Nature as a holy book

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الباحث : غياث منهل هادي

Nature and natural beauty have always been the source of inspiration for poets and mystics. For them, nature is one of the most recurrent and celebrated themes. It is a significant symbol of the beauty, righteousness and freshness they are looking for. For religious and mystical poets, it is a reference to God, his beauty, and splendour. Comparing it with the scripture, Thomas Ryan, a Catholic priest and a mystical writer, says "The Bible is the 'small book', the world of nature is the 'big book'. Both reveal the Creator."[1]

For Muslim mystics, God does exist everywhere as the Qur'an states: "Wherever (Whithersoever) you turn, there is God's face" (Chapter (Surah): 2: Verse (Aayah): 115). God is the, spirit, the warmth and the "light of the heavens and of the earth"(ch.34: v.35).

Hence, mystical literature usually celebrates natural beauty, prefers contemplative life where the mystic lives alone with nature. This "nature mysticism" is a vision of nature as a revelation of the divine beauty of God.[2] Some mystics have gone so far as to see the actual existence of God in every part of the natural world. [3]

Mystical poetry speaks of the mystical experience and the mystical vision. It describes the feelings of love and yearning of the soul that sees God in everything around. This poetry speaks of a divine essence in everything in nature. The poet sees the beautiful natural phenomena as manifestations of the ultimate beauty of the Creator.

II

Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi, was born in the Andalusian city of Murcia, Spain in July 1165 A. D.[4] The social and cultural varieties, the beautiful, affluent nature of Andalusia, in addition to the

moderateness of the Sufi heritage of his family were significant elements in the building of the poet and the mystic character in him. As a youth, Ibn Arabi was interested in sports, hunting and literature.[5] He used to take long walks and journeys enjoying the beautiful, affluent nature of Andalusia. He used to say sensual verse on hunting and other subjects.[6] As a grown up, Ibn Arabi chooses to live a mystical, contemplative life enjoying the beautiful landscapes and journeying in different lands, mountains, deserts, oases and natural springs. He developed a keen contemplative, mystical character.

Ibn Arabi believes that the whole universe, including humankind, is a manifestation of the Utter Truth (God). In a famous prayer, he says, "Glory is to [God] who created things and who is their essence."[7] He believes that "God is never seen apart from things…. [8] For He is known by His own creatures. They clarify and embody His abstract and metaphysical attributes.

For Ibn Arabi, nature is the mirror he sees God through. It provokes his imagination and drives him to fall in love with the hidden truth behind its phenomena. The diversity and wild beauty of nature are miracles for Ibn Arabi. The perfect beauty of the natural world contrasts with the imperfection and ugly aspects of the human world. As a poet who seeks beauty everywhere, Ibn Arabi sees in the phenomenal beauty of nature an expression of the ultimate beauty of its Creator. In every natural phenomenon, he sees the hands of God, His greatness and beauty. This vision of God in everything is an obsession for the poet. In the **Diwan**, his larger poetic work, he states that, "Other than His face my eye never saw/and my ear heard nothing but His speech."[9]

For Ibn Arabi God is manifested in nature. He exists everywhere around us, as the Qur'an assists this: "Wherever you turn, there is God's face" (Qur'an 2:115) His love for God is the power that had him pursue his lifelong journey in the mystical path. Throughout his poetry, especially in the **Turjuman Al-Ashwaq (translator of yearnings)**, his major poetic work, nature is one of the most recurrent themes. It speaks of nature as a symbol and a reflection of the beauty of God. The poet uses symbolism to express abstract ideas in tangible, concrete things. It is an advanced form of metaphor in which a red rose could stand for the abstract idea of love and so on. The mystical poet, as a sensitive and a creative being, approaches reality from a poetic and symbolic angle. For him, nature and every natural phenomenon mean more than what others perceive. They are symbolic expressions of transcendental facts.

