Nature as an ornament of poetry. The poems such as, 'Jadugarin', 'Priti Havi Tar' 'Premache Gane', 'Divya Ani Priti' etc. express his view of love and intensity of emotions and feelings. In the poem, 'Premache Gane', the importance of love is expressed as :-

" प्रेमावाचुनी सर्व सुने
जग असे कापुडवाणे "7

C) SUBJECTIVE POETRY:

Balkavi has depicted his life and personality in some of his poems. The poems 'Divya', 'Kalas', 'Udashinata', 'Yamachee Doct', 'Nirasha', 'Priti va Kartavya' etc. depict unhappy and lonely life of Balkavi. In these poems, Balkavi makes the objects of Nature the source of reflection on his unhappy and lonely life.

D) Besides the above poems we have a group of poems in which Balkavi's view of God, religion and morality is reflected. The poems dealing with these concepts are 'Atmavishwas', 'Panth', 'Kay Karu', and 'Dharmveer'.

In short, Balkavi has composed poems on various subject. However, Nature is predominant in these poems. So he is rightly called a devotee of Nature.

II.3) P.B.SHELLEY

A) LIFE OF SHELLEY:

Percy Bysshe Shelley, the well renowned nature poet of England, was born on August 4, 1792, at Field Place, Horsham, in Sussex. He was the eldest child of Timothy Shelley, a wealthy landowner who subsequently succeeded to baronetcy, and Elizabeth Pilford. Being the son of landlord, the child Shelley had all that one could desire by ways of amenities and comforts. There was apparently no material cause for that divine discontent from which he suffered all his life.

The most important influences that shaped the character of Shelley lie hidden in his early relationships with his family, neighbours and teachers. As a boy, he evinced no great interest in games and sports, but he was romantic in every nerve which made him the greatest romantic poet of England. During his childhood he invented wonderful stories made up from the explorations in the garden, wood and round the lake for the delight of his admiring sisters. He was very fond of walks in the open countryside. This incessant wandering in the countryside brought him ^{very} ~~too~~ close to Nature. Indeed, he had become a great devotee of Nature.

Shelley was educated at Eton and Oxford, and even as a schoolboy he was marked for the independence of his thought and his carelessness of convention. He was early interested

in Philosophy and while an undergraduate he published a pamphlet 'The Necessity of Atheism' which led to his expulsion from the university. Soon after, going to London, accompanied by his friend Thomas Jefferson Hogg, he met sixteen-year-old Harriet Westbrook and urged by compassion rather than passion, made a runaway marriage with her at Edinburgh in August 1811. Leading a financially harassed life, they stayed in York, in Westmorland, Ireland and Wales. However in a few years, he outgrew Harriet and abandoned her. Later he found a more sympathetic soul in Mary Godwin, the daughter of William Godwin, eloped with her and married her after Harriet had committed suicide by drowning. As a result of this, a popular indignation against him rose high and the custody of his children from Harriet was taken away ^{from} him, as he was considered an unsuitable guardian for them.

Rejected by his relatives and branded as corrupt and depraved, Shelley left England for Italy in 1818 where he remained for the rest of his life. Disgusted with human indifference, he turned towards Nature and got solace and comfort in her lap. Another reason of his turning towards Nature was that "by the end 1817 his health visibly declined and when it further worsened, his doctor advised him to look for a warmer climate."⁸ He, then, turned towards Nature and established a deep kinship with her because Nature provided

him both love and sympathy which he could not find in the human world. While in Italy he passed life in boating, wandering among hills and dales, as well as in the forest, in writing poetry and friendship. As he was rebellious by nature, he took interest in majestic and splendid aspects of Nature and made them reflection on his hopes and passions. He often visited a number of places and enjoyed the beauty and power of the various objects of Nature there. By making the use of the forces of Nature as symbols in his poetry he produced the greatest Nature poetry of the world. Having discarded logic in the relationship between poetry and reason, Shelley then proceeds on to identify himself with Nature.

