

**A STUDY ON THE THERAPEUTIC POTENTIAL OF NATURE
WITH REFERENCE TO PSALMS AND GITANJALI**

*Thesis submitted to Bharathiar University
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the award of the degree of*

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH

By

ROBY K SEBASTIAN

UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF

Dr. M. ASHITHA VARGHESE

Assistant Professor

Department of English and Foreign Languages

Bharathiar University



DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES

BHARATHIAR UNIVERSITY

COIMBATORE - 641 046

JULY 2019

Certificate

Dr. M. ASHITHA VARGHESE
Assistant Professor
Department of English and Foreign Languages
Bharathiar University
Coimbatore – 641 046

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled, **“A STUDY ON THE THERAPEUTIC POTENTIAL OF NATURE WITH REFERENCE TO PSALMS AND GITANJALI”** submitted to Bharathiar University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of degree in **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH** is a record of original and independent research work done by **ROBY K SEBASTIAN** during the period 2013-2019 of his study in the Department of English and Foreign Languages, Bharathiar University, under my supervision and guidance and the thesis has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree/ Diploma/ Associateship/ Fellowship or other similar titles to any candidate of any University.

Head of the Department

Signature of the Guide

Declaration

DECLARATION

I, **ROBY K SEBASTIAN** hereby declare that the thesis entitled, “**A STUDY ON THE THERAPEUTIC POTENTIAL OF NATURE WITH REFERENCE TO PSALMS AND GITANJALI**” submitted to the Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH** is a record of original and independent research work done by me during the period 2013-2019 under the supervision and guidance of **Dr. M. ASHITHA VARGHESE**, Assistant Professor, Department of English and Foreign Languages, Bharathiar University and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any Degree/ Diploma/ Associateship/ Fellowship or other similar title to any University.

Place: Coimbatore

Date:

Signature of the Candidate

*Certificate of Genuineness of the
Publication*

CERTIFICATE OF GENUINENESS OF THE PUBLICATION

This is to certify that the Ph.D. candidate **ROBY K SEBASTIAN** working under my supervision has published a research article in the refereed journal named **EDUCATION TIMES (A PEER REVIEWED JOURNAL OF EDUCATION AND HUMANITIES)** with Vol. No. **IX**, No. **1**, Page Nos. **171-175** and the year of publication **2018**. The contents of the publication incorporates part of the results presented in his thesis.

Countersigned

Principal/Head of the Dept./Director
(College/University/Institute)

Research Supervisor

Certificate of Plagiarism Check



பாரதியார் பல்கலைக்கழகம்

BHARATHIAR UNIVERSITY

COIMBATORE - 641 046, TAMILNADU, INDIA.

State University | Re-accredited with "A" Grade by NAAC | Ranked 14th among Indian Universities by MHRD-NIRF

CERTIFICATE OF PLAGIARISM CHECK

1	Name of the Research Scholar	ROBY K SEBASTIAN
2	Course of study	M.Phil., / Ph.D.,
3	Title of the Thesis / Dissertation	A Study on the Therapeutic Potential of Nature with Reference to Psalms and Gitaanjali
4	Name of the Supervisor	Dr. M. Ashitha Varghese
5	Department / Institution/ Research Centre	Department of English and Foreign Languages
6	Acceptable Maximum Limit	30 %
7	% of Similarity of content Identified	05 %
8	Software Used	URKUND
9	Date of verification	02/07/2019

Report on plagiarism check, items with % of similarity is attached

Signature of the Supervisor

(Seal)
Dr. M. Ashitha Varghese M.A.(Eng.Lit.), M.Sc.(App.Psy.),
P.G.D.M.C., M.Phil.(ELT), Ph.D.(ELT).
Assistant Professor
Dept. of English and Foreign Languages Bharathiar University
Coimbatore - 641 046.

Signature of the Scholar

R. Saravana Selvan 02/07/19

R&D Director (BU) / Head of the Department

(Seal)

Dr. R. SARAVANA SELVAN
Professor and Head
Dept. of English & Foreign Languages
Bharathiar University
Coimbatore - 641 046

University Librarian (BU)

University Librarian
Arignar Anna Central Library
Bharathiar University
Coimbatore - 641 046.

Research Coordinator (BU)

Urkund Analysis Result


Analysed Document: Roby K Sebastian.pdf (D54274452)
Submitted: 7/2/2019 12:12:00 PM
Submitted By: bulib_librarian@yahoo.co.in
Significance: 5 %

Sources included in the report:

chapters.docx (D36589680)
Jayashree Ph.D Final2 (2).docx (D40615353)
Hira Lal Singh_English_266.pdf (D46702687)
Sanjay Saklali English Thesis.docx (D36826115)
Main pages 15-02.docx (D25736673)
<https://doc.studenti.it/appunti/lingue/2/william-wordsworth.html>
<http://www.vinayakamission.com/userfiles/phd/J545600016.pdf>
<http://anubooks.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Notions-2015-No1-1.pdf>
<https://faithunited.ca/140914-human-nature-delight/14ff0c6c-db93-45f7-9695-649808dd8a8b>
[c0ea10aa-fdba-41b2-bc33-91e39d82519c](https://faithunited.ca/140914-human-nature-delight/c0ea10aa-fdba-41b2-bc33-91e39d82519c)

Instances where selected sources appear:

76



University Librarian
Arignar Anna Central Library
Bharathiar University
Coimbatore - 641 046

Acknowledgement

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I tender my heartfelt thanks to **Dr. M. Ashitha Varghese** who has been to an immeasurable degree of responsible for my undertaking this literary venture. I am deeply indebted to her for the invaluable and prompt guidance throughout the course of my study. Her patience and sacrifice will remain as inspiration throughout my life. I am indebted to you for the academic support that I received from you, teacher.

I thank **Dr. R. Saravana Selvan**, Head of the Department of English and Foreign Languages, Bharathiar University for his able guidance and unconditional support throughout my research work.

My special word of thanks should also go to **Dr. P. Nagaraj** for his unparalleled support, guidance, cooperation and encouragement. His infallible love and support had always been my strength.

I would like to extend my gratitude to faculty members in the Department of English, Bharathiar University, **Dr. B. Padmanabhan, Dr. David Arputha Raj, Dr. Vinothkumar** and **Dr. Kasirajan**, for their encouragement and support.

I am highly indebted to **Dr. G. Maheswari Ammal** for her guidance, concern, patience and cooperation.

I express my sincere thanks to all my CMI fraternity especially to Rev. Dr. Paul Achandy CMI, Prior General of CMI Congregation, Rev. Fr. Sebastian Thekkedath CMI, General Councillor for Education and all the General Councillors and Provincial, Rev. Fr. Paul Parakattel CMI and all Provincial Councillors and Superior

Rev. Fr. Austin Kalapura and all the Fathers of St Joseph's Monastery, Karikamuri, Ernakulam for their continues prayers and support.

I thank my teachers, friends and coworkers Dr.Betty PJ, Prof.MK Sanoo, Prof. PJ Joseph, Prof.M.Thomas Mathew, Prof. Lellamma Jose, John Paul, Jijo Palathinkal, Sharon Samson, Johnson C Abraham, Jolly Pavelil, Nelben Antony, Sakhitha, Sheldon Samson, Lijo, George, Sakthi Vignesh, Rudresh all the staff and non teaching staff of Chavara Cultural Centre Kochi, for their prayers and constant support. Right from the entire process of preparation upto the ultimate culmination of the thesis their involvement never failed.

This acknowledgement would be incomplete without the mention of my family members. I would like to mention the love, prayers and great support of my beloved Parents, brothers and sisters especially the constant encouragement of my twin brother Rev. Fr. Roy Kannanchira CMI. They are the persons who helped me and made this thesis a reality by having faith in me and instilling the passion to strive and achieve higher goals in life.

Above all I thank the Almighty God for showering His choicest blessings on me through the intercession of St. Kuriakose Elias Chavara the great visionary and the Founder of CMI and CMC Congregations.

Roby K Sebastian

Contents

CONTENTS

CHAPTER NO.	TITLE	PAGE NO.
I	INTRODUCTION	1-25
II	REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	26-91
III	CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	92-130
IV	TEXTUAL ANALYSIS	131-178
V	SUMMING UP	179-191
	WORKS CITED	
	PUBLICATIONS	

Chapter I

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life – no disgrace, no calamity which nature cannot repair.

– *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Nature is an entity of creative inspiration and divine energy. It is a therapy for grieving hearts, melancholic minds and mourning spirits. The natural elements are great reserves of spiritual resources that can restore health and wellbeing. Exposure to natural landscapes promotes mindfulness, high cognitive functioning, low stress and improved memory skills due to the contemplative, effortless attention the environment takes hold. It impacts their mind and body significantly, allowing the essence of fresh air, pleasant sights and sounds to get into their cells and heal them emotionally, physically and spiritually.

Literature has been mirroring life and people since time immemorial -- wars, revolutions, fall and rise of civilizations and many such events have found place in the vast literary canons. The evolution of humanity and their relationship with nature too have been recorded in literature. With the evolution of human beings, their relationship with nature too has evolved and has had been through different phases of wonder, fear, respect, reverence and indifference. Literature not just depicts the human-nature bonds at each passing time and space, but also redefines the relationship with its influence. There have been references to ecologically sensitive issues long before the emergence of eco-criticism as a prominent field of literary enquiry, some of the

earliest of them being *The Epic of Gilgamesh* in Western literature, and the Scriptures of Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Taoism with reference to the myths and folklores in particular cultures. A common trait found in post-colonial writers all over the world is writing about the landscapes and ecology of their own natural environments, this being a kind of writing back against the empire. In many countries including Africa, India, Canada, Sri Lanka, Australia this has been an essential feature of their literary works. Writers like Wole Soyinka, Christopher Okigbo, G D Roberts, Judith Wrights and many others wrote elaborately about their nature and ecology of their nations. This idea was inspired by the strong determination of the colonized people to recover their lands and identity from the imperial powers. During colonization, the first loss experienced by the nation was that of the locale, nature and environment. Thus the colonized countries wrote about their natural landscapes and their relationship to it, as an attempt to retrieve them from the colonizers. Indian English literature too has a rich collection of such works that stood distinct with an established identity of its own. The attitude of Indian poets to nature was that of an aesthetic appreciation of nature for the treasures it held, pastoral impulse, and reverence towards a spiritually renewing force of life. Some of the outstanding eco-poems Indian writing has produced are Toru Dutt's 'The Lotus', 'Our Casuarina Tree'; S K Chettur's 'Red Lotus'; Manmohan Ghose's 'Poplar', 'Beach' and 'Weeping Willow'; R R Shreshta's 'Coconut Palms', 'Juhu Beach'; M S Iswaran's 'The Neem is a Lady'; Sarojini Naidu's 'Summer Woods'; Greece C Dutt's 'Kanchan Junga and the Terrai'; and Rabindranath Tagore's 'Breezy April' and *Gitanjali*. These poems depict "the unique loveliness of the Indian scene and the freshness of vision with which it is perceived", as noted by Vinayak Krishna

Gokak in *The Golden Treasury of Indo-Anglian Poetry* (31). The early Indian poems had portrayed the beauty and sanctity of nature, but failed to show the gradually deteriorating environment and the natural world. Later writings like Dlip Chitre's 'The Felling of the Banyan Tree', Gieve Patel's 'On Killing Tree', Baldoon Dhingra's 'Factories are Eyesore' and Keki N Daruwalla's 'Boat-Ride along the Ganga' speaks about the degradation of the environment and man's role in it, often making people aware of the need to restore and reconnect to nature.

Nature is not distinct from human lives. It had always been an integral part of humanity, and continues to be so forever. The more humanity distances itself from nature; the alienation widens and disrupts the natural world as well as the wellbeing of human minds. Living in connection with nature often leads to heightened awareness and conscious living, enhancing the ability to think deep, have compassion, and to experience life as a sentient being in nature, irrespective of the hierarchical classifications.

SPIRITUAL HEALING THROUGH NATURE IN TAGORE'S POETRY

Rabindranath Tagore was as much a poet of Nature as he was of Man and God. He always aimed at the harmony between Man and Nature and to discover the Divine from the beautiful combination. From his very childhood he was carried away by the beauty of nature, and worshipped it for the lessons it taught him and for the beneficial provisions showered on him. Tagore wrote about his love of nature:

I had a deep sense, almost from infancy, of the beauty of nature, and intimate feeling of companionship with the trees and the clouds, and

felt in tune with the musical touch of the seasons in the air. At the same time I had a peculiar susceptibility to human kindness. (8)

Tagore's greatest merit as a nature poet is his identification with nature, and his ability to perceive things from the point of view of natural landscapes. The affinity he has towards nature and the self-effacement that he experiences and identifies with nature has been pictured quite artistically through his words. The depth of his relationship with the environment is so intensely felt in his poems, that nature seems to be a part of his self, and himself a part of the greater self of nature. He holds nature to be the primal source of life out of which humanity has evolved thousands of years ago.

The very fact that his birth required him to evolve as a separate individual, adrift from the life in nature, bothered Tagore and he wished to unite with the great force of life in nature as soon as he could. This idea of the poet's yearning to reunite with the spirit of nature was also the concept of many of his poems. In one poem, Tagore experiences himself as being strongly connected to the sea. He identifies that he had been an embryo in the womb of the sea for a million years. He listens to the roars of the waves and there he recognizes that voice of the universe that contained him for ages together. Tagore comes across this feel of the universal spirit in every element of nature. "I peep into the primeval nursery of life, where the mother Earth thrills at the first living clutch near her breast" (65).

According to the Vedantic philosophy, Nature and God are Prakriti and Purusha, which are the two elements that form the Absolute. The ideology forms the base of Tagore's philosophy of nature, man and God. When humanity meditates on nature, it

results in a divine revelation of the Almighty. This revelation helps humans have a realization of their own selves and its spiritual connection with nature and God.

In Tagore's poetry, nature is painted in all its colourful glory and beauty. A line from the poem 'The Gardener' gives a gist of the colourful blend of pure sensuous joy that nature holds, "Over the green and yellow rice fields sweep the shadows of the autumn clouds followed by the swift chasing sun" (84: 1-2). Nature is God's creativity, and when humans immerse themselves in nature's haven, they get to experience divinity even in the minute and insignificant elements and process of nature.

Tagore confides in Nature as a moral teacher and guide to humanity. He believes she teaches him goodness and morality through living examples. The entire system of his open air university at Shantiniketan is based on a living contact with Nature. The very meaning of the place is 'an abode of peace'. It is surrounded by canopies of trees and the learning was with nature, in serene natural environment, making it a blissful learning experience as well as healing through the peaceful landscapes. Since the ancient ages forest and nature has had great impact on human lives; human beings lived so close to nature that there was hardly any detachment and hostility between man and nature. In one of his speeches from the collection of essays, *The Relation of the Individual to the Universe – Sadhana*, Tagore delivered a lecture on the emphasis of living close with nature and its benefits, apart from speaking about beauties of nature. He justified that man and nature was inseparable from each other:

[...] in India the forests that our civilization had its birth [...] It was surrounded by the vast life of nature, was fed and clothed by her, and had the closest and most constant intercourse with her [...] Having been in constant with the living growth of nature, his mind was free from desire to extend his dominion by erecting walls around his acquisitions. (2)

Karunamaya Goswami, in his *The Art of Tagore's Song* comments on the mastery of Tagore's subtle handling of nature and its significance in his works:

Like the trees , the fruits and flowers , the air, the light , his own life helped him understand and communicate the dalliance of nature[...] The nature, as it were, like a person was speaking to Tagore of all the mysteries in her, and Tagore , on his part sympathetically responded to her outpourings and turned them in to songs. (218)

While portraying nature's beauty and delight in his poems on the one hand, Tagore himself admitted that he lived in a world that was in stark contrast to the one depicted in his poems. The pleasant and sensually appealing nature that he portrayed was just so in the world he lived. The treatment of nature in Tagore's works was not just the reflection of his emotional and spiritual affinity to nature, but was also derived from his deep ecological awareness. His genuine concern for environment is obvious in many of his works including the essays 'Palliprakriti', 'Aranyadebata', 'Tapoban', 'Halakarshan'; the poem 'Two Birds'; and the short story 'Bolai'. Tagore's love for trees and forests was immense. In 'Palliprakriti' Tagore attempts to prompt geo-environmental

consciousness. In 'Tapoban' he clearly conveys that the locus of the present civilizations is forests. His love for forests is so much that he sees them as living beings as himself, proclaiming them to be the source of wisdom for the entire universe. Saints and hermits lived in forests, contemplating in and on their serenity, which enlightened them with eternal wisdom that was spread out to the world. Forests and woodlands take up a great space in Tagore's poems, as a spot of solace that helps in reconnection, rediscovery, reconstruction of the selves in alignment with the rhythm of nature.

'Bolai' is a masterpiece of Tagore's ecological consciousness. It presents his sensibility and spiritual oneness with nature. Bolai is the protagonist of the story, who is a passionate nature lover. As a little boy who spends all his time with nature, he derives his happiness and comfort from it. He believes nature to be a part of himself and acknowledges it as the source of all his emotions. Bolai does not feel nature as inanimate, but as something which is full of life, and closer to him than any human being. "To him the grass cover did not seem like an immobile substance; he felt that this expanse of grass, surrounding his whole body – rolling and rolling, the grass tips would tickle his neck and he would burst into peals of laughter." (178) He is fascinated by nature and is excited about the changes in it with the passage of days. "He is intensely eager to see new seedlings emerge into the light, raising their curled heads. Every day he bends over them as if to ask, 'And then? And then?' They are his unfinished story." (179) Through the character of Bolai, Tagore presents a sense of deep ecological consciousness and environmental awareness that every human being should develop. Bolai's devotion and his sensibility towards nature are unparalleled. He feels the pain

of the flower being plucked and the branches snapped, while children of his age neither understand the significance of nature nor have any concern for the environment. His tender mind is hurt when he sees the grass mowed; his eyes well up at such sights but he feels that it would make him a laughing stock among his friends.

Tagore writes about the pain Bolai endures due to the widening separation between man and nature, “Bolai has long realized that some kinds of pain are for him to bear alone – they elicit no response from the people around him” (180). The story with its ecological note goes in to pinnacle when Bolai strongly protests the cutting a red silk cotton plant (simul tree). He treated it with motherly affection. The tree was saved for the time being but eventually “the stupid looking tree” (as looked upon by the narrator) was cut down when Bolai went to London for studying engineering. His aunt regrets for it, and realizes later that she should have protected the tree and loved it as a replacement of Bolai as it was the most loved to Bolai. For him it was not merely a tree, but equally valuable as a human life or more important than it.

He wrote verses on Tree Planting Festivals which was collected and compiled under the title *Banobani (The Message of the Wild)* (1929). He published a volume of poems entitled *Vanabani: Voice of the Forest* (1931) which was about trees, forests, flowers, seasons of nature, and how they are all connected to humanity. In the introduction to the poems in the anthology, Tagore shows his inclination to the Upanisadic philosophy which claims the manifestation of God in nature, and how it has greatly influenced his way of thinking. He seeks refuge in the trees, speaks and listens to them:

Therefore to your shelter

I come to gain the sacrament of peace, to hear

The mighty utterance of the silent, to surrender

Myself, head bowed by anxiety's heavy burden. (257)

Tagore presents all aspects of nature – its beauty, pleasant sceneries, affection and healing, rage and wrath, the disasters it brings, the degradation of it at the hands of humans, harmony with mankind, the loss of it, and the resultant state of disharmony between the two -- in his works. 'To Modern Civilization' (Sabhyatar Prati) is one of the most popular eco-poems of Tagore. In it he presents the fatigue of modern life, and longs for the return of sylvan age which he laments are now being replaced by cruel modernization eliminating greenness:

Give back the wilderness; take away the city-

Embrace if you will your steel, brick and stone walls

O newfangled civilization! Cruel all-consuming one, (223)

Tagore's concern for nature was expressed in forms of literary works, implying his awareness and criticism to the unrepressed rampage done to the nature. He aimed to prevent the exploitation of nature, and took initiatives from personal level to limit environmental destruction. According to him, human life is dependent on the natural cycle and natural phenomena, which, therefore, cannot be brutally exterminated as it will break the bond between man and nature and disrupt the whole ecological balance. His poem 'Dui Pakhi' portrays the crisis between culture and nature and symbolically

makes it obvious that the continuously evolving culture is gradually wiping out nature's vital forces. In another poem 'Mother Earth' (Basundhara-1839) Tagore shows his deep love and respect for nature as it relates him to the infinity, and the eternal love of a mother. Therefore his constant efforts were to save Mother Earth from the forthcoming calamities. His hundred years old vision is much relevant still in present day, and is an insight to keep working for the protection of the environment. His works, which have begun a legacy of eco-narratives, fulfills the purpose of understanding the significance of nature as emotionally, spiritually, mentally and physically rewarding and therapeutic.

Tagore's attitude towards nature is more of mystical, spiritual, philosophic, and Vedic than romantic. Nature poets have certain aspects of nature that they fondle and adore. It varies from person to person. Keats was a lover of birds and Wordsworth was an admirer of flowers. Similarly Tagore was a poet of rivers and Bengali seasons, especially the monsoons. Lightning is depicted as a fiery snake continuously biting the darkness. The clouds are compared to dancers on an aerial stage. The music of spring is pictured with the fragrance of Bakul flowers, cuckoos and humming bees. The freshness of nature has a magical effect on the readers.

In the poems of *Gitanjali* there is a full-fledged exposure to nature and the poems are set in rich natural backdrops of open air atmosphere and serene natural landscapes. Nature has been a great source of imageries and symbols in Tagore's poems. Tagore uses a variety of natural elements for references and as metaphors and symbols, personifying them for a better representation of the therapeutic aspects of

nature, and paralleling them to real life contexts. Stars represent light in darkness, and the attraction between stars shows the yearning to embrace not only each other but also their Creator. The vast blue sky symbolizes the magnificence of God. The imaginary line of the horizon where the earth and sky meets symbolizes the strong desire of Man to unite with God. The free floating clouds and cool winds are symbols of freedom and pleasant wandering, which is the sole purpose of a free and peaceful life. Death is represented as a passage from a known to an unknown haven of space.

The songs in *Gitanjali* “are offerings of the finite to the infinite” (77). *Gitanjali* stands in a high range when compared to other devotional-mystic poetry. According to T.S. Eliot it is great poetry which, “expresses in perfect language permanent human impulses”, and is universally appealing because it presents bare human emotions, and each human being is able to relate to the songs it contains (103). Here poetry becomes a revelation, an invocation that delves deep into the stark reality. Throughout the whole poetry humanity communicates with the Divine; the mortal waiting, seeking, praying, praising, speaking and adoring the immortal. The hundred and three songs in *Gitanjali* explore the connection between God and the human soul, and of God and Nature, of Nature and the human soul, and of the individual soul and humanity. There is a continuous conversation between the finite and the infinite throughout the poems.

According to the Vendantic ideals that have influenced Tagore, Nature is the abode of God. There is a certain kind of joy and gloom in nature that reveals the purpose of each of the lives God provides for, and He manifests Himself in the blend of emotions nature holds. “Hidden in the heart of things, thou art nourishing seeds

into sprouts, buds into blossoms and ripening flowers into fruitfulness” (81: 4).

The lines imply the inherent presence of God in every being of nature. Many songs in *Gitanjali* explore the inter-relationship of God and Nature. Tagore portrays, in them, the enormities of time and space, the eternal and the temporal, and examines the mysterious workings of life, of God and of nature. A prominent theme in many of the songs is nature being presented as a beautiful medium to allure humans to God. God loves humanity and manifests Himself in nature for human intimacy with the infinite, so as to be healed and renewed. Instances of lines expressing the manifestation of God through nature are, “In the fragrant days of sunny April through the forest path he comes, comes, ever comes. In the rainy gloom of July nights on the thundering chariot of clouds he comes, ever comes.”(45: 8-11) All faces of nature, irrespective of the time, seasons and space, are means and mediums of the communion of humans and God.

Gitanjali is abundant in quaint and sensuous expressions. The ultimate treasure of nature is the chief source of the rich collection of beautiful imageries and lyrical melodies. Thus nature enhances the poet’s spiritual and mystical ideals through its bounties, which are presented in pictures of words:

The morning sea of silence broke into ripples of bird songs; and the flowers were all merry by the road side, and the wealth of Gold was scattered through the rifts of the clouds while we busily went on our way and paid no heed. (48: 1-4)

Tagore emphasizes the importance of living in close bonds with nature, and of establishing a harmony between the human and non-human living beings. Humans lead spiritually gratifying and emotionally appealing lives when being in constant touch with nature; whereas when being alienated from nature, they become spiritually malnourished. Tagore believes that nature brings hope and consolation to the suffering humanity. He writes about the inherent harmony between the spirit of nature and the mind of man. Nature opens herself to humans and when humans reciprocate it there is a communion and mutual reception between the spirit of nature and the soul of humans. S.B. Mukherji in his book, *The Poetry of Tagore* writes with reference to Tagore's spiritual conception of nature:

A vision steeped in wonders, mystery and boundless joy fuses the human body and spirit and nature into a harmony. An exalting rapture breathes into a vision of timeless unison – physical as well as spiritual – with nature's form and phenomena, into the primitive bond of creative unity with the universe; into the sense of oneness with lights and waves, with flowers and fragrance, with the starry sapphires. They blend and merge into a beam of joy and wonder, into an affirmation welling from inner spiritual apprehension. (123)

To Tagore, devotion and worship towards God is expressed in the love for humanity and worship of nature. In *Gitanjali* he gives a meticulous description of the beauty of nature with its underlying spiritual significance. Tagore encompasses the trinity of Nature, Man and God, the deep communion of which is presented in his works.

The songs of *Gitanjali* do not merely sing the beauty and charm of nature, but each of them contains the identification of the human and non-human living beings, the humans and the elements of nature, the mortals and the Immortal, through which there is a realization of the self, the Divine and the Universe.

The stream of spirituality flows through Tagore's works, due to his intense love for nature. Tagore is an idealistic mystic who attains the communion with the infinite by losing himself in the contemplation of nature. He conceives the whole universe to be infused by one life, one soul. He realizes this oneness with the world, and writes about the fusion of Man, God and Nature in his poetry. Edward Thompson writes about Tagore in *Rabindranath Tagore: His Life and Works*, thus:

No poet that ever lived has had a more constant and intimate touch with natural beauty. He can use, at his best, the same images and pictures, the oldest ones in the world, a score of times in as many lines, and each time with freshness and charm. His wealth here is inexhaustible. (7)

The love of nature is equivalent to the love of God in Tagore, as by realizing the worth of the natural world, he is actually giving in to the fact that there is a God who created it. A common faith that an unbroken chain binds everything and everyone in the world, and that the spirit of man can commune with God through Nature forms the basis of all his poetry. Sarojini Naidu wrote about Tagore in her tribute to him for his contribution to humanism, "Tagore's song is the lyre of Heaven, emitting out the note of Eternity; it is the voice of all mankind, like the murmuring breeze of spring dawn, Tagore's poetry soothes and embalms the heart of humanity" (40).

From the style, concepts and narratives of his poetry, Tagore emerges to be a blend of Walt Whitman and William Wordsworth. The ease Tagore experiences in the company of nature resembles the ideals of Wordsworth and the sacred treatment he offers to nature is similar to that of Whitman's principles. In the poems of *Songs of Myself* Whitman sees the infinite, the unity of life, the fusion of material and immaterial, and the collapse of the physical into the spiritual; he ultimately discovers the inexplicable secret of existence from the natural world surrounding him. Nature can be read as a sacred text or the Book of God, which contains the eternal wisdom and enlightenment. He discovers the cosmic reality of the universe in the pages of nature. Such kind of approach to nature is Upanisadic in view and the spiritual orientation of nature underlying Whitman's poetry is shared by Tagore too, as he was much influenced by the Vedas and Upanishads where nature is revered as a divine energy. Tagore, as a spiritual humanist wrote poems with unprecedented freshness of the culmination of literary and spiritual sensibility.

NATURE AS A MEDIATOR OF HUMANITY AND DIVINE IN THE BIBLE

The story of Creation of the world is the first record of the coming together of Man, Nature and God. The Bible holds the account of it attributed to two key sources – the Priestly account of Creation and the Yahwist account of Creation. According to the former, in the beginning of Creation, God created time on the first day. He divided the time into light and darkness, which was day and night respectively. On the second day he created space, and divided it into the land and sky. On the third day he separated waters from the land, and thus was created the Earth and the Seas. On the following

day God commanded vegetation on earth, and there were plants bearing seeds and trees bearing fruits. God then created two great lights, the Sun to govern the day and the moon to rule the night. He also created the stars. On the next day God created all sorts of creatures to fill in the sky, waters and lands of the Earth. He finally created man in the image of Himself, and said, “Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, over the cattle, over all the wild animals, and over all living things that creep around the world” (Gen 1:26). The ‘dominion’ here refers to the nurturing of the lives in nature, as opposed to exploitation. Man and woman were created in the image of God, as He gave them a share in his nature, and assigned them as stewards to look after the rest of His creation. The earliest reference of the communion of Man and God takes place on the backdrop of nature. Since the Creation, Man, God and Nature had been interrelated. There was a mutual relationship between nature and humanity as nature was dependent on humans on its sustenance and humans were dependent on nature for their survival. It was in the will of God that there is an eternal harmony between Nature and Man, and that Man could communicate with God through the medium of Nature.

The Yahwist account of creation is much older and was written during the time of the Israelite monarchy in 10th century BC. There is no step by step process of creation here. God created man first, and only then he created one thing after another, until finally the woman is created as a perfect companion for man. Man was created from the dust of the ground and was given life by God. Therefore there is an indication of the intimate bond between humans and earth. This account is more inclined to be

anthropocentric. It begins with the mention of a dry and arid earth waiting expectantly for the human touch to transform it. The kind of bond mentioned here resembles that of the bond of affection between a farmer and his land. Man belongs to the earth and is made of it. The earth is so close to him that it is called a mother that is awed and respected. Man was supposed to guide and harness the world to help it attain the perfection that God dreamt of. The Lord created the Garden of Eden, a delightful spot for man to stay and live on. There were two trees in the Garden – the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Adam and Eve were allowed to eat whatever fruits they wished from the Tree of Life, but were forbidden the fruits of the other tree. They were told they would be doomed to die if they disobeyed the command of God and ate from the Tree of Knowledge.

The creation account presents the role of nature in mediating the communication between God and humans. Nature has been a constant witness in the evolution of mankind. It played a significant role in the Fall of man too. Man and woman were tempted in the Garden of Eden to disobey God by Satan, who came in disguise of a serpent, and provoked Eve to eat the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. Nature remains a background for the sin of humans here. The judgment that followed as a result of the sin had the wrath of God on humanity as well as the natural world. God abandoned humans from Paradise, and earth was separated from it, leading humans to toil for their survival, and there was hostility between the natural world and humans. After the fall, God sent His Son to save the fallen creatures, and as God redeemed nature, thus was redeemed humans.

The worship and praise of nature was the earliest form by which man communicated with God, and it served as the medium of expressing his longing for the union with the Divine. Every element of nature that evoked the awe and appreciation of humans was an inspiration for the allure of humanity towards God. The ancient poets and psalmists personalized natural objects, but did not invest them with emotions. They recognized nature as a living being, with the constant change in weather, seasons, moods and functions. The natural elements themselves were not seen as capable of life, but they recognized a supernatural power behind nature, which manifested itself through the changing moods of nature. For instance, the bright clear weather, yellow corn shining in the sun, etc. were associated with the grace and mercy of God, whereas the storms and violent floods showed the rage and wrath of God. In Greek, Roman and Chaldean mythology, each god exercised power over each element of nature whereas in the Hebrew mythology, there is only one God behind the whole creation that controls the heavens and earth. He is all powerful and the psalmists praises, celebrates and adores the God that provides for them. They call the elements of nature to rejoice and join them in their glorification of their Maker.

Psalm 148 shows the psalmist evoking all elements of nature to praise the Lord for creating them:

Praise Him, sun and moon; Praise Him, all stars of light... Let them
praise the name of the Lord, For He commanded and they were created.
He has ... established [sun, moon, and stars] forever and ever; He has

made a decree which will not pass away. Praise the Lord from the
 earth, sea monsters and all deeps; Fire and hail, snow and clouds;
 Stormy wind fulfilling his word. (148: 3, 5-8)

The above lines express the conviction that there are decrees and laws that God has assigned to each of His creatures in the heaven and for beings on earth. The natural phenomenon and the order of the universe exists as a result of the manifestation of following the commands. The psalmist calls them to honour their Creator by obeying His commands, and to rejoice in their existence created by God.

From the Christian perspective there is no scientific basis of the creation of the natural world. It is believed to be created by the Lord to provide for the existence of humanity, and to be nurtured in turn by the mankind. The natural world, the heaven and earth are only God's medium to communicate with humans. They are not assigned any spiritual significance, but play a vital role in the evolution of mankind and the worship of the Divine. Nature mediates between Man and God, and bears responsibility for the creation, fall and redemption of humanity. Human beings are stewards assigned to preserve nature. In Psalm 74, the psalmist Asaph praises God, "Yours is the day, Yours is also the night; You have prepared the light and the sun. You have established all the boundaries of the earth; You have made summer and winter" (74:16-17) The verses reveal the hands of God behind the workings of the universe. The elements of the nature are God's creation that He chose to share with humanity. In His covenant to humanity

God says that He provides “for the ongoing regularities” that prevails in the universe. Thus, all the creation prevalent in the universe reveals God’s omnipresence, wisdom and faithfulness to humanity, and loyalty to His covenant.

THERAPEUTIC LANDSCAPES & NATURE BASED THERAPY

Natural environments positively impact health and well-being, restore cognitive functions, improve healing, and nourish the mental faculties. Hartig defines restoration as “the process of renewing, recovering, or reestablishing physical, psychological and social resources or capabilities diminished in ongoing efforts to meet adaptive demands” (273). Apart from the philosophic and idealistic perceptions about nature as therapy, many studies based on scientific evidences too have established that nature based interventions can have beneficial effects on health and well-being. Engaging in nature related experiences like gardening, horticultural occupations themselves help in rediscovering selves and reconnecting to nature for enjoyable and soulful involvements.

There are many studies claiming that the rupture of the bond between natural world and human world leads to the disharmony in the cosmic balance. It results in psychological illness, emotional inefficiency and lack of spiritual well-being. The emergent field of eco-psychology develops the concept of therapeutic environmental philosophy which claims that reconnecting with nature is essential not only for the harmonious sustenance of biosphere but also for the emotional, spiritual and mental well-being and happiness of humanity. Nature has always been a therapy since the beginning of the world, but the development of Nature Therapy as a postmodern field of experimental study is based on the integration of art and theatre therapy, Gestalt,

narrative, eco-psychology, adventure therapy, transpersonal therapy, shamanism and somaesthetic practices. This has been implemented among communities in private, health and educational sectors in many parts of the world. Nature becomes a therapeutic setting in such campaigns. Outdoor natural landscapes are free, vast and not subjected to ownership by a particular authority. They are not confined in space or time. There is a continuous stimulation of energy in the natural world, as opposed to the indoors with artificial treatment facilities. People afflicted with social anxiety, communication barriers, emotional weariness and mental illness restore their health and abilities in the long term experience of living in the natural world, and being healed by the life of the natural elements. They have particular sites in the natural world like river banks, tree tops, under the shade of the tree, woodlands, etc. where they could relate themselves, identify the connection between the place and their states of mind, and establish a firm bond with the place or event in nature that puts them at ease, restores their peace and they naturally fall back in place. All they need is a hidden place, away from people, where they can relax, restore, rebuild their fragmented selves, tell their stories and build social relationships.