Ibn Arabi states his love for the Divine in a symbolic language using the convention of love and nature poetry as a model. He finds God in everything created by Him; in the vivid nature and in the virtuous beloved. He uses the symbol of the beautiful nature as a manifestation of God's beauty.[10] Avoiding abstract language, he tries to frame his meanings with live and vivid imagery and charge them with the intense emotion of love poetry. The poet stops looking for God in the abstract. God is Manifest in every entity of the world, and before that, He is within. The meaning of the poem in this method is two-level, i.e. the surface level, which is a clear and direct love poetry, and the hidden meaning of the transcendental, divine love. The poet believes that the two complete each other. The significance of both meanings is impossible to deny in the following lines:

She is a rose that springs up from tears, a narcissus that sheds a marvelous shower.

And when thou wouldst fain gather her, she lets down, to conceal herself, a scorpion-like tress on each side of her temples.

The sun rises when she smiles. O Lord, how bright are these bubbles on her teeth.[11]

The surface meaning is intended to provoke the imagination through the beautiful language. In the above lines, the image of the smiling beloved linked to the rising sun is a conventional image in love poetry. However, the deeper meaning of this image indicates a mystical experience of divine revelation, where the images of the "smiling beloved" and the "shining sun" are manifestations of God, of His beauty and His love for humanity. Here, natural beauty is combined with human love in order to reach up to a divine meaning.

The world of nature is a source of inspiration for Ibn Arabi. His realization of the symbolic value of nature in his poetry is the fort he uses to avoid the "eventual death" of abstract poetry.[12] He looks beyond the surface meanings of things. He may find in a drop of water a summary for the whole universe.[13]A beautiful landscape is- for him- a clear manifestation of the Divine Presence.[14] He finds God

In a meadow whose flies sang and hummed and a warbling bird
then answered them joyously.

Soft were its sides and soft its breeze and the clouds were flashing
and thundering,

And raindrops were descending from the crevices of the clouds like
tears shed by a passionate lover parted from her he loves.[15]

This vivid nature is not a passing phenomenon for Ibn Arabi. The meadow, the joyous bird, the soft breeze, the thunder and the raindrops are clear symbols of the Manifest God, the Creator and "the Essence of things."[16]

Nature is the face of God, flashing (lightning) and thundering are the clearest expressions of His great and beautiful presence. They resemble the mystical vision in that they only last for a while and combine the greatness and beauty of God. The descending of raindrops from the clouds symbolizes the descent of divine knowledge and divine love from God to the aspiring humanity. The image of the thunder, lightning, and rain, as symbols of the greatness of God and His beauty and the descent of His love and mercy to the world, is the topic of another poem:

A lightning-cloud gleamed at Dhat al-Ada with light flashing over the
plain therof,

And the thunder of its secret converse cracked, and its raincloud let fall
copious showers.[17]

This combination of beauty (lightning, light), majesty (thunder), and mercy (rain), is a sign of the divine essence beyond these phenomena. The splendour and awe these natural phenomena cause, are signs of God's beauty and majesty. Men should glean God's beauty as they enjoy the beauty of light and lightning; they should fear His anger as they fear thunder. Achieving that kind of relation with God, His mercy will "let fall copious showers."[18] Nature is not approached apart from the love context of the **Turjuman Al-Ashwaq (translator of yearnings).** The human love theme is put in harmony with nature in all its phenomena, and the female symbol for Ibn Arabi is a reference to "the

hidden and flowing femininity in the world."[19] Lightning and light are the most recurrent nature symbols in the **Turjuman**. Usually they are linked to the image of the smiling beloved. The beauty and the splendour they express, signify the beauty and splendour of God:

The sun rises when she smiles. O lord, how bright are these bubbles on her teeth!

Night appears when she lets fall her black, luxuriant, and tangled hair.[20]

Hunting beautiful and suggestive imagery, Ibn Arabi looks for God's oneness, His beauty in the variety and contrast of created things. The paradox of day and night, the smiling teeth and the dark hair speak of God's oneness in variety:

If she unveils her mouth, she will show to thee what sparkles like the sun in unchanging radiance.

