PERSPECTIVES OF NATURE IN
WALTER DELA MARE'S EARLY POETRY
(1901 to 1918)

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Philosophy
IN
ENGLISH

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ALIGARH
1987
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PREFACE
In this study entitled *Perspectives of Nature in Walter de la Mare's Early Poetry (1901 to 1918)*, my aim is to study de la Mare's early poetry with a view to explicating various perspectives of his treatment and attitude towards Nature. It is particularly interesting, for he wrote at a time (early twentieth century) when the divorce between man and Nature had already reached its climax, and instead of Nature socio-political ideas had become a source of inspiration for poetry. To the best of my knowledge this aspect of de la Mare's poetry has not so far received adequate attention from the poet's critics.

Only D.R. McCrosson in *Walter de la Mare (1968)*, and H.C. Duffin in *Walter de la Mare: A Study of His Poetry (1949)*; have touched upon this otherwise neglected aspect of de la Mare's poetry, and that too in not a detailed manner. Therefore, I chose this aspect for my M.Phil. dissertation. In the beginning I was rather discouraged for two reasons — paucity of critical material on de la Mare, and whatever critical books etc I could get they had either little or nothing; on the proposed subject. Consequently I had to depend largely on the text itself. This is perhaps the first attempt
of its kind in the form of a full-length study in which I have tried to explore various perspectives of Nature in de la Mare's early poetry. This may pave the way for undertaking a similar study of his Complete Poems (1969) in future.

My deep and sincerest gratitude is due to Dr. Masoodul Hasan, Professor, Department of English, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh; without whose benign and able guidance this work of mine would not have been possible. Thanks are also due to Professor H.C. Raizada, my teacher, for introducing me to Walter de la Mare for the first time; to Dr. A.R. Kidwal, Lecturer, Department of English, AMU, for sending me some very valuable critical material on the poet from Leicester (U.K.); and to Dr. Rizwanuddin Khan, Seminar Library Incharge, Department of English, AMU, for his moral and material support during the preparation of this dissertation. I also express my thanks to the staff members of Maulana Azad Library, AMU, Aligarh, and to Mr. Mohd Saleem Khan who has done the typing work with more than a professional interest.

ALIGARH

RAHATULLAH KHAN 16.9.87
CHAPTER I

NATURE IN ENGLISH POETRY BEFORE WALTER DELA MARE
Nature has never been wholly absent from poetry and English poetry is not an exception to it. It was there in Langland and Chaucer in the 14th century and it is also in the poetry of Ted Hughes in our own times. However, formally, the beginning of Nature-poetry in English is usually traced from the year 1726 when James Thomson arrived in London with the manuscript of "Winter" the first of the Seasons.\(^1\) He is a thorough naturalist as he records the pleasure, the sorrows and the daily doings of the rustics and the poor and frame around this picture of them the splendour and beauty of wild Nature. In fact it is Thomson who began in English "the poetry of the poor, the shepherd, the ploughman, the woodman, the farmer-statesman. And he recorded their life and work through Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter".\(^2\) He not only restored natural descriptions to poetry "but he made a new kind of it —— direct description of the

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2. Ibid., p. 46
doings and appearance of Nature, without any reference to man — for her own sake". 3

In Collins and Gray, however, Nature is painted as a background to human action, a secondary scene. They are linked back to the school of Dryden and Pope by a certain want of "Frank Naturalism", and therefore, even in their beautiful works a "prosaic note" is heard. For Gray was of the view that Nature is "the most graceful ornament of poetry, but not its subject".

But for the Romantic poets Nature was no longer something inanimate or merely a background to human activities. For them it was something animate which could influence human personality. They all loved and adored Nature in their own way, but in Wordsworth she found her most faithful priest. In his poetry he has an original philosophy and an individual view to propound. Wordsworth differs from other poets in the stress he puts on the moral influence of Nature on man. To him "she is a Presence not

merely capable of delightful ardor, but of elevating man by noble discipline".  