The key elements in nature-based therapy (NBT) are the choice, construction and maintenance of therapeutic spaces. There are many processes in the whole therapy session. Choosing a landscape and living with it is one way of rediscovering the actualized selves and they build on it. Besides it another important aspect is the engagement with the eco-narratives that are specially written for therapeutic motives. This process is a bonus to the people, as they get to connect with the stories of natural phenomena and the natural world, apart from voicing their own stories. When they read or listen to them,

they accept the essence of life and death by associating with the timeless and eternal universe and the dynamics of nature. Children's literature is a haven of ecologically rich therapeutic narratives. Nature serves a backdrop that is nurturing, healing, beautiful, and funny. Nature and the natural world take on the image of the 'great mother' archetype, and that presents as the undercurrent in such therapeutic literature. Children and old people are portrayed as finding solace and comfort in nature, and nature portrayed as their teacher, healer, guide and refuge. The texts reinforce the need to revive the sense of being a child of the natural world and to protect, love and respect the nature that nurtures it, despite the demands of human progress. Incorporating peaceful natural settings do not just aim at strengthening man-nature bonds, but also serves as a factor in developing the cultural values of children and young adults, and enhancing their emotional and spiritual well-being.

The Norwegian philosopher, Arne Naess coined the term 'Deep Ecology' in 1972 to present the idea that nature has an intrinsic value of its own, apart from its association with mankind and divinity. It is about the intimate emotions of attachment one experiences with the elements of nature, and he believes this identification to be attained to anybody who lives in the free nature, which would stimulate their senses and deepen the feeling of oneness and wholeness. Naess connects himself most with the mountains, and he thus writes about a particular Norwegian mountain as:

A symbol of benevolent, equiminded, strong father, or of an ideal human nature ... These characteristics were there in spite of the obvious fact that the mountain, with its slippery stones, icy fog and dangerous precipices,

did not protect me nor care for me in any trivial sense. It required me to show respect and take care. The mountain loved me in a way similar to that of my ten and eleven year old brothers who were eager to toughen me up. (69)

Nature becomes a medium of restoring health and peace. The real environment that serve humans as a healing space keeps them spiritually and emotionally enriched. The eco-narratives in literature too comforts human minds, as the peacefulness in the landscapes portrayed creates a mental landscape that reflects the peace, harmony and solace found there.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify spirituality in elements of nature through contemplating on nature.
- To understand and experience the therapeutic effects of nature and natural landscapes by living close to it, and being healed by it.
- To study the portrayal of nature in literature and understand its spiritual significance, with reference to the literary texts of *Gitanjali* and the Psalms.
- To realize the interconnection between God, nature and humanity as each of the three becomes a medium of connecting the other two.
- To examine the practical concepts of Therapeutic Landscapes, Nature Based Therapy (NBT) in real life contexts as an application of free air living and its healing effects in the mind, body and spirit.

- To understand the ever growing significance of nature as a healer, especially with reference to the concepts in the case of mentally ill, emotionally distorted, and spiritually exhausted communities of people.

METHODOLOGY

The research design employed here is phenomenological. The concepts that are central to the research are studied in detailed. The methodology taken up for the study is that of textual analysis within the respective conceptual framework. The primary texts are analyzed for traces of instances from the concepts, and are further verified in application to the latter.

CHAPTERIZATION

The thesis is divided into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the study and gives detailed explanation about the author (Rabindranath Tagore), texts (*Gitanjali*, Psalms), and about eco-narratives in general; it discusses the concept of therapeutic landscapes and nature based therapy with respect to the idea of nature as a therapy and contributing to the mental, emotional and spiritual well-being. The chapter examines the significance of nature in the poems of *Gitanjali*, and the role of nature in the Bible, especially Psalms. The objectives, methodology and chapterization of the study also are listed here. The second chapter collects previous studies about the subject, the author and the concept which are put together in a chapter as the reviews of related literature. The third chapter discusses the conceptual framework and its birth from various interdisciplinary studies. The origin, development, ideology, expansion and application of the concepts are discussed in detail with regard to the study. The fourth

chapter analyzes the literary texts of *Gitanjali* and the Psalms with respect to the concepts discussed in the previous chapter. It presents the study of the Bible as a literary text and its critical analysis. A detailed account of the depiction of nature in the songs of *Gitanjali*, and the role of nature in the creation, evolution, fall and redemption of humanity according to the Bible are presented. The chapter addresses the varying roles that nature is assigned in the psalms during worship. The fifth chapter culminates the study compiling the major findings of the study, the relevance and need of the study, and listing the scope for further research and limitations of the study.

Chapter II

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The chapter presents the academic reviews related to the select literature, comprising studies previously conducted on the two primary texts taken up for the study, Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali* and the Psalms in the Holy Bible. *Gitanjali*, subtitled as 'Songs of Offerings' is a collection of songs beaded as a garland and offered to God. In the verses of *Gitanjali*, flowers different conceptions of divinity, mysticism, love, humanism, idealism, nature and spirituality.

The Holy Bible is a scripture followed mostly by the Christians. Despite being a religious scripture, the Bible is studied more as a work of literature in contemporary critical writings. The text is rendered in forms and structures that are literary oriented; and have a collection of stories, poems, songs, proverbs, and essays. They are analyzed for the figurative and literary devices using literary criticism. The introduction of literary criticism into Biblical studies has also lighted a new dimension of research for biblical scholars. Northrop Frye, the most influential literary critic of the century, writes in *The Educated Imagination*, "The Bible forms the lowest stratum in the teaching of literature. It should be taught so early and so thoroughly that it sinks straight to the bottom of the mind, where everything that comes along later can settle on it ... the Bible ... should be the basis of literary training".

The reviews are classified into four sections – the authorial descriptions which include articles about the writers; the textual analysis of *Gitanjali*; studies about the

Psalms; and the depiction of nature as a therapy and solace in eco-therapeutic literature and strategies.

AUTHOR

Atiur Rahman, ‘Tagore’s Thoughts on Environment’, 03 June 2011

The article studies Rabindranath Tagore’s ideals and thoughts about environment and its preservation. Nature is a central motif in Rabindranath Tagore’s prose, poems, plays and essays. Being a strong environmentalist, Tagore sought to balance development and preservation. He advocated for a progress that included preservation. He came across several instances that provoked him to write about the contempt of modern man against nature, through which he expressed his annoyance. Most of his literary works express his intense love for nature, often describing the beauty and warmth of it. He believed that there could never be a complete development without involving development at rural levels. There is, among his works, a separate collection of lyrics named *Prakriti Parjaay* (*pakriti* means nature, *parjaay* means genre) devoted to nature and its preservation.

Tagore professed his affection for nature not only in through his words; he extended it to a practical hand with the foundation of Santiniketan in the east of Bengal. It was a lush green paradise, surrounded by sylvan canopies all around. Children were taught under the shady trees, not to flaunt a romantic idea, but to engage in every moment with nature, thus cultivating respect for nature. There are a few instances of some of his works discussing nature. The short story ‘Balai’ is about the love of a boy for a tree. The poem, ‘The tame bird was in a cage’ is about the love between a caged bird and a free bird and about the plight of the caged bird. In ‘I Plucked You Flower’, human

hostility against nature is depicted by its destruction. In 'Fruit Gathering', Tagore explains the ignorance of humans in dealing with nature; he feels humans have no rights to interfere with the activities of nature, and that such anthropocentric behaviour is the root cause of all natural calamities.

Tagore's thoughts about the environment and his concern for the deteriorating man-nature bonds are presented in the above review. He advocates for a mutually cordial relationship between human beings and their environment.

Ammara Khan, 'REVIEW: Rabindranath Tagore: An Interpretation by Sabyasachi Bhattacharya', 16 Sep. 2012

The write-up is a review of the work '*Rabindranath Tagore: An Interpretation by Sabyasachi Bhattacharya*' which is a biography of Tagore by the latter. In this work the writer has attempted to produce the life of the legend. Tagore was a philosopher who had greatly impacted the people of his time. Being the first Indian to beget the Nobel Prize for literature, he was a national icon since then, and remains so till this day. But a lot of his works other than *Gitanjali* are unfamiliar to people. He considered imperialism as an obstacle to the cultural interactions and intercultural acceptance. As a humanist, he believed in the betterment of the individual, and the resultant development of the country. He held nonviolence as the key to humanity, and the essence of nonviolence as the elimination of the self or ego. Tagore preached and practiced the eradication of the self/other dichotomy, for a peaceful living. Unlike the other nationalists of his time, Tagore believed in the betterment of the people, especially of the country people from the rural areas, for the advancement of the nation.

Though Tagore has discussed and wrote about all areas of life, including relationships, society and politics, he is widely acclaimed as a spiritual and mystic poet. *Gitanjali* being the only work translated by Tagore into English has created a sagacious picture of him to the world, due to the mystic attributes of the work. The writer thinks Tagore has been reduced to “a saintly person who belonged to an ashram, not to the contemporary world”, whereas Tagore was in the constant quest of knowing himself and realized at seventy that his real and only identity is that of a poet.

The above review is a review of a posthumous biography of Rabindranath Tagore by Sabyasachi Bhattacharya. The writer has interpreted the life of Tagore distinct from other works. He has explored Tagore from all aspects, and thus presents an organic and genuine account of Tagore’s life and letters. Tagore dreamt of and aspired for a casteless, classless world where harmony and friendship prevail among people and nations. The work is categorized into the genres of biography and literary criticism. It comes to an end with an account of Tagore’s principles and philosophies of humanity. The work is an original extract of the legend’s life, and his evolution as a remarkable leader, intellectual poet, and a sentient human being.

**V Baskaran, ‘Tagore: A Mediatrix of the Trinity of Nature, Man and God’,
April 2013 (PhD Thesis)**

The thesis studies Rabindranath Tagore as a mediator connecting Nature, Man and God, through his works. A meticulous analysis of his works in three sections (poetry, prose, drama) is presented, of which poetry is reviewed here.

Rabindranath Tagore gave Indian poetry a different standpoint with his unconventional thinking. He gave a new authority to the Bengali sky, storms, harvest, flood, flowers and sunlight through his works. He was a lover and worshipper of nature. As he observed nature, he found that the world was just bursting with great beauty, and this inspired the mystical perception of the world teeming in his works. Tagore was as much concerned about human beings as he was about nature. He found that man and nature could survive only if they coexisted, and thus became a mediator of man and nature. He recollects how in his childhood, the only companion for him was the row of swaying coconut trees in the garden. He treats them as living as himself. While nature is described as the giver of life and joy, human beings are also said to be the receivers of this joy and life. The early phase of his poetry was inspired straight from his observations and experiences. Later on, there was a growing concern for the environment, due to which he advocated and worked for a sustainable development where man and nature could coexist.

Tagore began his journey of writing poetry with poem 'The Wild Flower' which narrates the story of a girl named Kamala who was brought up in a retreat in the Himalayas. She had not known any other human being other than her father. Her only friends were the wild flowers of the hills. After her father's death, a young man falls in love with her and marries her. But she is attracted to her husband's poet friend who falls for her. The friend keeps it a secret within him, whereas the innocent Kamala confesses her love for him. Her husband, who comes to know of it, kills his friend assuming him to have seduced his wife. Kamala leaves back her husband, and returns

to nature for solace. But having known human love, she could neither find peace in nature, nor survive without love. She commits suicide by jumping in to the river, and the waves embrace her like a mother does her child.

The poem 'The Awakening of a Waterfall' is about the sudden awakening of the poet's soul at the sight of the golden sun light, the free flowing waters of the rivers and the melodies of morning birds. He discovers himself and the presence of the universe at these delights. There are many such poems written in the glory of the joy of living, and in the rediscovery of the beauty of the world. They are collected and compiled under the title '*Morning Songs*'. The poem 'Echo' in the collection is about the numinous instinct of a majestic symphony flowing in the heart of the universe, and the echo of which is reflected in the beauty of the world. The poems 'Endless Life' and 'Endless Death' reinforce Tagore's most favourite philosophy of 'being is becoming'. They focus on the need to renew life and break away from the monotony. Life is renewed only by death, and death never dies. Therefore, death has to be welcomed with hospitality, rather than being scared of it. He says he has lived and died every year. The poems 'O Chabi Gan', 'Wistful Dream', 'Wakeful Dream', etc. portray the dreamy sensuousness and the obsession of natural beauties. Nature is personified as a good spirit working for the benefit of humanity. On the other hand, in poems like 'The Frantic Scream', 'Night's Universe' and 'The Sentient Night' the horrific face of nature is revealed – the nature that takes violent vengeance for its destruction, the nature that retaliates when it is being exploited, and the nature that overpoweringly destroys humanity with volcano fires, floods and draughts.

Tagore's next collection is entitled *Pictures and Songs*, which contain poetical sketches. One of the picturesque poems from this collection is 'Alone', where a maiden walks through golden fields of ripe rice in the glittering golden sunset. In the poem 'The Golden Boat', the poet sits in the fields near the river, and as the golden boat appears, he fills it with the harvest of the field. The boat goes off leaving him behind alone. The golden boat here symbolizes life which collects people's achievements in their lifetimes, leaving them with their lives till it takes us back with it. In a poem, 'Sister' (Mediatix), the character of sister plays a mediatix between human (her younger brother) and animal (a kid). She takes up both her brother who is scared at the coming of the kid near him, and the kid who wants to play with her brother. She equally consoles both of them, building in a mutual knowledge and harmony between them.

Her brother on one side, the goat on the other,

She consoled both, giving them equal attention.

Sister to both the children, animal and human,

Mediatix, she knit them in mutual knowledge. (11-14)

Just like the sister in the above poem, Tagore becomes a mediatix of humanity and nature.

The vignettes of Life and Nature are meticulously weaved in Tagore's poetry. Examples of such exquisite poems are 'Sundar', 'Ses Dan' and such. 'Sundar' opens with the picture of a cloudy afternoon against the sunlight. Tagore is adept at bringing beauty out of contrasts, as seen in the light and dark, silence and rustling trees where

nature's majesty is best revealed. Nature's charisma and magic is to be found in poems like 'On the way' and 'The Dark Flower' celebrating solitude, and the mysteries of nature. In the latter poem, the girl's dark gazes are compared to the black clouds of June.

In most of Tagore's poems there is an interrelation between God, Man and Nature. He brings out the essence of the mutual harmony between the three elements. The world of nature and the world of Man is distinctly separate. The two worlds are brought together by the third world which is of the Divine. Tagore becomes a mediator of the union of the trinity. This trinity is found not only in his poems, but in proses and dramas too.

Caroline Eden, 'A Nobel Tradition: Rabindranath Tagore – the First Songwriter to Win Prize', 25 Jan. 2017

The article is in appreciation of Rabindranath Tagore on his Nobel winning achievements. Rabindranath Tagore was a writer, artist and a performer. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1913 for "his profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse, by which, with consummate skill, he has made his poetic thought, expressed in his own English words, a part of the literature of the West", according to the Nobel website. '*Gitanjali: Songs of Offerings*' is a collection of 103 lyric poems published in 1912 by the India Society in London. The fame it received was huge, and was highly appreciated by prominent Western writers of the time, like W B Yeats, Ezra Pound, Thomas Moore, and William Radice. W B Yeats, having heard of the book, read and gave the introduction to it. The poems are still being revered for their melodies, imageries, spiritual wisdom and devotion to the spirit of Nature.

S Chelliah, ‘Mystic Vision and Cosmopolitan Outlook in *Gitanjali*’, 3 March 2017

Rabindranath Tagore was one of the early literary geniuses the country had witnessed. He represented India in the literary map of world. A poet par excellence, Tagore is known as a spiritual humanist, ideal mystic and visionary. His mystical philosophy was based on the Vedic literature. Worshipping God and Nature, and loving humanity, his literary productions revolved around the basic essence of the universe – the relationship between Man, God and Nature. Though Tagore was aware of the stark complexities of the world he lived, his writings had always been a source of comfort and solace. He turned every disharmony and discord into harmony and unity in his works, which is why it was said that “to read one line of Tagore is to forget all the troubles of the world’. Tagore’s poetry is a hope for unity and harmony.

To Longinus, the aim of poetry was sublimity, to Horace, poetry was the source of pleasure and for Tagore, poetry is the medium to teach men of the lessons of nature, and the mysteries of God. Tagore was never an advocate of ‘Art for Arts’ sake’. He rather believed that art should enrich human lives, and that being a poet, his duty was to help man realize the need to connect with himself and the rest of the creation in a creative harmony. The very purpose of poetry according to Tagore was to establish a perfect harmony between humanity, nature and God; and thus to elevate the human soul from stains of materialism to a greater and nobler purpose in life. His poetry was rich in metaphors, symbolism, and imageries. WB Yeats remarked that in Tagore’s writings, poetry is wedded to life, as his poems contain the fundamental elements of everyday life -- the trees, rivers, flowers, sun, stars, life, birth and death. Tagore emphasizes

in his works that God was present in the most ordinary and common of people, elements and processes in life. His mysticism is a practical way of looking at the world with a pure soul. Tagore's poetry is spiritually significant, as he is a blend of mysticism and romanticism.

Tapati Sinha, 'Nature and Environment as seen by Rabindranath Tagore', May 2018

The review explores Tagore's love for nature and environment, as is projected in many of his writings where nature is the major inspiration. Tagore feels freedom in the tranquility of nature. He was captivated by Nature since his boyhood. His works not just describe nature at its full length; they seek the divine presence and adore the penetrating visual magnificence of it. Tagore has portrayed the divinity of Nature in all forms – the Creator and the creations of the universe – in works like *Gitanjali* and *Banabani*. He has a collection of more than four hundred songs devoted to Nature where he vividly describes plants, seasons, flowers, rivers, and every phenomenon of nature.

Tagore believes humans beings to be evolved from the Mother Nature, and therefore insists on a cordial harmony between man and nature. He has emphasized this idea in his poems. He considers that nature is not just a showcase of beauty, but something that has its own purpose and meaning. Man without Nature and Nature without Man is incomplete. Tagore was quite disturbed at the over exploitation of nature by technology and development. People were having advantage exploiting nature; but nature retaliated and overpowered every time. He advocated for a sustainable development; and his concern for nature is revealed through his writings. The foundation

of Shantiniketan was a tribute to Nature and organic learning. He also introduced festivals in celebration of each changing seasons marked by reciting or chanting songs dedicated to Nature in order to invoke the blessings of the *panchabhootas*.

Tagore's deep respect for nature is not just present in his works; he had also realized the importance of nature in real life. This awareness has brought him closer to nature, and deepened his experience with nature.

Gheorge Mustata, 'Rabindranath Tagore Invites Man to Reharmonize Himself with Nature'

The review signifies the need of preserving nature and environment in the modernized era and how that is the only way left to survival. The writer, here, specially mentions Rabindranath Tagore, his concern for the environment, and the corresponding efforts to preserve it.

Ancient Indians had depended on the woods, riverbanks and forests for shelter; fruits, roots, tubes and animals for food; barks, leaves and animal skin for clothing. Man could not exist without nature, and there was a harmony between nature and human beings centuries ago. Nature provided, and was not exploited. The Aryan immigrants who came to India settled in the forests and took advantage of the natural resources. Tagore writes about it, "Having been in constant contact with the living growth of nature, his mind was free from the desire to extend his domination by erecting boundary walls around his acquisitions. His aim was not to acquire but to realize, to enlarge his consciousness by growing with and growing into his surroundings". A civilization of such kind brings in a harmony between "man's spirit" and "nature's spirit".

According to Tagore, nature is the only path to spirituality. He says that water not only cleanses the body, but also heart and soul; the earth does not simply hold the body, but is a lively presence pleasing the mind. As long as man cannot connect with nature, he lives in a prison cell, without realizing the significance of the world he is born into.

The writer appreciates Tagore's conviction that man should return back to nature, and that it is the true way to connect to the universe. He, thus, invites human beings to reharmonize with nature, in order to connect to one's spirit and to the universe. In it lies the ultimate realization of one's being in the world, and the connection between man and everything else in the universe.

GITANJALI

The following reviews are write-ups about the text, *Gitanjali: Songs of Offerings* including research articles, papers, dissertations, thesis and collection of essays.

Paula Hayes, 'Love of Creation and Mysticism in Tagore's *Gitanjali* and Stray Birds', 2010

Rabindranath Tagore was much influenced by the Rig Veda, which formed the base of much of his philosophy. Tagore was a nature lover and held deep respect for nature, God and the creation. According to the Rig Vedas, in the beginning of time there was nothing. The only resources were nothingness, deep nothingness, non-being and non-existence. God Almighty created the material world out of the voids of non-being and nothingness. There was no existence of time too in the beginning. God moved the primeval voids and constructed time out of them. Rig Veda appreciates the natural

physical world, reveres it for the abundance it contains, and accepts the forces of nature as possessing metaphysical power over the universe. It cannot be transcended by humanity. Tagore understands the Vedic philosophy as appreciating the phenomenal world and existence.

In a song (Brink of Eternity) in *Gitanjali* Tagore makes a comparison of the material house and spiritual house. The material house which is the poet's body is symbolized a cramped tiny house, and the spiritual house owned by God is symbolized by a mansion. "In a desperate hope I go and seek for her in all the corners of my room; I find her not ... My house is small and what was once gone from it can never be regained" (87: 1-5) In the above lines, the reference to 'her' is to the eternal soul. The poet's body is a small house incapable of containing the eternity; it is too small for the vast infinity whereas only the God's spirit can embody eternity.

But infinite is thy mansion, my lord,
And seeking her I have come to thy door
I stand under the golden canopy of this evening sky
And I lift my eager eyes to thy face. (87: 6-9)

The evenings and the beauty of nature described in the above lines reflect the physical manifestation of the spiritual grace within the Divine. Tagore's idea of worship is through meditation on the divinely inspired forms of nature.

In another song (Where shadow chases light) the poet depicts the devotee's yearning to unite with the God. He presents himself as looking and meditating on the rain messengers of wishes) that comes down from heaven, he waits all day looking at

the rain waiting for someone to arrive. The ‘someone’ here might be a dear friend or a simply a presence. “This is my delight/thus to wait and watch at the wayside/ where shadow chases light/ and the rain comes in the wake of summer” (44: 1-4). He further writes, “From dawn to dusk I sit here before my door/ and I know that of a sudden/ the happy moment will arrive when I shall see” (44: 9-11). The poet is here waiting for the presence of God and enlightenment. But he does not experience the union throughout the poem where he continues to wait with hope. He says “In the meanwhile I smile and I sing all alone/ In the meanwhile the air is filling with the perfume of promise” (44: 12-14) The poet’s heart is teeming with hope and excitement to meet the Divine, as he knows God would not give up on him.

Tagore has been a romantic and idealistic mystic throughout life and letters. His concept of mysticism was not devoid of individuality and sensuality. He does not renounce the joys of the physical world to attain spirituality, as he believes that the individual personality and sensuous joy further enhances the intensity of appreciation and worship of the spiritual.

N Cinthia Jemima, ‘Quest for Spirituality in *Gitanjali* and Psalms: A Comparative Study’, May 2013

Rabindranath Tagore’s *Gitanjali* which contain songs of offering to God, is one of the best works in the literary canon. The Book of Psalms is one of the important sections in the Bible, and most of the psalms are song-offering to God. The research article does a comparative study of the structure and content of the *Gitanjali* and the Psalms.

The write first compares the organization of lines in *Gitanjali* and Psalms.

The songs in *Gitanjali* are divided into two parts; the one first part is about the quest for God and the second is about the realization of God. Each new poem is continued from the preceding poem. Man's mystic relationship with nature, the divine presence in nature, the joy of union between God and Man, gratitude for grace, the pain of separation from the Almighty are discussed throughout the poems. Towards the end, the poet focuses on death and welcomes it with joy as a new beginning.

The book of Psalms is a collection of holy songs, written for private devotion and public prayers. It is divided into five books. Book I contains Psalms 1-42, written by David. Book II includes Psalms 42-72, attributed to the Sons of Korah, Asaph, David and Solomon. Book III has Psalms from 73 to 89, authored mainly by Asaph and Sons of Korah. Book IV covers Psalms 90-106, with anonymous authors except for Psalm 90 by Moses and Psalms 101 and 103 by David. Book V has Psalms 107-150. The Psalmists who composed these songs were the Jewish religious poets of Israel. They wrote about everything they experienced in their lives – joy, grief, fear, insecurity, hardship, sins and virtues; and had unwavering faith in a loving God throughout the good and bad times. They praised and thanked God in all of the songs for being with them.

Some of the songs of *Gitanjali* are analyzed here to make the comparative study. In the first poem, there is an inner harmony that the poet speaks about. The soul is immortal and the body is perishable, but it is God's will to allow the renewal of life by changing the brittle empty bodies. In poem 27, the poet confesses his vanity to God, who is the master poet. God is the ultimate musician who created and sustains the

universe with his music. There is no greater poet than Him, and the poet is only an instrument in the hands of God that inspires the divine music. In Poem XLVII, the poet writes about his anxiety in case of missing the meet with God. Throughout the night, the poet sleeplessly waits for God like a lover does for her man to return home. He fears that he may sleep off exhausted and miss meeting God. The lines strongly resemble the verses in the Biblical Song of Solomon where the lady speaks of her lover (God). This shows the influence of Bible on Tagore. In Poem 127, the truth about God is depicted. God is indefinable and His love is inexplicable. The poet writes and sings about the majesty of God, eternity of His path, and His mysterious ways. But when he is asked to explain its meaning, he finds no words to express the divine glory. It can be only felt by a devoted pure heart and cannot be conveyed in words.

Psalms are personally related to every individual. They are put forth more as personal pleas than as prayers. Psalm 98 is about absolute rejoicing in gratitude, to God's mercy. Since the beginning of the song the joyous mood lasts throughout, as can be seen in the opening line, "Sing unto the Lord a new song for he hath done marvelous things" (Psalm 98:1). David sings with joy by counting the blessings God has bestowed upon him. Biblical scholars categorize Psalms 47, 93, 96, 97, 98 and 99 as "royal enthronement psalms". This is because it takes the form of the coronation of a king by the people, and honouring God with the title of a king or ruler for His splendid reign. The song is structured discrete. God is praised by the totality of the earth in verse 4.

The individual elements of nature like seas, rivers and mountains too extol God by roaring, clapping hands and singing. In Psalm 27, the psalmist sings with hope amidst his laments of trials and struggles that God will finally come to help him:

I am still confident of this:

I will see the goodness of the Lord

in the land of the living.

Wait for the lord; be strong and take heart

And wait for the Lord (Psalm 27: 13-14)

David refers to God as “My light, My salvation, My stronghold” and fearlessly celebrates the strong faith in God by recalling his previous experience receiving God’s grace. He prays to God to instruct, guide and lead him since his way is perilous and unsafe.

The poet is an enlightened soul who does not shun the world but refines the world through his imaginative capacity and delightful words. In order to attain a spiritual realization, one does not need to renounce the world, rather should connect with the world, delight in its beauty and make it a better place where it degrades. Tagore says, “I feel the embrace of freedom in a thousand bonds of delight”.

The book of Psalms contains personal experiences and reactions to them. Psalms are enlightening and insightful and help in gaining a better understanding of life, experiences, and spirituality. They draw individuals closer to God. Psalm 42 describes the yearning of the psalmist to reconnect with God, “as a deer thirsts for springs of water”. Tagore experiences the same thirst for God in his *Gitanjali*. In Psalm 98,

David praises God throughout the ups and downs of his life, and reveals the longing to get closer to God. God is a safe haven of comfort and rejoice for the psalmists as well as the poet, who offers themselves at the feet of God to enrich their lives.

Aju Mukhopadhyay, ‘Tagore’s *Gitanjali*: A Critical Appraisal’, 2014

Rabindranath Tagore wrote the original *Gitanjali* in Bangla, and later translated into English himself, though the English version had differences with the original text, both in the languages, style and the number of poems. The English received the songs with so much of enthusiasm that they could almost connect *Gitanjali* to their Bible. It was such popular there. The songs were unheard previously, and were a fresh delight to the heart and soul. The English awarded him the Nobel Prize, and made his songs “a part of the literature of the West” because they could find the echoes of the Bible as the source of the songs, though his original sources were the Vedas and the Upanishads. Tagore was well versed in both the Bible and the Vedas and knew that God in essence was the same in both. William Rothenstein, who first introduced the songs to the gathering said, “Here was poetry of a new order which seemed to me on a level with that of the great mystics. Andrew Bradley, to whom I showed them agreed: ‘It looks as though we have at last a great poem among us again’.” Per Hallstrom, the member-secretary of the Nobel committee remarked, “it is certain, however, that no poet in English since the death of Goethe in 1832 can rival Tagore in noble humanity”.

Spiritual freedom or ‘mukti’, referring to salvation or ‘nirvana’ in the Buddhist phraseology, is an underlying concept in many of his poems. It implies the release or

liberation of the soul from the world, to merge with the Divine. But Tagore says in the eleventh poem,

“He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground

And where the path maker is breaking stones” (11: 4)

He believes and preaches that God is not anywhere beyond the world, or inside the shrines of the temples, but in ordinary toiling people. He was a great worshipper of the Vedic deities. Gouri Dharmapal, in her review of the original *Gitanjali* in Bengali, says that one could know Rabindranath in the Vedas, just as the Vedas could be known from him. Tagore and Vedas are the same, the only difference is one says in the Vedic language, and the other in Bangla. And it is not a mere recitation or translation of the Vedas, but the realization of it. Tagore addresses God as his Mother, Father, Lord, Master, King, Friend and Playmate, as he had experienced the presence of God in all these forms. Tagore does not yearn for the eternal in a spiritual, instead he is in quest of a spiritual liberation, as a conclusion of his physical life. He is not detached from the world, instead this spiritual yearning has led him enjoy the world and life more. Tagore loved God, but he loved life more. Though *Gitanjali* is appreciated and reputed for its hymns and songs of offerings to God; it also contains his love for people, fellow humans, society, nature and his motherland, as much as his devotion to God. He appealed to God for the welfare of his countrymen, to raise them in knowledge, wisdom and humanity.

The writer projects *Gitanjali* as a tribute to humanity, along with the worship of Lord. *Gitanjali* is an offering of songs and *Gitimalya* is an offering of the garland

of songs for the Lord. Through these songs, Tagore is surrendering himself, body and soul, to God; while simultaneously delighting in the joys of the universe.

Sneh Lata Sharma, ‘Rabindranath Tagore’s Tryst with the Divine: A Critical Study of *Gitanjali*’, 2014

During the turbulence of pre-World War era, while the West had renounced God, especially with the proclamation of Neitzche’s ‘Death of God’, the East was inclined to spirituality with the publication of Tagore’s *Gitanjali*, songs of offering to God. Such verses are the composition of a master who has experienced ecstasy. The songs reflect the ancient Bhakthi tradition of writing. He is elated about the union with God and his God does not belong to a particular religion or community. He believes in the God of love, equality and harmony. In *Gitanjali* there are combinations of Sufi mysticism, Vaishnavite ideals, Upanishads, Bengali Baul lyrics and literatures and philosophies of the East and West. He was also influenced by the philosophy of Advaita (non-dualism) which is seen in the poem ‘Leave this Chanting’ where he feels that God is not a separate entity living outside in the skies of heaven, but a spirit that resides in his own self. In Song 36 of *Gitanjali*, Tagore submits himself to God and confesses his spiritual weakness, and prays to make him morally and spiritually strong so that he can accept the joys and sorrows of life alike and serve and help elevate his fellowmen in their spiritual realization. He prays to God to lead his nation into the humanitarian “heaven of freedom”.

A blend of Christian and Hindu mysticism prevails in Tagore’s writings, while addressing both devotion and nature. He seeks to God to destroy with His weapons his

ignorance and inadequacies. He also takes a stance of reverence, like Wordsworth, while describing about Nature in his songs for her nurturing love.

Despite the honour of India's most renowned mystic poet, Tagore neither confines himself to the stereotype of a saint or spiritual Guru nor renounces the world to attain the divine. He is more preoccupied with humanism and concerned about his fellow humans. In Song 15, he brings down divinity to earthly level. He equates the work of a labourer to that of the creation of God, by elevating the labourer in divinity. Like Walt Whitman, whom Tagore calls the greatest poet of America, Tagore too sees divinity in humanity. Just as Tagore sees God in the poor labourers tilling the soil in the hot sun; Whitman sees God "each hour of the twenty-four, and each moment then, in the face of men and women" and in his "own face in the glass" (*Leaves of Grass* 74).

Sandagomi Coperahewa, *One Hundred Years of Gitanjali 1913-2013, 2015*

(Collection of Essays)

One Hundred Years of Solitude is a collection of essays brought up as a tribute to the great writer, Rabindranath Tagore, on the hundredth centenary of the Nobel Prize honour by the students of University of Colombo, CCIS. Tagore was honoured with Nobel Prize in 1913 for *Gitanjali*. The year 2013 marks a century of this prestige. The collection of essays as a tribute to Tagore shows the timeless relevance and literary value of his works, not just in India but in other parts of the world too. The writers of the essays collected here are from India and Sri Lanka.

The researcher has reviewed four essays from the collection regarding the critical appreciation and analyses of *Gitanjali*. The essay '**Tagore's *Gitanjali* as a Modernist Text**' by Wimal Dissanayake explores *Gitanjali* as a modernist literary text expressing the fragmented and ambivalent modern poetic self in its quest of putting it back together. The writer travels a different path in analyzing the text for the modernist elements in it, as opposed to the conventional themes of spirituality and mysticism. He says that Tagore uses spirituality and mysticism as a backdrop for a deeper analysis. Tagore was highly concerned about issues of freedom, emancipation, reason and their connection to modernity. As much as there are metaphysical and spiritual poems, there are secular poems too in *Gitanjali*. In most such poems, selfhood, modernity and social conscience is discussed, especially in poems like 'Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high' and 'This is my prayer to thee, my lord'. There are poems like 'Deliverance is not for me in renunciation' and 'In the deep shadows of the rainy July' which shows the complex relationship between a poet and his self, and a devotee and divinity. The self is fractured and is set to rebuild against the uncertainties and ambiguities, in the background of conventional devotional poetry and cosmic thinking.

The writer discusses ten aspects of modernity discovered in *Gitanjali* in order to reinforce his understanding of the text as a complex modernist text. Primarily, he thinks the author considered modernity a form of negativism that affects the growth of human intellect and insight. Instead he created a positive frame of mind to compensate the negativism in the society. *Gitanjali* is found to be analyzed within the context.

Next, modernity is believed to have certain inclination to death and deadliness. Tagore in *Gitanjali* gives a poetic rendition of death in many of the poems, as an inevitable fact.

