

## Inside Out: TENNYSON'S TREATMENT OF NATURE



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“Smoke is always directed upward and it is in no hurry any time. It looks as if the rivers are also contaminated by human tiredness.”

Among the Victorian poets, Tennyson's treatment of nature is unique. Neither is he like Arnold who wanders in the woods looking for the truth in nature nor does he paint nature like Browning with “pea for pea” exactitude to exalt the magnificence of God's grandeur. In Tennyson's dexterous delineation of nature, nature becomes more and more humane. In this writing, it is shown how he enlivens nature with human feelings in the poem “The Lotos Eaters”. He ascribes all the inner urges of tired soldiers into the external world. He projects the inside of the choric singers out into the external of dreamland of the lotus land. He skillfully builds a befitting anchorage for the band of exhausted sailors.

In the beginning, nature seems to be kind of weird or charmed to the readers. In this poem the tired sailors reach an island where it is always afternoon. The sun is setting and the moon is also there over their head. A number of streams are flowing down from the mountains towards the sea. On the peaks of the mountains there is old snow. The colour of the sand of this island is yellow. The land is somewhere covered with deep moss and there are galingales here and there. The area is encircled with pine and palm trees. The air is heavy with the dust of lotus fruit. In short it is a perfect place for those sailors to relish their leisure and rest their tired bones. It is after noon and, of course, is not

busy morning, nor pick-hour noon and nor the dead hours of night. Afternoon is a time when we long for some refreshment to be free from the strain of our business. In the afternoon the sailors reach the island:

In the afternoon they came unto a land,

In which it seemed always afternoon \*

The sailors likewise have reached the afternoon of their lives. In this stage, completing their prime, they want to retire from the strenuous march of life and they want to say goodbye from all sorts of responsibilities. They even have lost the courage of facing the reality. They are in confusion and they know that “confusion is worse than death”\*. The yellow colour of the sand stands for the sailor's diseased vitality and their broken will power. The land, at places, is covered with cool deep moss making a comfortable bed for a rest. Here the flow of the rivers is remarkably slow. It is compared to ‘downward smoke’. Smoke is always directed upward and it is in no hurry any time. It looks as if the rivers are also contaminated by human tiredness. They come down not only like smoke downward but they also in the course of their flow take rest, have pause and then go forward. They are like tired wayfarers who take some rest time and again:

And like a downward smoke, the slender stream

Anon the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams! ....\*.

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The enchanted sun is lingering in the west as if it is taking (a) rest on the horizon. The sunset is always a pleasing sight to enjoy. This protracted sunset, on the one hand, is providing the tired sailors with recreation and on the other, it has been touched by the feeling of tiredness and is taking rest itself. This prolonged sunset also procrastinates the evening to ensure long lasting enjoyment for the sailors. The wind that blows over here is not again very fast. It is slow and swooning as if it is panting wearily like the one who has dreamt a bad dream. Everything has caught an air of languor. In the eyes of those sailors, the sea also appears to be weary:

... .. , but evermore

Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,  
Weary the wondering fields of barren foam.\*

The moon is there to heighten the enjoyment and make the island perfect becoming refuge for those tired souls. Poppy flowers are drooping in sleep. The wind is laden with lotus dust. There is sweet music falling down from the blissful sky. People keep their eyes half shut; they do not talk but whisper and pass their time ruminating the happy memories of past life. The befitting setting allows and encourages them to retire from their hard life and indulge in affluent amenities over here avoiding adverse hateful dark blue sea. They like this becoming and lulling lap of nature in the midst of galin-gale, amaranth and molly. We find a very bounteous nature which sympathizes those tired soldiers and becomes a benevolent host for them.

Here the poet successfully projects the inner feelings of the soldiers into the external nature. The inner world of the exhausted sailors finds superb expression here where the objects of nature are touched and swayed by the emotion of these wondering wayfarers. Here the moon is stuck over the head in day time, the sun is lingering in the west, streams here 'fall and pause and fall', poppy flowers hang in sleep and soothing sound descends down from the heaven. All these make this island a dreamland, a befitting lulling lap for the sailors to rest their immeasurably tired bones. To conclude, in Tennyson's adept depiction of nature, nature is found to be more and more humane and sympathizing.

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