The whiteness of her forhead is the sun's, the blackness of [her hair] is the night's: most wondrous of forms is she- a sun and a night together!

Through her we are in daylight during the night and in the night of her hair at noon.[21]

The poet finds God in the beautiful smile of the beloved. By "unveiling her mouth," he refers to God's unveiling His beauty to the eyes of the poet. In the paradox of her white forehead and black hair, likened to day and night, the poet refers to the manifest- unseen, paradoxical (or twofold) nature of God. These paradoxes are hard to assimilate by reason, but a mystical heart can combine antitheses and create compromises.

In addition to the symbols of light, darkness, lightning and thunder, day and night, the poem for Ibn Arabi is a hymn of the creation, a prayer, a song and a celebration of the world's unity, beauty and the God present in it. Ibn Arabi envisions the world as an emanation of God.[22] The different

aspects of existence are manifestations of the divine attributes and the holy names of God.[23] Beauty is the manifestation of His name the Beautiful. This explains why man loves beauty by instinct. This love is an expression of man's instinctual love for God, the creator and essence of beauty.[24] Thus God bestows beauty, among His holy attributes, upon the world of nature, "A perfection followed by greatness, and a beauty, /So the whole universe has won the prize."[25]

Employing nature's beauteous imagery, and love's sincere feelings and sentiments, Ibn Arabi achieves a unification of nature and the human world by showing that the two are two faces of one path, the path of God. The infinite beauty of God is manifested in vivid nature, and the poet exults of his union with that nature:

I become a nightingale once, rapturous by an honourable being I loved.

I aspire to the essence of beauty, its sound, I go singing to the nicest orchard.

In these forms, I look nice, but cruel and severe in the form of a hawk.[26]

In the first line above, the poet is a nightingale singing delightfully of the love of his Beloved. He looks in the aspects of nature for manifestations of the Essence of beauty. The last line speaks of the beauty of God's greatness. The hawk or falcon is a symbol of greatness in the same way that the nightingale and the orchard are symbols of God's beauty manifested in nature. They are symbols of God's holy names and various attributes in Islam like, the Merciful, the Loving, and the Great, the Strong…etc. Thus, as a lover of God, the poet is between the fear of God's greatness and the love of His beauty. He is aspiring for that beauty and observing the values and demands of God's path. The poet rejoices on his union with nature as a union with God.

III

Gerard Manley Hopkins lived a short intense spiritual life. He was born in Stratford, Essex, in 1844 to a middle-class cultured Anglican family, his premature death was in 1889, at the age of forty-five.[27] At school, he was interested in literature and art. He has also written some poems celebrating nature and natural beauty. After school he joined the University of Oxford, Balliol College, where he developed his ideas about beauty, art, poetry as well as religion. Leaving Oxford, he decided to become a Catholic priest and to join the Jesuit Order. He dedicated everything to his spiritual life and stopped writing poetry for seven years. In 1885, he resumed writing poetry for religious goals mainly. The poetry he has written is marked by maturity in vision and celebration of nature and natural objects as the reflections of God's greatness, beauty, and omnipresence.

He was born in the age of industrialism and expanding business.[28] This expansion of business and materialism drove people far from nature. Industry started to destroy nature and occupy beautiful landscapes, wild forests,..etc. The pantheistic, mystical approach to nature found in the Romantic poetry of the early nineteenth century started to disappear by the middle of the century. From his very childhood, Hopkins was interested in nature where he used to take long walks and keenly observe beautiful landscapes, which turns to be a lifelong habit for him. W. H. Gardner, a biographer, records that as a child, Hopkins loved to "climb a tree and look out at the top, feeling close to the sky."[29]

Thus, his approach to nature and art is marked by a religious orientation, i.e., to see a religious significance to every natural phenomena and to serve a religious goal in every piece of art or poetry he thinks of. In an early school poem, "The Escorial", he writes

> There play'd the virgin mother with her Child
>
> In some broad palmy mead and saintly smiled,
>
> And held a cross of flowers in purple bloom
>
> … (Poems, p. 16.)[30]

The beautiful nature, here serves as a setting or a background to the religious meaning. It is in the beautiful meadow and the cross of flowers that Hopkins finds and expresses the religious meaning he intends his lines to carry.