Thirdly, poetic imagination was given a special significance in Tagore's works, as is seen in the Romantic and Modernist texts. He finds imagination as a spiritually redeeming power. The next factor is the idea of freedom which is a chief concept in modernist writings. *Gitanjali* explores freedom in its maximum. The world is in chains, but the poet's mind breaks these shackles and creates his own world with imagination. This is clearly evident in *Gitanjali* as Tagore builds unknown, unseen realms out of ordinary objects and experiences, with his freedom of poetic imagination. In one of his poems, he says, "Freedom is all I want, but to hope for it I feel ashamed". The fifth aspect is the blend of ordinary and extraordinary. Tagore experiences the sublime even in day to day life. This preoccupation with the "everydayness", even while focussing on the cosmic, is a particular trait of modernist writers. The dichotomy of conflicting ideas and emotions is another modernist feature present in the poems of *Gitanjali*. The interplay of paradoxes between light and darkness, presence and absence, unity and plurality, order and chaos, tranquillity and turbulence, certainty and uncertainty, universal and particular is central to his poems. Tagore, as an individual and as a writer, strives to balance constant tension of being the author of his life and the author of his texts.

Eighth, the use of irony is a prominent technique and style of modernist texts. Tagore, in *Gitanjali* has employed irony to show the discrepancies of reality and fantasies, hopes and their non-realizations, expectation and actuality, etc. Modernist literature has been obsessed with the notions of individuality and identity formation. In many poems of *Gitanjali*, self and individuality precedes the vastness of the cosmos, forming

the ninth aspect in the discussion. The final trait is the emphasis on the art of writing itself. Tagore believes his emotions are best expressed through poetry, and that poetry becomes both an aid and an obstacle in the revelation of sentiments.

The second essay, '**The Great Fair of Common Human Life: Re-reading *Gitanjali***' by Radha Chakravorthy says that *Gitanjali* presents love in all forms – erotic love, motherly affection, brotherly companionship, and love for nature. The poem also employs erotic metaphors signifying the ultimate form of love.

The writer says that Tagore debunks the greed for material possessions and the culture of avarice. The underlying concept in most poems of *Gitanjali* is the desire to break away from materialism, for the union of the self with the eternal spirit is. In other poems, his desire for the beauty of the world is sensual and spiritual. He celebrates the beauty of the world and puts off the idea of detachment.

Tagore has a special bond with his God, and he believes that God is manifested in the most ordinary aspects of day to day life. In this regard, nothing in the world is negligible or good for nothing. In poem 43, the metaphor of dust represents the humblest level of existence, and it is a trace of God. His ideals do not dissuade him from the social realities of his time, nor does his mysticism take him off human strife. Tagore emphasizes the need of giving up ego indicating the importance of humility in devotion to God. His God does not dwell in the temples, and neither is his worship registered through hollow rituals. He sees God in the poorest of the poor. This trait of Tagore resembles

Kabir who was a great influence on him, rather than the Vashnavaites. In *Gitanjali*, poem 11 presents the disapproval of orthodox religion and its rituals, his love and respect for common people, and the strong faith in dignity of labour. It goes:

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads! Whom does thou
worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open
thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the
pathmaker is breaking stones. He is with them in the sun and in shower,
and his garment is covered with dust. Put of thy holy mantle and even
like him come down on the dusty soil!

.....

Come out of thy meditations and leave aside thy flowers and incense!
What harm is there if thy clothes become tattered and stained? Meet
him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow. (*Gitanjali* 11)

When there is no ego, people connect with each other easily, and that forms a vital role in one's spiritual journey. Connecting with many people helps overcome the boundaries that divide man from man; and this way the human spirit identifies with and belongs to the universe and God. In poem 63, he says that there can be no one alien to him, if he has known God, because God is all pervasive. And as long as God is with him, he cannot shut the doors of his heart to anybody.

Critics point out the contradictory pulls of detachment and involvement, renunciation and desire in Tagore's works. His ideas evolve throughout his life, and always celebrate the relationship between man and God. *Gitanjali* celebrates the whole of Creation – the earth, sky, plants, birds, animals and seasons, with humans as the centre of the universe and God's most beloved. *Gitanjali* demands to be reread in the present times, to discover its multiple understandings. The poems emphasize the necessity of connecting with each other – “our social and cultural others” – and to think beyond the divisions and discriminations that segregate humans from humans. They also signify the importance of leading a harmonious life with the surrounding environment. They proclaim the relevance of spiritual and ethical values, instead of being obsessed with material prosperity. Tagore, through the poems, rejects the orthodox rituals of the religions, and instead calls for a faith that is all inclusive and tolerant. The poems advocate unity in all forms of diversity, be it in knowledge, culture, language or heritage.

The third essay **‘Oh, the Picture of Perfection! The Joy Unalloyed’** by P.H.K Kulatilaka. Three of his poems were dedicated to children, their innocence and bliss. Tagore was very much fond of the beauty of childhood. In poems 60, 61 and 62, he writes about the sudden flickers of smile on a baby's lips when he's asleep; the simple and innocent lives of children playing with sand houses, empty shells and leaf boats; the divinity and colourfulness associated with childhood and its reflection in the Creation, respectively.

Tagore spent some time of his youth in seclusion in the solitude of the Bengali village in a boat house by the Ganges, where his only living companions were the wild

ducks from the Himalayan River coming during the autumn. He felt the birds and rivers had so much to speak to him, and he had a great time discovering the secrets of Nature. This speaks for the great lyrical dynamism with which his poems are written.

Love is the basic emotion motivating the poems, and there are different types of love – love of God for his creations, sensual love between a man and woman, the affectionate love between a mother and a child, love for nature as a gift of God.

The final essay ‘*Gitanjali* – Lotus and the Empty Basket’ by Edmund Jayasuriya speaks about the sheer poetic insights of the text. Tagore promoted multiculturalism, tolerance, sympathy and understanding. He found glory and happiness in humbleness. He served humanity irrespective of class and creed. Tagore believes service to humanity is service to God, and that real beauty is within our spirit if we look deep into us, instead of searching it out. He says if instead of following the useless religious rituals, we be kind to each other, there is redemption in that. Tagore’s poetry speaks close to our hearts. One instance the writer quotes is from the lines where a man asks a lady carrying a lamp to lend her light to light his dark home. But she refuses and carries the lamp to the carnival of lamps to float it in the river. He “stood and watched her little lamp uselessly lost among lights”. His lofty ideals are expressed in mystic poetry.

The essays in the collection are critical readings of *Gitanajli* from unexplored perspectives, celebrating the legacy of Tagore and *Gitanjali*.

Vivekanand Rao, ‘Rabindranath Tagore: *Gitanjali*’, 2015

The review studies Tagore as a visionary, and gives an account of the predominant themes and imageries in *Gitanjali*. Tagore is placed as a Romantic in terms of poetic diction, and approach towards nature as a ‘friend, philosopher and guide’. Like Keats and Wordsworth, Tagore has explored the entire realm of natural scenery and has pictured them vividly in his works. His works, most importantly poems like *Gitanjali* employ a lot of imagery to give a concrete expression of his thoughts and emotions.

The writer here has classified the imageries into three types – Direct, Figurative and Reciprocal. Direct images are the representation of the poet’s emotions and dreams in picturesque concrete fantasies. Figurative images represent the poet’s emotions and experiences with the use of literary devices like simile, personification, metaphor and mythological references. Reciprocal images are those in which the vehicle and tenor reciprocate. An example of this image from the text can be seen in the lines of the second song,

I know thou takest pleasure in my singing

I know that only as a singer I came before thy presence.

.....

Drunk with the joy of singing I forget myself and call thee friends who
are my lord

There is an abundance of nature imagery in Tagore’s poetry. Some of the most repeated images are of flowers, birds, evening, moon, stars, rain, river, sea, pastures, light, darkness, boatmen, shepherd, cattle and many such. These images express Tagore’s

deep love and reverence for nature and its glory in simplicity, as keenly observed by him. The metaphor of the poet as a traveller, the boatman as God, the sail in the boat as the journey of life, and the other side of the river as an unknown place which can be explored only after death are instances of how the poet connects everyday experiences to deep philosophy. Pain and death is discussed from a mystic point of view in Tagore's poems. Death is presented as a new beginning with lots of hope as much or more than there is in life, "where the old tracks are lost new country is revealed with its wonders" (*Gitanjali* 37). The severity of death has been wiped off in the excellent poetic language.

Tagore was greatly influenced by the Indian classical mythology of the Vedantas and Mahabharatha. Therefore, they become a source from which the poet derives imageries. He follows the tradition of the Vaishnava poets in its expression of devotion through rich imagery and symbolism. God is presented as lover waiting for his beloved, and playing a flute meanwhile. The flute in the hands of God is the poet, and he feels bliss as an instrument in his Master's hands, "being carried over hills and dales" by the eternal melodies (*Gitanjali* 1). Through images, symbols and literary devices like these, Tagore brings together simplicity and sublimity. He also advocated individual liberation and dignity, and believed that there is a divine purpose in the diversity of each culture, religion and language. This idea has been overlooked now, but is most needed during times like this. He genuinely wished for his fellow human beings to be enlightened and awakened by spiritual wisdom, as is expressed in the lines,

Where the mind is without fear and head held high

Where knowledge is free

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow
domestic walls;

.....

..... my Father, let my country awake. (*Gitanjali* 35)

Tagore has skilfully employed the English language to put in Indian philosophy. He is one of the makers of the modern India. His message is to actively participate in the joys and sorrows of life, and to appreciate and enjoy the universe that reveals its wonders to those who save time to look deep into it.

**M Sriprabha and G Sankar, ‘Theme of Adore and Bereavement in Tagore’s
Gitanjali – A Study, 7 Sep. 2016**

The research article reviews the themes of love and bereavement in the songs of *Gitanjali*. Different types of love are manifested in the poems, but the highly adored and most intimate one is that of a lover for his beloved. Due to this reason, his works are personal and universal at the same time. Tagore presents the particular love from the male and female perspectives. Along with the sensual love between man and woman, he also presents the sacred love between man and God, and the human love among human beings and other living beings.

The concept of corporeal love is one of the most discussed themes in literature worldwide. Tagore has a different way of portraying corporeal love, in his verses, with reference to man God relationship. God is presented as a King with many master musicians in his court, to entertain him. But He is most delighted by the “plaintive

little strain of the poet singing in a corner of his humble cottage. Pleased greatly with the song, God comes down from His throne at the poet's cottage, and presents him a flower. The poet is overjoyed, and vows to always keep his body pure yearning for God's touch, and knowing that God will delight him with His touch. He swears to keep his mind clean and empty of all evils, as he knows that in the depth of his heart, is the shrine of God. The period of waiting to meet the lover and to reunite with him seems long. Tagore experiences this feeling as he longs to be one with the divine. The poet says that the doors of his heart are unlocked and pleads God not to pass by like a dream, but to come in and accept him.

Tagore's wisdom, experiences of life, deep understanding of humans, and meticulous observation of nature and natural phenomena has been reflected in his works including *Gitanjali*. Tagore has been looked upon as a leading figure of the Indian Renaissance for his valuable contribution to world literature.

Rashmi Rana, 'Divinity as the Manifestation of Nature and Man – The *Gitanjali*'

The poems of *Gitanjali* are offerings of songs to the Divine. In T S Eliot's words, they are "offerings of the finite to the infinite". The number of themes and concepts in *Gitanjali* is innumerable. Tagore's poetry expresses universal human impulses. The main theme of his poetry is devotional; it shows the urge of the devotee for reunion with the divine. Tagore believes that the human body and the natural world are the temples of the God. God manifests Himself in the pristine nature and the clear soul. In Tagore's poetry nature is the horizon where man meets God. The joy in nature makes him feel the presence of God. Tagore presents the infinite pleasure of nature in a variety of

images, metaphors and other figures of speech. Simplicity and intimate contact with nature are the easier paths Tagore suggests to reach the divine and elevate oneself morally and spiritually. When man communicates to nature, and thus to God, there is complete harmony established between them, which puts the soul of man in peace. The narrative of *Gitanjali* is in total unity with the lyrics. Tagore's conception of nature is mystical, spiritual, romantic and divine. His imagination contains the common and basic elements of life, nature, and living; and glorifies them as elements of eternity.

Tagore being a mystic poet has succeeded in portraying and experiencing nature as a spiritual, divine and pure energy that fills the life of man with joy and bliss. God reveals Himself through the pleasant and serene nature in the depth of the woods, or heights of mountains, music of birds, rivers and summer bees. The article suggests the omnipresence and might of God.

BIBLICAL PSALMS

W. T Allison, 'The Nature Poetry of the Psalms', 1906

Nature had been worshipped since ages ago by man expressing his intense yearning to commune with God. The natural elements like the sun, moon, stars have always been objects of awe as far as humans were concerned., and anything that inspires the awe of humans were considered to be divine in nature. It is based on this fact that the ancient mythologies of various nations rendered the origin of the universe to the elements of nature. Though the ancient men were inspired of nature, they did not adore or mediate on it as is done by the contemporary nature poets. Nature was believed to evoke emotions, but was never thought of as having emotions in herself. They early

poets recorded the changes in nature and subjected it to the will of God. When the sky was clear and bright, they felt God was kind and was in His full grace. When there were storms and tempests, people assumed God was angry and was showing His wrath through the violent phenomenon of the nature. In Greek and other mythologies, each God exercised control over each natural force whereas in the Hebrew literature there is one God almighty who rules over the entire universe. The Jews believed that God resided in the mountains and led their way through as they crossed seas and deserts. They believe God descends His heavenly abode and comes down to earth and resides in the natural forces so as to protect His devotees. There was also the tradition of employing nature to show the magnificence of God. Earthquakes were considered as smoke from the nostrils of God, lightning and thunder as sounds announcing the arrival of God. Natural changes were also symbolized as the emotions of God. In Psalm 105 there is a reference to the God who expresses His anger through the thunder, lightning, hurricane and plague. "He sent darkness and made it dark; He turned their waters into blood and made their fish to die." The song represents the power of God over the entire universe -- on land, air and water. When God wishes He rages earthquakes and storms, at His command the waters are turned to blood, He breaks down the mountains and destroys the trees and plants, and finally man himself is subjected to the wrath of the avenging God.

The voice of Jehovah cleaves rocks;

The voice of Jehovah shoots forth flames.

The voice of Jehovah makes the wilderness tremble;

Jehovah makes the wilderness of Kadesh tremble. (29: 6-8)

The presence of God in the natural forces is thus expressed in ancient poems and psalms.

C S Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 1958 (Book)

C S Lewis has noted his observations after reading psalms in the book. Psalms have multiple authorship and are written at different time periods. Psalms are not sermons or doctrines, but poems meant to be sung. The Bible being a piece of literature has to be interpreted as literature. It contains many literary forms of writings, of which psalms are structured as prose poems or lyric poems. They must be read as poems being analyzed for their figurative language and emotional connections rather than logical connections.

The chapter ‘Nature’ of the book is reviewed here for the study, taking into account the naturalistic elements in the Psalms, and to comprehend the portrayal of Nature in the Psalms. There are two aspects influencing the psalmists’ approach to Nature. The first reason is the predominance of peasants in the nation. There was no particular appreciation of nature back then, till the development of big towns and cities like Alexandria. During the Middle Ages, the Jews were made to work on lands, and were not into business or money lending as is now. Most of the country was lands to be toiled. When almost everybody was dependent on soil for their living, neither was there a particular thing called the ‘country’, nor was there any nature poetry because the world itself was ‘country’ back then. Nature was the only source of livelihood, knowledge and entertainment for people. Therefore it was prevalent as a part and parcel of human lives. The works written were never an appreciation of nature, but just an expression of day to day life. However, the appreciation of Nature exists, and that is of two types – utilitarian and poetic. Some of the beautiful descriptions of Nature in

Homer's works are of its functional value, rather than the romantic beauty are – rich deep soil, plenty of fresh water, green pasture that will make the cows really fat, nice timber, etc.

The psalmists write lyrics and therefore the description about landscapes is few. They give a detailed account of the feel of the weather from the eyes of a common man. It goes, "Thou art good to the earth ... thou waterest her furrows ... thou makes it soft with drops of rain ... the little hills shall rejoice on every side ... the valleys shall stand so thick with corn that they shall laugh and sing" (65: 9-14). Another instance from Psalm 104 is the line 16, "the great trees drink their fill". The weather and nature is pictured vividly.

The second factor discusses Nature and God at the beginning of creation, as observed from religious standpoints. Jews believe in a single God, the creator of heaven and earth. An Egyptian myth has the story of Creation from a God named Atum who came out of the water and produced more Gods. The Babylonian myth has the story of evolution than the story of creation. Norse myth begins with the ice and water at the beginning of creation. The Greek myth has the earth and heaven already in existence before the Creation. The idea that God created nature denies Nature the divinity assumed to be associated with it. Nature is said to tempt, "If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth kissed my hand; this also would be an iniquity" (31: 26-28). The lines refer to a spontaneous impulse created in the mind of the speaker. The tempting quality of Nature is another reason making it devoid of divinity. Though the doctrine empties

nature of divinity, it is used as symbols and manifestation of the Divine. Nature has since the beginning been a manifestation of the presence of God. Psalms sing the light to be His garment, the thunder to His voice, the winds to His messenger, the flames to be His servant and the volcanoes to be the response of His touch. Nature becomes the messenger of God, and not the God himself.

There many Psalms solely devoted to Nature. In Psalm 104, the writer says, “We have not only the useful cattle, the cheering vine, and the nourishing corn. We have springs where the wild asses quench their thirst ... fir trees for the storks, hill country for the wild goats and conies ... and even with a glance far out to the sea, where no Jew willingly went, the great whales playing, enjoying themselves”. The appreciation of animals like asses, lions, wild goats and whales in the above lines imply the thought that all creatures of God are equal before him. The animals, neither superior nor inferior to men, too depend on God; they “seek their meet from God”. God sustains all of his creations alike.

The book gave an account of the picturesque nature in the Psalms of the Bible. Psalmists were the religious Jews of Israel living in the pastorals and praising God. Nature was the most basic element in their lives, and the above book review has given a record of the importance of nature in their lives.

Donna C Owens, ‘The Psalms: a Therapy of Words’, 19 Aug. 2006

The paper focuses on the therapeutic functions of poetic language. The writer considers the select psalms as a text here, rather than a scripture or holy hymns for the analyses of language and words as therapy. Psalms are placed in a historical context,

and their content and structure are analyzed. Secondly they are assessed for their application in contemporary contexts; and are further analyzed for their therapeutic qualities. Here, the psalms are just a body of text in application of the linguistic therapy, devoid of its connection to spirituality.

Psalms belong to the Old Testament scripture, the nineteenth book of the Bible in the Christian churches, the twenty third book of the Roman Catholic Bible. The origin of Psalms dates back to the reign of King David, around 1000BC. Though believed to be of multiple authorship, Psalms are finally compiled as a collection of poems by King David.

Psalms are written as prose poems in parallel structures. It can be divided further into synonymous, synthetic and antithetic structures. Psalms with synonymous structures have the same thought repeated in different words; synthetic structured psalms have a line of thought being continued from one line to another to have a cumulative effect; and antithetic psalms reinforce the present thought by placing it in contrast to an opposite idea. Westermann (1980) found that there are three genres of Psalms – Laments, Hymns and Praises. Laments and Praises are further classified into Individual and Community categories. Hymns are praises and songs of worship that are descriptive in nature as compared to the narrative nature of Psalms of Praise. Praises include praises to God for His service to the community. Individual Laments are about sickness, injustice and poverty whereas Community Laments are addressed to God or enemies.

Unlike other religious scriptures, Psalms are still valued in contemporary times for its application across time, space and cultures. Psalms are texts that every human can relate to, at all times. As long as the world is, there are sufferings and difficulties. Gelberman and Kobak (1969) considers psalms as “thoroughly human documents, reflecting the difficulties of existence, the struggle to remain faithful to ideals, the overcoming of doubting, the fight for victory of the better self, and the conquest of despair” (135). Religious people, especially Jews and Christians, sing Psalms to reach out to God, communicating their sickness and sufferings, to be healed. In the book *Use of Poetry* Thompson says that Psalms are not just religious poetry, but consists of themes related to war, nature, society and humanity. Psalms have been read widely since the IIWW to 2001 for their qualities of solace and peace, which helped compromise conflicts. Since the first outbreaks of plagues, HIVs, psalms were sung as an alternative to reduce the sufferings of the afflicted. Another example of the contemporary use of psalms is in the case of reggae music. Rastafarians, like the Israelites in exiles, are devoid of the basic human rights. The language of the Psalms was well applicable to express their plights, and they used it to showcase their protests against colonial oppression, and their fight for social equality. Some of the relatable psalms are Psalm No. 137 and Psalm No. 19 (Rivers of the Babylonian). People connect more with Laments than Praises or Hymns. The latter are used in occasions of celebration, and for thanksgiving to express joy, whereas the former addresses the pain and day to day struggles people undergo universally.

J J Leedy, a research scholar, in her research paper entitled ‘Principles of Poetry Therapy’ speaks about the concept of *isoprinciple*, advocating poetry therapy, by specifically choosing poems that speak to the concerns of the clients. Leedy has been credited to introduce poetry therapy as a distinct area, derived from music therapy.

The researcher has made use of two theories related to the therapy of words. The first is Poetry as Therapy: Relational Constructionism, and the other is Poetry in Therapy: Prompting. The first one focuses on the process of meaning making through language, especially written language, by forming a narrative identity from the gathered experiences. The constant communication involved in the forms of language activities like reading, writing and speaking, helps express the silenced experiences which are in fact universal. The latter concept of prompting helps the client to frame and reframe their narrative identities by using prompts when they are stuck.

The analysis of psalms supports various psychological theories like that of the Jungian philosophy of collective unconscious. The bible consists of a variety of literary forms, and is widely popular due to its primitiveness and universality. People find it easy to identify themselves with the large multitude of problems and experiences discussed in the Bible. Psalms have been proven to be therapeutic by early researches, as they not only let people identify themselves, but also gives them a sense of hope. Gelberman & Kobak says psalms were designed in such a way that expresses “truth and experience on a feeling rather than an intellectual level”. The reflective and affective nature of psalms makes them appropriate for their use as therapeutic prompts, based on the different types of prompts.

The study aims to effectively apply the therapy of words to heal people facing problems to form their narrative identity by expressing their experiences. The process involves the use of language as the primary medium helping the clients. Two theoretical frameworks have been designed for the study; and psalms are the tools of therapy (used as prompts) with which the experiment has been carried out. Prompts are the tools by which the therapists help the clients in writing their narratives. Psalms are relatable to people to a great extent, and therefore helps explain the position of the clients. The therapist aims help in the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of the clients' narratives using psalms. Thus, the problems in the construction of narrative identities faced by the clients are overcome by the use of psalms as therapeutic prompts facilitating the narrative process.

Arnold E Sikkema, 'Laws of Nature and God's Word for Creation', January 2007

In the story of creation as has been recorded in the Scripture, it is evident that while humanity neither followed the orders of God, nor abided by His laws to govern the creation; God has been faithful to His covenant. Therefore, the psalmist calls upon the non-human creatures of the heaven and earth to praise the Lord, for it is due to His kindness and loyalty that they exist. In Jeremiah 31 and 3, God expresses his faithful covenant for humanity and for the natural world; He emphasizes that the covenant with the natural world is as important as the one with humanity:

Thus says the Lord, 'If you can break My covenant for the day and My covenant for the night, so that day and night will not be at their appointed time, then My covenant may also be broken with David

My servant so that he will not have a son to reign on his throne ...

Thus says the Lord, 'If My covenant for day and stand not, and the fixed patterns for heaven and earth I have not established, then I would reject the descendants of Jacob and David My servant'. (Jeremiah 33:20, 21a, 25, 26a)

The above lines express God's agreement of loving sustenance and nurturing, with the day and night. God promises to sustain the natural world and its changing patterns, according to His 'laws of nature'. He remains faithful to his creation regardless of its response to His faithfulness. God's relationship to His creation is further articulated in Genesis 8:12: "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, And cold and heat, And summer and winter, And day and night shall not cease." Here He implements and promises a set of regularities, which He does out of His righteousness, and not because He was constrained to follow them. The sequence of day and night is not something humanity experience if not for the loyalty of God towards His covenant with the creation. The beginning of the creation and God's love for it is expressed in the Scripture, "Let there be light ..." (Genesis 1), and where God says' "Allow the following things to have an existence, to have a true and real otherness from me and to have an ongoing character of relationship and regularity that I will sustain".

God loves not only humans, but the non-human creation too, comprising the whole universe. Therefore humans should stop considering themselves as the center of the universe, a separate entity from the rest of the world, because God Himself says in his covenant that the rest of the creation is as important to Him as human beings.

Fergus Alexander James McDonald, ‘The Psalms and Spirituality: a Study of Meditative Engagement with Selected Psalms among Edinburgh Students, 2007 (PhD Thesis)

The research explores the influence of select psalms on young adult spirituality. It seeks to facilitate the spiritual journey of a sample of students from the University of Edinburgh within the age range of twenty to thirty and who are on or beyond the fringes of the church. The concept of ‘scripture engagement’ as inspired by the Bible Society movement is employed to carry out the experiment, also with a motive to increase the interest in spirituality and decrease the confidence in churches.

The research is divided into three parts. The first part discusses the debates about spiritual engagement, and substantiates the employment of Psalms as a tool for enriching spirituality. The second part describes the respondents’ meditative engagement with six selected psalms and identifies the six findings based on them. Psalms 126, 55, 22, 30, 73, 55 are the psalms selected for the experiment. In the third part the findings are evaluated and the research concludes that the creative engagements between respondents and text results from respondents realizing that the psalms resound with their idealism and basic human requirements in ways that facilitate their quest for personal meaning and spiritual enlightenment.

Praying a Psalm in its Natural Setting

God’s creation is beautiful and is a divine revelation. Psalms are songs that connect us with God delivering him our struggles and longings. Meditating on the

scripture in the lap of nature brings us closer to God and makes the worship more powerful. The article helps in making our prayers more powerful, as a retreat guide.

Psalm 1 can be best meditated near a tree, by de-cluttering the random thoughts and diversions of mind. The article proposes to seek to become like the man described in psalm 1 who is “like a tree planted by the streams of water”, whose “delight is in the law of the lord and on his law he meditates day and night” (verses 2-3).

The retreat suggests taking a walk with God while meditating on Psalm 16, praying the Lord to help one choose the right path, how to walk in whatever path is being chosen. The Psalm, in David’s words, seeks the help and accompaniment of God, and complete submittance to Him that leads a prosperous life.

The following lines of Psalm 19, “The heavens declare the glory of the God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day he pour forth speech ... In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun, which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion, like a champion rejoicing to run his course” (verses 1-2, 4-5) needs to be meditated looking at the sky and enjoying the beauty of God’s creation.

Psalm 36 is to be prayed by a fountain. It will cool the dry mind with its water, and helps go with the flow. It glorifies God for the kindness of providing abundance. Psalm 42 and 46 creates the best effect when sung near a lake, stream or waterfall while listening to the flows.

Psalm 62 should be meditated sitting on a rock. David often found refuge in a cave of rock, during his trials in the dessert. Therefore, during times of hardships, uncertainties and insecurities, it is advised to meditate on God and to unload the burdens

to Him, sitting on a rock. When feeling spiritually dry or weak in life, finding a cactus and contemplating on how it survives the scorching of the desserts help. Psalm 63 can be sung during these times, earnestly praying to God to quench the dryness and weariness. Psalm 72 is to be meditated on a grassy land, according to the retreat, with special focus on the line, “Christ will be like rain falling on a mown field” (6).

Psalm 92 is assigned for the Sabbath day. Meditating Psalm 92 near a palm or cedar tree can benefit the worshipper in more rejuvenating ways. Verses 12-14 can be meditated upon, “The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon ... they will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green”. Psalm 104 is to be sung meditating on the joyfully singing carefree birds that are taken care of by the Lord. Just as the Lord provides for the birds of the sky, he provides for humans too.

Readings for Scriptural Healing

Prayer is one of the best and most powerful ways of communicate with God. How a prayer is prayed is as important as what is being prayed. The words of prophets, sages, poets and rabbis whose prayers have been heard are often referred to when praying is complex, inarticulate and ineffective. The scriptures are helpful in prayers. They contain various references of God, his revelation and manifestation in the natural world and the rest of the universe. The psalms in the bible assist greatly in prayers. The psalmists express their emotions openly out to their God who they know is listening. Their prayers are sometimes meditation and contemplation; sometimes lamentation over grievances; and at times celebration of the kindness and mercy of the Lord that

has protected them from persecution, illness wars and battles. Meditating on the Scriptures is essential while reading slow and focused, and visualizing the God listening to the prayers.

NATURE, SPIRITUALITY AND HEALING

Dag T Elvin, 'Henrik Ibsen's Use of Friluftsliv', September 2009

The research paper explores the concept of 'Friluftsliv' coined by Henrik Ibsen, who is best known for projecting the existential issues in his works. He had incorporated the concept in two of his works, a poem titled 'On the Heights' and a play titled *Love's Comedy*. Both the works were written when Ibsen was struggling to find the meaning and purpose of his life. Friluftsliv identifies with the experience of connecting with nature for the value it has in the development of one's body and spirit. When immersed with nature, there is a fulfillment of spiritual and physical growth that cannot be perfectly gratified if not for this experience.

The poem 'On the Heights' reflects Ibsen's hardships in his life. The poem is a monologue which develops into a dialogue later. Nature plays a vital role, both as an environmental setting and for its symbolic meaning. The protagonist is a farmer's son and struggles with a decision in his life. He dreams to live in the plateaus and trek mountains, but is indecisive about it. He faces existential crisis due to the conflicts about leading a calm life in the village or trekking the mountains. His encounter with a stranger, who challenges him, inspires him to follow his dreams. He gives up a life with his girlfriend and mother to achieve his dreams, and lives free from the expectations of the villagers. Ibsen believes that every individual should be able to live his/her life

in their own terms without being influenced by the family or society. The speaker of the poem spends a year, which is all the four seasons, in the mountains. During the autumn, he realizes that his village is actually a prison for men and cattle. The life in the mountains was a rich experience for him, where he could be himself leading his life his way, beyond the norms and rules the society imposes. Ibsen believes that it is important for an individual to follow his intuitions than to follow the expectations of other people.

Here in this deserted dwelling

I have housed my wealth of treasure;

There's a bench, a stove, sweet smelling

Air, and time to think at leisure

The experience in the plateau is a 'friluftsliv' for the speaker's thoughts as he lives a fresh and free life in the heights of nature, with independent thinking. This is what every individual should aim to achieve in his/her life.

In the play *Love's Comedy* the use of 'frilufstliv' is in a different manner. It is not centered on nature or environment, rather idealism in life. The characters, Falk and Svanhild are idealists. They fall in love, but later choose to separate because they think that these good feelings they share now will diminish with time, and so it is better to have good memories than a bad reality. Another man proposes Svanhild, and she accepts the proposal because she realizes that it is difficult for a woman to live alone. Despite knowing that her 'friluftsliv' (idealized love and freedom) is over, she accepts the proposal

due to the inevitable reality of life. Ibsen names the characters' with birds' names. Falk is falcon and Svanhild is swan in Norwegian. The characters are given these names symbolizing their idealistic quest for meaning and freedom, ultimately leaving off their nests.

Megan Lankford, 'Nature and Grief: An Eco-critical Analysis of Grief in Children's Literature', April 2010

The study is a visual and textual analysis of the picture texts, *Lifetimes*, *The Red Tree* and *In the Piney Woods* for the role of nature dealing with life, death depression and grief.

Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen's *Lifetimes*, the subtitle of which is 'The Beautiful Way to Explain Death to Children' explores the role of nature as a source of wisdom and knowledge about the universality of life process, and the inevitable death. Nature is also rendered as a safe haven for children to seek shelter in, releasing their emotions, identifying themselves in its reflection, realizing the world and its phenomena, and learning new lessons nurturing their growth and upbringing. *Lifetimes* is an illustrated book rich in picturization and verbal narratives that aims to help children understand the concept of death in a gentle way, by employing experiences and lessons straight from nature. The book is directed at an implied child reader, and an implied adult reader who helps in the learning of the child. The authors believe that children can be, thus, introduced to the concept of grief and death, which will help them cope up with it. The book is designed colourfully with the images from nature, to substantiate the text, besides making it children friendly. To point out a fact clearly, the author

draws in similarities between the child and the living beings of nature including plants, animals, birds and insects. This kind of reliance on nature for instances and picturization, reveals the truth that Nature is a treasure-house of facts and mystery, and that learning from nature is one of the best ways to grasp things.

Shaun Tan's *The Red Tree* is the second book analyzed for its text and images, for the study. *The Red Tree* has been awarded the Patricia Wrightson Prize for Children's Literature and was an Honour Book for the Children's Book Council. The book is heavily illustrated with pictures conveying emotions of despair, loss and loneliness. There are few or no words. The text has a little girl as the protagonist who is troubled of loss, despair and loneliness; and finally discovering the ultimate refuge in nature. Nature is not depicted as a solution to the problems faced by human, nor is it shown as a source of knowledge in the text. The red tree symbolizing nature is a place of comfort and solace providing a beam of hope amidst all the sadness and despair. The book has a picture of a red leaf among other elaborate images in every page, signifying constant hope and comfort among the darkness. The narrative begins with the picture of a little girl waking up in a lone room with dark leaves falling round her, and she staring at the walls blank and hopeless. In a page, the author uses the image of a large fish with wide mouth, symbolizing darkness, and blocking out the lights of the city. Throughout the book, the reader is able to connect himself/ herself with the character.

The third book is analyzed for the study is Rony Schotter's *In the Piney Woods*. The book is a nature-based therapeutic text that involves a lot of visual images along with the narrative. The book has the story of a little girl Ella and her grandfather.

However nature is depicted so significantly that it almost takes the place of a third character within the text. At the beginning Ella lives with her grandfather in their summer home where nature is the backdrop. As the story progresses, the role of nature shifts from being just a background framework to that of an educator and teacher. When Ella's grandfather dies, nature becomes her guide of wisdom, more than a place of healing and comfort where Ella confides herself.

The book opens with the lines "Long before I was born, Grandpa, strong and straight and singing, built our little house at the edge of the sandy, piney woods near the sea" (1) backed an water-coloured illustration of the house in the woods facing the sand dune and the sea. One day when grandpa is tired to come out for walk, Ella joins her pregnant sister, Sada to sit below the tree. The following lines show Ella's love for nature, and the intricate connection she has with her grandfather and nature:

Sada rests below while I climb into the trembling branches of an old oak. Its dry leaves rattle in the sea breeze, and its ancient arms hold me up and close and nearer the sky. I pretend I am a nestle bird and call down to Sada below, 'Caroo-caroo! ... I wonder if, far away, Grandpa can hear us. (12)

Once when the pinewood catches fire, Ella rushes out to save her pinewood trees along with the firemen. And she discovers a treasured open pinecone which she wants to show to her grandpa immediately who has been waiting long to see it. The instances reveal that nature is not just a significant part of Ella's and her grandpa's life, but that they are so connected with nature that there's no human-nature division.

When grandpa dies, Ella says that she has lost her best friend. They bury grandpa near the pinewoods and she plants a seed of the open pinecone she had brought for him, near his grave.

Ella vows to herself that she would carry further the legacy of their story, as she plays with her nephew,

In few years, I will take him to the pinewoods, and that we will play the games that Grandpa and I used to play. I will teach him everything Grandpa taught me about the tightly closed cones of dwarf pitch pines – how patiently they are waiting for *their* chance to burst free and be. (30)

Ella learns from nature the process of birth, death and regeneration; and relates it to her grandpas's life. She finds solace in nature, and the pinewood trees helped her to a large extent, overcome the grief and restore herself. Ella is renewed and reborn in her break from the human into nature.

