



Henry David Thoreau's treatment of Nature in Walden

KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT *Thoreau is one the greatest Nature-lovers in American literature. At Walden Pond he lived in the closest possible proximity to Nature, and established a Wordsworthian intimacy with all Nature's aspects, features and moods. It would not be wrong to say that he is the Wordsworth of American literature, even though he wrote in prose and even though there is a basic difference he wrote in prose and even though there is a basic difference between Wordsworth's treatment of Nature and Thoreau's. Like Wordsworth's, Thoreau's love for Nature was profound and genuine. The relationship which Thoreau established between himself and Nature and which he wanted to be established between Nature and other human beings is one of the cardinal facts of Walden. Like Wordsworth, Thoreau treats Nature with imagination and feeling.*

Thoreau, the author of the famous, thought provoking book *Walden* is what Emerson calls Man Thinking. *Walden* is considered a masterpiece one of America's greatest writers and philosophers; Thoreau hated cruelty and injustice as much as he loved Nature. *Walden* is one of the great seminal book of the 19th century declares Joseph Wood. The Krutch. Thoreau's *Walden* is one of the great classics of world literature.

The best phrase to describe Thoreau's relation of nature and his treatment of it is that supplied by his Concord friend and neighbor, Ellery Channing, who called him "the poet-naturalist". Like the romantic poet, Thoreau treats Nature with imagination and feeling. But Nature in *Walden* has more than poetic importance.

Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* is one of such great documents of the American literature. *Walden* like Plato's *Republic* can guide the confused world. In fact, *Walden* is called a lay Bible. It advocates a simple life that is close to the life lived in the woods. It is not for nothing, *Walden* subtitled "Life in the Woods". *Walden* is a result of Thoreau's experiment with life; it is a reaction of his experience; and it is his manual to the weary mankind. Thoreau's work *Walden* and *Civil Disobedience* influenced many a great man of man kind. *Walden* is also influenced Mahatma Gandhi and it made Leo Tolstoy read it. W.B Yeats admired Thoreau. They said *Walden* is fresh and original. Thoreau's *Walden* is a treatise in the line of Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*. Not to speak of it bears a comparison with Thomas Moore's *Utopia*.

In the light of this *Walden* must be read independently as it is a social document about simple life- primitive but happy, isolated but harmonious, pure and noble. In the words of Martin Bickman, *Walden* is a "jeremiad calling for a retreat from the corruption of American Society". Definitely *Walden* advocates a life of simplicity, self-reliance and independence. Really it is a lay Bible.

Of various senses, sound was perhaps the most important vehicle for Thoreau's insight into nature. Sound and silence were indeed, Thoreau's grand analogy. Silence was a celestial sea of eternity, the general, spiritual and immutable; sound was the particular and momentary bubble on its surface. Sound was important to Thoreau for the intimation of silence which is brought to him. Sound and silence represented for him the transient and the permanent. Where the other senses failed him, sound invariably came to his help and put him on touch with the divine. In the chapter "Brute neighbors". He

creates an animal cosmos that dramatizes his transcendental vision of the divinity of nature.

Walden is neither an essay, nor philosophy, nor preaching; it is an account of the various meanings of nature as experienced by Thoreau. The chapter called "Ponds" illustrates how Thoreau brings out the meanings of nature as experienced by the mind. According to one view, this chapter is one of the finest part of the book, and it contains some of the best prose of the nineteenth century.

Thoreau's description of *Walden* pond: "Walden is blue at one time and green at another, even from the same point of view. Lying between the earth and the heavens it partake our colors of both..." The description is beautiful in itself: it appears to be a realistic picture of what Thoreau saw. Nature contains both physical and spiritual aspect, and *Walden* Pond reflects both. Nature is represented with all its richness, and Thoreau communicates his experience in all its fullness. The idyllic life represented by *Walden* is not a matter of environment; or of retreat from the urban life; it is rather a moral question involving the way man chooses to live.

Thoreau was, at the very core, a preacher. The morality that he preached, interesting itself, is the most significant thing about him. He was the noblest sense of the world, a 'cynic'. A life in harmony with nature, the culture of joy and simplicity, the subordination of science to ethics – these were the principles of cynicism, and to these Thoreau were always true.

Thoreau is the greatest by far of American writers on nature. He was the creator of a new manner of writing about nature. There is something in Thoreau that is not to be found in Wordsworth and Shelley. Much of Thoreau's writing is a mere record of observation and classification and has no claim on our remembrance. If at times his writing descends into the cataloguing style of the ordinary naturalist, the old tradition of wonder was too strong in him to be more than temporarily suppressed. He concludes that, "I learned this at least my experiment that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours." (p.324). Thoreau writes, "Man has an unquestionable ability to elevate his life by a conscious Endeavour". Lean Edel says, "Thoreau made his life a sylvan legend that of man alone, in communion with nature". Indeed Thoreau is read everywhere.

REFERENCE

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