In Oxford, Hopkins was influenced by the Aesthetic Movement, which was a kind of an aftermath to the Romantic poets' worship and idealization of nature. Influenced by John Ruskin (1819-1900), the famous thinker and art-critic of Victorian England, Hopkins held that "the truth of nature is part of the truth of God."[31] Since beauty relates to the nature of God, and because it is the reflection of God's nature in visible things, the beautiful is a symbol of God. In this way, Hopkins followed Ruskin in viewing nature as a 'holy book."[32] The poet develops a religious aesthetics that enables him to view nature and Man as revelatory of God. He expresses this when he states in a sermon: "Neither do I deny that God is so deeply present to everything…that it would be impossible for Him but for His infinity not to be identified with them."[33] This vision of the world as "charged with the grandeur of God", is a central theme in Hopkins's poetry. (Poems, p.70).

Nature is an essential part of Hopkins religious (theological) aesthetics which is based on his vision that God exists in everything: "God's utterance of himself in himself is God the Word, outside himself is this world. This world then is Word, expression, news of God. Therefore its end, its purpose, its purport, its meaning, is God and its life or work to name and praise him."[34] Hopkins's poetry attests to his vision of God as present in the world.[35] According to Hopkins, God can be found in man's immense desire for beauty.[36] As a poet, he seeks beauty in everything around himself. However, earthly beauty is not the goal of life for him.[37] It is a sign of "the great heaven above." He feels that a deep religious meaning that he cannot understand is beyond earthly beauty. In an essay written in his Oxford years, he writes, "I am sure there is in the higher forms of beauty, at least I seem to feel, something mystical, something I don't know how to call…"[38] Hopkins's quest for spiritual certitude, his attempt to answer, in his own poetical way, the question of anxiety of his age, is a return to nature, a search for purity, spiritual virginity and a journey to God.

An important early poem of Hopkins, "Rosa Mystica" speaks symbolically of the sacred aspects of nature. Nature, in this poem is a maternal being, a mother of the poet's soul. The theme of this poem, one can say, is finding the mystery of the world in little things like roses, trees, and other natural objects. These objects are interpreted to be representative symbols of divine, metaphysical things related to God and other religious figures in Christianity. The rose, the tree and the blossom are expressions of their own beauty and metaphysical truths beyond themselves.

THE Rose in a mystery'-where is it found?

Is it anything true? Does it grow upon ground?

It was made of earth's mould, but it went from men's eyes…(Poems, p. 50)

The refrain of the poem indicates the symbolic meaning of the rose, "In the gardens of God, in the daylight divine / I shall keep time with thee, Mother of mine."(Poems, p. 50) "Mother" here can refer to nature as well as to the Virgin Mary. The second line of the refrain, which changes repeatedly, clarifies the mystery. The rose, the daylight, the time and the garden are things of this world, "of earth's mould", however they also belong to the mystical, or divine world the poet is experiencing through his vision of the rose. He clarifies that in the fourth stanza, "Mary, the virgin, well the heart knows. / She is the mystery, she is that Rose."(emphasis added) (Poems, p.50) Mary is the rose, the tree, but more significantly, Jesus, the Blossom of that rose, is the goal of the poet. The refrain with its changing second line asks, "In the gardens of God…/ Shew me thy son, Mother, Mother of mine." (Poems, p. 52.) Then, the poet asks for unity with that divine tree, "In the gardens of God…/ Make me a leaf in thee, Mother of mine." (Poems, p.52) Nature for Hopkins is the "garden of God", where His sweetness, beauty, grace and charity reside. It is the heaven on earth:

The breath of it bathes the great heaven above,

In grace that is charity, grace that is love.