While the author's words are appealing, the illustrations are even more intriguing as it picturizes the exclusive friendship between Ella and her grandpa, engaging themselves in the abundance of nature. Illustrator, Bulcken Root, has greatly adorned the text with beautiful images of Ella and grandpa during their walks in the piney woods, facing away from the reader; their dance among the gnarled branches pretending to be trees; baking blueberries in the night; etc. The portrayal of nature in this book is more related to the Romantic perspective of nature as everything – teacher, educator, mother, healer, comfort, and companion – that aids in the growth of human minds.

Jeffrey W Smith, 'The Polluted City and the Healing Power of Nature: Wordsworthian Idealism in *Guild Court*', January 2012

The review analyses the significance and power of nature in the making of man, with reference to the book *Guild Court* written by the British author, George MacDonald. MacDonald is one of the writers of the Victorian age to witness the transition of England from a country land to an industrialized hub; and the mass migration from the countryside to the cities. He was disturbed by this great change, and wrote about it in his works. MacDonald was greatly inspired by Wordsworth's poetry. Like Wordsworth, he was born and brought up in the country, and later moved to the cities for education. Nature was a prominent factor in his past, and this influenced his thinking to great extent. Therefore, MacDonald could connect in depth with the romantics and their ideals.

MacDonald has interpreted Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, and *Excursion*, and formed that in order to attain union with God, man has to first seek harmony with nature, because nature has the presence of God. In his Scottish novels like *David Elginbrod* (1863), *Robert Falconer* (1868) and *Malcom* (1875), the protagonists are male characters with rural background who move to the cities and are shocked at the moral and physical degradation there. Whereas his English novels, like *Guild Court* (1868), *The Vicar's Daughter* (1872), *Mary Marston* (1881) and *Weighed and Wanting* (1882), present city based female protagonists who makes effort to connect with Nature, often after reading Wordsworth or the Bible. Impelled by the spiritual power of nature, they then seek to bring in a spiritual renewal or reformation within the city targeting the poor inhabitants.

The novel, *Guild Court*, presents the rewarding effects of nature on two girls, Mattie and Poppie. Both the girls lived in London, and has never left the city. They suffered from some sort of mental degeneration. According to MacDonald, the absence of Nature in their lives has retarded them, due to their spiritual undergrowth. Another character, Lucy Burton, a social worker greatly influenced by Wordsworth, mentors the girls. Based on her reading of Wordsworth, she believes that nature and God are closely connected, and that through nature, God can be attained.

London is presented as fragmented city in the novel. People living there are in constant turmoil not just because of the polluted city, but also due to the corruption in the minds of the people. Even in the novel, only the rich have access to the greeneries of parks and gardens, the only space binding humans to nature in the city of London. MacDonald believes that God is manifested in the divine expressions of nature, because nature produces feelings of hope, resilience, supplication, simplicity and conscience of duty. These holy emotions are evoked by each and every element of nature. He, therefore, thinks experiencing and re-connecting with nature is an essential requirement for the physical, psychical and spiritual growth.

MacDonald employs the Wordsworthian idealism to show the characters' moral advancement. He presents the relationship of the characters with nature, and how it affects them. Mattie, having lost her mother, is left alone with her father in a claustrophobic area of the Guild Court. Being in the confines of the four walls and burdened with premature responsibilities, Mattie has lost the innocence of her children long ago, and instead becomes stern and rigid. She is described as "old-fashioned" in

behaviour, speech and mannerisms. Gradually she begins to suffer from degenerative mental disorders. On the other hand, Poppie is an orphan who wanders in the streets aimlessly, with behaviour described as a blend of a toddler and a wild beast. Lucy believes they can be bettered by establishing contact with nature and take them to the country side of Hastings. While being there Mattie is unable to experience the beauty of nature, due to her fear of being lost in the vastness of the universe that even God may not be able to find her. This fear blinds her senses. The author says that people should overcome the initial fear and should experience the beauty of nature to the fullest. Her spiritual state was weakened due to constant confinement within the Guild Court, and only when she got out of it, she was able to make spiritual progress. She spent sufficient time with nature, and as a result her “thought and feeling were drawn outward. Her health improved. Body and mind reacted on each other. She grew younger and humbler” (204). Before leaving Hastings, she retained her childhood and was childlike.

In MacDonald’s essay, ‘Wordsworth’s Poetry’, he draws in Wordsworth’s classification of the four phases of spiritual growth in relation to nature. In the first phase of interaction with nature, a simple amusement is experienced, which leads to the second phase of joy, which creates a deep impact on the soul. The third phase is that of a deeper understanding of Nature, which renews the spiritual realization within the human hearts. Lessons are learnt from Nature about its healing, comfort and wisdom. The fourth phase is where a spiritual resurrection occurs. He says that Nature is a tool employed by God to draw humanity towards him, as is seen in the spiritual conversion of Mattie. In most of his works, MacDonald personifies Nature as an external force of

God which unveils its hidden truths to people who seek for them. People who experience the truth should further spread it to the fellow humans so that their spiritual growth too is enhanced.

Ignacio Almodovar, 'The Concept of Nature in Gothic and Romantic Literature', 2014

The above work draws a parallel between the concept of nature in the Romantic and Gothic literature, with respect to the select literary texts from each period. The Romantic writers thought of Nature as the greater whole of which Man is a part. This idea of Romanticism is opposed to the Renaissance conception of Man being the center of the universe. In Romantic literature, Nature was literally the muse of the writers. Wordsworth wrote about the simplicity of nature, Coleridge wrote about the supernatural, Blake wrote about the innocence in Nature as that found in children, and Keats wrote about the beauty and immortality of Nature.

In William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*, nature is employed throughout. In the former collection nature is idyllic and blissful, whereas in the latter, nature is dangerously mysterious and violent. Blake presents the duality of nature

William Wordsworth also, like Blake, has written about the innocence of nature and related it to the innocence of children. One of his most famous hymns on nature is the 'Lines Composed a few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour'. It is commonly known as the 'Tintern Abbey', the poet looks at nature from a different perspective from that of his earlier one. After a long time,

when he revisits nature, he could feel the pulse of it. He says when he dies and his sister is sad, his natural settings will heal her, as they will become her “healing thoughts”, and as a guardian, will protect his sister. In the ‘Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of early Childhood’, Wordsworth reconnects nature and childhood. Childhood is innocent, and adulthood is believed to be a shadow of the pure childhood. The poem says the glory and innocence of childhood is lost with time; but the speaker feels that even as a grownup he can understand nature better, meditate on its depth, and reconnect with nature through his childhood memories where nature played a vital role. In ‘Tables Turned’, Wordsworth says to give up reading science and art and to learn from nature. Nature has “a world of ... Spontaneous wisdom” (17-19), and teaches best. Even a tree could teach much and better than all sages of the world can. Therefore, the poet says, “Enough of Science and Art ... Come forth with your heart/ That watches and receives” (29-32).

Samuel Coleridge’s poems are addressed to the supernatural. ‘Kubla Khan’ was inspired by an opium-induced dream vision. The poet speaks about the journey of Kubla Khan to Xanadu that has “sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice” (35). Such is the style of Coleridge where he blends the natural with the supernatural resulting in fantasies. In the poem ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’, there is the use of supernatural elements. His poems encourage the harmonious mutual sustain of Man and Nature.

Lord Byron elevates nature, in the poem ‘Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage’. Nature is presented as a travel companion in the first canto. The second canto shows the wild face of nature. The poet says that he is not alone in the company of nature, and that

he would prefer to be left alone with nature than being with men. When people do not understand him, Nature does, because they “spake/ A mutual language” (III.13). The most celebrated line of this poem, “I love not men the less, but Nature more” (IV.178) sums up Byron’s love and respect for nature.

Shelley’s ‘Ozymandias’ shows the superiority of nature over humanity, which is transient as opposed to the immortality of nature. Keats’ Ode to a Nightingale is a tribute to nature’s beauty and immortality, and how strongly it helps in imaginative escape.

Gothic novelists presented the terrible and obscure vision of nature. They write about mysterious horrors of nature with its deserted wild landscapes and ruined castles. In novels like *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *Frankenstein* Nature functions as a source of knowledge, an overpowering force and a friend or confidant at the same time. Thus, the concept of nature varied with respect to different genres of literature; however there were no doubts that nature played a crucial role in the lives of the writers, as well as their works.

Todd W Ferguson, ‘The Natural Environment as a Spiritual Resource: A Theory of Regional Variation in Religious Adherence’, July 2015

Landscapes have power to affect minds. Beautiful landscapes and pleasant weather (commonly known as natural amenities) are often resources for spiritual connection with the Divine. The study aims to experiment with the impact of spirituality based on natural landscapes on religious adherence. The writer hypothesizes that regions with higher natural amenities or spiritual resources will have less religious inclinations. People experience spiritual connection with the divine, as they connect with nature.

This happens not just with believers, but there are many instances of such reports among atheists too. This provides an evidence for the large scale relationship between nature and the sacred. The purpose of this study is to relate natural environment and religion. The natural environment of a place not just affects the look and feel of a place, but also its social aspects. A naturally rich landscape may increase the population growth of that area, enhance tourism and hike the economic development of the region. Natural landscapes often fulfill the spiritual needs of people, and thus are seen here as competitors to traditional religious organizations, leading to lower rates of religious inclinations.

The natural resources of a place include mountains, lakes, rivers, hill stations, forest and woodlands, coastlines and beautiful weather. They are more than just the physical landscapes and economic resources for an area, as they help attain spiritual gratification to a great majority of humans. To interpret the connection between natural landscapes and spirituality, the writer here has made use of the theoretical framework from William James' understanding of religion, William Sewell's use of resources and Emile Durkheim's concept of sacred. James defines religion as "the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine" (36). Based on this definition, natural resources could be used to facilitate the above said spiritual feelings, acts and experiences, thus helping people connect to the sacred. Sewell's definition of nonhuman resources is "objects, animate or inanimate, naturally occurring or manufactured, that can be used to enhance or maintain power" (9). The power refers to the spiritual power or

divine energy. Durkheim wrote about the power invoking character from the sacred, thus, “The man who has obeyed his God, and who for this reason thinks he has his God with him, approaches the world with confidence and a sense of heightened energy” (211). Natural elements have the power to induce spiritual feelings and sense of awe within human minds. Hence they help people connect to the sacred.

Many ancient civilizations held nature as the medium of worship whereas some worshipped nature as God. Even today nature continues to be a constant resource of spiritual energy that helps in connecting with God. Native Americans are known for their worship of nature. Thoreau and Emerson experienced nature in depth and explored spirituality in new dimensions. The reason behind the spiritual association of natural elements maybe the purity and holiness it instills and the divine inspiration. In an interview held by Froese and Bader, an American lady Becca, when asked about spirituality, said, “I feel God most vividly when I am close to nature. When I am sitting on the porch I hear the birds singing, see the flowers and feel the wind, that’s God’s presence to me” (2010:20). Nature contains power that is capable of arousing a sense of awe and devotion within people. The peace found in the elements of nature is equivalent to the sacred presence.

Therefore, in a region where there is a rich natural landscape with which people interact, it thus becomes the source of people’s spiritual energy and sacred peace. This reduces the religious attitudes of people as they give up going to religious organizations and instead spend time with nature, renewing and rediscovering them, and reconnecting with God.

Jason A Kaufman, ‘Nature, Mind and Medicine: A Model for Mind-Body Healing’, 2018

The article avows the holistic approach of health to be maintained. Exposure to nature actually provides a window of healing that boosts the mental and physical functioning of the individuals. Through guided meditation and consistent interaction with nature, one achieves the mind-body relaxation. Though urban cities and development are essential to life, modernization has led to the ‘denaturing’ of the environment, by encroaching the lands and uprooting trees to build in more buildings. Spending time with nature relaxes the mind and body from the fatigue of urban life. It has the potential to reduce stress and increases the attention span among children, young adults and old adults. According to the Attention Restoration Theory exposure to natural environments boosts the nervous system and improves high cognitive functioning because the environment is rich in stimuli but less in arousal. There is no voluntary attention demanded; the very environment has an involuntary attention that is less conscious and more contemplative. Complementary to the ART, Stress Reduction Theory (SRT) posits that exposure to nature promotes reduction in sympathetic nervous system arousal which reduces stress. Nature has therapeutic and restorative effects. It not only fosters happiness, but also keeps emotions in regulation, boosts memory and immune functioning. Meditating on the forests, listening to the bird sounds and such contemplative activities within a natural setting enhances the attention span. Imageries are powerful and catches hold of the mind and senses. All types of imageries – visual, auditory, and tactile are capable enough to keep the mind’s attention in control.

Thus nature is a therapeutic agent that restores mental, physical, biological and spiritual health; boosting up the fundamental functioning of the body and making it relax and restore. Thus constant exposure to nature keeps one happy and healthy.

Nazia Azad, ‘Healing Power of Nature’, 20 April 2019

An article by Alexandrain Sifferlin, titled ‘The Healing Power of Nature’ published in the Times Magazine, speaks about the innumerable benefits of spending time with nature. The Forest Agency in Japan in the early 1980s advised people to take strolls in the woods for better health and healing. The practice was known as forest bathing or shinrin-yoku. It was said to lower stress and positively heal the body and mind. Scientists researched on the claims, and found them true. Trees release a compound known as phytoncides that protect them from pests, and when humans inhale this compound it brings in them healthy biological changes that lower blood pressure, reduce depression and anxiety, increases the number of natural killer cells that reduce the risk of cancer, and control attention span helping to be mindful. Every day interactions with nature can promote the health and wellbeing of people. In a study in 2010, scientists found that people who took long walks through forests and woodlands on consecutive days increased their natural killer cells by fifty percent and the activity of the cells by fifty six percent. The more the time spent with nature, the more it instills peace and calmness. Studies showed that children with ADHD increased their attention and improved concentration as a result of spending quality time with nature. The serene and peaceful atmosphere, fresh air, pure smell and pleasant sights contribute to wellbeing of the body, mind and spirit.

There have been scientific studies proving the beneficial effects of living with nature. Confining oneself to the four walls of the house, and making life digitalized affects health in the long run. Being in contact with nature awakens the senses and provides beautiful experiences that keep life light and happy.

Kashish Kacheria, ‘Nature Imagery and Symbolism in Selected Poems from Rabindranath Tagore’s Collection’

The research article explores the imagery and symbolism related to nature, in the select poems of Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore has always employed rich imageries of nature in his works. In terms of his approach towards Nature, he is considered a Romantic like Wordsworth. Tagore’s poetry is sometimes said to resemble the style of Kalidasa, “revealing different facets of natural beauty in all its splendour. The varying moods of nature are recorded in his poetry.” (N Dwivedi). Dr Radhakrishnan remarks that Tagore makes use of the eternal to touch upon the temporal. All the elements of nature like the river, Earth, Moon, stars, sun, sky, flowers, birds, bees, sand and dust, appear in his poems as symbols and motifs.

The review classifies the imageries Tagore has employed in his works into pastoral, plant and water imageries; natural elements as mystic motifs; and natural cycles and phenomena.

Pastoral imagery in Tagore’s works include graphic descriptions of gardens, valleys, meadows, fields, pastures, and the grazing cattle. In the poem ‘I Travelled the Old Road’, the Earth is portrayed as a delighted Mother who gave birth to the “ripening rice” in the fields. The essentiality of rice, a staple diet of India, is depicted through

the imagery. The lines, “and on many a rainy day the smell of the wet earth had come to her over the young shoots of rice” from ‘She Dwelt Here by the Pool’ is another visual pastoral imagery. It not just brings in the image of the rain drenched lands and the smell of the soil but arouses the senses of the readers. India being an agrarian country, the smell of the rain here, is an emotion; a symbol of happiness and prosperity. Most of Tagore’s poems are set in a countryside landscapes. An instance of this is seen in the lines, “I took my fruits to the market, my cattle to the meadows” from the poem ‘I Travelled the Old Road’. In ‘I Shall Gladly Suffer’, the image of cattle grazing in the rural pastures is drawn. The lines from the poem, “the herd-boy who grazes his cattle sitting under the banyan tree”, “he disappears in the forest with a peacock’s plume in his hair”, and “clouds of dust are raised by the cattle, the maidens come out in the courtyard to milk the king” are rich in rustic images. The reference is to the deity, Lord Krishna who strolls around the woods and the garden with the herd boys. The lines are also an implication of the presence and prevalence of Divinity in Nature.

Plant imageries in the poems of Rabindranath Tagore include those of seeds, fruits, flowers, roots, leaves, trees, branches, groves and forests. In the lines like “scatter them like seeds with careless hands in the extravagant winds of March” (In the Beginning of Time) and “you have moved from my world, to take a seat at the root of my life” (There is a Looker-On), nature is fused with humanity. The elements of Nature are used to express human emotions. The images of shady trees and rustling leaves have always been an important element in the scenery of Tagore’s poetry. Instances of it are seen in the lines, “many a traveller takes rest beneath that banyan tree” and “her

pet name is known here among those date-palm groves” from the poem ‘She Dwelt Here by the Pool’. Another vital image widely used in his poems is that of a flower, as a metaphor of tenderness, mysticism, transience, and copiousness. In the line “she is near to my heart as a meadow-flower to the earth”, the flower symbolizes the tender and delicate nature of the lady referred. The line, “April night is sweet as a fresh-blown flower” implies the beautiful but short lived April season with reference to a freshly bloomed flower to be withered soon.

The images of water as represented by river, streams, and seas are abundant in Tagore’s poetry. The lines “My love for her is my life flowing in its fullness like a river in autumn flood, running with serene abandonment. My songs are one with my love, like the murmur of a stream, that sings with all its waves and currents” from the poem ‘She is Near to My Heart’ uses the image of river, stream, waves, current and flood to denote the speaker’s ever flowing love for the lady. In the poem ‘In the Beginning of Time’, the poet writes, “the beauty deep as the sea of silence”, where ‘sea’ is a mystic symbol of eternity. There are many images of water in the form of rain, dew, mist, river, riverbanks, sea and tears in the works of Tagore, beautifully representing the simplicity as well as the magnificence of human lives.

Tagore has also portrayed the natural elements like the Earth, moon, sun, stars, and dust to signify related emotions. While most of the times, the Earth is discussed as a delightful and nurturing mother, at times it is also used in comparison to the heaven. The moon is epitomized as great beauty, love and guidance in times of dark hopelessness. In the poem, ‘The Evening was Lonely’, the moonlight is referred to as the “Spirit of

Beauty”. Nature is also personified in many of the poems; an instance is the line “the sky seemed to kiss me on my forehead”. The image of dust is given a worthy connotation in Tagore’s poems, as opposed to its belittlement as a demeaned existence. Tagore considers that life evolves from and merges into dust. Dust is truth to him, and not an illusion. Thus ‘dust’ is a vital element in his works. The line, “Are you a mere picture, and not as true as those stars, true as this dust?” is an example from his poem of the same name. The twinkling stars denote boundless beauty, infinity and eternal desire. These lines, “I sat up and saw the glow of the Milky Way above my window, like a world of silence on fire, and I wondered if at this moment she had a dream that rhymed with mine” from the poem ‘I Dreamt’ is an exquisite gleam of thought the poet has, inspired by the burning stars.

Tagore also employs the cycles of nature and natural phenomena throughout his collection of poems. Just as the seasons of nature represent different concepts, so are times of the day. Dawn symbolizes hope and enthusiasm; dusk denotes the last ray of hope. Night is often related to hopelessness and darkness. Summer, autumn, winter and rain find a significant place in Tagore’s poems as motifs and metaphors.

Romanticism and Mysticism is best expressed in *Gitanjali* through the umpteen metaphors of Nature and its diversity in all forms. Tagore finds divinity and idealism in Nature. His spirituality is paved in the observation, realization and the absorption of Nature, and by seeking and finding God in nature’s revelation.

World Pantheism, ‘Nature and Spirituality’

Pantheists are greatly concerned about nature, and hold much respect and love for it. They believe that human beings are an integral part of nature, and that the rest of the world and creatures of the universe share equal rights and freedom earth. They do not simply preach the preservation of nature, but also have measures and programs to save nature. They have saved many acres of natural habitats, and protected plants and saved wild animals according to the respective schemes. Pantheists worship nature as a spiritual resource and do not exploit it. They do not consider nature worshipping as against reason or rationality. It just means a judicious use of nature, and not the overt exploitation of it for their needs.

People should adopt measure and strategies to protect and save nature that nourishes and nurtures human life and survival. Nature greatly affects the mental, spiritual and psychological wellbeing. Therefore preserving it is in one way, caring for humanity.

CONCLUSION

The above reviews about *Gitanjali*, Psalms; and the role of nature as a comfort and therapy, and the importance of it in various literary genres has been analyzed in order to gain a better understanding of the previous researches held on these concepts. The previous studies help form a strong base for the present study to develop as a full-fledged original research. In the chapter, various research articles and studies have been explored that gave profound insights about the primary texts (*Gitanjali* and Psalms), the author (Rabindranath Tagore), and the concept of nature as a therapist. The songs in *Gitanjali*

are rich in descriptions about natural landscapes, and the experience of harmony between man, nature and God. The nature poems in Psalms are studied for the various accounts of nature being presented in them. Nature takes on various roles from mediator, guide, healer and spiritual trainer. It has been a rich source of spiritual resources that help human beings attain their happiness and wellbeing and restore the deteriorating health and peace with the powerful natural forces.

Chapter III

CHAPTER III

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

*“I go to nature to be soothed and healed, and to have my senses put in
tune once more” - John Burroughs*

Human beings have largely become an indoor species. When nature holds so much within to be discovered, humanity finds no time to unfold its coveted treasures. Though one phase of nature has always been an eye candy with its excellent scenic views, the other phase is yet to be discovered. The healing touch of nature that soothes the morbid human routine has reached only a few, and is yet to be explored by a whole lot. Nature has established its stance in therapy to heal ailments. The pristine natural world is highly creative and resourceful with its stillness, serenity and peace. When immersed in nature, it is impossible not to be awestruck by its magnificence, power and beauty. Therefore, the more the interaction with nature, the higher is the evolution to a peaceful life.

The chapter discusses the theoretical or conceptual framework to be applied for the analysis of the select texts. Research today is interdisciplinary. More and more theories from different disciplines are being merged to interpret, examine, study and verify the research concepts and to apply them in real life contexts. The development of the concepts here, which are Therapeutic Landscapes and Nature Based Therapy, are derived from various disciplines of landscape architecture, occupational therapy, environmental psychology and behavioural sciences. These theoretical frameworks overlap into each other, giving new insights and unexplored perspectives to look upon the study.

Based on the reviews of related literature presented in the previous chapter, the underlying concepts and themes in the works of *Gitanjali* and Psalms are clearly comprehended. The significance of nature in day to day life, among the various other themes of spirituality, life and love; stands out as a distinct conception in the works. Nature has been depicted in its several forms in the songs of the Psalms and Tagore's *Gitanjali*. The study aims to analyze the aspect of nature from a medicinal perspective. Natural landscapes serve as a therapy for soothing the diseased human minds, and alleviating the pain and agonies. Humanity has always found solace in nature than in men; hence sought answers from it not only in the great romantic literatures, but also in the practical real life. The idea has been backed up by many real life incidents, practical experiences and multiple projects.

Experiencing nature and becoming a part of the landscape is often a spiritual feeling and a state of mind. Life in the mountains, woods, and on the riverbanks is thoroughly enriching for the body and spirit. Such experiences establish a connect between the landscape and health, by letting the soul of the landscape enter the limbic systems through the fully awakened senses. Most people living in the urban are devoid of the spiritual state of mind when being with nature, because they consider the landscape an objective entity rather than a subjective experience. The deep connection to nature and the resultant spiritual wholeness forms the base of Arne Naess' philosophy of Deep Ecology and Henrik Ibsen's *Friluftsliv*. *Friluftsliv* is a Scandinavian philosophy proposed by the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen and had its roots in Norway and Sweden. The term expresses as 'open air living'. Ibsen popularized the term in 1859

through his work *On the Heights*. It is a way of living close to natural landscapes, and is a philosophy of living adopted by the Norwegians, though today it has been more commercialized and less philosophized. Scandinavians were already nature loving people, and romanticism strengthened their interest in nature and outdoor living. The idea was emphasized more by Ibsen's philosophy. Life in and with nature is the foundation for *Friluftsliv*, as opposed to the outdoor activities in nature, or superficial trips to the wilderness which involves mere observation of nature. The activities issued now in the name of *Friluftsliv* are in contrast to the original concept of 'free air life' which implied the spiritual freedom and enlightenment found in living with nature. Participation, interaction and endless encounter with the landscapes are the only means to attain an ecologically rich life. *Friluftsliv* is all about the love for nature and reconnecting with a long lost sensation of the lived-in experiences with nature. It is a philosophy and a lifestyle.

Natural landscapes, since ancient times, have been a therapy for several diseases affecting the human senses and spirit. The ability of natural environments to heal and the healing properties within a place is theorized as therapeutic landscapes and nature-based therapy. The chapter discusses therapeutic landscapes from the perspectives of ecology, landscape architecture, health geography and neuroscience. It also studies the cases of healing through nature-based therapy (NBT), which is an emerging field of medicine focusing on the treatment and cure of illness through exposure to nature, without medication. It includes (but is not limited to) therapeutic landscapes, healing gardens, horticultural therapy, restorative environments and all that looks deep into

the mysteries of nature, and help people restore their health and wellbeing by being in constant contact with nature so that they experience the energy of the natural forces effecting on them, and understand life and world better as they learn acceptance, coping up mechanisms, and are restored in mental and physical health.

THERAPEUTIC LANDSCAPES

The concept of therapeutic landscapes was originally developed and applied to heal the sick minds from mental and physical illness or disease. The concept was popularized by the medical geographer, Wilbert Gesler. He applied the concept in practice focusing on specific sites that promoted healing, whereas researchers after Gesler shifted the focus from specific sites like hospitals and meditation centers, and expanded it to ecologically rich landscapes in general that appeased human minds. Cultural geography shifted from its traditional perspectives to a new one, during the late 1980s and the 1990s. The sense of place is deeply connected to the sense of self, as it strongly affects the mind and the quality of life. The identity of a place lies not just in its physical landscape, but its associations to human activities. The relationship between place, healing and health is manifested in the concept of ‘therapeutic landscapes’. Wilbert Gesler was the first to bring in ‘therapeutic landscapes’ as a tool in research. He defines therapeutic landscapes as “healing places ... (that) include such things as natural and human-made environments, historical events, cultural beliefs, social relations, and personal experiences” (95). The focus of Gesler’s concept is more specific to religious sites such as pilgrimages and meditation centers. The expansion of the concept to include non-specific sites for relaxation and restoration were during the later years. Gesler has

coined the term, which was first introduced in his articles “Therapeutic Landscapes: Medical Issues in the Light of the New Cultural Geography” (1992) and “Therapeutic Landscape: Theory and a Case Study of Epidaurus, Greece” (1993). The articles describe therapeutic landscape as a site associated with healing and cure. Gesler has developed a new perspective in the interpretation of landscapes by applying concepts from new cultural geography, signifying the “sense of place, landscape as text, symbolic landscapes, negotiated reality, hegemony and resistance, territoriality, and legitimization and marginalization” (735). Healing through therapeutic landscapes is a challenge to the traditional health care centers suffocating the patients more with scary equipment, heavy expenses and terrible medication. In contrast, nature-based therapies (NBT) involving therapeutic landscapes are highly effective and the only requirement is the exposure to soothing and healing spaces, if not for the commercialized nature-based health care organizations. The landscapes taken up for the study are further classified as traditional ones like that of mineral springs, mountain retreat, riverside camps, woodlands; and the modern ones like healing huts, healthcare centers and hospitals.

Gesler’s case-studies included three experiments on different places. In Epidaurus, the treatment was done through a ‘dream healing’ where the patients are supposed to lay still and wait for the vision of Asclepius, the healing god, in their dream. If the god appeared in their vision, it is believed they would be healed and cured of their troubles. Purification of the body and soul through water is also an important process during this healing in Epidaurus, which included drinking water as well as bathing. Snake was another significant element in the healing, as Asclepius was used to carrying a

snake with him. It was worshipped as a symbol of regeneration, shedding away the old self and being reborn. Time spent exercising, engaging with natural surroundings, building social relationships, making a sense of the illness and healing in the particular context, added to the activities related to healing. Gesler said that if the environment fails to be a healing space by itself, the location should incorporate naturalistic elements that promote healing. He also advocates the necessity of spirituality for effective healing. Analyzing the cases, Gesler inferred that physical, mental and spiritual well-being at Epidauros was influenced by several factors, as opposed to a single element of cure. Some of these factors included the natural and man-made environments, human perception, beliefs and hopes, everyday activities, sagacity of the place, social associations, historical and cultural events and the individual experiences. These factors are not specific to Epidauros alone, but for any other place of healing irrespective of their nature.

Gesler's next case-study was about Lourdes Basilica, published as 'Lourdes: Healing in a Place of Pilgrimage' (1996) in the magazine *Health and Space*. Lourdes is a site of pilgrimage, which was studied and analyzed by Gesler for its therapeutic properties. It is well known for the miraculous healing powers of the spring waters there. The water was tested for the identification of scientifically based curative elements, following the controversies of such mystic healing. But there were no scientific grounds, and the healing is supposed to be purely supernatural. Instant healing involving prayers and a curative element like water are believed to be present in the miraculous healings

of Lourdes. Gesler himself had experienced spiritual and psychological renewal, though not exactly the above mentioned sense of healing, during his visits to Lourdes, because of the shared sense of community.

The third case study about therapeutic landscapes was based on the spa at Bath, England. The article about it titled 'Bath's Reputation as a Healing Place' was published in the book *Putting Health into Place: Landscape, Identity and Well-being*. He states the need for healing within places and the significance of human perception about places and healing. Perceptions and beliefs along with the powers of a place enhance restoration. Bath is famous for its historical consequence, cultural significance and the natural surroundings including the hot springs that are crucial to its therapeutic roles. The springs and the spa's structural design influence the rejuvenation of mind and spirit.

Development of Therapeutic Landscapes Post Gesler:

The concept has been broadened to a great extent by researchers following Wilbert Gesler. Allison Williams is one among them to have taken significant interest in the therapeutic landscapes and their development. She has published articles titled 'Social Science and Medicine' (1998) and 'Therapeutic Landscapes' (1999) where she describes 'therapeutic landscapes' as places that are well-reputed for physical, mental and spiritual healing. She extends the original definition of Gesler's 'therapeutic landscapes' by employing the concept of humanism and holistic medicine.

The redefinition adds in the concept of health maintenance as a key element in the well-being within places. This emphasis on the maintenance of health besides healing and cure is central to the concepts of Allison Williams and the following researchers,

unlike Gesler whose only concern was with healing. According to her, holistic medicine is taking on a new turn, receiving renewed interests chiefly due to the dissatisfaction with conventional health care. Landscape symbolism plays a great role in identifying and interpreting disease, therapy and health maintenance. Spaces and health are intrinsically connected, and develops a meaning making process of symbolizing mental states through landscapes.

Therapeutic Landscapes: The Dynamic between Place and Wellness, edited by Alison Williams was a landmark in the progression of broadening the concept of ‘therapeutic landscapes’. The book collects and classifies three case studies based on the concept, and they are ‘Therapeutic Landscapes as Healing Places’, ‘Therapeutic Landscapes and the Marginalized’ and ‘Symbolic Landscapes in Health Care Systems’. The cases, especially the first and the third, have led to the evolution of ‘therapeutic landscapes’ as a theory. The introductory chapter by Williams records the application of the concept, including the maintenance of health in many places. Though Gesler has focused his research on specific sites like Epidauros, Lourdes, and Bath for healing; the concept has been adopted by many other perspectives too. Allison Williams has studied the connection between holistic medicine and landscapes, and thus understands therapeutic landscapes not only as places that heal, but more importantly as places that maintain the well-being and health.

A case study on Denali National Park has been taken up by a researcher, E. Palka (1999) in ‘Accessible Wilderness as a Therapeutic Landscape: Experiencing the Nature of Denali National Park, Alaska’ based on his idea that therapeutic landscapes are natural

spaces that help people relax and thus restore themselves along with some kind of physical, mental and spiritual healing, as opposed to Gesler's carefully designed infrastructural buildings, landscapes and healthcare facilities. He believes such landscapes to be purely natural environments that become settings for therapeutic experiences. The healing powers of Gesler's sites are supposed to be beliefs backed up by the myths and legends telling stories of their supremacy, more than any real experiences. The study on Denali National Park focuses on the visitors' ability to connect with the park as a therapeutic landscape. Some of the qualities inducing the therapeutic experience are the spiritual history of the place for the Alaskans, the genial human-nature interactions, the importance of accessible wilderness, authentic natural landscape, aesthetically pleasing backgrounds, soothingly renovating remoteness and the belief in the power of the place to heal. From the survey it is found that the visitors to the park had unanimously proclaimed the physical, mental and spiritual restoration and healing the park encompasses. Based on his findings, Palka concludes that available but pristine and wholesome wilderness without human imprints and technological intervention, brings in and sustains wellness, and promotes healing without any of the conventional healthcare facilities.

The next case study has been on children's summer camps, by Thurber and Malinowski (1999), employing Gesler's definition of therapeutic landscapes and his concept of symbolism within landscapes representing the mental states and enhancing healing. The study uses Gesler's themes of everyday activities; natural surroundings and built environments; beliefs, perceptions and philosophies within the camp; and has found a strong coherence between the concept and its application. The camp was

working with the mission of promoting mental, physical and spiritual growth to the kids. The case analysis shows that the camp has successfully accomplished the mission by being a restorative and uplifting space for the inmates. The study was supported by two other studies based on children's enjoyment in the camp despite homesickness, and development of individual preferences within the camp environment. Based on the survey and Gesler's themes, the camp is a 'therapeutic landscape' promoting mental and spiritual well-being.

Allison Williams has another case study where she extends the meaning of therapeutic landscapes beyond the natural and built environments promoting mental and physical healing, to include the well maintenance of health and well-being. She redefines a therapeutic environment as having a 'healthy' and 'definitive' relationship between individual identity and sense of the place. The case study deals with the home care nurses in a medically underserviced area of northern Ontario and studies the place identities of the nurses. The intervention comprised of 131 questionnaires and eight in-depth interviews aimed to gather information regarding the satisfaction of life within the community characteristics. Both the interviews and questionnaires focused on demonstrating strong place identities among the nurses. Williams also connects landscape authenticity and place identity. The connection between the authenticity of landscapes and place identity is so strong that it influences one another, as it is the authenticity of the landscape that allows an underserviced area like this to be kept up as a health maintaining therapeutic landscape for the nurses.

Kearns and Barnett (1999) has taken up a case study in a children's hospital, Starship Hospital, Auckland in New Zealand. The hospital is specially designed for creating a healing environment within, for young patients. Kearns and Barnett follows Gesler's definition of therapeutic landscapes where individual, societal and environmental factors combine to contribute to the healing. It has child-friendly features like carpeting and playful spaces symbolically designed to represent a therapeutic environment to restore the physical, mental and emotional well-being.