In 1822, he was living a quiet and studious life at Pissa. On July 8, 1822, he along with his friend Williams went to welcome Leigh Hunt at Leghorn who had now arrived in Italy at Shelley's invitation but Shelley did not wish to stay there. When they were returning by sea their boat was overtaken by a squall and sank, and both Shelley and Williams were drowned. It was his untimely death at a very young stage of life.⁹

B) THE PRINCIPAL POETIC WORKS OF SHELLEY:-

Shelley was a versatile genius. He composed a number of longer and smaller poems. The main themes of his poetry are: a passionate devotion to Nature in the best tradition

of his Age, but going beyond tradition we get his keen interest in science, a radical egalitarian approach to religion favoured by platonism and pantheism, and admiration for ancient Greece.

Shelley's poetry cover a wide range and variety. His longer poems such as 'Queen Mab', 'The Revolt of Islam', 'Julian and Maddala', 'Prometheus Unbound,' Alastor or the Spirit of Solitude', 'Adonais', 'The Triumph of Life' etc, deal with all the serious problems of religion, politics, philosophy and life. There are in these poems, however, certain characteristic features which mark Shelley as a keen observer and faithful recorder of various objects of Nature. These poems show Shelley's love of nature in its changing rather than static phases. This is well in accord with his constant preoccupation with mutability. The various objects of nature, such as, the clouds, storms, dawns, sunsets, even the trees and flowers are seen in these poems in whirling motion.

Besides these longer poems, Shelley has composed several lyrics based on nature, personality and hopes and liberty. His major nature poems have been divided by Stopford Brooke into three major groups: (1) The poems of nature and man. (2) The poems of pure nature, and (3) The classic poems of nature. In the first group we have a

number of poems, such as - 'Mont Blanc', Lines written Among Euganean Hills', 'The Alps at Dawn', 'To the Moon', 'The World's Wanderers', 'Stanzas written in Naples', 'A fragment 'The Forest at Evening', Italy and Sorrow, 'The Zucca', 'To a skylark', 'The Nightingale', 'The woodman and the Nightingale', 'The Towers of Famine', 'When Soft Wind', And like a Dying Lady', 'Evening - Ponte a Mare, Pisa'¹¹ etc. The second group of ^{the} poems of pure nature consists "Passage of the Apennines", 'The cloud', 'The Dawn', 'Dawn and Desire', 'Twilight and Desire', 'All Sustaining Love', 'Song of Spirits', 'Hymn to Apollo', Echo song to Asia', 'The Spirits of the Earth and the Moon', 'The Moon and the Earth', 'The Music of the woods', 'A Dream of the unknown', 'Ode to the West Wind', 'A Widow Bird sate Morning' etc"¹² In the third group we have the classic poems of nature, such as 'Hymn to Apollo', 'Hymn to pan', 'The Birth of pleasure', 'Arethusa', 'Song of prosrepine' etc."¹³ In these poems we get Shelley's love of nature, his interest in changeful in nature, his belief in the power of nature to soothe the human heart, and pantheism, his nature myths, the use of abundance of Nature imagery and symbolism. In order to point out Shelley's treatment of Nature in these poems Stopford Brooke has defined the three types as follows:-

"(1) His (Shelley's) love of that which is indefinite and changeful in nature made him enjoy and describe better than

any other English poets that scenery of the clouds and sky which is indefinite owing to infinite change of appearance.

(2) Again, just because Shelley had no wish to conceive of Nature as involved in one definite thought, he had the power of conceiving the life of separate things in Nature with great individuality. When he wrote of the cloud, or of Arethusa, or of the moon, or the earth as distinct existences, he was not led away from their solitary personality by any universal existence in which they were merged, or by the necessity of adding to these any tinge of humanity, any element of thought or love, such as the pantheist is almost sure to add.

(3) Lastly, on this subject, the vagueness and changefulness of Shelley's feelings and view of nature, except in the instances mentioned, the dreams and shadows of it in his poetry that incessantly form and dissolve like the upper clouds of the sky, each floating while its successor is being born, and few living long enough to be outlined, are the only images we possess in art, save perhaps in music, of the many hours we ourselves pass with Nature when we neither think nor feel, but drift and dream incessantly from one impression to another, enjoying but, never defining our enjoyment, receiving moment by moment, but never caring to say to any single impression, 'stay and keep me company'.¹⁴

Here we can say that nature plays an important role in the lives of both Balkavi and Shelley. Indeed, both Balkavi and Shelley became the great devotee of nature.

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