To thy breast, to thy rest, to thy glory divine

Draw me by charity, Mother of Mine. (Poems, p.52)

Hopkins's poems celebrate the beauty and omnipresence of God. In the lines above, he finds heaven on earth, seeing in the beauty of nature a divine motherly being that combines grace, charity, and love. The poet wants a return to nature, to the warm breast, and the divine glory.

In most of his poetry, Hopkins is joyful, hopeful, and he rejoices the presence of God in nature and man, asking men to "heed" the God in them and to give up worldliness and follow the path of God. He loves nature and celebrates its beauty all over his poetry. The beauty and greatness of nature mirror the beauty and majesty of God, the Creator. Hopkins believes that nature is a holy book compared to the Bible. Both reveal the Creator."[39] Natural beauty, for him, is not an end by itself. Instead, it is a means to see and reflect on the hidden-permanent, divine truth in its phenomena. By celebrating and praising the beauty of nature, he praises God. In many poems, he is fascinated by the static aspects of nature like flowers opening and fading, sky-scapes and landscapes, as well as the vivid and dynamic aspects of nature like storms, high winds, lightning and thunder. In "Spring" he writes

NOTHING is so beautiful as spring--

When weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush;

Thrush's eggs look little low heavens, and thrush

Through the echoing timber does so rinse and wring

The ear, it strikes like lightnings to hear him sing…(Poems, p.71)

This beauty, vivid and static, speaks of the divine essence, of the garden of Eden, which is the source of "all this juice and all this joy" of worldly beauty. In his poetry, the poet contemplates simple objects like flowers, birds, trees, streams and landscapes to get to the very presence and energy of God himself. Hopkins "found a mystical significance in Nature, he went so far as he actually saw God in Nature."[40] In this sense, "all of nature was sacramental to him. It was the visible sign of an invisible, creative energy that truly revealed the Creator." [41] Reflecting on the significant place of nature and man's due vocation in his vision, Hopkins writes:

> The sun and the stars shining glorify God. They stand where he placed them, they move where he bid them. 'The heavens declare the glory of God.' They glorify God, but they do not know it. The birds sing to him, the thunder speaks of his terror; the lion is like his strength. The sea is like his greatness, the honey [is] like his sweetness; they are something

> like him, they make him known, they tell of him, they give him glory, but they do not know they do, they do not know him, they never can… [42]

Amidst nature and natural beings, only man "can know God, can mean to give Him glory," therefore it is the duty of man to celebrate the beauty of God in natural things.[43]

Hopkins always sees the beauty of nature as a reflection, manifestation, and the best evidence of God's beauty. God should be extremely beautiful to be able to create such a great natural beauty. The poet finds a heaven in a wild flower, "I do not think I have ever seen anything more beautiful than the bluebell I have been looking at. I know the beauty of our Lord by it."[44] The world of nature becomes a path the poet takes to reach to God. The rapture and joyfulness of a mystical experience occupies the mood of "God's Grandeur", one of the most rapturous and ecstatic of Hopkins's poems. "God's Grandeur" opens and ends with a sense of spiritual illumination and rapture. The octave (the first eight lines of the sonnet) starts with a metaphorical expression of a mystical vision of the world spiritually filled up, charged or electrified with the grandeur of God:

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.

It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;

It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil

Crushed. (Poems, p. 70.)

The first line, carrying the whole idea of the sonnet, combines biblical allusion to a contemporary scientific metaphor. The Nineteenth Psalm states that "the heavens declare the glory of God."[45] The poet says that God's grandeur is like electricity which is there in everything, although unseen. Man needs only to "look" carefully to grasp that presence and to see that grandeur. The poet holds that "All things are charged with love, are charged with God, and if we know how to touch them-give off sparks, take fire, yield drops and flow, ring and tell of [H]im."[46]

God's love of humanity is the energy that permeates, "charges" and lightens the world. It is the "instress", the linking-together force that unites the world and gives it meaning and brings it back to

God. In this poem, the poet seems to have "know[n] how to touch" these things and the spiritual charge has "flame[d] out" through the poem itself. The first line is an epiphany, a moment of extreme illumination. After this experience is delivered, the poet feels relieved and able to use similes and metaphors to elaborate and show instances and details.