Allison Williams, a health geographer, working for more than twenty years on the concept of therapeutic landscapes, believes that the application of the concept is a liberating experience for many in the society. She discusses the example of a current work in progress analyzed for the therapeutic landscape of an ashram community dedicated for world peace. She classifies the areas in which the concept has been applied as, traditional, distinct populations, and health care sites. Traditional therapeutic landscapes encompass natural and built environments that reflect healing qualities, such as wilderness environments and retreat houses. The concept is further applied for specific populations focusing on place-based interventions, such as substance abuse centers for addicts and home design for autistic children. Such therapeutic experimentations with the concerned participants contribute to their health and healing. The application of the concept to health care sites, such as mental health hospitals, long-term care facilities, and community care homes, focus on how these sites can be improved to address the needs of care recipients more holistically. A growing interest in traditional spaces and places, such as those identified as 'blue/green' environments (Foley 2010), as well as shrines

dedicated to healing (Williams 2010) is recorded during these days. The applications of the concept with respect to distinct populations have been further expanded to include the experiences of migration for immigrants and refugees (Agyekum and Newbold 2016) and experiences of grief (Maddrell 2016). The establishment of the concept in health care settings have continued to look at both institutional settings (Gesler and Curtis 2007) and deinstitutionalized community care settings (Donovan and Williams 2007; Williams 2002). The concept of ‘therapeutic landscapes’ is employed as a tool for informing and mobilizing positive change in the world – personal, environmental, medicinal and social change – as is evident in the mounting health geography and growing medical anthropology literature.

Allison Williams has further invited the literary contributions of medical anthropologists in her edited volume of *Therapeutic Landscapes* (2007). The introductory chapter in the final section, co-authored by Setha Low, was titled as ‘Transcending Geography: Applications in the Anthropology of Health’. The article helped attain an anthropological understanding of therapeutic landscapes. Despite the interest of medical anthropologists in the cultural and geographical context of health for a long time, the publication of the book was a surprise as it is in the infant phase of therapeutic landscapes in anthropology. Though there were controversies about the original perspective of therapeutic landscapes, later it was agreed, following Setha Low, that a multidisciplinary perspective, incorporating anthropology, environmental psychology, and geography, ‘allows different aspects of environments to be explored when trying to understand why a specific landscape is therapeutic’ (2007, 295).

The above mentioned meditative ashram is an instance of a therapeutic site as Allison Williams cites in her book. The landscape of the ashram and the ashram community resembles a global village consisting people from all over the world. The common language used here was English, with all the daily activities – from morning meditation to yoga classes and educational workshops – being offered in English language attainment, though many languages were spoken at the Bahamas site. Members of the community -- long-term residents or short-term visitors -- had the common aim of realizing peace, both within themselves and in the wider outside world. The ashram was open, welcoming and amiable to the common public, which made it accessible to people from all walks of life, with many financial concessions on accommodations and tent camping available for those on a tight budget. The pace of life in the ashram is slow, allowing for meditative contemplation in moving from one activity to the next. The community members are facilitated to explore and learn an array of practices, from fasting to meditation to sustainable farming. The workshops conducted pertain to health, wellness, self-actualization, environmental sustainability, humane lifestyles and practices, and spiritual fulfillment, leading to a peaceful and healthy world. The activities are planned with breaks in between, such as the thirty minutes between morning meditation and yoga class, and these breaks allow time for social exchange with fellow community members, with brunch and dinner being the most intense opportunities for socializing. There are strict codes of conduct with respect to addictive substances. On the whole, the ashram itself is quite a therapeutic landscape, given its built and natural environment;

focus on physical, spiritual, and mental health; daily schedule of activities that bring order and calmness to the community; and social inclusivity. Thus the ashram operates as a place of healing, health, and renewal for all who live there or visit it.

HEALING PLACES

Healing Places: The Science of Place and Well-being by Esther Sternberg recollects the ancient idea of healing through nature's hands, and re-presents it in the modern context with strong scientific bases. Dr. Esther Sternberg places this scientific understanding in the context of place, revealing how much the environment contributes to health and wellbeing. The body's sensual perceptions and physiological response to the physical environment were examined for the study. She relates how physical space affects and transforms the healing process. She herself is a physician who has widely studied the interaction between the brain and the functioning of the immune system, as well as the psychophysiological effects of stress on health. The effect of the environment on the range of illness and health, and the ability of environment to cause changes in health throughout lives are discussed. The belief in the healing powers of the environment is commonly accepted, but the comprehension of the psychophysiological mechanisms that bring about this healing effect is barely realized. This phenomenon is connected to the human stress response, in which chronic stress leads to suppression of the immune system, closing the body's ability to heal. Dr. Sternberg expounds the phenomena of how architectural spaces affect the visual pathways of the brain, and how looking at beauty causes an increase in endorphins, which reduce one's perception of pain. She writes from her experience as well as from analyzing others' experiences.

During the process of healing, there is a transformation from sickness to well-being shifting the focus from the inner world of hopelessness and despair to the beautiful outer world of sunlight, cool breeze, dew dropped plants, brooks and streams. Such pleasant physical surroundings, in turn, affect the rate of healing too. It has been scientifically proved that healing and places are interconnected. Places that have beautiful landscapes, and pleasant weather uplifts the mood of people, makes them healthy and happy, restoring their peace and wellbeing, and improving upon the emotional health, spiritual balance, and social relationships. The first study to prove that was by Roger Ulrich in 1984. It has been published in the *Science* magazine and showed that when hospital rooms had open windows that gave a clear view of the physical world, patients healed better and more quickly. During the years 1972-1981, Ulrich had conducted an experimental study in a suburban Pennsylvania hospital on the significant association of places and healing. He examined the hospital records and chose forty-six patients with gall bladder surgery, of which thirty were women and sixteen were men. Twenty-three patients were placed near windows that opened to trees and groves, and the other twenty-three were placed near windows that viewed just stone bricks. All the patients were treated by the same nurse, and were recorded for their health indicators including the amount of dosages, medication for pain, the duration of hospital stay and other parameters. It was found that the patients who were placed near windows with the view of nature were given lesser dosage and were discharged from the hospital sooner than others.

Primeval societies knew that nature had a great place in the healing of minds and bodies. Ancient temples built for Asclepius, the Greek god of healing, were situated on the hill tops overlooking seas and oceans, far away from the cities. Healing occurred obviously, in the presence of nature. Contradictory to the histories of nature as the best physician, the developing technologically-advanced hospital culture in the cities does not really heal, as healing is different from treating or diagnosing. Sophisticated equipment like X-ray machines, electrocardiograms take up most of the place the patients requires for healing, and thus the comfort of the patients is ignored.

John Eberhard, director of research at the American Institute of Architects held a collaborative workshop in 2002 for architects and scientists, presenting and exploring the interface between architecture and neuroscience for the first time. A conference at Woods Hole discussed about how to measure and use the tools to promote healing. Architects meticulously examined the features of physical environments for the therapeutic elements contained. They measured the temperature, airflow, wavelength, colour, and light intensity of the scenes viewed. Neurologists examined the effect of the place on the brain. They could monitor areas in the brain that became active when the patient was looking at a scene. They could measure physiological responses such as stress and relaxation. They could measure stress hormones in saliva, and changes in heart-rate variability and breathing. And they could measure general indicators of health such as immune responses, dosages of pain medications prescribed, and length of hospital stays.

It was concluded that with advanced technology in neuroscience and architecture, the factors in the physical environment that promote healing can be measured, and the reception of the stimulus by the brain can also be recorded.

NATURE BASED THERAPY

The term 'Nature Based Therapy' (NBT) is generally used to refer to therapy based on experiences and activities in a nature setting, engaging with nature, as a part of the treatment process that promotes healing. Health interventions based on nature as a therapy is growing wide in many parts of the world. Researchers have scientifically established the correlation of natural landscapes or environment and health and wellbeing. When involved with nature, there are high possibilities of spiritual revelation experienced. As a result, an awareness of the limited grasp over nature's power occurs, which is the core of the nature-based therapeutic treatment. Such treatments are bound to reveal the transformative power of healing and spirituality. The three key components of this therapy are the nature, client and the therapist. Nature becomes an active therapist in the healing process often, rather than remaining a passive background. Based on the concept of nature-based healing; several projects have been initiated and successfully accomplished. Research shows besides healing, that there are cognitive and moral benefits from working with nature, as it improves concentration, memory, and attention. It also alleviates clinical depression as is seen in the case of depressed patients who almost overcame depression after their participation in therapeutic horticulture during a twelve-week program. Various studies have found that cognitive malfunctioning in children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is improved to a clearer

functioning upon exposure to and engaging with nature, as reported by Biopsychosocial Medicine in 2012. Performances based on concentration and attention were spotted to be higher in children who spent more time in natural woodland areas, as compared to children in urban areas left to stay indoors.

The concept of health has been an important topic of discussion since the ancient times. The contemporary health specialists claim health to be a holistic and broader concept, rather than the minute biological details that go in to the physical state of wellbeing. Health is regarded as a holistic and positive state of being (physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual) that fosters healthy relationship with oneself, with others and the socio-cultural and environmental surroundings. In a healthy landscape, these factors progress naturally and effortlessly, culminating into an overall health and wellbeing of the people living in such environment. This perspective of health resembles the health philosophy of ancient days. The environmental setting need not always be natural ones like the woodlands, mountains and seashore though they are more effective) but can also be manmade ones like gardens, and environmental therapeutic settings. The concept of gardens as healing spaces can be traced back to thousands of years ago. Therefore, gardens have been an important factor in the therapeutic processes and medical care. The use of garden for health care purposes can be traced back as far as to the Roman Empire and Persian Empire. Thus it was a common conviction that the environment and landscapes affected the healing and health of people. Spending time in nature – gardens, pastorals, and landscapes with lakes and meadows, hill stations, etc. – are found to be health rewarding as people restore themselves physically and mentally in these

places, by breathing in fresh air, being in natural daylight, and inhaling the greeneries. This idea was believed to be the key concepts of many theories like that of miasma and phytogenic theory, the two important medical theories of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which was supposed to influence hospitals in having an attractive and pleasant natural settings. Many hospitals contributed a lot in the arrangement of beautiful landscapes and incorporated natural related activities and experiences in the treatment sessions, as it was thought would positively affect the mental wellbeing of the patients. Many healthcare settings specially designed for promoting healing are known by different names and terminologies in different contexts. Some of them are restorative gardens, therapeutic landscapes, healing gardens, community gardens, care farms, urban green therapeutic spaces, sensory gardens; and the therapeutic programs or interventions are addressed as Horticultural therapy, social and therapeutic horticulture conservation therapy, onotherapy, nature based therapy, ecological psychotherapy, care farming, green care, people farm relationship, and human issues in horticulture.

Some definitions that define the workings of these landscape environments with the motive of providing healing are listed. In oral lecture of ‘Creating a Sensory Garden’ at a conference on “Securing Our Health and Wellness”, R Haller (2004) spoke thus:

Concepts like restorative gardens, healing gardens, sensory gardens, and urban green therapeutic spaces are often used to explain that the design in itself is intended to have effects on the visitors’ health; it’s a

question of a relationship between a user and setting, without any therapeutic program or certain therapeutic activities. Gardens attached to hospitals, nursing homes and hospices can be described in that way.

In an article entitled 'Healing Gardens: Therapeutic Benefits and Design Recommendations' (1999), C Cooper-Marcus and M Barnes write:

On the other hand, the meaning of concepts like therapeutic gardens, and care farms involves a special designed or special chosen place *and* a therapeutic intervention: the places are purposely designed to improve the health experienced by a special client group, through the interplay between the therapeutic settings, the therapeutic activities, the therapeutic team and the clients. However, all these concepts are often mixed and used in other, quite opposite ways.

Horticultural therapy is doing horticultural activities in a therapeutic natural setting. It was derived from occupational therapy, and in the 1950s and 1960s, it was further expanded to include treatment for people experiencing strokes, cardio vascular spasms, autistic disorders, and Alzheimer's disease. Care farming and green care involves therapeutic programs in a natural setting where animals lay a great role in the therapeutic process. These therapies belong to the greater field of animalistic therapy. Nature based therapy, eco-therapy are therapeutic approaches that emerged with the development in the disciplines of ecology and psychology, where both we collaborated to incorporate eco-psychological studies that included research in eco-psychological therapy.

There are three main steps in the therapeutic processes in nature based therapeutic context. They are – viewing nature, being in the presence of nature, and involving active participation in and direct interaction with nature. As people view nature, they mediate on the natural elements and the changing natural phenomenon that expands the mental horizons and allowing the assimilation and acceptance of new perspectives on health and life. Being in contact with nature and experiencing the presence of nature substantially contributes to people's recovery from critical and threatening life situations. Spending time with nature lights a spark of creativity and intuition that are much essential in every phase of life. Apart from that, people also experience restoration of the sense of self, reduction in anxiety and stress, enhancement in the perception of reality, and promotion of tolerance and understanding, all essential to live a healthy life. Actively involving in the therapeutic sessions by having close interaction with nature is inspiring and life changing. It greatly improves one's social relationships, cuts off the inhibitions and lets the soul freely express itself in the world, helps voice their grief and pain with the nature and with others, and at the same time connect to people and nature in their joy and pain as they realize the oneness pervading the entire universe.

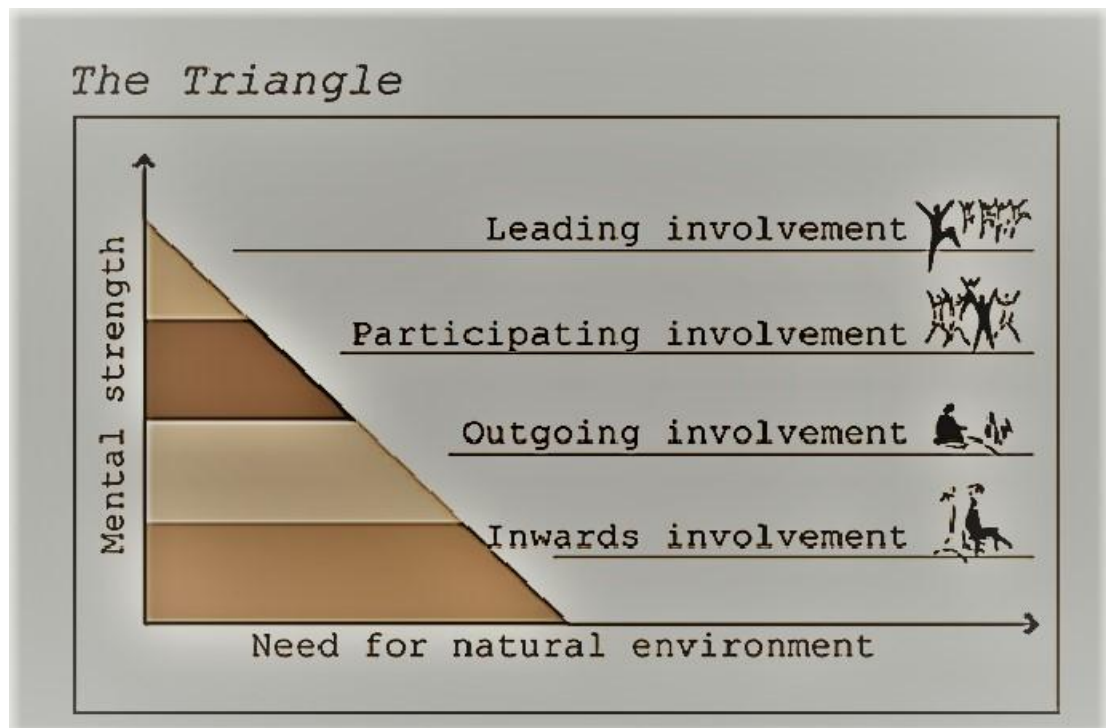


Fig 1: Mental Strength Triangle (Stigsdotter and Grahn; 2002, 2003)

The figure above shows the relationship and the impact of natural environment on mental wellbeing. The triangle was first proposed by U Stigsdotter and P Grahn, expressing the effect of nature on health and healing.

Environmental psychology and other disciplines of postmodern health geography makes claim that the environment affects an individual's social behavior, emotional states, and relationship with oneself and others. The aesthetics of a place plays a great role in the display of people's emotions. Spaces are known to have emotional impacts; thus outdoor environments and contact with nature assists the therapeutic process. Nature based therapy is an innovative therapeutic approach designed to develop social, cognitive, emotional capabilities and moral ethics of people who lack them or have lost them. The project takes place in open natural environments, making use of the

natural elements to provide emotional support and heal the patients. The approach is not just a therapy that benefits the humans, but also is a strategy to strengthen the bonds between humans and nature, and foster their love and care for nature. Nature becomes the therapeutic setting, and the clients are supposed to interact with it, establish a connection with their favorite spot, thus creating a private space for them to relax, revise and rediscover the spark within themselves. It is during this process of reconnecting with nature, that they open themselves to the therapist and allow themselves to experience the change at the hands of nature.

Nature therapy has a subset of adventure therapy. It employs nature as a medium to expose the clients to new experiences involving nature, and thus expand their horizons. Some of the activities in adventure therapy are skydiving, canoeing or hiking through wilderness, during which they confront nature. This helps them encounter their fears and anxiety by enhancing fearlessness, coping skills, sociability, mental and emotional strength. A key factor essential throughout the therapy is a strong base of the client, therapist, and nature. Traditionally only the client and therapist were important for the therapy, but in nature therapy, nature is an active participant like the client and therapist. It is almost like a co-therapist. The therapist becomes a spectator and witness to the interaction between the client and nature. He/she becomes the mediator, enhancing the bond between the client and nature. The natural landscapes involved in the process do not just influence the setting, but affects the whole process of therapy.

A case study of nature therapy was conducted for a group of children aged from eight to ten, studying in a remote school for special children. Initially the children were made to observe the changes in nature during the autumn by looking through the windows. They recorded the changes, and once they got familiar with the process within their own classrooms, they were then taken outside and let to experience nature first hand, based on the idea of each person building homes in nature. Each child discovered places for them, and then built their homes with much love and care. When there was a seasonal change from autumn to winter, there were changes in the natural elements too. There was rain and fog, new vegetation, and the entry of migratory birds into 'their space'. Children learned about the cycle of life speculating the changes in the cycle of nature. They learnt about the changes in life that comes with growing up. As they could connect themselves with their surroundings and the natural phenomenon, there was a deeper connection between the children and nature. They shared their stories with each other, as well as with the natural elements. They realized that they were not alone in whatever times they had been going through, and that pain and joy was experienced by all beings on earth, not just by the human but also by the non-human lives in nature. This realization of the collectiveness and oneness that bound all creatures of the universe alike, brought them solace and comfort, especially when they went through emotional lows. When the winter season came to an end and the spring took over, there were further changes in the natural surroundings. The colourful flowering of the trees and gardens, the music of bees and birds, soft grass turned into yellow thorns, etc. happened during the seasonal change. Observing the uncontrolled changes in the natural world, they were inspired to voice their discomfort in the present and the hope for a better change. After a point

of seven months, the children were asked to look back and reflect upon their journey of therapeutic sessions, and to give feedback and suggestions for further procedures. Having had individual homes and developing their comprehensibility and coping skills from those, they now wanted to build a collective home, common for everyone in the group. They discussed about locale and design of the home, and about the possible threats they could receive from their schoolmates. Though there were differences of opinion that did not lead to physical fights or quarrels. This indicates that throughout their therapeutic journey they were made more capable to accept and understand things and their communication, interpersonal skills and social relationships have been greatly developed, which resulted in positive verbal communication. By the end of the sessions, children found their journey quite meaningful, and they had a treasure of lessons and memories to take back with them. They missed not only one another, but their ‘home’ – the physical natural world that nourished them, guided and taught them lessons in silence, and the quiet friend that helped them know themselves, realize the world, accept life, and to grow despite anything.

The above case study highlights the presence of nature as an active therapist during the sessions. It was both the medium and the instructor. The ‘Building a Home in Nature’ technique proved to be a great one to assist the healing of the mental and emotional strains the children encountered. It was not only an intervention technique to carry out the whole therapeutic process, but was the tool for basic diagnosis too. The therapists observed each child and the home it chose to build. The choice of spot, the materials used for construction, the mobile status of the homes, the nature of its

borders, its permanence, the relationship of the home to the other homes and to the respective surroundings and so forth were analyzed to interpret the personality and the emotional state of the children. These elements were the symbols providing the overall understanding of the children, their background and states of mind. The technique resembles the ancient shamanistic practices of separating a piece of land from its surrounding and incorporating in it the nature's healing powers. Similar to that was the exercise of building homes in nature for special purposes that ultimately aims at healing.

Another instance of building a home in nature was designed for young adults and the aged communities. Here they move between the spaces, assimilating from one place and implementing into the other. A workshop was conducted in a forest near the college. Initially they were allowed to listen to the sounds of birds, wind and the rustling leaves, as they reflected upon their original homes. The clients were asked to share stories about their homes. Later they were suggested to wander off and find a home in nature for them. They chose places that identified with their stories and selves. A woman chose an uprooted tree trunk and shaped a square figure with the pine leaves around the branch. When asked about the design and location of her home, she explained that she had always wanted a small square house, which was detested by her ex-husband who wanted a big round one. She found her ideal home there on the tree trunk, and displayed her vulnerabilities through the chopped tree trunks, which she identified as her own self during her complex relationship with ex-husband. The therapist asked her to write letters to her old self from her present 'home'. She poured her pain, anger and frustration in her letters to herself and to her husband. The exercise helped her let out the excess

from her heart and relieved her of the pain she had been subduing all the years. When the group reassembled again they are asked to read out their stories, and they found that they were not alone in their pain and sufferings. After this exercise a ritualistic practice was held incorporating the drama therapy into nature therapy. The lady was asked to stand with closed eyes, breathing and listening to the music of the birds and winds in a circle surrounded by other members of the group. The group members were later instructed to tighten the circle and to focus on the lady's breathing. She began moving within the enclosed space and when asked say something about her home now, she replied that her body was her home. It had been so long since she breathed in peace that she realized then her home was none other herself, her body. The sound of the birds and the smell of the leaves reminded her of the home she grew up in as a child. She realized that home was not just buildings of bricks, but was the emotion of being at peace with the self, the sense of belongingness; and that it could be a person too.

The collaboration of drama therapy, ritualistic practices and nature therapy were involved to enrich the therapeutic journey. Another principle that underlay the concept was that of shifting between dual realities, the fantastic and the concrete realities. The therapeutic process takes place in the fantastic world in the sessions unlike the mundane monotonous realities) where they experience and explore changes in roles and behavior that are practically impossible to explore from their homes. The things learned from here can be applied in the real homes, implementing the changes that were aspired to be made. Nature provides a space for identification, inspiring people to connect to it and share their stories. When nature therapy collaborates with eco-psychology, it shows

the integration of mind and body as corresponding to each other. The approach challenges the traditional verbal or cognitive experimentations, and gives in a new dimension to the use of therapeutic space and healing within it based on the relationship formed with nature. This nature therapy also encourages ecological awareness of people. Nature contains resources that boost the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of communities.

Nature based therapy (NBT) varies in approach and techniques for different age groups. Here the older adults are treated with the use of narrative approach, and the concept of 'psychological time' as is developed by Shmotkin and Eyal (2003). The concept is about making the old adults accept their past, make choices for their future, and to adapt their perspectives based on the changing realities. Any psychotherapeutic approach for old adults involves the concept of psychological time, as it influences their perspectives and perceptions about life and world. The narrative approach, put forth by White and Epston in Australia, is based on the concept that lives are stories. Each individual creates his or her own narratives as they live by, that need to be told. There are also narratives that they are told to, which are called meta-narratives, and are the narratives of the social and cultural communities. Often the conflict between the narratives and metanarratives causes psychological and emotional stress, not letting people live their lives authentically.

By incorporating nature into the narrative approach, nature not only becomes a listener of the narratives, but also helps people to connect with its stories of natural phenomena, changing seasons and the recurrent cycle of life and death. This helps the

old adults to achieve a sense of continuity and completion in their lives, when their limited linear lifetime is associated with the eternality and timelessness of the universe. The changing and dynamic nature as an active therapeutic background helps people become more flexible and adaptive to changes. This brings in a holistic perspective of healthcare and healing, while at the same time strengthening the relationship with the environment, also leading to broaden the spiritual dimensions.

In a workshop on Nature Therapy conducted in Scotland for professionals there assembled many disillusioned old adults, many of whom, purposeless and hopeless, did not know what to do after retirement. The therapist engaged them in meditative walks along the beach, listening to the whispers of the waves and observing the movement of sand. While contemplating on nature, they were asked to reflect on their lives, and relate the whispers of nature to their lives. While taking each step of the meditative walk by the sea shore, people were asked to imagine each step as each chapter of their life. By these exercises, the disillusionment and hopelessness got rid of them, and they found so much to do with life. Meditating on nature and feeling its vibes and energy made them realize that life was beautiful. Some of them regretted not having lived life enough in those chapters that are already closed, but resolved to make the present and future beautiful and live with no regrets. This therapeutic approach was creative, non-verbal and non-cognitive unlike most of the conventional approaches. The contact with nature, and creativity helped healing and thus enriched the therapeutic process.

The above therapeutic sessions involved an open outdoor setting and the use of nature as an active participant, almost like a therapist. The therapist takes a step back, allowing the interaction of the clients and nature to complement healing. This technique challenges the traditional approach that had indoor settings with artistic decorations and less contact with nature. Here the people were exposed to the dynamic nature and they were amazed at the energy in nature, that they had to “stop and be” in that present moment and cherish life and happiness. They opened themselves to the beauty of the world and let them reconnect with the aesthetics of nature. When being with nature, they were taken back to their innocent childhood and the memories of it. They could connect every stage of their life to the cyclic natural phenomenon of the universe like the ebb and tide, sunrise and sunset, sprouting of new plants, withering of the old, migration of birds, and such things. This helped them evolve a sense of time, and accept their past, and fall in line with the present. These experiences not only helped in expanding their perspectives of life, but also brought in rays of hope and meaning in their lives, as they develop a sense of harmony and unification with the flow of the universe.

In Nature Therapy the role of the therapist is dualistic. He can take up the role of an active therapist working directly with the client, interacting with him or her in the backdrop of nature as a tool. The therapist can also take a quieter role, allowing the client to interact with nature, form connection with the natural environment, while the therapist remains an observer, witnessing the client-nature relationship; and a container that holds information about the client, by analyzing their interaction with nature. A case study was conducted about a man who had problems due to the psychological stress

he encountered while meeting the challenges of a demanding career and being a supportive family person. He experienced intestinal problems due to extreme stress, and his stomach felt like 'wet soil' making him uneasy all the time. He detested hearing the word 'soil'. The client was affected with psychological stress, physical disease, and verbal obstacle. He approached a therapist who suggested activities involving playing with the sand and soil. The client was taken to the seashore and banks of river, where he was allowed to play with the soil by digging his hands deep into it. Initially he hated touching the sand or soil, but later on he got used to the sensation. And while he does that he was to meditate on the sensation of the feel of dry soil, sand, and wet mud on hands. Gradually, as he did that, he realized how much he was missing his childhood and the memories of childhood where he played with the sand and soil. Going back to that experience made him feel like he was becoming a child again. This playful and innocent experience soothed him. He shared with the therapist that he had a complex childhood, which is now reflected in his complex relationship with his kids. The sessions were held during the day and at the end of the day, choosing a safe place for him to play with the sand. He was asked to meditate on the changes in nature as it turned from day to night, the morning voices giving way to an altogether different night sounds. The client was given sufficient time to know the ground and to feel the natural world in changing patterns. He enjoyed the childlike appeal of the activity, and said that through these sessions, he realized that he missed his childhood badly, and that it was affecting his relationship with his children, making them miss their dad. Nature helped him reconnect to himself, and thus to reconnect to his children. He understood the necessity of spending some quality time in nature, doing actually nothing except enjoying its treasures.

Engaging with the natural world is as important to humans to recover themselves from the mundane unexciting world to be rejuvenated spiritually, physically and mentally; as much it is to increase their ecological consciousness.

In 2010, the project of Healing Forest Garden Nacadia was developed to promote the concept of Nature Based Therapy (NBT) among people affected with stress-related diseases. In Sweden and Denmark, stress-related illnesses are cured by the use of nature-based therapy. The Healing Garden in Alnarp is considered to be the leading project in employing the concept of NBT for curing stress related diseases. The treatment results in Alnarp shows an increase in the psycho-physiological wellness of the patients, their sense of reason and collective functioning, decrease in anxiety, depression, and muscular pains. The Healing Forest Garden Nacadia, which followed the one in Alnarp, was started with many objectives, of which some are to heal the patients, get evidence-based knowledge about the design and effects of the Nacadia garden and serve as a demonstration center of healing for the public. Nacadia was built on one hectare land in the Horsholm Arboretum which contains the largest collection of plants in Scandinavia, of over 2000 species. The garden is set in a well-established forest with lush vegetation. There is a spacious greenhouse and small shelters for patients where they interact with the physicians and seek personal refuge. Nacadia is designed as a behavioural setting where human behaviour and environmental settings are interconnected. It is a forest healing garden with trees, shrubs and layers of perennial vegetation in three-dimensional appearance which creates an effect of being in a room with floor, walls and ceilings made of natural materials. This is believed to enhance the feeling of being with nature and thus improve healing.

Researchers of the Arnalp Rehabilitation Center analyzed the interconnection between the mental strength and natural environments. Mental strength is determined by healthy emotional and cognitive resources. If the mental strength is falling due to stress and related diseases, it affects the person negatively, failing the thinking, learning and interacting capability. In order to restore the mental balance, solitude is a requirement; which here means time spent alone, in a restoring natural environment which would strengthen the mental faculties. So the patients were exposed to such serene places when their mental strength was in decline. Horticultural activities in the rehabilitation processes are effective means of therapy as they induce positive changes that are meaningful and rewarding. It also enhances the sensory experiences of the patients. The diversity of the places are such that can be explored for their meaning with respect to life, health, care, nature, development and change by the use of metaphors, symbols, stories and poems. The aim of nature-based therapies is to evoke in the patients a realization of the connection between nature and humanity, and the acceptance of the law of the universe as they experience the natural processes and phenomena in relation to their own life situations. This builds in the capability to understand, accept and encounter the challenges. Symbolism in literature dealing with nature also helps to a great extent in realizing the therapeutic objectives. An instance is that of the Buddhist monk Thich Naht Hanh drawing on the metaphorical meaning of planting a seed and applying it to real-life contexts for therapeutic use:

Your mind is like a piece of land planted with many other kinds of seeds: seeds of joy, peace, mindfulness, understanding and love; seeds

of craving, anger, fear, hate and forgetfulness...when the seeds of happiness in you are watered, you will become happy. When the seeds of anger in you ... are watered frequently are those that will grow strong. (22)

In nature-based therapies (NBT), the nature or environment is never a passive background, but an active catalyst for the whole therapeutic process. The system of therapeutic landscapes is represented in the below diagram where healing forests are designed specifically for therapeutic purposes, functioning on the mindfulness-based cognitive treatment of the Acceptance and Commitment Theory (ACT). The means and methods of accomplishing healing are through sensory experiences, horticultural activities and nature-related stories and poems, with the goal of improving the quality of life, restoring the defected health, and increasing the capacity to deal with further challenges.

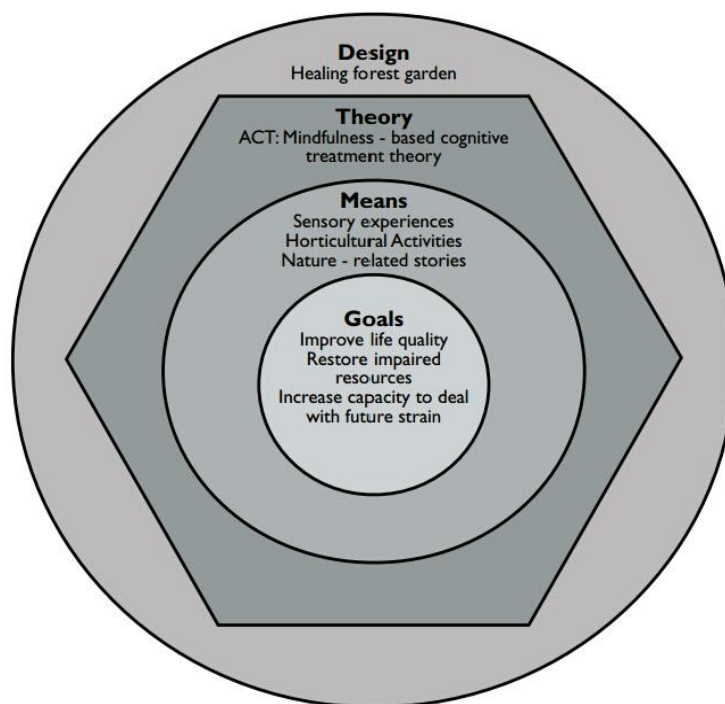


Fig 2: Diagram of nature-based therapy (NBT) in Nacadia

The duration of the therapy was for ten weeks. During the first week, a group of eight patients were made to participate in the sessions for three hours of two days each. The time frame increases per week as the therapy proceeds and is reduced during the last two weeks to withdraw from the sessions and get back to their normal lives. After the therapy programs, there are follow-up sessions after every one, three and six months to maintain the acquired well-being during the therapy sessions. The treatment is categorized into three themes according to the needs of the patients, to enhance their healing. The first one is named 'Relaxation & New Beginnings', which consists of activities regarding presence and acceptance, which are usually introduced through pleasant experiences as they are easy to accept. Patients are often very weak in all aspects during the initial stages. Thus there is a great need of being relaxed and healed. Relaxation is the key component throughout the process of healing, but the first three weeks focus entirely on making them relaxed in the healing garden environment. Through this, the base for healing is established as when people are relaxed and composed by the workings of nature, health and well-being are easily restored. The second theme is 'Grounding and Strength'. The vital aspects in this theme are encountering the challenges and turning them to manageable situations and opportunities to be utilized for growth, realization and acceptance. After the first sessions, people regain their mental strength and commit for more in-depth therapeutic activities that are carried out with nature-based relaxation techniques.

‘A Dose of Nature’ is a project comprising different nature-based interventions for health and wellbeing that ran from the spring of 2015 to the autumn of 2016. It was held in Bristol, Exeter, and Cornwall and in the south-west of UK. The sessions ran for twelve weeks and included doctors, patients, health professionals, and interveners who were mostly health staffs or medical practitioners. The settings for the intervention were places rich in natural beauty such as coastal areas, woods, and green country sides. The time spent in those places included activities intended to increase the engagement with nature such as physical exercises or meditation in naturally rich landscapes and conservation of woodlands. The project was not intended as a therapeutic intervention, but to encourage people to explore the effects of living close to nature. Later when the effects of the intervention were recorded, there was found an increase of average 69% increase in self-reported well-being. Some among them experienced some sort of healing which resulted in the reduction of medication, and they volunteered to sign up for further training or programs, whereas some others got rid of the stress and anxiety disorders. Patients have also reported a better balanced state of mind, social skills, confidence, sense of individual worth, formation of friendships, and skill development. The project has benefited the participants personally as well as financially; they not only experience wellness and restoration, but also develop skills that get them employed. ‘Ecominds’ is a similar project that covered extensive nature-based interventions that resulted in huge savings per participant. Such projects not just enhance the health and well-being of the select participants/patients, but also advantage them from financial, social and developmental aspects.