Unlike Wordsworth, Shelley did not find any didactic note in Nature but her external beauty charmed him much. The description of various flowers in "The Sensitive Plant" shows how Shelley's senses reacted to their beauty, colour and their odours. He was not only content with her sensuous appeal but also sought in her the presence of "Universal Beauty" in every object of Nature leading to "ecstatic vision". It is this pantheism of Shelley which raises him to the highest plane of spiritual ecstasy. Like other Romantic poets Byron also loved Nature and his poetry is full of beautiful descriptions of natural scenery. Nature for him is a splendid background against which human activities depict themselves. He looks on Nature not to find in it some spiritual essence but an echo of his own passions.

Walter de la Mare was born on 25 April 1873, and his first collection of poems Songs of Childhood came

out in 1901 at a time when he was about 28 years of age. It means that the formative years of the poet coincide with the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It will be therefore in the fitness of things to make a brief survey of the poets who were the reigning influences at that time:

After the Romantic poets Nature became a pervasive subject in English poetry. Even in the Victorian period which is known for scientific discoveries and religious scepticism we find first-rate Nature poetry. In Tennyson, Browning and Arnold, the representative poets of the age, there is a continuation of the attitudes of the Romantic poets towards Nature but always tinged with the spirit of the age. There attitude is more objective and scientific. In Tennyson the first thing that one notices is the beautiful landscape and the wide range of the objects of Nature, more often than not, dealt with scientific objectivity. He is "the poet of the flowers, trees and birds. Of flowers he must be held the supreme master. The meanest flower that blows does not inspire in Tennyson thoughts so deep as it did to Wordsworth, but he has painted them all —— flowers, wild and cultivated,
trees, herb, woods, downs, and moors — with the magic of a Turner? Like Wordsworth, for Tennyson too, Nature is beautiful, beneficent and sublime but at the same time the spirit of the age seems to have got hold of the imaginative mind "which was in communion with the thought and knowledge of the day". In Tennyson therefore, emphasis is laid on the cruel aspects of Nature and we find "Nature red in tooth and claw". Besides pictorial quality he has also got rare power of suggesting correspondence and interaction between the mind and its surrounding. This is particularly noticeable in the "Lotos Eaters" where the "languorous" atmosphere provides a suitable background to the lethargic and sleepy mood of the mariners who want to live a life of ease and inactivity.

Robert Browning is primarily a poet of man for he held the conviction that 'God is glorified in man', still he seems to have a genuine love for Nature. This love for Nature he owes to his long stay in Italy — a fact which is easily testifiable by the landscapes which are mostly Italian. They are photographic pictures giving

impression of realism on the part of the poet: In the opening lines of "Pippa Passes" the colourful picture of the sunrise is a fine example of this realism. "Meeting at Night" and "Parting at Morning" successfully illustrates Browning's power to capture a natural scene with a 'few master-strokes'. Following is the sea-scape at night:

The gray sea and long black land;
And the yellow half-moon large and low;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed i' the slushy sand.

and the sea-scape at morning:

Round the cape of sudden clave the sea
And the sun looked over the mountain's rim:

These landscapes are not significant in themselves but for the human figures that move in the foreground: for example the sea-scape in "Meeting at Night", towards the
and is enlivened with a human voice. Similarly the morning scene in "Parting at Morning" contrasts the course of the sun with that of the poet.

Besides providing a background to human figures Browning also made symbolic use of Nature; for example in his famous poem "Andrea del Sarto", Andrea's description of the evening has a bearing upon his 'stale' and 'insipid' look. The 'sense of diminished vitality in the autumn evening in Florence harmonises with the vistful fatalistic disposition of Andrea'.

The foremost poet who established a link between the early and the later part of the nineteenth century poetry is Mathew Arnold. His attitude towards Nature is unique in its own way. He was a great admirer of Wordsworth and the later seems to have influenced him considerably. But unlike Wordsworth Arnold does not attribute divine power to Nature. He observes Nature with

all her beautiful sights and sounds and admires her beauty objectively.

Like Wordsworth, Arnold also feels that "the world is too much with us". He is fed up with

This iron time
Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears,

and diagnoses the

Strange disease of modern life,
With its sick-hurry its divided aims

He, therefore, turns to Nature for solace and seeks refuge in her from the 'fever and fret' of life, as in "Self- Dependence":

Ye who from Childhood up have calmed me,
Calm me, ah, compose me to the end.