Stated in a current of images, the glory of God is manifested in two ways: sometimes it appears as a sudden brilliance, lightning, or glints of light from a shaken foil (or tinsel). At other times, it appears over a period of time like the oil from the crushed olives that slowly oozes out and gathers into a thick pool. The complicated simile in the third line is another biblical reference. The oil of the crushed olive is gathered to give light. In John (8:12) Jesus says "I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."[47] At the same time the word "Crushed" may suggest Christ's crucifixion and sacrifice. For as olives are crushed to give oil, Christ's sacrifice is the only way to give light to this world, to charge it with love, to charge it with God.

After the ecstasy of the first three lines, the poet turns to man, the prime of God's creation, questioning the role man has chosen. The poet is surprised why man ignores God's greatness and why he does not lead the path of God. Yet, he gives his answers:

Why do men then now not reck his rod?

Generations have trod, have trod, have trod;

And all is smeared with trade; bleared with toil.. (Poems,p.70.)

God is personified as a king with his rod, but men do not acknowledge God's rule. Instead of treading the path of God, man chooses the path of materialism, "trade" and "toil." The onomatopoeic line "[g]enerations have trod, have trod, have trod" brings this movement of humanity into life through the treading sound movement. It is a marching toward materiality in which man spoils everything:

And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with

toil;

And wears man's smudge and shares man's smell:

the soil

Is bare now, nor can foot feel, being shod. (Poems, p.70.)

These lines present another current of images and metaphors related to man's world. In these images, Hopkins gives a critical account of the industrial world he lives in. Industry is consuming and drying up the natural energy. Nature is subjected to man's greed and loses its freshness, its fertility and its productivity. All this happens because man has lost his spiritual values that connect him to God. Man's eyes are bleared, he is unable to see his right way well. The poem presents a kind of conflict between the corrupted material world and the beautiful world of nature.

The sestet (the final six lines of the sonnet) brings the reader back to nature to renew faith and regain the rapture of the beginning: "And for all this, nature is never spent."(Poems, p. 70) The reason for this renewal capacity within nature is God, "the dearest freshness deep down things." The sun that goes down in the western sky will rise again at the dawn of another day, from the East. This could be interpreted as an implication that the materialism of the western world (or Britain) will set down, and humanity (the world) will renew itself spiritually by means of the second coming of Christ. The reason for this relief is the poet's belief that God is taking care of the world. The poem ends with another mystical vision of the Holy Ghost brooding over the world like a dove (or a hen) with its warm breast brooding over its young ones in its nest. The sonnet closes with this sense of spiritual warmth and certitude. The world is protected by God with his great love for humanity.

Significantly, the poem is one of Hopkins's best achievements in the integration of form and content. Its imagery, its sound movement (Hopkins meant his poems mainly to be read aloud) and its rhythmic structure all carry its very content. The poem flashes in its imagery when it speaks of God's sudden manifestation, lightning, or "shining from a shook foil." It treads heavily when it speaks of the devastating movement of the treading generations of mankind. It finally shines with light and warmth with rhythmic stability when it speaks of Christ's second coming from the east and God's warm brooding over the world.

The conflict between man and nature that occupies many of Hopkins's poems is settled finally within a moment of revelation where the two complete each other. One of his most enthusiastic and ecstatic poems, "Hurrahing in Harvest" celebrates a mystical moment of revelation:

Summer ends now; now, barbarous in beauty….