Direct interaction with nature often stimulates emotions and sensations that were previously unexplored. Through deep physical, emotional and spiritual encounter with nature, people are made capable of reconnecting with themselves, exploring the unknown selves not known to them, receiving enlightenment and insights, developing a sense of strong connection with the universe, and identifying oneself as part of the greater cosmic world. These qualities would not have been instilled in them, if not for the exposure to the natural world. The modern world lacks the spark of life, soulfulness and deep and sensible connections with oneself, the society and the surrounding environment. When the equilibrium between the human world and natural world is ruptured, there is a lack of personal wellbeing as well as destruction of natural habitats and landscapes. In the capitalistic modern lifestyle, when humanity begins to see itself as a separate entity apart from the rest of the natural world and creation, it breaks the harmony of the biosphere and the cosmic balance. Eco-psychological movements like Deep Ecology claim this vanishing human nature alliance, and the need to reconnect to nature. In this respect, Nature Therapy holds greater advantage in helping people reconnect to nature, and increasing the ecological awareness as well as health and wellbeing as a result of this connection. In conventional therapeutic approaches, environment and nature hardly had any significant role to play; but with the emergence of eco-psychology and its interdisciplinary studies, during the past few decades the influence of nature on the emotions of people have been considered a significant aspect of the therapeutic process. The aesthetics of the natural world greatly influence the human insights, spiritual dimensions and social behavior.

CONCLUSION

Life away from nature has drastically declined the health of the mind, spirit and body. Today people are seeking to get themselves healed through some means or the other. When technology fails, they return to nature as that is the only way path of healing organically. The need to reconnect with nature is at an alarming rate. Humanity has to get back to the eco-central life drifting away from the techno-central lifestyle. Nature, which was the only physician once to effectively heal the diseased, is rapidly replaced by technologically sophisticated hospitals that are bent on diagnosing the patients and financially exploiting them rather than soothing or healing them. The study aims to reinforce the importance of nature as a therapy within world literatures as well as from the lived experiences of people out there. Correspondingly the present chapter explores the therapeutic role of nature from various disciplines of ecology, medical anthropology, health geography, landscape architecture and neuroscience. The studies carried out were based on therapeutic landscapes that include natural sceneries, built environments and sites for specific contexts. They were designed in such ways that are intended to create a sense of healing through the sense of the place. People affected with illness are brought to these landscapes and are encouraged to engage with the natural landscapes either through activities or meditation, by which they experience healing. In all of these cases, the health of the people after the intervention of nature was recorded during the experimental projects, and was found to be progressing from the state of illness to that of wellbeing. There were also many projects developed worldwide based on the concept of therapeutic landscapes and nature-based healing.

Due to the psychosomatic changes occurring within the human bodies while experiencing nature's healing power, the transformation takes place, and people are healed. The best interest of nature lies in healing, exploring spirituality, and attaining self-realization. Nature serves many functions, of which healing is the most universal and significant. Therapeutic landscapes, which are designed on the healing tendencies of natural environments, are found to produce great health effects, as people identify themselves in their connection with nature, and realize that human life and living is a part of the greater whole of the universe.

Chapter IV

CHAPTER IV

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

“And in to the forest I go, to lose my mind and find my soul” – John Muir

Nature is a slice of paradise on earth, the divinity of which evokes an experience of bliss. Wounds heal, hearts revive, and souls soothe in the showers of monsoon, flowers of spring and the bowers of the woods. The tranquil and slow pace of evolution in nature is rewarding in all aspects. Thus, the magnificence and glory of nature lie in its power of healing minds, spirits and bodies.

The concept of ‘therapeutic landscapes’ and ‘nature-based therapy’ discussed in the previous chapter, is based on the therapeutic value of natural landscapes. Though the concept was originally confined to site-specific therapeutic landscapes and organizations, it was further broadened to incorporate any natural environment that prompted healing. In nature-based therapy (NBT), suitable narratives based on eco-psychology are the primary chosen literature in the process of healing, for the patients. It contains poem and stories based on the theme of nature and its various faces. The process of healing through nature – both real natural environments and imaginary natural landscapes in eco-narratives – takes place by forming a mental scape or an invisible landscape within the mind, reflecting the outer landscapes supposed to restore health and heal distress. These mental landscapes formed, in turn, connect the landscapes and states of mind; thereby enhancing the healing through contemplating on nature. Nature mediates between human states of mind and physical health.

The chapter studies and analyses the select songs from Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali*, a collection of songs, and select verses from the Psalms in the Bible. *Gitanjali* is an offering of songs dedicated as a tribute to the Almighty. It contains 156 in the original Bangla version, whereas only 103 songs in its English translation. The original *Gitanjali* was published on August 14, 1910. Later Rabindranath Tagore himself translated these songs from Bangla to English, and the English collection was published in November 1912 by the Indian Society of London. In the following year, 1913, he was honoured with the award of Nobel Prize in Literature for *Gitanjali*. It is said to be awarded "because of his profoundly sensitive, fresh and beautiful verse, by which, with consummate skill, he has made his poetic thought, expressed in his own English words, a part of the literature of the West".

The songs are woven with the poet's love and devotion for the Lord, for Mother Nature; and affection for his fellow beings. Besides being a prominent theme in *Gitanjali*, the concept of nature and its therapeutic healing has also been widely used for effects of symbolism throughout the book. The work is ornate with beautiful imageries, symbols and metaphors from day to day life in the backdrop of a rich natural environment. Hence the study of *Gitanjali* in appreciation of the ecological sumptuousness is undertaken, as the narrative imageries promote health, wholeness and healing. The study is appropriate for the analysis and application of therapeutic landscapes and nature-based therapy in real life contexts, parallel to the textual narratives.

A poet, critic and theorist named Murali Sivaramakrishnan, in his book, *Poetry and Nature Some Prefatory Remarks* writes that poetry and nature have been interconnected for so long that the poets recognize its intrinsic value better than anybody else. Poetry is the “struggle to find the true expression, a suitable mode of celebrating this unique realization”. Though poets celebrate nature universally, there is something distinct and unique about Indian poets and their perception about nature. They often associate nature with spirituality or mysticism. Therefore, the concept of Nature Mysticism which has been propagated by this perception was actively realized in the East – in the Upanishads, Taoism and Zen. For a nature mystic, all elements of nature are means to find and reach the eternal. Nature on the whole is more significant and much appreciated than its constituent elements, and it is also considered more of an aesthetic experience than a means of survival. The aesthetic element of Nature Mysticism leads to ardent worship and devotion known as *prema bhakthi* (the unitive love) which is supposed to undergo *viraha bhakthi* (love in separation). Such concepts are common in the poems of Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini Naidu and Bharathiyar. In Tagore’s poetry, Man, Nature and God are a trinity of inseparable entities. His high literary sensitivity and open receptive mind have “turned brooks in to books and stones as sermons”. His poems – especially *Gitanjali* – are emotionally, spiritually and intellectually appealing.

GITANJALI

The main subject of *Gitanjali* is the consistent yearning of the devotee to unite with the Divine. There has been much such devotional poetry in the tradition of Indian literature since ancient days. But the impact of *Gitanjali* was so immense that it created a

sensation in the West as it was original and unconventional in nature, language and style. Abbe Bremond said of devotional poetry such as *Gitanjali* that, “Such poetry is half a prayer from below and half a whisper from above: the prayer evoking the response, or the whisper provoking the prayer, and always prayer and whisper chiming into song”. The songs in *Gitanjali* explore the connection between man, God and nature. Nature is depicted as a vast arena where Man and God connect in its presence. Nature is a sublime experience in the poems of *Gitanjali*, where the poet discovers God’s love in the beauties of Nature. The budding flowers, the flowering grove, the dense forests and green grass, the spring season with flowers laden, “the ever wakeful blue sky”, “the night with starry vigil”, “the shore of the ink-black river”, “the frowning forest”, “lashes of lightning”, the sea, the woods, the blue sky, the mellow singing birds, the children playing on the sea shores, heavy pour of rain, the mud-stained traveller, the blooming and drooping lotuses, the parched earth in summer, the dark clouds and the bright moon, the golden sunlight and other such beautiful elements of nature are allusions to the immortal divinity and infinite spirituality.

The songs taken up for the study are songs 5, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 27, 45, 48, 54, 57, 58, 59, 60, 62, 65, 67, 68, 69, 70, 81, 92 and 103 of *Gitanjali*. In Song 5 the poet’s longing for a harmonious reunion with God is presented. He is fed up with the worldly occupations and longs for a time of peaceful contemplation in the presence of the Lord. He says that other works could be taken care of later, but now his only will is to sit by God, experience the peace in divinity and become one with Him.

Today the summer has come at my window with its sighs and murmurs;
and the bees are playing their minstrelsy at the court of the flowering
grove.

Now it is time to sit quiet, face to face with thee, and to sing dedication
of life in this silent and overflowing leisure. (5: 6)

The above lines reflect upon the devotion of the creation to its Creator. Every being in nature holds devout worship towards God. The summer brings with it pleasant scenes and sights. The cool breeze blows with the sound of soft sighs, the streams flow with the murmurs of sweet music, and the bees sing melodies in the flowering tree groves. The mention of summer seasons and the bees playing songs by the blossoms of groves expresses the devotion of the bees in their worship to the blooming flowers and orchards, to nature and the Lord Himself. Merely looking at the beauty and harmony of nature and its living beings leads the poet to commune with God. As the poet sits quiet and watches the beauty of nature, he feels the presence of God, and feels as if conversing with Him face to face in the silence of the greeneries. Nature embodies peace, and at that moment the poet wishes to offer his life in eservice of the Lord. Meditating on peace and beauty of nature brings the human soul in harmony with the soul of nature, the soul of the Universe.

In order to experience divinity, healing and peace, one need not go in search of the Divine in places of pilgrimages and temples. Merely sitting in the silence and being engrossed in the beauty of nature, assimilating the peace and harmony present in every element of nature, would in itself, be a soothing and healing experience.

Song 18 is a blend of hope and despair. It is about the weary waiting of the devotee to get entrance into the house of the Lord. The idea is expanded with the help of images from nature. The song has the image of dark clouds representing the lonely heart of the poet in despair, waiting for the Lord to open His doors and let him in. the poet thinks that without God letting him in, he is left alone in the “long, rainy hours”, clueless about what he is to do. The gloom of the poet’s heart is symbolized through the gloomy sky and dark clouds, elements of nature. In the other way, the state of the nature is also bound to affect the poet’s state of mind. Nature, in the song, is gloomy and threatening, indicating the poet’s depressed heart. In the spiritual journey towards truth, the soul is caught amidst the dark apprehensions, which are implied by the image of ‘rainy hours’, ‘dark lonely day’, ‘clouds’ and ‘loneliness’.

Tagore personifies the soul as a lady who yearns to unite with her Lover, the Lord. The anxious lady waits for her love at the doorsteps, without sleeping, and scared of the incessant heavy outpour, gloomy sky and dark storms. The poet’s soul fears losing the cherished love of the Lord. His waiting heart is said to be wailing and is compared to the restless wind. Just as the dark clouds will certainly leave way for the sun, so the hope of the dark hours giving way for god’s grace is present in the poem.

Song 19 is about the giving away of hopelessness to the path of hope. The poet persistently waits for God in the dark nights and deserted lands, without giving up. The patient waiting and determination of heart is rewarded with the break of sunlight, chirping of birds and the blossom of flowers, which are all manifestations of the Divine.

The morning will surely come, the darkness will vanish, and thy voice
pour down in golden streams breaking through the sky.

Then thy words will take wing in songs from every one of my birds'
nests, and thy melodies will break forth in flowers in all my forest
groves. (19: 4)

God is felt in the serenity of nature. Trees, sunlight, blooming flowers, brooks and rivers are the wonders of nature and are various forms through which divinity is expressed. The elements of nature touch spirits, and bring in a kind of spiritual renewal. The occurrences of the universe and the natural phenomena are reflected in the human lives too. The seasons of nature are mirrored in the landscapes of the mind. The pleasant visual images and pleasing experiences change the state of mind positively, as a result of which there occurs mental and spiritual healing. Thus, nature becomes a therapy, due to its healing effects, to the sick minds, gloomy hearts and depressed souls. The boundlessly blissful experiences of nature enhance health and wellbeing of individuals.

In song 21, the poet's eternal waiting is continued. The seasons change as the spring flowers wither and fade and the autumn trees shed leaves. But the poet's craving for the Eternal union with God does neither fade nor cease. The urge to be one with the God is strong within the poet, and therefore he cannot delay any longer. But before he can merge with the Lord, he has to cross the ocean of eternity.

The spring has done its flowering and taken leave. And now with the
burden of faded futile flowers, I wait and linger.

The waves have become clamorous, and upon the bank in the shady
lane the yellow leaves flutter and fall. (21: 3)

The loud clamorous waves of the sea call him to launch his boat and keep sailing, as he stands on the shore fluttered with yellow leaves all around. He could hear the sound of the wind singing, and the music keeps him thrilled. The pull of the eternal is irresistible to him, and he decides to sail. As the poet himself is in the long waiting for meeting his God, the whole atmosphere and the surroundings around him are in the mood of waiting for things to change. The autumn waits for it to be taken over by the winter, and the waves wait for their music to be heard, and call to the poet to come to them. The poet takes nature in to his service to express the concept of mysticism here. He waits for the Divine in the company of nature.

Song 22 reveals the poet's strong desire that the Lord come to him and make him privileged and blessed with His presence.

The woodlands have hushed their songs, and doors are all shut at every
house. Thou art the solitary wayfarer in this deserted street. Oh my only
friend, my best beloved, the gates are open in my house – do not pass
by like a dream. (22: 6)

It is the monsoons of the July where the nights are long, dark and stormy and where days do not come up with their light. In the dark, there are no hushes of the birds and animals the trees of the woodlands are silently asleep; and there are also no sounds of people. Everyone is slept with their doors closed, except for the poet who still waits for his divine Lover and only Friend. He invites the lord who is his Lover

as well as his Friend to come to him as He walks through the dark stealthily as a secret lover. The doors of the house are open, and the poet calls by his Lord not to pass like a mere dream, but to come to him as his doors are open only for Him. Just as the doors of the house are open, even when the whole street is asleep, the poet's heart and soul are open for the divine touch from His Lord amidst the dark and stormy weather outside as well as inside his life. He believes the sight of the Lord and His mere graceful presence is the only thing needed to ignite the spark of his spiritual renewal.

Song 24 discusses the power of death, a universal phenomenon, an inevitable part of every living creature. Death is here glorified and not feared. God has created life and nature in such a way that he gives rest to all the creatures in the night so that they wake up fresh and renewed the next day. Birds, flowers and wind take rest when tired and seek to get refreshed and renewed. Birds get back to their nests and take rest. By the dusk the petals of flowers are drooped and they wilt, only to take to reborn and renewed afresh. God takes care of His creation and nourishes their lives with appropriate energy and strength in times of need. The poet, here, too feels that he has become weary and tired in the journey of life, and therefore, prays to the Lord to grant him the required strength and power to get through the voyage. He longs for a spiritual renewal as he has become weak, exhausted, poverty-stricken and dust-laden, and he thinks that only death could give him the renewal he needs.

Song 27 presents that even in absolute darkness; there can be found a spark of light. In the utter darkness of night and in the incessant heavy downpour of rain, the

poet hears the sweet melodies of music. Like flashes of lightning, his heart is illumined by the momentary flashes of love.

Misery knocks at thy door, and her message is that thy lord is wakeful,
and he calls thee to the love-tryst through the darkness of night. (27: 4)

Light, oh where is the light! Kindle it with the burning fire of desire! It
thunders and the wind rushes screaming through the void. The night is
black as a black stone. Let not the hours pass by in the dark. Kindle the
lamp of love with thy life. (27: 13)

The image of darkness, rain and thunder symbolizes the dangers and difficulties in the journey of the poet's life. The mention of "her message" refers to the message of nature, which is that the Lord is aware of his strains and struggles, and that He would light his way even in times of darkness. The fire of the divine love that burns in the poet's heart brightens his soul and path. The very message of nature is to treasure the love of the Divine, as that in itself turns out to be the best guidance in times of disillusionment.

Song 45 is about the omnipresence of God, and God's manifestation in nature and everyday life. The poet says that god is ever present in all walks of life. When sought with watchful senses, one feels God everywhere, in the seasons of nature and the natural phenomenon of the universe. The Lord is seen to be present in every age, every time and every space, as an energy, feeling, thought and matter.

In the fragrant days of sunny April through the forest path he comes,
comes, ever comes.

In the rainy gloom of July nights on the thundering chariots of clouds
he comes, comes, ever comes.

In sorrow after sorrow it is his steps that press upon my heart, and it is
the golden touch of his feet that make my joy to shine. (45: 8)

Divinity lies in the glory of nature, the peace found within the elements of nature – in the fragrance of flowers, colours of spring, dark clouds, rainy nights, sunny forests. It is also present in the day to day lives of sorrows and happiness. When the days are sorrowful, God brings joy with His presence and comfort. The joy that is experienced through nature is a divine bliss, as the Lord expresses and manifests Himself best through the faces of Nature. Nature becomes, thus, a medium of connection, communication and comfort between God and humans.

Song 48 is in appreciation of self-realization and realizing God through the path of nature. People are so engrossed in their monotonous busy life that they miss being in touch with their own selves. They are so much lost that they fail to appreciate the beauty of nature, and feel the presence of God in it.

The morning sea of silence broke into ripples of bird songs; and the
flowers were all merry by the roadside; and the wealth of gold was
scattered through the rift of the clouds while we busily went on our way
and paid no heed. (48: 1)

The poet and his companions set out on their journey early morning. They were busily focused only on their work that they neither talked to each other, nor stopped by to look at the nature or sing songs. As the noon approached, the speaker decided to

rest by the grass near the lake. There was a huge banyan tree under which the shepherd boy was sleeping and dreaming; and the doves cooed in the shady branches. The speaker's companions mocked at him and went ahead with their journey. Though their words provoked him to rise up, he did not respond and continue to lay on the grass by the water. The peacefulness of the evening spread over the poet's heart too, "The repose of the sun-embroidered green gloom slowly spread over my heart. I forgot for what I had travelled, and I surrendered my mind without struggle to the maze of shadows and songs" (48: 22). When the poet woke up from his sleep, he saw God in front of him. He could not believe his eyes, as he "saw thee standing by me, flooding my sleep with thy smile" (48: 27). He says that he thought the path to reach God was long and wearisome, but he found that God was neither far, nor unreachable, but revealed Himself through Nature. Nature possesses the divine touch of God, which in turn is conferred upon those willing to experience spirituality through patient engagement with nature. The calmness, repose and tranquility brought along with the spirituality through communion with nature are pricelessly therapeutic and heal humanity.

Song 54 is entirely symbolic. It sings the interconnection between the nature and God. Nature awakens in the presence of God and the Divine is embodied in nature.

I heard not thy steps as thou camest. Thine eyes were sad when they
 fell on me; thy voice was tired as thou spokest low – 'Ah, I am a thirsty
 traveller.' I started up from my daydreams and poured water from my

jar on thy joined palms. The leaves rustled overhead; the cuckoo sang
from the unseen dark, and perfume of *babla* flowers came from the
bend of the road. (54: 8)

The women of the village call the speaker to come along with them before it turns noon. But the speaker, carried away by the beauty of nature, lingers languidly. The speaker here is a lady, and as she was strolling by the shady trees, the Lord appeared before her in the disguise of a thirsty traveller. She gives to Him water from her jar, and the Lord asks her name. The Divine takes in any form to reach His devotees. As the devotee and the Lord communicate, nature articulates and expresses the joy of the communion. The leaves of the trees rustle, the birds sing sweet music and the perfume of *babla* flowers spread fragrance. These are intimations of the divinity inherent in nature, and symbolize the poet's long felt desire to be united with the Lord, and the role of nature in fulfilling the purpose.

Song 57 is a tribute to the Creator for the creation of the universe. It is a song of praise and a hymn to light. The light that fills the world is a symbol of God's delight in the magnificence of His creation. Light is beautiful and the epitome of joy. The poet describes the light as "world-filling", "eye-kissing" and "heart-sweetening" (57: 1).

The butterflies spread their sails on the sea of light. Lilies and jasmine surge up on the crest of the waves of light.

The light is shattered into gold on every cloud, my darling, and it scatters gems in profusion. (57: 6)

The vast sky, wild winds, fluttering butterflies and the blooming flowers are all embodiments of beautiful creations by the Lord, and they survive and blossom into happiness because of the light. The light of the universe reflects the Divine Light which enlightens the minds with wisdom, understanding and love. Light is boundless joy, and light spreads immense happiness from trees to trees, people to people. The joy of heaven overflows into the banks of earth, flooding it with happiness. The light of the universe brings in light to the people's lives. Nature contains the Divine joy, and is the manifestation of God's glory and greatness.

Song 58 proclaims the joy bound in creation as well as destruction, for destruction is the renewal of life.

Let all the strains of joy mingle in my last song – the joy that makes the earth flow over in the riotous excess of the grass, the joy that sets the twin brothers, life and death, dancing over the wide world, the joy that sweeps in with the tempest, shaking and waking all life with laughter, the joy that sits still with its tears on the open red lotus of pain, and the joy that throws everything it has upon the dust, and knows not a word. (58)

God delights in creation and destruction. The universe revolves around the cycle of creation, destruction and renewal. The poet writes about the joy of renewal hidden in the destruction of trees by tempests and storms; the shatter of earth and lives in natural disasters. The other face of nature, violent and overpowering, is also been discussed

in the song. But instead of complaining about destruction, the poet feels it as the plans of the Divine, and thinks it as mandatory for the process of renewal of souls and lives in every organism.

In Song 59 the poet realizes that the splendor of nature – “this golden light that dances upon the leaves, these idle clouds sailing across the sky, this passing breeze leaving its coolness upon my forehead” – is the love of God (59: 2). God expresses His love and glory through His beautiful creation. Nature has a message for humans always. The daybreak with golden light fills the poet’s heart with hope, love and joy, as it is the rebirth of light from the darkness. The golden sunbeams light up the universe and make the leaves, water and sand shimmer and shine. The clear white cottony clouds sailing idle across the sky is a pleasant sight and scene. The soft breeze blows and cools not just the foreheads but also soothes minds. Every night is taken over by the beautiful light of the day. The poet glorifies the Lord for His marvelous creation which confers upon him wonderful experiences.

Song 60 contrasts the innocence of children with the corrupt adults. The innocence of children finds or reveals godliness. The poet speaks about the joyous children playing on the seashore with empty shells and building sand houses. They make boats with fallen leaves and float them in the deep seawaters. The sky above them is endless and the sea beside them, boundless. On the open shores of the world, children would laugh and play, unbothered of the complications of the world. Unlike the adults who come to the sea to make use of it, they neither know shipping nor fishing, and hence do not exploit the sea, but instead cherish the experiences of going wild and playful with the sea.

They build their houses with sand and they play with empty shells.

With withered leaves they weave their boats and smilingly float them on the vast deep. Children have their play on the seashore of worlds.

They know not how to swim, they know not how to cat nets. Pearl fishers dive for pearls; merchants sail in their ships, while children gather pebbles and scatter them again. They seek not for hidden treasures; they know not how to cast nets.

The sea surges up with laughter and pale gleams the smile of the sea beach. Death-dealing waves sing meaningless ballads to the children, even like a mother while rocking her baby's cradle. The sea plays with children, and pale gleams the smile of the sea beach. (60: 5-16)

Children, unaffected of the roaring tempests and numberless deaths in shipwrecks, they play on the shores of the sea, laughing and shouting. They build sand houses, play with empty shells and pebbles, make boats of fallen leaves and happily cherish the moment. Nature's beauty is further enhanced with the innocence of children. As the innocent children play on the shores, the sea gushes up laughing, and the beach smiles with joy. The waves of the sea seem to be singing ballads and lullabies to the children, like a mother does. It plays with the children.

When the innocence of nature merges with the innocence of children, divinity is at its utmost peak. Humans should become childlike and learn to be content and to enjoy living in the present moment, cherishing the beauty of nature and love of God,

instead of building up complexities. The divine joy is experienced by innocent children and is felt in nature too.

Song 62 sings the unparalleled love of a parent for his/her child. Just as a parent loves the child and fondles it with toys, songs, sweets and kisses, so does God take care of His children. He makes them happy with his beautiful and pleasant creation. The poet says that he realizes God's love and care as he fondles and loves his child. As he gets his child colourful toys, he understands the reason behind the creation of vivid colours all over the universe – among flowers, amidst the floating clouds in the sky, and tints of shades in water. God has created the world with so much of colours to please and entertain His children. When the poet sings for his child to dance, he notices the music in the leaves of the trees and the waves of the sea, which the Lord had created for the earth to listen. He believes God created them for His children to listen to the music of nature and dance to its rhythm. As the poet brings sweet things to the greedy little hands of his child, he knows the reason for the honeyed nectars of flowers and sweet juices of fruits. The Lord has been so generous towards His children that he has filled the flowers and fruits with sweetness, in order that his children relish the sweetness of nature and become sweet themselves too, imbuing it within them. When the poet kisses his child to make him smile, He realizes why God had created beams of golden morning light to touch our body and warm us, and summer breezes to cool our bodies. The kiss of the light and breeze not just cools our body, but puts a smile on face, as they touch our souls too. God is happy when His children are. Nature,

therefore, has been created to amuse, please, soothe, heal, protect and secure human beings and other living organisms. God wanted a safe haven for His children, and thus created Nature, as a refuge for His children.

The song describes the essence of nature and its creation for a divine purpose. God has created nature for His children, the human beings; and nature, in turn, mediates between the Divine and humans. The very origin and creation of nature is in terms of purely divine perspectives. Therefore, as long as there is nature, it continues to heal and provide comfort.

Song 65 sings of the eternal divine inspiration that binds Man and God together. The poet addresses God as his poet and asks thus, “My poet, is it thy delight to see thy creation through my eyes and to stand at the portals of my ears silently to listen to thine own eternal harmony?” (65: 3). God has created the world for all of His creatures. Man being the most unique of His creations, is much benefitted from the rest of the universe. Nature contains the pleasant sights and harmonious melodies all within it. There is a divine bliss as man communes with nature, the most beautiful of God’s creation which imbues the presence of God in every element of it. As humans connect with nature, the Divine gets to feel the beauty and magnanimity of His creation through human beings themselves.

The line, “Thy world is weaving words in my mind and thy joy is adding music to them” refers to the thoughts within the poet, inspired by the Lord’s beautiful creations, and which are in turn penned down to words (65: 6). The Lord takes pleasure in the fact

that He could see the glory of His creation through Man, which in turn, is a spiritually and aesthetically rewarding experience for humans to be the medium of glorifying nature.

Song 67 reveals the various manifestations of God in nature. “Thou art the sky and thou art the nest as well” (67: 1). The sky is limitless and infinite. The nests keep the birds sheltered. The metaphor of sky and the nest is in direct reference to God, the keeper and savior of humankind. God expresses Himself through all elements of nature.

There comes the morning with the golden basket in her right hand bearing
the wreath of beauty, silently to crown the earth.

And there comes the evening over the lonely meadows deserted by
herds, through trackless paths, carrying cool draughts of peace in her
golden pitcher from the western ocean of rest. (67: 4)

The golden sunrise crowns the earth, and brightens people's days with its lovely morning light. The evenings are described as peaceful with the golden pitcher of sunset over the lonely meadows. Nature has a certain way of lighting up people's minds, and healing their spirits. The Divine is present in the golden sunlight, pink sunset and the infinite white light of the blue sky. The beauty of nature awakens the experience of infinite bliss.

Song 68 portrays the love of God for His creation. The whole of the creation is at the service of the Lord in pleasing, healing and comforting the humans and other living beings. The rays of the sun embrace the earth when it dawns. The poet feels that nature has a great role in solacing him, and bringing him peace. He feels the hands of

God as the sunlight embraces him with a motherly affection. The sun beams gather at the back door of the poet's house and carry back to the Divine clouds of his sorrows and songs. He is moved by the tears and sufferings of the poet. "With fond delight thou wrappest about thy starry breast that mantle of misty cloud, turning it into numberless shapes and folds and colouring it with hues ever-changing" (68: 4). The clouds of human struggles are taken up to the Lord, which He wears over His starry chest as a mantle. He gives them new colours and shades, filling hues of joy in them, and helping them restore their happiness and well-being with solace of nature and natural phenomena.

Nature and humans are two entities much close to the Divine. God has given nature in the hands of man that they tend to it and be provided by it. Nature too, provides and protects humans and paves way for connecting to the Divine. Human sufferings are compared to the fleeting dark clouds that shadow the serene white light of the Almighty. Yet the Lord is kind to humans that He colours them with various hues and thus gets it rid of its tearful darkness.

Song 69 celebrates the life given by the Lord – the life in humans, nature, and the universe. The same life that is present in the human soul is present in the nature around. "The same stream of light that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures" (69: 1). In the blades of grass, the rustles of leaves, the chirping of birds, the stream of waves and breezes there holds the same life that runs through the veins of humans. The ebb and flow of the tides correspond to the rhythms of life and death revolving and contained in every spirit of the universe. The poet takes pride in the fact that he is a part of the universe, and that

Life has chosen him to live in the world of lives. The poet feels glorified to be a part of the universal and ageless soul flowing through his blood. To be instilled with life and to live in a universe aged thousands of years, connecting and mingling with other forms of lives, in perfect synchrony, is a soulful experience that fills that the poet with pride and bliss. The love for life and the appreciation of it leads the poet to connect with nature. The universe is full of life, and when lives meet and connect, there occurs an exchange of energy and vitality. The nature, natural landscapes and the natural world are suffused with positive and divine energy. As human beings come in contact with nature, they imbibe the divinity and experience healing, peace and solace.

In Song 70 the poet speaks about the joy in the changing natural phenomena of the universe.

All things rush on, they stop not, they look not behind, no power can
hold them back, they rush on.

Keeping steps with that restless, rapid music, seasons come dancing
and pass away – colours, tunes and perfumes pour in endless cascades
in the abounding joy that scatters and gives up and dies every moment.

(70: 3-8)

The whole of nature is ever on move and endlessly changing. The rushing torrents, the raging storms, and the fast changing seasons symbolize the swift dance of joy. The love and joy of the Creator permeate all things and sustain them. The Divine is inseparable from nature, and manifests Himself in every form of life in nature. Humans and nature are instruments through which God reveals Himself.

Song 75 reinforces the fact that everything on earth, every soul and life of humans as well as nature, ultimately merges with the Creator. The rivers flow and irrigate lands, rushing through fields, but finally they do join with the sea, which is symbolized as God. Similarly the flowers bloom and spread fragrance to the world, but its ultimate service is to offer itself to the Lord, by withering off by the end of the day, or by offering itself in the worship of God. The metaphor of rivers and flowers explains the human situation appropriately. Just like them, human souls are bound to unite with God at the end of their journey on earth. “From the words of the poet men take what meanings please them; yet their last meaning points to thee” (75: 9). The human soul comes from the Divine and returns to Him. Every life on earth originates from God and reunites with Him.

In Song 81 the poet rejoices in the grace of God. Nature is closely associated with divinity. It is nourished by the Lord himself and that is why there is always an element of divinity present in nature. The Lord grows the seeds into sprouts, blooms the buds into flowers, and ripens flowers into fruits. Behind the lush growth of nature and the harmonious coexistence of nature, natural world and its living beings, is the hand of the Lord. Just as the Lord takes care of the nature, so does he take care of the humans, who connect with God better in the presence of nature, as they experience healing, liberation and divine intervention there.

Hidden in the heart of things thou art nourishing seeds into sprouts,
buds into blossoms, and ripening flowers into fruitfulness.

I was tired and sleeping on my idle bed, and imagined all work has
ceased. In the morning I woke up and found my garden full with
wonders of flowers. (81: 4)

The above lines show how God tends to the nature as well as the humans alike.
Man, God and Nature is a trinity of peace. God nourishes nature, nature heals man;
and through nature, man experiences God and his wonders.

Song 92 is about the immortality of nature and the mortality of humankind. Even
when people die, the nature that God has created will last forever. It will continue to
save, protect, heal, and serve humans as long as the world exists. As life ends, the
poet thinks of attaining spiritual revival, and renounces himself from material gains.
Nature is divine, as it makes no distinction between rich and poor.

Yet stars will watch at night, and morning rise as before, and hours
heave like sea waves casting up pleasures and pain.

When I think of this end of my moments, the barrier of the moments
breaks and I see by the light of the death thy world with its careless
treasures. Rare is its lowliest seat, rare is its meanest of lives. (92: 4)

Nature holds hoards of treasures within it. The stars, moon, sunrise and sunsets
will exist forever, and continue to enlighten souls with the divine aspects of nature.
Nature has been a constant support system for humans. But humans are so busy in
attaining materialistic gains that they forget to enjoy and cherish the love of nature.

The poet leaves the message that humans should not any longer overlook and spurn the treasures of nature, lest it be too late to experience the divine bliss and spiritual healing from the wonders of nature.

Song 103 is the last song in the collection. It discusses the total surrender to God. The poet is at the end of his life's journey and surrenders himself totally to the Lord. He compares his heavy heart to the rain clouds of the monsoon, hung low with unshed showers. He lowers and submits his burdened heart at the Lord's feet. The ever flowing streams and rivers ultimately merge into the vast sea. Similarly, the poet's songs that he sings during times of sorrow and bliss, flow in the sea of silence, and merge with the Lord. Like the cranes flying back and forth their homes, the poet's soul rests in his eternal home, the Lord's home.

The above song parallels the natural landscapes and mental landscapes of the speaker. Everything in nature – the rain clouds with unshed showers, the rivers merging with the sea, the cranes – is in the mood of submission to the Supreme. The mood of the natural world corresponds to the poet's state of mind, where he, like the rest of the universe, admits the supremacy of the Lord and thus surrenders himself in the safe hands of the Divine.

“There is a ... sense in which the Bible, since it is after all literature, cannot properly be read except as literature; and different parts of it as the different sorts of literature they are.” – C S Lewis

BIBLE, PSALMS AND LITERATURE

The Bible, as much as it is a religious text, it is a work of literature. It is a literary masterpiece rich in diversity of form and content, for artistry, for affective power, and figurative language. The literary approach to the Bible lies in its interpretation of narrative genres, stylistic forms, and character analysis of poetry and prose. The word ‘Bible’ is derived from the Greek word ‘biblios’, which means ‘little books’. The Bible is not a single book, but rather an anthology of sixty-six books. The authorship of these books is not known, but they have been composed and compiled centuries ago, over a span of approximately 1500 years. However, the composition of Bible had a sense of national unity, as all of its authors were Jewish. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew and the New Testament was written in Greek. Most of the Bible was written in the Middle Eastern region in Palestine. The configuration of Bible took place in many phases – composition (in oral or written form), circulation, collection, recognition and canonization (the proclamation and acceptance of the collected works as a single sacred book). The Bible holds a rich collection of literary genres – comedy, tragedy, satire, parables, proverbs, psalms, songs, hero tales, epistles, visionary writings and many such forms. Hebrew scholar Meir Sternberg breaks down the Bible into three types of writing – religious, historical and literary. In most of the Biblical passages, the three types of writing merge and there is a blend of history, religion and literature.

Literature not only depicts human experiences and lives, but also interprets them. Being a form of art, the style of expression is equally important as the content and matter. The Bible interprets and portrays human experience in the most artistic form. Paul Roche, in *The Bible's Greatest Stories*, writes:

The events as told in the Scriptures have a value quite apart from their religious significance: a value as literature. They tell of mankind's experience at its most moving and most memorable in words that go beyond mere chronicle: words that strike the heart and light up the vision.