But unlike Wordsworth, Arnold thinks that
the secret of Nature "is not joy but peace" as he says in "Resignation":

Yet Fausta, the mite turf we tread,
The solemn hills around us spread,
This stream which falls incessantly
The strange scrawled rocks, the lovely sky
If might lend their life a voice,
Seem to bear rather than rejoice.

Thus Arnold does not worship Nature but turns to her for solace and also for contrasting "the quiet of Nature with the disquietude of man".

Nature in Arnold's poetry is also seen as a background to man. For instance, the vivid, pictorial and accurate descriptions of the rural scenes around Oxford in the "Thyris" and "The Scholar Gipsy" not only add to the local colour but also serves as a fitting

background for the poet's reflections on modern life, intensifying the contrast between 'Natur's tranquility and man's restless strife'. As S.A. Brooke rightly remarks: "Arnold contrasts the calm of Nature with our turmoil, hurry, confusion and noise; he contrasts the immortal life of Nature with our decay and death, and finally contrasts her joy and freedom with our sorrow and slavery in our struggle towards perfection".9

Walter de la Mare's interest in and familiarity with Nature, and with Tennyson's poetry may be noticed in his critical essays, "Tennyson", "Naturalists", and "Flowers and Poetry". Although he appreciated Tennyson's insight into human character and interest in science, he particularly credited the latter for his love of Nature. In fact de la Mare believed that Tennyson's interest in science arose from his interest in Nature:

"His interest in science was diligent and curious, but that too was in service of Nature".10

10. Walter de la Mare, "Tennyson" in Pleasures and Speculations (London: Faber & Faber, 1940), p. 44.
Therefore, he discusses at length Tennyson's treatment of Nature. De la Mare considers Tennyson's 'lifelong and impassioned adoration' of Nature more intense than any other aspect of his poetry. He is of the view that Tennyson's passion for Nature even atones for some flaws which the critics have pointed out from time to time:

"When indeed we think of Tennyson's life-long and impassioned adoration of his Nature, far exceeding in intensity even his concern with things of the intellect his insight into humanity, his impulse towards introspection and his keen interest in science, all such criticism seems a little graceless, and niggardly if not beside the point."  

Elsewhere too he appreciates Tennyson's direct contact with Nature:

There is scarcely a lyric of Tennyson's but has for its individual charm not a

simple passionate thought, not a mystic allusiveness or a profound human emotion, but someone supremely faithful or significant fragment from a direct tryst with his Nature".12

Similarly the following statement about the popularity of Tennyson in view of the regularity with which his poems were appearing in the contemporary anthologies is very significant. It has not only a bearing upon de la Mare's interest in Tennyson's poetry but also brings out clearly the fact that he had a considerable knowledge of the English seasons and the particular birds associated with each one of them:

"All three poems appear almost as regularly in every new anthology of English verse as cuckoo to our English spring in the third week of April"13

De la Mare believed that man cannot escape from the influence of physical and social phenomena that

12. Walter de la Mare, "Tennyson" in Pleasures and Speculations (London: Faber & Faber, 1940), p. 44.
he happens to come across in his childhood. One aspect or/other attracts him most and continues to be a permanent passion even in maturity. Similarly a poet cannot lose sight of the particular environment and people with whom he had spent his childhood, the best formative period in his life:

"... no man from childhood onwards, fails to reveal a pronounced if oscillating inclination to what on earth most fully satisfies for him some permanent innate or inherited hunger, yearning and desire. A poet, any artist, however versatile, is unlikely to be exceptional in this."

Earlier in the same essay emphasising the relationship between the poet's mind and his environment de la Mare makes the following observation:

"But poetry is the outcome and flower of circumstances and surroundings as well as of human beings."

15. Ibid., p. 32.
It was true in his own case as well. He was born in Charlton in Kent. According to Trevelyan it was popularly known as "the Garden of England". Kent is traditionally rich in natural beauty and it continues to be the chief producer of apples in England. Hence the child de la Mare opened his eyes in the midst of Nature and could not shake off the impressions he received of the world around himself. His poetry is full of beautiful landscapes and animate world — birds, animals, small insect and tame animals, etc. In this connection Kenneth Hopkins has made a very pertinent remark:

"His attachments have all been local: birds, clouds, the seasons; and his travels have not been to the sites of ancient battle fields, or to cities having the largest this, or the most celebrated that". 17