I walk, I lift up heart, eyes,

Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our Saviour…

And the azurous hung hills are his world-wielding shoulder

Majestic--as a stallion stalwart, very-violet-sweet!—

These things, these things were here and but the beholder

Wanting… (Poems, pp. 74-75)

He envisions everything to be created in Christ, Christ's nature as the original pattern [inscape] of creation."[48] Hopkins says that one simply has to look at the beauty of nature to see the beauty of Christ. The image of the "azurous hung hills" suggests a contact between heaven, (the azurous sky) and the earth,(the hung hills). Those hills are seen by the poet as Christ's world holding shoulders. But this sweetness, this beauty of nature, the poet is saying, is incomplete without the beholder's (i.e. man's) appreciation. It is when nature and man get together that love is born, and it is born in a flash (like 'shining from a shook foil' in "God's Grandeur").[49] Filled with this love, the heart seems to "acquire wings, and man, not wishing to remain on earth, feels the urge to leap up to heaven pushing the earth from under his feet."[50]

Thus the poem concludes with man rejoicing in the beauty of nature and gleaning the holy presence in it.

IV

For Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi and Gerard Manley Hopkins, God reveals himself in nature. Nature becomes a holy book and they seem to ask man to pay more respect, to remove his "intellectual sandals," as it were, in the presence of nature.[51]The poets view God to be everywhere around themselves: in meadows, trees, birds, as well as in man's world. The images of lightning and the light, with its scriptural allusion, are common symbols to the presence of God in their poetry. They are consistent marks of God's beauty and splendour.

To conclude, in their poetry, the two poets celebrate the universal idea of God being present in everything. Their notion of beauty as a divine attribute is related to their instinctual love of beauty and the connection between beauty and righteousness or Godliness. The poetry of the two is a glorification of God, a celebration of His omnipresence and beauty. The theme of many of their poems is the assertion of God's place in the world. Nature for them is not empty but filled with spiritual power. The natural beings are signs of God's majesty and beauty. The poets feel the presence of God; they see Him in everything He has made.

For Ibn Arabi, nature is more symbolic, it is a reflection of the beloved's beauty. In his poetry nature is always a symbol of the human beloved, who is another symbol of the divine. We have this three dimension vision of nature; man; and the divine. The world of nature relates to the human world which relates to the divine. This makes the world of nature the setting of the poet's journey to God.

Hopkins's poetry indicates that man is removed from God by the artificial world he has surrounded himself with. More significantly, man can go back to God only by going back to nature and witnessing the divine presence in its various phenomena. With Hopkins it might be said that nature is more real for him. It is always there, nevertheless; it signifies transcendental meanings. With Hopkins, nature is compared to the incomplete world of man. Its purity and virginity is a continuous reference to man's shortcomings and lack of perfection.

In this way, poetry for the two poets is a quest for inner peace and spiritual certitude. It is a way to give their hearts more freedom to contact God more intimately, to purify their soul, as in a prayer, from everything other than God. At the same time, their poetry is a sermon for human beings, a call for humanity to go back to nature, to its spiritual being, and to "reck the rod" of God, as Hopkins says in "God's Grandeur." The poets' vision may be described as a nature-man-God vision. They seem hold that man's life means nothing without appreciating the spiritual values the natural world shows.

At the same time, nature is incomplete without man. It is a holy book that needs a pious, keenly observing and self conscious reader that appreciates its value.

NOTES

[1] Thomas Ryan, ed., **Hopkins: the Mystic Poets** (Woodstock: Skylight Paths Publishing**,** 2004) 3.

[2] ibid.

[3] ibid 5, 6.

[4] Asin Placius**, Ibn Arabi: His Life and Doctrine,** translated from Spanish into Arabic by Abd Al-Rahman Badawi, (Qairo: The Anglo-Egyptian Library, 1965) 5.

[5] Placius 6.

[6] Abd Al-Mun'im Al-Jiboury, **Ibn Arabi Sha'iran (Ibn Arabi as a Poet**) (Baghdad: Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, the University of Baghdad, College of Arts, 1993) 10-11.