In the Scripture, the Psalms are more challenging subjects for literary reading than the narrative sections of the Bible. The Book of Psalms is the Old Testament Book of the Christians, mainly used for their liturgical worship, private prayers as well as meditation. It is commonly called the Psalter. The linguistic devices and highly classical poetic themes they contain make them inaccessible for interpretation, translation and critical analysis, not just for the literary scholars but also for the Christian followers and worshippers. The strong poetical status of Psalms has made it essentially the “poetry of the heart, a spontaneous outpouring of feeling expressed with directness and simplicity... its poignancy and universal appeal deriving from this very lack of conscious artifice”, according to Robert Alter, in *The Art of Biblical Poetry*.

The Psalter was the hymn book of Israel, and it is a treasure house of prayers, worship, adoration, instruction, praises and laments. Prayers are adoring, contemplating, seeking, listening, desiring, meditating, complaining, etc. in nature. It can be expressed in words as well as utter silence. Prayer of any kind needs an orientation. The Psalter served

the purpose of redirecting prayers for centuries before Christ and after Christ. Jesus himself had prayed the Psalms. The life of Christ and the New Covenant sealed in his blood gives a new dimension of worship, and enriches the old Psalms and traditional prayers presented in the Old Covenant.

The Psalms convey the intimate feelings of the nation and the emotions of pious people praying to the God who is close and dear to them. Some Psalms are specifically written for particular contexts, such as for times of peace and war, health and sickness, victories and dejections, triumphs and disasters, etc. On the other hand, some other Psalms burst out in anger, and others express a calm confidence. These give people a way to outlet their emotions through prayer, to pray in similar situations in their lives, and to express their thoughts – even anger and disappointment – to God and their fellow men. The Psalter was composed in the span of several centuries. After the return of the Jews from exile, they involved themselves entirely in composition of Psalms. The authorship of Psalms in the Hebrew Bible and in the Greek Bible is attributed to different individuals or groups, David being the most important among them. But finally it was stated that David was the author of the whole Psalter. Though not all Psalms are actually of Davidic origin, David is recognized for starting this whole tradition of composing hymns and prayers. The Psalms were a compilation of Israel's response to the deeds and words of God, and also as a reaction to God's inaction and silence. They throw light upon the real experiences of human lives, be it happiness, disappointment, anger or frustration.

The Book of Psalms is structured into five individual books. Book One consists of Psalms 1-41. In the Book One the authorship of almost all Psalms are attributed to David. Book Two consists of Psalms 42-72. Psalms 42-49 and 84-88 of Book Two are associated with the Sons of Korah, who were members of a musical guild. The authorship of the rest of the psalms in this category is unknown. Book Three has only seventeen songs ranging from Psalms 73-89. Book Four also consists of seventeen Psalms, from Psalms 90-106. Book Five is the largest of all the books, containing 44 Psalms, from Psalms 107-150.

NATURE IN BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES

Peter Harrison in his book, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science*, explores how Christianity helped in the evolution of modern natural science. The Scripture contained reference to nature and the natural world. The reference was not just interpreted in terms of God interacting with the natural word, but each natural object was viewed as a symbol for something else. Nature was highly symbolic with its metaphors and allusions. Harrison explains that there were multiple layers of meaning the interpreter had to unfold while reading, in order to access the hidden spiritual meaning integral to the text. God communicated to Man through His creation. Harrison says that it was a common belief among the scholars that the “human race had at one time been in possession of a complete knowledge of the natural world” (66-67). The presumed knowledge is supposed to be tarnished by the Fall of Man. The Reformation changed the way people read and interpreted the Scripture. During the period, people were inclined towards rebellion and revolution. Along with the Scripture, the way people

looked at nature changed too. God devoted a significant amount of his words in the description of Nature, its creation, and instructing man to work with it. Therefore, nature must be really important to God and has a significant place in the Divine strategies. Later people took interest in the study of the natural events mentioned in the Bible, not just as some tools for symbolism, but as important natural events themselves. Events such as the Flood and the parting of the Red Sea, further the resurrection and the final judgments were theorized and studied for the link between the natural phenomena occurring due to science and the natural occurrences forced by the supernatural causalities. Chemists studied the process of transforming the “bodies into a form fit for the next life” (155). Astronomers researched about the locations of hell and heaven, and one of them claimed that hell was on a comet. Thus, the Scripture forms the basis for the evolution of natural and modern sciences.

Nature had had a significant role in the history of mankind and the creation of the Universe. God created Man at last, only after He created the light, atmosphere, land and water, and filled them with sun, stars and moon; birds and animals respectively. Man was the pinnacle of all His creations, and therefore was special to the Lord. There have been claims that the Scripture holds responsibility for the present environmental exploitation, as it worded that the humans have dominion over the nature and rest of God’s creation. But researchers clarify that God had assigned humans as stewards to look after and protect His creation. Robin Attfield, in ‘Christian Attitudes to Nature’ reinforces the fact that human dominion is actually taken for the role of stewardship, and not intended for any kind of exploitation. Adam was assigned the task of tending

the Garden of Eden, preserving its beauty and protecting it, while obtaining his food from it. In God's plans, Nature and Man were supposed to coexist, mutually providing for each other. God created Man in His image and that led to handing over the responsibility of taking care of His creation, and assigning humanity the role of stewards. There was no reductionism in nature with the coming of stewardship, and instead there were only possibilities of mutual growth and enhancement at each other's care and protection.

It was the Fall of Man that disrupted the whole creation. Man disobeyed God and therefore, "perverted the whole order of nature in heaven and earth" (Calvin, 3S). The ideal harmony that existed between Man, Nature and God was ruptured and nature turned hostile to humanity. Therefore, the Fall is seen as the root of all environmental crises today.

Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field by the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken. (Gen. 3: 17-9)

Nature groaned in pain bearing the curse of God as a result of its abuse by humans; it cried out to the Lord for vengeance followed by redemption. The Creator redeemed it and made it capable for directing the supernatural communication of God to humanity.

Even after the fall, God never failed to care for His creation, both mankind and nature, which is why he protects the mankind from the wrath of nature as a result of the fall, and forgives humanity of its sin by redemption. God's love and concern for

His creation results in the incarnation of Jesus and His crucifixion. Jesus came to earth to save not just humanity, but the whole creation. The fall of Man resulted in the fall of earth, and the redemption of mankind resulted in the redemption of earth too.

Humanity and nature are inherently connected throughout history. The Old Testament affirms the essential connection and harmony between humanity and nature, as man was created from dust, conceptualized as an ‘earthling’, and therefore is part of the non-human creation, part of nature. Nature has an intrinsic value of its own, and was not just created to serve humanity, but humanity was created to live together with nature. Man and nature are similar and distinct at the same time, because though humanity is part of the creation, it was created in the image of God. They connect at a deeper level. God describes not just Man, but also Nature as His contractual partner: “I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth.” (Gen 9, 13) Christianity does not divinize nature, because divinization of nature prevents any kind of modifications – agriculture, technical intervention, genetic engineering and experimentation – to it. On the other hand, Christian ethics considers both the marvelous and imperfect sides; positive and negative sides of nature. God created nature as an order with life and death, harmony and conflict, happiness and grief. Humanity is supposed to accept, cultivate and provide for nature in return for its resources and provisions. The Genesis refers to ‘healing’ as a healthy state of mind, restoration of well-being and peaceful relationship with God, self and fellow beings. The Jews

lived an ecologically rich life in the naturally diverse and scenic lands of Palestine.

The river valleys at the base of the hills and mountains in Palestine, with the rural lifestyle contributed to the health and well-being of the ancient Israelis.

PSALMS

The Psalms taken up for the analysis are Psalms 8, 23, 29 (10), 33 (6-9), 42, 46 (2, 3, 9), 50 (6-11), 65 (9-13), 72 (3, 6, 7, 8), 74 (16, 17), 77 (17-19), 78 (14-16), 84 (3, 4), 96 (11, 12), 97, 102 (25), 107 (33-43), 121, 139 (8-12), and 148. The above mentioned psalms and verses are studied for the interconnection of nature and spirituality. The natural world is a creation of God, mediator of God and humans, a form of universal energy, a medium of worship, a process of evolution and an artistic therapy.

The Psalm 8 of Book One is quoted in the letter to the Hebrews 2:6-8, the title of which reads as 'To the Leader: According to The Gittith. A Psalm of David'. The psalmist looks at the night sky and wonders how beautifully God has created His world. He is awed at the majesty and power of the Creator. Pondering upon these, led him to question the reason of God entrusting such beautiful of His creation to the mankind. This psalm has a reference to the lines in the Book of Wisdom, which says, "If through delight in the beauty of creation, people assumed to be gods, let them know how much better than these is the Lord, for the author of beauty created them" (13:3). He is amazed at how much God has done and is still doing for humans. However, he still does not realize what is it that makes man so special to the Lord over the rest of His creation; and thus he examines the relationship between God and man. Looking deep into the personal experiences where God has reached for him, cared and nourished him, he

realizes that God created man similar to Him in form and image, and treasured mankind of His precious creations, which was why God gave him the right to dominate over other creatures. The psalmist reflects on how dignified God has led humans. He says that, human beings should see it as a gift that God has granted them free access to His beautiful natural world, instead of exploiting it. Humans could commune better to the Lord by harmonious interrelation with nature.

The psalmist also contrasts two cases where one is that of little children who are open to the workings of the Lord, and are amazed at the wonders of nature. On the other hand are cunning people who rebel against the Lord. Such people fail to access the hidden treasures of nature, unlike the psalmist who appreciates the intricate delicacy of the creator of the universe. The moon stars and the sun are called 'the work of God's fingers' and the psalmist rejoices in the wonder, simplicity and glory of nature.

Psalm 23 reflects the trust and confidence of the masses in God's goodness and kindness in the present and the future too. The psalm projects God as the leader and provider of humanity. Human life is paralleled to the lives in nature. Christianity compares human beings as sheep and the Lord as the shepherd tending them. The journey of human beings on earth is compared to the grazing sheep on the green pastures. The psalmist sings that God guides them as they graze upon, and take them to the oasis to quench their thirst. When darkness falls the sound of the Shepherd's staff strikes the earth and the rocks, the straying sheep is shown the path. With such care, God will never let His children stray or lag behind. The faithful Lord protects His sheep.

Nature and humans are God's creation, and is protected and tended to by the Lord. Human life corresponds to the natural landscapes. Situations in human lives find a parallel in the nature and natural world. Situations and contexts can be correlated in the human and natural world, which helps in a better connectivity. Though there are many distinctions, humans and nature are after all, God's creation.

In Psalm 29, David praises the Lord for His supreme power as a result of meditating upon a severe thunderstorm. It was composed in honour of God, celebrating His power over creation, as opposed to the pagans who worshipped nature and its elements. In verse 10 of the psalm the storm reminds David of the flood of Noah's time. Just as the Lord quieted the storms by meditating on them, He subsided the flood too. The incidents proclaim the fact that God overpowers nature, and that His glory lies in protecting His people against the natural disasters. "There is quietness within the storm for those who belong to the people of God" (VanGemeren, 257). God never gives upon His believers.

Human beings should see in nature the attributes of God, and should glorify Him for the ultimate power of creation, destruction and redemption. The Lord is both the creator and savior of the universe.

Psalm 33 reflects on the power of God, the creator. The psalmist says the people should come together, stand in awe, and unanimously praise their Creator as He can command the sea to stay within its boundaries and not to encroach lands; as He can lock up oceans and prevented the earth from drowning in it. The world was created through the word of God. The following lines invoke praises:

What a pity it is that this earth, which is so full of God's goodness,
 should be so empty of his praises, and that of the multitudes that live
 upon his bounty there are so few that live to his glory! (Henry, 609)

As much as people live in the abundance of God, they should also praise the Lord,
 as it is not fair to have His children making use of His goodness without glorifying
 Him in praises.

Psalm 42 expresses the psalmist's longing for God and yearns for His mercy. It contains two stanzas, each of which ends with the same refrain. In the first stanza, the psalmist sings of being tormented at the hands of enemies and expecting to be saved by the Lord. He compares himself to a thirsty deer hoping to find the flowing streams so as to quench its thirst. He was spiritually exhausted and thirsty and was looking forward for the Divine inspiration, as he knows that God would sustain him spiritually like a brook sustains a deer physically. The writer laments that he had to drink from his own tears instead of drinking the water supposed to have been provided by the Lord. But he stays firm in faith and strongly believes that God would reach for him, and till then he recalls how God had spiritually refreshed him in Jerusalem, and thus, keeps up his hope. In the second stanza the psalmist laments of his troubles and distress. He is not in Jerusalem now, but near the Hermon range of mountains, in the north of the Sea of Chinnereth. These mountains rise up to the east of the Jordan Valley. The mention of natural landscapes in hymns and songs to God reveals the significance of

nature in their worship. The writer also compares his troubles to the loud and noisy waves of the heavy waterfalls cascading upon him. But still he keeps up his hope, and ends the song with the refrain expressing his faith and confidence in his God.

Psalm 46 is written by King Hezekiah, and it magnifies the Lord as His people's protector. It is believed that King Hezekiah wrote it after he experienced the deliverance of God from Sennacherib. Mount Zion was safe because God dwelled there; similarly His people were safe when He lived with them. He is a shelter from all dangers and calamities they experience. The images of the mountains sliding into the sea, earthquake and the storm-tossed sea indicate terrible disasters affecting the people and as long as God is with them, He keeps them safe away from these calamities. The psalmist invites his fellow beings to remember the Lord's deliverances and how His army had destroyed Israel's enemies in war. The psalm celebrates the goodness of God and the gratitude and trust of the people in Him.

Psalm 50 presents the judgment of God, charging them of formalistic worship and hypocritical living. He gives them a final warning to live righteous. The verses 6- 11 of the psalm are analyzed here, where God speaks to His people, both as their God and as their Judge. He charges them of their offerings, which included slaughtered and burnt bullocks, goats and birds. "For I own all the animals of the forests, and animals on a thousand hills. All the birds of the air I know, and all that moves in the fields are mine" (50: 10-11) He warns them they have no right to sacrifice the lives of the birds and animals, as every being on earth is God's creation. God expects the gratitude of His children as offering for His deliverances. He wants them to have a vital relationship

with Himself and giving in their hearts space for Him is the biggest offering He could have from His children. Formalistic worship where people treat Him merely as their God, and indulgence in useless and sinful offerings annoys the Lord. The Divine wants a harmonious and vital relationship among His humans, non-human creation and Himself.

Psalm 65 is song of communal thanksgiving celebrating God's blessing of abundance. God nurtures the earth by watering it, sends bountiful harvests, the pastures of the meadows are enriched with greeneries and filled with flocks, and suffuses the valleys with grains. The people are blessed with God's bounty in natural resources which forms the base of a rich and healthy life. Thus the people shout out and sing in joy hymns to the Lord. Here in the song, nature is a precious gift God offers to the mankind, to enrich their lives with abundance and to heal them physically, emotionally and spiritually by sustaining a cordial relationship with it.

Psalm 72 is attributed to King Solomon, but is thought of King David's prayer for the son succeeding him. It is a prayer for prosperity, with the assumption that the king would take upon his reign as is commanded by the Lord, by being righteous and exercising his power in favour of the poor and needy. This is the final psalm in the Book Two of psalms. The reference to the "mountains and hills" yielding "peace for the people" implies the reign and government to be so fair and just that even non-human creations of God are at utter peace within the kingdom (72: 3). David prays that his successor be like "the rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth" (72:6). The 'mown grass' refers to the oppressed and poor people of the kingdom, and the father wishes that his son be like the showers that tend the mown grass and

nourish the earth. Solomon seeks power over a wide range of earth, so that he establishes righteousness and justice throughout the earth, where people are benefitted out of his government.

Here in the psalm, nature and its elements are employed as metaphors for good government, excellent providence, prosperity and richness of life.

The context of composition of Psalm 74 is during the devastation of Jerusalem in 587 BC. The enemies mock the Jews in the name of their God who is said to have passively witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem. The psalmist wonders why does God not intervene to protect the poor and downtrodden, and continue to allow the fury of the enemies, despite being all powerful enough to conquer the world. Psalm 74 is a communal lament song. The devastation of the temple on Mount Zion and the city of Jerusalem had brought a fall in the image of God in the eyes of the neighbors and enemies. They thought of the Lord as possessing Supreme power over earth and heavens. Whereas the inaction of God in times of refuge and rescue led them conceive that the Lord was in fact incapable of protecting His own people. But Asaph, the psalmist knows the power of God and recalls how He defeated the enemies and motivated him to act in defense of His children.

Through verses 16-17, the psalmist recalls the glory of the Lord's creation of cosmos. "Yours is the day, yours also the night; you established the moon and the sun. You have fixed all the bounds of the earth; you made summer and winter." (74: 16-17)

The reference to the natural world is in the recall of God's glory and His power over every element of nature and humans. The 'day', 'night', 'moon', 'sun', 'summer' and 'winter' are themselves powerful forces of nature. The power of the Creator is ultimate.

Psalm 77 is an individual lament of the psalmist in despair and hopelessness. He wonders if God had given upon him, and is so disturbed over his abandoned-like situation that he lies awake throughout night. He then thought upon the Lord's deliverance of His people during the Exodus from Egypt. That brought him comfort, and in turn he asks God to manifest His power for His people again. This gives him the hope that God would reach for his help.

The clouds poured out water; the skies thundered; your arrows flashed on every side. The crash of your thunder was in the whirlwind; your lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and shook. Your way was through the sea, your path, through the mighty waters; yet your footprints were unseen. (74: 17-19)

In the above lines nature is portrayed as a fierce force, aiding the glory and power of God. The natural elements are used as metaphors accompanying and expressing the overpowering entry of God in rescue of His people during the Exodus.

Psalm 78 is a didactic psalm emphasizing the grace of God, and asking the present and future generations to learn from the past. The psalm is a continuation of the previous psalm where Asaph continues his narration of God's grace during the Exodus. Despite God's provisions, the Israelites disobeyed and rebelled Him that

He provide them according to their terms, instead of simply commanding them to obey Him throughout. The psalmist warns people to remember the God's provisions, love and care during the past and to stay faithful to Him as He was to them.

In the daytime he led them with a cloud, and all night long with a light of fire. He split rocks open in the wilderness, and gave them drink abundantly as from the deep. He made streams come out of the rock, and caused waters to flow down like rivers. (78: 14-16)

The above lines show the wonders of God's power for the love and care of His children. While the Jews were migrating from Egypt, they had to cross the Red Sea, which symbolized the hurdles in life and in journey. God, unable to see His children suffering, sheltered them day and night, provided them sufficient food and water, by splitting rocks. The portrayal of nature in the verses here is that of a means of provision and an epitome of God's love for His children. The Lord provides to humanity the strength, energy, space, health and food from nature.

Psalm 84 expresses the joy of the psalmist as he has reached the temple of God in Jerusalem. The pilgrimage to Jerusalem is not just physically refreshing, but also emotionally and spiritually rejuvenating. The psalmist reflects on the happiness of those beings that are always near the Lord, dwelling in the same land, in His presence. "Even the sparrow finds home, and the swallow a nest for herself where she may lay her young at your altars... Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise." (84: 3-4) The reference to the sparrows and swallows indicates living beings

and humans who live near the temple of God in Jerusalem, as God is ever present to tend to them and they can praise Him for the peace and provisions that He fills in their lives.

Psalm 96 sings about the righteous reign of God on earth. It invokes all the creations on earth to acclaim and praise the Lord who is coming to judge the world. All of God's creations, humans and non-humans, are invited to join the praise celebrating God's glory. "Let the heavens be glad, let the earth rejoice, let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the fields exult, and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy" (96: 11-12). The verse 11-12 specially refers to the non-human creation, as even they will be benefitted of the Lord's sovereign. The Son of God came on earth to save all of God's creation, and the God Himself would come to judge them. Therefore, the writer calls upon every being to rejoice in the righteous rule of the King.

The portrayal of nature (earth, sea, fields, and trees) in the specific verse of the Psalm is as the happy and obliged creation of the glorious God, awaiting the glory of God to rule the earth and as praising His arrival. Nature is personified in their attempts to express joy – the earth rejoices, sea roars, trees sing and fields exult.

Psalm 97 is an outburst of praise and joy at the final coming of the God's reign in power. He encourages his fellow beings to live righteous and to be prepared for the apocalypse. God dominates the world and the whole of His creation – every being on earth, land, mountains, air and water – would rejoice the day of his arrival. The psalmist has a vision of the Lord on the Day of Judgment and writes of Him as the glorious King whose return lights the world with his lightning, and shakes the mountains.

The “clouds and thick darkness all around him” symbolizes His power (97: 2). The mention of ‘fire’ represents His absolute judgment that destroys the evil and preserves the righteous. Everything on earth submits to Him including the tall mountains that melt away at the sight of their Maker.

Psalm 102 is a song of personal lament by an anonymous writer. It contains the plea of an individual, the prayer for the restoration of Jerusalem, and concludes with the contemplation on the fragility of human lives. The psalmist is attacked by the enemies and calls out to the Lord whom he knows will not forsake His children. “Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands” (102: 3) The psalm refers to the ceaseless and infinite existence of God. The creations of God are temporary and die out in short spans of time; God alone is eternal, real and immortal. Yet he takes care and tends to every element of His creation, as long as they exist. Therefore, the psalmist finds hope in the eternal God who is the Creator of heaven and earth. Earth and heavens, built by God, contains the most prominent and diverse of God’s creations. But even after they continue to decay, God remains forever as the sole truth and eternal reality.

Psalm 107 is a song of thanksgiving, and the psalmist uses a variety of images and metaphors to describe the situations of human lives. He reminds his fellow beings to remember the grace of God in times of their distress, and to offer their gratitude in response to the help and care of the God. When they cry out to God, He listens to them and frees them of their struggles. Humanity should never forget the love and care of

God and how it has graced the lives, and should be grateful to the Lord forever. He ends the Psalm with the note, “Let those who are wise give heed to these things, and consider the kindness of Yahweh” (107: 43).

There are many references to natural elements within the psalm, like that of ‘rivers’, ‘deserts’, ‘fields’, ‘vineyards’, ‘springs of water’, ‘thirsty ground’, etc.

He turns rivers into a desert, springs of water into thirsty ground, a fruitful land into a salty waste, because of the wickedness of its inhabitants. He turns a desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water. And there he lets the hungry live, and they establish a town to live in. They sow fields and plant vineyards, and get a fruitful yield. By his blessing they multiply greatly, and he does not let their cattle decrease. (107: 33-38)

God overpowers nature, and changes the situations of human beings according to their deeds, using nature as a tool. Nature becomes an instrument in the hands of God for cursing or blessing His people. God exalts the righteous and humbles the proud, based on their experiences. The righteous humans rejoice in this judgment of God, and the sinners keep silent. Therefore, the psalmist warns people to be wise, think about these matters and to meditate on God’s loyal love and care.

Psalm 121 sings of the trust of the psalmist on his God, and directs his thoughts to Him who is the source of his help. As he travels on the journey of pilgrimage, his eyes are lifted to the hills of Mount Zion, and as he looked there he reflected that it is the Maker of those tall hills who is the source of his help and guidance. The hilltops and

mountains are usually peaceful, and people who live there experience some kind of divine inspiration and infinite joy. The air over there is fresh and free, and the land and water is unpolluted and clean. The physical landscape contains so much of divine element as there is less human intervention there and more sanctity, thus transferring divine energy. When the mountains are the epitome of holiness and strength, the psalmist wonders how much strong and reliable would be the Creator of those mountains.

The second part emphasizes the assurance of God's help, throughout their journey of life. God never gives up looking after His children, be it day or night. He guards His people as an animal keeper protects his animals or as parents protect their children. He would save them from the scorching heat of the Palestinian Sun and ice storm of the cold moon. The psalm continually reminds and recalls God's care and love and his protection for the masses from all harms, when indoors or outdoors, and during their journey.

The Psalmist is inspired of divinity and God's glory by looking at the Mount Zion, where he was travelling to the pilgrimage site. Nature becomes a medium for him to realize the supreme power. He looks at the tall, strong and calm mountains and wonders about the magnificence of their creator. Thus the mountains, the nature mediates between humans and the Divine energy. Nature mediates, meditates and inspires humanity.

Psalm 139 is a beautiful song by David that expresses the mutual trust, confidence and loyalty between the God and the psalmist. The psalmist believes that God know him inside out, and therefore He knows that he would hate those who stand against

God's will. God watches the thoughts, words and deeds of the psalmist; He knows him even before he was born into this earth, and as long ago since he was a fetus in his mother's womb. God is everywhere, and within every inch of him. David gives instances of where he might hide himself from God, which still He would find out, because He is omniscient and omnipresent. "You are there if I ascend the heavens; you are there if I descend to the underworld" (139: 8-9). The verse employs merism that expresses everywhere between heaven and hell. Even if he travels as fast as the speed of light to the other side of the world, he could nowhere escape the sight of God. Even when he tries to hide himself in the darkness, God will follow him, as "darkness is not dark", but is "as bright as the day" to Him (139: 12)

Nature and the universe is portrayed as God's creation and God's vast home, where everything that occurs in the universe is of God's will. The vast natural world is the abode of the Divine.

Psalm 148 praises God for the creation of heavenly bodies and earthly beings. The psalmist asks every being and every object on earth and heaven to exalt God for creating them. It calls on the heavens to praise Him for establishing them, and the earth for creating it. The angels, sun, moon, stars, planets and heavens and waters above heaven are personified and are attributed the ability to praise the Lord. He commanded them to be created and therefore they exist, so they owe Him praise and worship. They continue to exist as long as God wills them to be. Parallel to the heavenly bodies, the psalmist next calls upon the multitudes of earth to praise God. He personifies inanimate objects like snow frost, fire, wind, mountains, hills, fruits trees, birds,

animals, creepers and crawlers, and calls upon men and women of all ages too, to join the public worship and praise the Lord, whose “name alone is exalted”, and whose “glory is above earth and heaven” (148: 13).

Nature is ever beautiful and glorious in its full bloom, and every element of it should be thankful to the Lord for having made them, and humans should be even more thankful for their creation, as well the creation of the universe and the natural world which provides them with food, shelter, health, joy and solace.

CONCLUSION

Attaining wholeness, experiencing restoration, and becoming healthy is the ultimate goal of human lives, as it leads to the accomplishment of fulfillment and wholeness. Health and proliferation of life has always been a matter of consideration for individuals, societies, nations, and government. There have been many studies about alternative healthcare services, and healthcare provisions involving nature and natural landscapes are the most effective and fruitful. Living with nature, free air living, following the ideals of Deep Ecology, sustaining the ecological richness, maintaining a healthy relationship between humanity and nature are certain aspects of nature-based living.

Nature has played a vital role since the beginning of the creation of the world. According to the Christian Scripture, God created nature first. He created and filled the land, water and atmosphere, and filled them with respective plants, animals and birds. He filled the sky with stars, moon and the sun. The creation of nature led to the creation of humanity. God placed nature and humans in equally significant positions.

However, man disobeyed God, trying to be independent of the Creator. This led to the fall of humanity, which in turn, led to the fall of ecology. However, nature had a role in the fall of humanity, as it became the medium of the evil temptation. Just as nature and humans are interconnected in their degradation, so are they interrelated in their redemption. Nature cried out to God for vengeance and God redeemed it, which in turn, redeemed the humanity too. When God controlled the wrath of nature, human beings were saved too. Therefore, the presence of nature in every phase of the journey of mankind, influencing and relating to it, shows the deep interconnection between the two entities of the Creation – humanity and nature.

While Christianity does not divinize nature, pantheism and paganism worship and idolize nature. Hinduism respects nature for the spiritual significance of the *panchabhootas* – air, water, fire, sky and land over the universe. In many systems of faith, nature transcends its physicality and becomes the manifestation of something beyond itself. While in some traditions, nature is the locus of divine energy, in some others, it becomes a medium of worship and communication between the Divine and the humans. Mountains, rivers, sky and fire assist in the worship of the divine. Nature is a process of evolution. Comprehending the infinite change within, it evolves timelessly in itself. Nature is a landscape and becomes the space required for an action, be it meditation, worship, healing or any other kind of experience. Nature is spiritual -- it has a soul thousands of years old, which is capable of bringing together and culminating the energy, life forces and vitality of the universe that results in renewal, revival and healing of the spirits.

Nature serves a multitude of purposes, and is multifaceted entity that holds in it the power to create, destruct, deconstruct, revive and renew lives. It has been celebrated widely as a force of life, sometimes a silent healer in the solitude, and at other times exploding into an outburst of emotions. It is an element of reassurance and rejuvenation, becoming a means of therapy by itself.

Chapter V

CHAPTER V

SUMMING UP

Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature – the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter - Anton Chekhov

Natural landscapes are resourceful, not only in social and economic aspects, but in spiritual aspects too. The woods, forests, lakes, hills and mountains contain fresh air that the modern sickening cities lack. The very absence of pure atmosphere and clean air has invited innumerable fatal diseases affecting the body and mind. To breathe in fresh air, and to be in a serene environment, enjoying the sights and sounds of nature restores the psychological balance, heals the physical and emotional wounds and gets one in tune with the rhythm of the universe. Nature is dynamic and still, silent and articulate, providing and at times destructive in nature – an enigmatic paradox beyond the grasp of human understanding. Contemplating on the beauty of nature gives into a realization of the sense of connection with the self, and its connection with the universe.

The chapter culminates the study, summing up the whole research. The study had been a process of understanding the significance of nature in life and literature. What was experienced in life had been recorded in literature, and what is lost in life now is being reminded by literature. There was a time when nature was adored, worshipped and glorified for its inspiration, creativity, dynamics and vigour. As time passed by, human beings thought of them as a separate entity that ruled the rest of the universe.

That led to the exploitation and domination of the natural world, and its creatures.

The world, as a result, has lost its harmony and balance, and nature retaliated in overpowering forces, destroying lives.

The researcher had studied the impacts and significance of nature on humanity, unfolding fresh insights about nature and the Man-Nature-God bonds. The primary texts analyzed for the research are the songs in *Gitanjali*, and the songs from Psalms in the Bible. Rabindranath Tagore, one of the most prominent writers India had witnessed, was a poet, dramatist, musician and essayist too. Tagore was a spiritual mystic who lived by the principles of the Vedantic philosophy. He had great love and respect for nature, which was further expressed in his works. He recorded the glory of nature, its degradation, and the need to preserve environment and to develop ecological consciousness.

Gitanjali is Tagore's spiritual autobiography. It is an anthology of 103 songs offered to the Divine as a tribute for His grace and love. The underlying concept of *Gitanjali* was the poet's love for nature, man and God. He signified the connection amongst the trio in most of his poems. God is presented as being manifested in the forces of nature.

He reveals Himself in the golden rays of the sunrise, colours of the sunset, still blue sky, star-decked velvet sky, music of the streams, songs of the birds, fragrance of the flowers, summer bees of the spring, river banks with yellow leaves fluttered, waves of the sea, the poor labourers and in the innocent children playing on the seashore. The poet experiences the divine touch of God in the beauties of nature. The poems reveal the vastness and the immense love and nurturing of God, and His manifestation through

the basic natural elements. He portrays God as the father, mother, child, beloved, friend, poet, king and the master poet; implying the various roles in which God reveals His presence fulfilling the needs of the poet and nurturing him throughout his life.

Tagore's concept of divinity was derived from humanism and his intense passion for life. He believed that human life has an eternal unity to all the forms of lives, despite the external conflicts. He discovered divinity in humanity, especially among the poor and downtrodden and realized that it was his mission to elevate them to a dignified existence through the rhythm and melody of his poetry. Only through the purification of mind, body and soul does one attain the divine experience. Nature helps in healing the body, mind and spirit with its rich resources. Tagore celebrates the glory of God in the abundance of nature's treasures, as he believes that God uses nature as a medium to express, manifest and reveal Him to humanity. But when humanity does not acknowledge or respect nature, they fail to recognize God either. The poems in *Gitanjali* are inspiring and express the poet's yearning to unite with God, which is often made possible through the medium of nature. The poet waits for his beloved, God, through day and night sleepless, but he feels the presence of God in the natural world and the changing natural phenomenon.

Another ancient text employed for the study is the Bible which has been subjected to literary critical readings, irrespective of its status as a Holy Scripture. The Bible is more a literary work with a wide variety of genres, forms and narrative techniques, than a religious text. The portrayal of nature in the Bible is vivid and various.

Nature has been there with mankind since the creation of the world. Nature and humanity are two entities created by God; He wished they would help each other grow and sustain. God created Man in the Garden of Eden in His image. According to the priestly account of creation, Man was created at last; only after all other creatures of the heaven and earth were made. Man was quite special for God which is why He created him in His form. God then created the woman to accompany man. The man and woman were supposed to live happily in the paradise of God's Garden, tending to the rest of the creation, eating foods from the trees and plants and loving one another and God Himself. Man and Nature coexisted in peace and harmony as long as they abided by the rules of God and obeyed Him.

In the Garden of Eden, there were two trees – the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God had forbidden man and woman to eat from the Tree of Life, whereas had allowed them to eat whatever and however much they wished to eat from the other tree. However, Man, tempted by Satan's evil designs, was provoked to disobey God. As they were tending to nature, Satan came to them in the disguise of a serpent, and tempted Eve to eat a fruit from the forbidden tree. He convinced her that it was God's will that they eat from the tree. Eve ate the fruit and gave it to Adam too. Knowing that Eve was doomed for disobeying God, he chose to perish with her, instead of persisting by God's command. Thus, he was doomed too. This led to the abandonment of earth from paradise, and the Fall of Man from the grace of God. During the Fall, Man and Nature were against each other and against God, which led to the fall of both. Nature was a medium in the hands of Satan to tempt Man, and the

abandonment of Man caused Nature to fall too. As a result of the disobedience, God cursed man that he will have to toil and sweat to fill his stomach, cursed woman that she will have to undergo the pain of childbirth and He cursed nature that it will be hostile to man, and will not yield to him.

The very idea that there was the forbidden tree and the permissible tree symbolizes the two faces of nature – the provider and the destroyer, the consoler as well as the slayer. The Bible does not portray nature as all divine, it rather shows neither nature nor humans have the eternal power, and that rests only with God. Nature and humans are bound to help evolve one another, and nature serves as a medium to connect humanity to God. It mediates between the God and the humans

In the redemption of Man, Nature played a vital role too. The earth groaned in pain and cried for God's mercy. God loved His creation more than the wrath, and sent His Son to redeem the whole of the creation, including the natural world and the mankind. When God created the world, He made a covenant and said in it that He would nurture and preserve His creation as long the earth existed. He had another covenant that said that if humans destroy the pattern of the day and night, He would destroy their generations. God loved all His creation equally and gave no rights to none to destroy any one of His creation.