[7] Ibrahim Bayumi Madkoor, ed., "Wahdat Al- Wujud Between Ibn Arabi and Spinoza" **Muhiyiddin Ibn Arabi: Al-kitab Al-Tidhkari (the Memorial Book**) (Cairo: Al-Katib Al-Arabi Publishing House, 1969) 370.

[8] Aatif Jawdat Nasr, **Al- Ramz Al-Shi'ri ind Al- Sufiyah (the Poetic Symbol in Sufism)** (Beirut: Al-Andalus and Al-Kindi presses, 1978), 150.

[9] Ibn Arabi, **Diwan Ibn Arabi** (Cairo: Bulaq, 1855) 123. All subsequent quotations from the **Diwan** will be taken from this version, translated by the researcher.

[10] According to 'Aatif J. Nasr 198. Although Ibn Arabi didn't state this clearly, she sometimes stands for God himself. Nasr 143.

[11] Ibn Arabi **Turjuman Al-Ashwaq (translator of yearnings) Al-Ashwaq,** 111.

[12] Dr. Hikmat Al-Awsi, a scholar, quoted in Hamidah Saleh Al-Baldawi, **Al-Shi'r Al-Sufi fi Al-Andalus (The Sufi Poetry in Andalusia)** (Baghdad: Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Baghdad, College of Arts, 1990)108.

[13] Nasr Ad-din Al-Bahra "A Poet Whose Religion is Love" **Al-Turath Al-Arabi Quarterly,** No. 80 (July 2000)10.

[14] Ibn Arabi, **Dhaka'ir**, 154.

[15] Ibn Arabi, **Turjuman Al-Ashwaq (translator of yearnings),** 102.

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[17] Ibn Arabi, **Turjuman Al-Ashwaq (translator of yearnings),** 116.

[18] Ibid 116.

[19] Al-Jiboury 110.

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[21] ibid 123.

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[27] Ramji Lall, **Gerard Manley Hopkins** (New Delhi: Rama Brothers Indi PVT. LTD., 2008.) 1.

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[29] W. H. Gardner**, Gerard Manley Hopkins: A Study of Poetic Idiosyncrasy** (London: Oxford University Press,1969) 8.

[30] Gerard Manley Hopkins, **Poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins**, W. H. Gardner, ed.(Oxford: the University Press, 1956) 16. All subsequent quotations from Hopkins's poetry will be taken from this version.

[31] Philip A. Balinger, **The Poem as Sacrament: A Theological Aesthetics of G. M. Hopkins** (Leuven: Peters Press, 2000**)** 33. See also 25-59.

[32] ibid.

[33] Quoted in Ballinger 147.

[34] Quoted in Ballinger 235.

[35] Ryan, 11.

[36] Lall, 70.

[37] John Pick, "Introduction" **Immortal Diamond: Studies in Gerard Manley Hopkins,** ed. Norman S. J. Weyand (New York: Sheed & Ward. 1949) xxiii.

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[38] Gerard Manley Hopkins, **The Collected Works of Gerard Manley Hopkins**, ed. Lessly Higgins, vol. iv (Oxford: the University Press, 2006.) 146.

[39] Ryan 3.

[40] Lall 203.

[41] John H. Armstrong, "How Can Poetry Express Nature and Incarnation Sacramentally," retrieved from:<http://johnharmstrong.typepad.com/john_h_armstrong_/2009/12/gerald-manley-hopkins-how-poetry-can-express-nature-and-incarnation-sacramentally.html>,on 13/12/ 2009.

[42] Quoted in Ballinger 235-236.

[43] ibid

[44] Laurann de Verteuil, "Reviving God: a study of Matthew Arnold and Gerard Manley Hopkins' religious belief." <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/arnold/deverteuil.html> (retrieved on 12/2/ 2009).

[45] Psalm 19, New Testament: The New King James , (National Publishing Company, 1987), 486.

[46] Quoted in Ballinger 228.

[47] John (8:12), New Testament 184.

[48] Verteuil

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