In the Psalms, the devotees expressed their intimate emotions and feelings with God. They cried, lamented, praised, and pray through the psalms. Prayer was not just seeking from God; it is openly communicating the heart to Him. During times of sickness, war and persecution, the psalmists cried out to their God in frustration and

lamented of their struggles. During days of happiness and grace, they celebrated the glory of God expressing Him their gratitude. The psalmists praise the God, and also call upon the objects of nature, the things of heaven and earth to praise the Lord, for if it was not for Him, they would have not existed. The elements of nature (the Sun, moon stars, trees, sea monsters, mountains and waves) are personified and asked to join in the worship and celebration of the arrival of their Maker. The psalmists also consider nature as a medium to connect to the God. They believe God resides in the Mount Zion of Jerusalem, and that He descends from Heaven to take care of His devotees. Therefore they go to the mountains to feel His presence, and return with His grace. Another implication of nature is as a space enhancing the communion between God and man. Nature is considered as possessing spiritual resources that help humans connect to the Divine, in their prayers. Praying in peaceful and beautiful landscapes strengthens the sacred vibes and the devotees feel the presence of God in the environment. Nature has also been portrayed as a mere object in the powerful hands of God. God uses nature as a tool to communicate to human beings. The early men thought that God's grace and kindness was revealed through the pleasant weather, clear climate and peaceful landscapes, whereas His wrath and rage was expressed in the violent natural forces like heavy flood, violent storms and tempests, raging wildfires, and such, destroying human lives and causing unrest over the world.

The texts show nature as a medium, as a mediator that connects the heaven and earth, inspiring the meeting of God and Man. Nature had been a form of worship in many ancient mythologies and still in many pagan cultures, people worship nature

as God. The elements of nature are supposed to contain spiritual powers and divine energy in many forms of faith and religions including Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. There is the worship of the Sun, moon and the stars; worship of the land, water, sky, fire and air. Everything from the trees and lands to the matter in the elements of air are assigned holy touch that is capable of healing and protecting the universe. Thus, nature is a form that reveals, energy that enlightens, space that contains, thought that stimulates, and a medium that bridges every aspect of life to the greater cosmic universe.

Nature and natural sciences have led to the evolution and advancement of modern sciences. Studies have shown that a region rich in natural landscapes and physical environment is less inclined to religious practices and worship. Nature contains the spiritual energy resources required for the renewal and restoration of the body, mind and spirit. As per reports, the spiritual or divine vibes in nature have been experienced by the atheist communities too. People living in the urban go to churches and temples to feel the presence of God, and to reconnect with God and with their own self. But people living in rich natural landscapes do not feel the need to go to religious organizations, as they are already renewed and revived by the spiritual energies of the nature, healing not only minds and spirits, but also restoring their physical health and psychological balance. This holds it true there is a divine inspiration in the primeval untouched natural forces.

The conceptual frameworks within which the texts are analyzed are Therapeutic Landscapes and Nature Based Therapy. The concepts are derived from collaboration of interdisciplinary studies that overlapped the aspects of environmental psychology,

neurosciences, landscape architecture, health geography and behavioural sciences. Landscapes have a vital impact over minds. Beautiful landscapes and peaceful surroundings naturally puts mind at ease. Dry, arid and spoil environments make minds messier and the instant tendency is to complain and aggravate the already existing problems reflected by the external landscapes too.

Nature therapy teams with drama therapy, language and narratives to effectively heal the patients. In Nature Therapy the three key components are the clients, therapist and nature. The relationship between the client, nature and therapist should be strong enough for effective therapeutic results. The therapist can take up two roles – he/she can either involve actively with the client, with nature as a background tool; or take up a passive role as a witness, and let the client interact directly with nature. There are many techniques and programs that form the therapeutic sessions. The clients are allowed to spend enough time with the natural environment, which is sometimes the ‘homes’ they choose from the space according to their likes, or are some common unpolluted, serene and pleasant places that the therapist chooses. The clients meditate on nature – the sounds of the birds and streams, whispers of the waves, rustling of the leaves that they keep their focused on the most basic of the senses; they are made to play with the sand and soil that they go back in time and feel the lightness of childhood; they are made to create their own homes in nature with the materials found there, so that they connect with and identify with nature.

While contemplating on nature, there is a sense of connection with one another and with the greater world. Human lives are no different from that of the rest of the

world. The law of nature is the law of the universe. Sometimes when humans forget the law of the universe, reconnecting with nature reminds it. Observing the life and the dynamic natural phenomenon of the changing seasons, renewal of life and departure of lives, consistency of life and inconsistency of the form, the consecutive patterns of shifts in time, the unexplored pieces of the vast lands that have been walked through, the recurrent newness in the ordinary and commonplace, the known yet unpredictable instances in nature should relate it perfectly with life. People learn everything they need to when they are left alone in the company of nature. They develop an understanding of the way of Life, may it be human or nonhuman. They learn to accept things, as lessons taught by nature.

REFLECTIONS ON THE STUDY

The study redefines the concept of nature with regard to the texts being analyzed. Nature was considered an abundant source of material resources, and socio-economic assets. The spiritual significance of nature is often overlooked, and was limited to the thoughts of some saints and poets of the ancient ages. But the stark need of it at its peak is during this hour. The study emphasizes and rediscovers the teeming spiritual energy of nature, which is much essential to humanity, to lead a peaceful life amidst the chaos. Nature is packed with divine inspiration and spiritual insights that are present in life and presented in literature by poets like Rabindranath Tagore. The aim of such writings is to encompass a huge mass to the treasures of nature that is continuously being overlooked and unheeded despite people being suffering due to the lack of it in their lives.

The study explores the multiple roles of nature that it serves the universe. Some seek solace and comfort in nature, others seek material resources; some discover a parent, friend, guide and teacher in nature, whereas some others find God in the depths of nature. Living close by the woodlands, near the green fields, on the mountains, by the lakes and riverbanks, in pastoral valleys enriches life in its depth. Exposure to nature makes man insightful, profound, contemplative, watchful, mindful and wise, thus making life worth living, knowing the purpose of it. Be it the real natural landscapes or the landscapes in the narratives, they take people to a whole new level of understanding. The psychological and cognitive faculties are in full bloom when with nature. The songs in Tagore's *Gitanjali* are so full of fresh life and colours of nature that a mere reading of them would comfort a grieving heart. The way the poet identifies his soul with every aspect of nature, helps one connect to oneself and relate to nature as the poet does. Similarly the psalms in the Bible that has special reference to nature helps one explore the untold stories of nature, unknown roles that nature had been ever since flowing into. Another interesting aspect of the study besides exploring the therapeutic effects of nature is the way external landscapes reflect the states of mind of the person or the character, both in the songs as well as in real lives.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- Nature is a treasure house of wisdom, resources and spiritual energy vital for the survival of human beings and sustenance of the universe.

- When people connect to nature, they actually are reconnecting to themselves, exploring the unknown pieces of their soul, and gaining insights as they rediscover their identity, with reference to the self and the universe.
- Nature possesses the power to heal, revive and restore human beings physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually
- Human beings are a part of the greater self of the universe, and therefore cannot exist independent of the natural world. Being in constant touch with nature helps people understand and accept life as human life is relatable to the natural world.
- Nature mediates between the divine and the humanity. It is a mother, mediator, healer, friend, guide, shelter and refuge for the mankind; taking on various roles and serving many purposes.
- Nature, as an existence, has multidimensional perspectives. It is a process of evolution, a thought pervading the space being it; and a timeless therapeutic entity

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

Nature is the source and sustainer of life, mending and healing the broken fragments of selves. The study aims to reinforce and emphasize the significance of nature in healing humanity. It calls for the need to retain harmony with nature, as was there during the ancient times. In the textual analysis of the primary texts there was found a rich collection of verses picturizing the glory of nature and the magic in its

touch to heal wounds. The texts have been analyzed within the conceptual framework of Therapeutic Landscapes and Nature Based Therapy. The study infers that human beings and natural world coexist to mutually aid each other. Nature is an integral part of human lives as human beings are part of the greater universe. Nature exists and expresses itself in multidimensional perspectives throughout the vast universe.

RELEVANCE AND NEED OF THE STUDY

The modern humans have become detached from nature, and continue to see them as a separate entity from the rest of the natural world and living beings, that demands to be holding the entire power over earth. Capitalization and modernization has exploited nature to attain the perfect luxurious lives for humans at the cost of ecological degeneration. The trend has been defined by N. Meyers as ‘biotic holocaust’ (31). Anthropocentrism is at the heart of modernity, and nature has been considered an obstacle to be tackled by humanity, which led to a total disconnection to the physical landscapes surrounding them. It is high time that nature be preserved and humans understand the significance of it, not just in maintaining the ecological balance, but also realizing the need of the healing touch of nature to the degrading humanity. Since the past few decades, there has been the development of nature as a therapy in the treatment of patients afflicted with psychological illness and physical ailments. In the context of modern lifestyles, Nature Therapy is highly significant and is emerging all over the world, helping people cope up with trauma and accept life. When people engage with nature, they establish a sense of identification, and experience revival and renewal of

body, mind and spirit. Nature Therapy is much needed now than any time in the long past as it is now that people have become more disillusioned, restless, aimless and lost than ever.

The study reinforces the importance of nature in human lives, through the text of *Gitanjali*, and some songs from the Psalms. The texts portray nature as a divine energy that renews humans spiritually and heal and restore them mentally and emotionally.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to constraints of time, the researcher could not extend the research to include any field work, and had to limit the study to the textual analysis of Rabindranath Tagore's *Gitanjali*, and select Psalms from the Bible.

SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- Research about Therapeutic Landscapes can be done, studying and understanding how natural landscapes work and heal ultimately.
- Studies can be done on the practical approaches of Nature Therapy, carrying out field work and recording the experiences of the clients and their healing after the therapy
- Nature Therapy can be collaborated with other disciplines to attain healthcare and healing more effectively, using language as another factor in the therapeutic process
- Literary analysis and critical study of eco-fiction can be researched, analyzing the natural phenomenon and their effects on the characters.

Works Cited

WORKS CITED

PRIMARY SOURCES

Fallon, Michael. *The Psalms*. Kensington: Chevalier Press, 2005. Print.

The New Community Bible. Australia: St Pauls Publications, 2011. Print.

Sternberg, Esther M. *Healing Spaces: The Science of Place and Well-being*. London: Harvard University Press, 2009. Print.

Tagore, Rabindranath. *Gitanjali: Song Offerings*. 2016 ed. London: Macmillan and Company, 1912. Print.

SECONDARY SOURCES

PRINT SOURCES

Baskaran, V. "Tagore: A Mediatrix of the Trinity of Nature, Man and God." Diss. Vinayaka Missions University. 2013. Print.

Berger, Ronen. *Nature Therapy: Selected Articles*. Israel: Nature Therapy Center, 2009. Print.

Brown, William P. *Seeing the Psalms: A Theology of Metaphor*. Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002. Print.

Chelliah, S. "Mystic Vision and Cosmopolitan Outlook in *Gitanjali*." *Language in India*. 17.3 (2017): 50-63. Print.

Coprahewa, Sandagomi, ed. *One Hundred Years of Gitanjali 1913-2013: A Collection of Essays*. Sri Lanka: CCIS, 2015. Print.

- Corazon, Sus Sola, Ulrika K Stigsdotter, et al. "Development of the Nature-Based Therapy Concept for Patients with Stress-Related Illness at the Danish Healing Forest Garden Nacadia." *Journal of Therapeutic Horticulture*. Np. 2010: 34-51. Print.
- Ferguson, Todd W., Jeffrey A. Tamburello. "The Natural Environment as a Spiritual Resource: A Theory of Regional Variation in Religious Adherence." *Sociology of Religion*. Sociology of Religion Advance Access. 76.3 (2015): 295-314. Print.
- Gogoi, Dhanjyoti. "Eco-philosophy in the Contemporary Poetry in English from India's North East." *IJELR*. KY Publications, 3.3 (2016): 115-122. Print.
- Hayes, Paul. "Love of Creation and Mysticism in Tagore's *Gitanjali* and Stray Birds." *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*. 2.4 (2010): 41-490. Print.
- Jemima, N Cinthia. "Quest for Spirituality in *Gitanjali* and Psalms: A Comparative Study." *Language in India*. 13.5 (2013): 183-191. Print.
- Kaufman, Jason A. "Nature, Mind, and Medicine: A Model for Mind-Body Healing." *EXPLORE The Journal of Science and Healing*. Elsevier, 14.4 (2018): 268-276. Print.
- Khachatourians, Ariane. "Therapeutic Landscapes: A Critical Analysis." MA thesis. U of Simon Fraser. 2006. Print.
- Latha, T. "Images in Tagore's *Gitanjali*." *Language in India*. 12 (2012): 167-173. Print.
- Lankford, Megan. "Nature and Grief: An Eco-critical Analysis of Grief in Children's Literature." MA thesis. U of British Columbia, 2010. Print.

Levy, Sholomo Ben. "Readings for Scriptural Healing." *Scriptures for People who are Sick or Blue*. Np, 2005. Print.

Lewis, C S. *Reflections on the Psalms*. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1958. Print.

Macdonald, Alexander James. "The Psalms and Spirituality: A Study of Meditative Engagement with Selected Psalms among Edinburgh Students." Diss. U of Edinburgh, 2007. Print.

Marsh, Christine. "Understanding Rabindranath Tagore's Spirituality as Deep Ecology, Deep Anthropology and Political Theology." *Gitanjali and Beyond*. 1 (2016): 135-154. Print.

Mukhopadhyay, Aju. "Tagore's *Gitanjali*: A Critical Appraisal." *IISUniv. J.A.* 3.1 (2014): 12-20. Print.

Mustata, Gheorge. "Rabindranath Tagore Invites Man to Reharmonize Himself with Nature." *International Journal of Communication Research*. 4.4 (2014): 353-358. Print.

Nillson, Kjell, Marcus Sangster. eds. *Forests, Trees and Human Health*. Springer, 2011. Print.

Owens, Donna C. "The Psalms: a Therapy of Words." *Journal of Poetry Therapy*. Routledge, 18.3 (2005): 133-152. Print.

Palanisamy, S.A. "Religion and Literature: Tagore's Spiritual Humanism in *Gitanjali*." *IOSR-JHSS*. Nd: 28-29. Print.

- Rahman, Md. Zillur, Md. Akhtar Hossain, and Md. Sadekul Islam. "Rabindranath Tagore's Eco-consciousness in 20th Century Bengali Literature". *IOSR-JHSS*. 23. 12 (2008): 12-18. Print.
- Rao, Vivekanand. "Rabindranath Tagore: *Gitanjali*." *RJELAL*. KY Publications, 3.3 (2015): 350-360. Print.
- Roy, Animesh. "Green Poems: An Ecocritical Reading of Select Indian Poems in English." *MIT International Journal of English Language & Literature*. 1. 2 (2014): 92-99. Print.
- Sharma, Sneha Lata. "Rabindranath Tagore's Tryst with the Divine: A Critical Study of *Gitanjali*." *IJELR*. KY Publications, 1.2 (2014): 32-35. Print.
- Sikkema, Arnold E. "Laws of Nature and God's Word for Creation." *Fideles: A Journal of Redeemer Pacific College*. 2 (2007): 27-43. Print.
- Smith, Jeffrey W. "The Polluted City and the Healing Power of Nature: Wordsworthian Idealism in *Guild Court*." *North Wind: A Journal of George MacDonald Studies*. 31 (2012): 18-20. Print.
- Sriprabha M, G Sankar. "Theme of Adore and Bereavement in Tagore's *Gitanjali* – A Study." *International Journal of English Literature and Culture*. Academic Research Journals. 4.8 (2016): 142-145. Print.
- Tagore, Rabindranath. *Gitanjali: With Introduction, Opening Notes and Illustrations*. Bandra: BYB, 2016. Print.

Taylor, Bron. "Earth and Nature-Based Spirituality (Part I): From Deep Ecology to Radical Environmentalism." *Religion*. IDEAL, 31 (2001): 175-193. Print.

Weinberger, Lael. "Reading the Bible and Understanding Nature." Rev. of *The Bible, Protestantism and the Rise of Natural Science*, by Peter Harrison. *Journal of Creation* 23.3 (2009): 21-25. Print.

Winchester, Margaret, Janet McGrath. "Therapeutic Landscapes: Anthropological Perspectives on Health and Space." *Medicine Anthropology Theory*. 4.1 (2017): 1-10. Print.

NON-PRINT SOURCES

Allison, W. T. "The Nature Poetry of the Psalms." *The Biblical World*. 28.2 (1906): 87-93. *JSTOR*. Web. 25 Apr. 2019.

Azad, Nazia. "Healing Power of Nature." 20 Apr. 2019. Web. 30 Apr. 2019.

Eden, Caroline. "A Nobel Tradition: Rabindranath Tagore – the First Songwriter to Win Prize." *LARB*. 25 Jan. 2017. Web. 25 Feb. 2019.

Elvin, Dag T. "Henrik Ibsen's Use of Friluftsliv." Presented at the conference: Henrik Ibsen: The Birth of 'Friluftsliv' – a 150 Years Celebration. North Trondelag University College. 14-19 Sep. 2009. Reading.

Gaultiere, Bill. "Praying a Psalm in its Natural Setting." *Soul Shepherding*. Nd. Web. 23 Feb. 2019.

Johnson, William T. "The Bible on Environmental Conservation: A 21st Century Prescription." *UCLA Electronic Green Journal*. University of California, 1 Apr. 2000. Web. 26 Feb. 2019.

Kacheria, Kashish. "Nature Imagery and Symbolism in Selected Poems from Rabindranath Tagore's Collection *A Lovers' Gift*." *Extended Essay*. Np.nd. Web. 13 Mar. 2019.

Khan, Ammara. "REVIEW: Rabindranath Tagore: An Interpretation by Sabyasachi Bhattacharya." *DAWN*. 16 Sep. 2012. Web. 12 Jan. 2019.

"Nature and Spirituality." *World Pantheism*. Np. Nd. Web. 17 Apr. 2019.

Rahman, Atiur. "Tagore's Thoughts on Environment." *The Daily Star*. 3 June 2011. Web. 2 Jan. 2019.

Rana Rashmi. "Divinity as the Manifestation of Nature and God – The *Gitanjali*." Np. nd. Web. 3 May 2019.

Schroeder, Herbert W. "The Spiritual Aspect of Nature: A Perspective from Depth Psychology." In proceedings of *Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium*. Apr. 7-9, 1991 (Saratoga Springs, NY, 1992), 91-96.

Sinha, Tapati. "Nature and Environment as seen by Rabindranath Tagore." *Different Truths*. Np. 9 May 2018. Web. 11 Apr. 2019.

Publications

**Vol. IX
Number - 1**

**ISSN 2319-8265
(Special Issue) January 2018**

EDUCATION TIMES

**A Peer Reviewed Journal of
Education & Humanities**

APH PUBLISHING CORPORATION

A Study of Political Awareness Among High School Students Mr. Satish Chand	89
Emotional Intelligence, Personal Adjustment and Academic Motivation as Predictors of Academic Achievement among Adolescents Dr. Krishna Rao Gangolu	93
Does Internship Programme Enhance Teaching Competence of Prospective Teachers? An Inquiry Dr. C. Maria Ugin Joseph	98
Awareness Among the Parents Towards the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 in Tamilnadu Dr. V. Manoharan and Dr. G. Pazhanivelu	103
Efficacy of Practicing Asana and Pranayama for Enhancing Memory Among Prospective Teachers Dr. S. Peter Anandh	111
Techno-Pedagogical Practices for New Learners Guidelines for Innovative Educators Dr. Betty P. J. and Joby Joy Kurian	121
Thai Mass Media: A Phonological Study Sompoch Wowong	129
Use of Activities to Teach Social Science Dr. Bharti Rathore and Ms. Janki Shukla	140
Strategies for Inducing Empathy in Neo Counsellors Dr. G. Bhadramani and Dr. J. Venkatachalam	147
Emotional Intelligence Shapes Students and Teachers Behavior Dr. Rajani Ramesh Senad	155
Attitude of Teachers Working in B.Ed. Colleges Towards the Use of Technological Gadgets in Teaching Dr. R. Sembiyan	161
A Case Study of a Dyscalculic Child Dr. Vikas Kumar	166
Nature Depicted in the Book of Psalms- An Analytical Study Roby K. Sebastian and Ashitha Varghese	171

Nature Depicted in the Book of Psalms- An Analytical Study

Roby K. Sebastian* and Ashitha Varghese**

ABSTRACT

Nature, Man and God form a Trinity and exist as a whole unit. One cannot exist without the other two units. Thus Nature serves as a Mediatrix of Man and God; Man serves as a Mediatrix of Nature and God and God serves as a Mediatrix of Nature and Man. There is no question that Earth has been a giving planet. Everything humans have needed to survive, and thrive, was provided by the natural world around us: food, water, medicine, materials for shelter, and even natural cycles such as climate and nutrients. The beauty of nature can have a profound effect upon our senses, those gateways from the outer world to the inner, whether it results in disbelief in its very existence as Emerson notes, or feelings such as awe, wonder, or amazement. Exposure to nature not only makes you feel better emotionally, it contributes to your physical wellbeing, reducing blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension, and the production of stress hormones. It may even reduce mortality, according to scientists such as public health researchers Stamatakis and Mitchell. One main reason why we have nature reserves is to protect our biodiversity- the degree of variation of life. A sufficient biodiversity is required to keep our ecosystem in natural balance... A healthy biodiversity is of extreme importance to humanity as it provides a number of natural services for everyone. The beauty of God's creation draws us to delight in God's goodness and his loving presence in the moment. And the prayer of the Psalmist gives voice and shape to our struggles and longings and connects us with God's loving heart. It is a joyful and renewing experience to pray a Psalm in it's nature setting. In this article the investigator hope it will be a very helpful guide for a retreat or another time of extended silence and solitude.

Keywords: Nature, Psalms

INTRODUCTION

The words nature and natural are used for all the things that are normally not made by humans. Things like weather, organisms, landforms, celestial bodies and much more are part of nature. Scientists study the way the parts of nature work... Nature is often seen by humans as natural resources. Where the Divine dwells, along with whom dwells an inner tranquility for which man seeks outside himself. Meditating on Scripture (God's special revelation) in the nature setting described (God's general revelation) is a powerful combination for our devotional life! I have especially found this helpful with praying the Psalms. God has given us the Psalms to help us learn to pray — he knows we need the help! Many people have found this article to be a very helpful guide for a retreat or another time of extended silence and solitude with Jesus. Look deep into *nature*, and then you will understand everything better. Just living is

*Research Scholar, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore.

**Research Guide, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore.

not enough... Wherever you go, no matter what the weather, always bring your own sunshine. Adopt the pace of *nature*: her secret is patience. In every walk with *nature* one receives far more than he seeks.

NATURE IS TOO MUCH WITH US

Many people celebrated nature. They loved nature and enjoyed being outdoors. Their writings were nature inspired. Shelley uses the wind and nature as an inspiration for this ode. Just as leaves are scattered as the autumn wind blows. Shelley saw the west wind as a symbol of true inspiration. Shelley wants people to realize that the wind can be a preserver and a destroyer, "Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere; Destroyer and Preserver; hear, O hear!" This is not just a gentle breeze it is ferocious, blowing things around. We are being infected with diseases. It is also referring to the dead leaves decomposing on the ground. Society is just out to get material things. They do not care about nature and how they are damaging it. Shelley was concerned about nature and the effects that we have on it. Just like in life, there may be dark and dismal times in life but there is always tomorrow. Every day comes with a new start and everything that lives must die. That is a part of the life cycle. These are connecting life and death.

Like many other Romantic writers, Wordsworth saw nature as an emblem of God and the divine nature of him. His poetry celebrates the beauty and spiritual nature of the world. In *The World Is Too Much With Us*, Wordsworth contrasts nature with the world and their lust for materialism. They were just worried about the "getting and spending". This sounds just like our world today. So many people are caught up in materialistic things that they do not stop and look around at the simple beauties of the world. They do not even stop long enough to hear the birds sing. He is criticizing the world for the Industrial Revolution. They were absorbing themselves in materialism and distancing themselves from nature. We, as a society, have so many modern conveniences today that most of us do not rely on the earth for any of our needs. Most people do not use the earth as a natural resource.

Tagore identifies the "formless" within the forms. Nature, Man and God form a Trinity and exist as a whole unit. One cannot exist without the other two units. In the sea of life one has to face many storms and waves of trials, troubles and tribulations. Tagore well understood that in his efforts to adjust to the demands of the society man had become complex. His complex nature deviated from the simple man which God had made in his own image. With complexity he lost his humanity and loss of humanity made him forget his origin from the Divine. In man's need to fulfil his social obligations, he drifted away from Nature resulting in loss of tranquility: loss of tranquility led to development of turmoil within the self. In this struggle to emerge out of the turmoil and get tranquility man forgets to look within himself. Where the Divine dwells, along with whom dwells an inner tranquility for which man seeks outside himself.

THE NATURE OF THE PSALMS

During his lifetime, David composed sixteen psalms that related to different life situations. He became the poet of Isra'el. Therefore, during the study of the Life of David, several of his poems are included to give the reader the full picture of David's feelings at that time.

1. **Religious lyric poetry: The Psalms** are the largest collection of ancient lyrical poetry in existence. Lyric poetry directly expresses the individual emotions of the poet. Many psalms address ADONAI directly with their poetic expressions of petition and praise. They reveal all the religious feelings of the faithful – fears, doubts, and tragedies, as well as triumphs, joys, and hopes. The psalmists frequently drew on their experiences for examples of people's needs and God's goodness and mercy. Singing of past deliverances in easily remembered

didactic poetry provided support and comfort for believers in their hours of trial, as well as warning them against unbelief and disobedience. In this regard, the psalmists rejoiced over the Torah as their guide for conduct and direction for prosperity.

2. **Expressive language:** Awareness is achieved through the use of images, symbols, figures, emotional vocabulary, and multiple meanings. The imagery used in the Psalms is earthy, for the Israelites were largely a nation of farmers and shepherds living in the countryside close to nature. It was also militaristic, because they were often involved in wars to conquer the Land, and defensive wars against the ravages of empires that at times were part of the discipline. Consequently, to fully understand the poetic expressions they used, one must understand the people's cultural experiences.

This expressive language enabled the psalmists to convey several things at the same time. Because the truth was presented in word pictures, it evoked in the reader the feelings that the poet had when he wrote the lines; it excited in the reader the emotional significance of the words as well as their intellectual meanings. Several headings are used to designate the types of psalms in the book, Hebrew word *mizor*, translated psalms, heads 57 psalms. It signifies a song accompanied by stringed instruments. A *maskilis* probably a soul-searching poem, and 13 psalms are labeled with this heading. The Hebrew word *sir*, translated song, is used 12 times. The designation *miktam*, is found with 6 psalms. Its meaning is disputed and undetermined. The

3. **Meter:** The fact that the Psalms are artistic, means that they display in fuller measure and with greater frequency the components of artistic form, including patterns, design, unity, balance, harmony, and variation. The psalmists were imaginative and creative; they regarded their artistry as crucial to the meaning of its content. Meter is basic to the pattern of poetry. Hebrew poetry certainly has meter and rhythm, but it is not possible as yet to determine that meter with any degree of certainty. Most commentators are satisfied to count the number of accented Hebrew words or word units in a line as the basis of their poetical analysis. Because only a few psalms consistently follow a metrical pattern of accented words, attempts to reconstruct the text according to preconceived or novel ideas of meter are unconvincing.
4. **Parallelism:** The predominant feature of Hebrew poetic structure is the repetition of meaning in parallel expressions. . . or poetic parallelism. The biblical verse of poetry normally has two or more of these parallel units. The relationship between the parallel units must be studied to determine the emphasis of a verse as a whole. The words are not meant to rhyme, but are parallel in thought
5. **Stylistic arrangements:** Apart from a few psalms, the arrangement of lines of poetry into stanza or strophes is not common. Psalm 119 is perhaps the best known for this, for it divided into 22 strophes of eight verses each. A few psalms have a refrain to mark out their strophic arrangements (42:5, 11, 43:5, 57:5 and 11, 80:3, 7 and 19 for example).
6. **Music and melody:** In the praises, both Isra'el's music and musical instruments are mentioned in the Psalms. Cymbals, wind instruments, and string instruments of various types are named, showing that musical accompaniment must have been on a grand scale. Also, many times the headings of the Psalms say for the director of music, occurring 55 times.

Several psalms also include melody indicators. To the tune of the lilies is found with Psalms 45, 60, 69, and 80. To the doe of the morning occurs in Psalm 22. To the silent dove of the distances is the heading of Psalm 56. Do not destroy occurs in Psalms 57-59 and 75. Since the word *al-mahalath* in Psalm 53 is related to the Hebrew word for sick or sickness it has been suggested that what is in view is a prayer for a sick person. The meaning of *al-mahalath leannoth* in Psalm 88 is disputed and uncertain.¹⁶

VIEWS OF PSALMIST ABOUT NATURE

Most psalms are examples of lyrical poetry. The 150 psalms contained in the book of Psalms deal with different subject matter. These can be grouped into nine general categories. There are many Psalms which comment on the greatness of God as creator of all things and the majestic results of His handiwork. These are referred to as Nature psalms. Sit near a tree and reflect on what you fill your mind with as you go about your daily life. Man who delights continually in God's law and his Word and so he easily and naturally bears much fruit. "He is like a tree planted by the streams of water" and "his delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night" (Ps. 1:2-3). The psalmist comments on God's greatness as it is displayed in His creation and man. He introduces these two manifestations of God's glory in verses 1-2. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained. (Ps. 8:3-4) Take a walk on a path. Let David's words in Psalm 16 inspire: "I have set the Lord before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body will also rest secure... You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand" (Ps. 16: 8-11).

Look up at the sky as you contemplate Psalm 19 and the sweetness of God's personal message of love for you. This is an interesting psalm because it demonstrates two categories of Psalms in one single poem: a Nature psalm in verses 1-6, and a Word psalm in verses 7-14. The author is balancing two ideas in this poem in order to make one point. In verses 1-6 he shows that man can acquire knowledge of God through the physical universe and uses a Nature style psalm to say this. Especially meditate on these words: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech... In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun, which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion, like a champion rejoicing to run his course" (Ps. 19: 1-2, 4-5). The LORD [is] my shepherd; I shall not want. (Ps. 23:1-6) Perhaps you've been busy or dry lately. Let the fountain speak to your soul. Listen to the Spirit in its splashing waters. Attune your life rhythm to its rhythm; go with its flow. Meditate on "We feast on the abundance of your house; you give drink from your river of delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light" (Ps. 36: 8-9). Let the flowing waters help you to say with the Psalmist: "Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me. By the day the Lord directs his love, at night his song is with me" (Ps. 42:7-8).

Find a rock – a large one to sit on (or near) or a small one to hold. In his desert trials David often found shelter, safety, rest, and prayer in a cave in the rocks. Perhaps in some area you're feeling unsure or unstable, fearful or fickle. Open your heart to God and tell him just how you feel. Use the rock to meditate on Psalm 62. "My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation" (Ps. 62: 1-2). Meditate on Psalm 63 and take heart from the way that David's heart for God: "O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water" (Ps. 63:1). Let the heaven and earth praise him, the seas, and every thing that moveth therein. (Ps. 69:34)

Psalms 92 verses 12-14 would be true for you: "The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God. They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green." Look and listen for the birds. Notice how joyfully they sing! The same Father that cares for them cares for you. Let the birds lead you to give thanks and praise to God. With the birds and the angels of the heavens you are joining God's love song – he sings his love over you first! Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof. (Ps. 96:11-12). Again Ps. 102:25 says old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens [are] the work of thy hands. Meditate

The Idea of Education and Justice in Plato

Apurbo Kumar Roy*

In this article I wish to explore the role of education in making just social order in the prespective of the 'Republic'. In this article I shall first discuss the idea of education and then focus on the role of education on making just social order for justice in society. I proceed, now, to discuss the idea of education as offered by Plato. Plato has offered a system of education which is aimed at building up of an ideal state where justice shall prevail to maintain just order in a society. The objective of education, as conceived by Plato, in the ' Republic' is to offer a social system which shall be harmonious in nature. For Plato 'The ultimate end of all education is insight into the harmonious order (cosmos) of the whole world.'¹ A society shall be considered as harmonious when the relationship among the members of a society is cooperative and authentic. A relationship is considered as authentic in a society when each of members of a society respect others as a moral 'agent' in social interaction and interpersonal relationship. The purpose of education, for Plato, is to inculcate the values of social cooperation and social harmony in 'individual' and 'society'. For Plato, a society is comprised of different conflicting elements from the various strata of the hierarchically arranged social system and as such conflict of private interest among the members of a society is likely to take place if not obvious. Plato thought of education as a means to resolve the conflicts and establish harmony among the members of the society. Social

harmony can be established in society through revelation of the truth and the purpose of education, for Plato is revelation of the truth. Revelation of the truth of reality is what education should aimed at for the well - being of the society in general. Attainment of well - being can be possible through an education system which is inclusive and all- encompassing in nature. Let us now see how Plato has conceived of an educational system which shall be inclusive and all-encompassing in nature.

In the domain of philosophical discourse on education Plato may be considered as the first thinker to offer a systemic theory of education. Plato thought of an educational system which shall cultivate the morality and virtue in human beings so that an individual can become a good citizen of a just society. Plato's the *Republic* may be considered, in that sense, as an attempt to work out a sound and rational community where each of its members shall have that what is due to them. For such a community to come in existence, education must be considered as the central institution which shall ensure the existence of such community to become.

The thought of educational system as reflected in the ' Republic ' is comprised of metaphysical, epistemic, psychological and sociological elements. What seems to me as important for understanding of the theory of education of Plato, as available in the ' Republic ', is exposition of the metaphysical, epistemological, psychological and sociological elements, which are interwoven with it. Before proceeding to the theory of education of Plato I would like to focus on the inherent metaphysical epistemological psychological and sociological elements of the theory of education for understanding of the scheme of education which he intends to establish to reach at the goal of a just society.

In so far as the sociological elements in the theory of education in the Republic of Plato is concerned it is said that in writing his 'Republic' Plato was influenced by the socio-economic conditions of the then Athens very much. His childhood and youth were spent under the shadow of

*Associate Professor of Philosophy, Deshabandhu Mahavidyalaya, Chittaranjan, West Bengal and Research Fellow, Department of Philosophy, The University of Calcutta.

on the birds and on Psalm 104:1, 12, 28, 30: "Praise the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, you are very great... The birds of the air nest by the waters; they sing among the branches... When you open your hand, they are satisfied with good things... When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth." In Ps. 145:5 it is said, I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works.

CONCLUSION

The earth and nature is very important to our existence. We must do everything that we can to take the best care of it. We should really understand nature and the part that God plays in it. God created it and everything good in it. People are materialistic and do not slow down enough to enjoy the simple things in life. There are people of various hues of homogeneous nature and contrary attitudes, of strong men, and weak stand points. There are egregious women and indifferent men, loving wives and careless husbands, surrogate mothers and over-anxious fathers, They make an interesting picture of different shades". Nature psalms usually point to the creation as a whole or some part of it as a witness to God's wisdom, greatness and power. The negative physical effects of the natural calamities and man's poor stewardship of the environment has diminished the original glory of God's creation. However, we can still see God's presence in the mighty array of the heavens, and the revelation of Jesus Christ as the Son of God has become for us the new witness of not only God's power but His eternal purpose as well.

REFERENCES

- https://www.google.com/search?source=hp&ei=vBrAW86PIoLAjwT7_LPIBw&q=Nature&oq=Nature&gs
- <https://www.google.co.in/search?q=praying+a+psalm+in+its+natural+setting&oq>
- <https://www.google.co.in/search?ei=1j7AW7eAKISRjwSz5Ja4CQ&q=celebration+of+nature+in+literature&oq>
- <http://www.psalmsquotes.com/creation.htm>
- <https://jaymack.net/english/life-of-david-commentary/Ae-The-Nature-of-Psalms.php>