De la Mare's unflagging interest in Nature is borne out fully in his important essay "Naturalists". In this essay he has traced a brief history of Nature

poets (W.H. Hudson, Frank Buckland, Burton, White, Issac Walton, Wordsworth, Traherne, Robert Bridges, Robin Herrick, Gilbert, Charles Waterton, Edward Thomas and W.H. Davies, etc.) culminating in his brilliant reference to W.H. Hudson. To him "Nature was a perpetual miracle". He seems to value rural retirement and contemplation which reminds one of James Thomson. Commenting on Hudson's naturalism de la Mare says:

"To be specific there are three Huddons present and active in his books, and they may be clumsily denominated as the field naturalist pure and simple, the human naturalist and the super-naturalist ...
As the first of these Hudson watches, scrutinizes, plays 'I spy' and collects. He classifies and experiments. He is a child in the wild of Nature, and by no means a dreamy child, taking notes". 

De la Mare was quite conscious of man's divorce from nature and was aware of the repercussions of this

18. Walter de la Mare, "Naturalist", in Pleasures and Speculations (London: Faber & Faber, 1940), p.48
19. Ibid., pp. 55-56.
divorce. In this regard he was a follower of Hudson whose views he repeats in the following words:

"There is no doubt that
men are very ignorant about Nature...
We are not in Nature; we are out of her,
having made our own conditions; and our conditions have reacted upon and made us what we are — artificial creatures". 20

Here we find similarity between de la Mare’s view and those of Mathew Arnold, besides the Romantic poets. He also seems to subscribe to the belief that man finds solace and comfort in the midst of Nature away from the humdrum of every day life; a solace which may be felt even by reading books which have natural descriptions:

"On opening any such book, it is as if out of the heat and dust and noise and shallow fluster of every day life we had entered into the coolness and quiet

20. Walter de la Mare, "Naturalist" in Pleasures and Speculations (London: Faber and Faber, 1940), p. 49.
of some solitary building of an age
so extreme that it acquired a natural
and living state and beauty; for here
every coloured creature, bird beast
butterfly, leaf and flower and the
creeping thing .... although it be only
representative, is alive."

A man who had such an abiding interest in the
treatment of Nature in others' works would have hardly
ignored it in his own poetry. It is also clear from some
of the titles of his poems: "Evening", "Night", "Silver
Moon and Stars", "April", "Autumn", "Summer Evening",
"Winter and Night Flower", "Winter", "White Mist", "Night
Frost", "Dawn", "A Dale of Snow", "The Three Cherry Trees",
Bees' 'Song" and "The Pigs And the Charcoal Burner", etc.

21, Walter de la Mare, "Naturalist" in Pleasures and Specu-
lations (London : Faber and Faber, 1940),
p. 61.
CHAPTER II

TREATMENT OF FLORA, WEATHERS AND SEASONS
By the end of the nineteenth century 77 per cent of England's population was living in towns and cities, and only 25 per cent in rural areas. Moreover, dependence on land decreased and industry and urban professions increased. The percentage of total population dependent on agriculture declined considerably in the later half of the nineteenth century. This steady decline in agriculture, and subsidiary industries made the villages backward in comparison with towns whose material opportunities, exitaments and "pledges of a better life attracted the youth and led to a 'rural exodus'." This rural exodus

had left the villages intellectually poor, as the educated persons mainly flocked to cities or towns. "The whole routine", writes Lewis Mumford, "divorces itself from the soil, from the visible presence of life and growth and decay, birth and death ... the rhythm of the seasons disappears, or rather, it is no longer associated with natural events, except in print." It was this divorce from Nature and a mechanical way of living (in metropolis) which bred in modern man a mechanistic outlook and a lack of feeling for Nature.

However, despite the mechanical attitude and metropolitan way of life, Nature-poetry was still quite popular among these city-bred individuals not only because of a desire to flee from the congested city-life but also because they thought that real English life was alive in the countryside. During the twenties and thirties this attitude became deeply ingrained and deliberate efforts were made to revive interest in the English countryside. Almost a campaign was started to emphasise its significance by a large number of writers and intellectuals. They

include people like H.J. Massingham and C.E.M. Joad. Massingham was of the view that to discover 'the genius of place' he had to find the past, particularly the Middle Ages. Even a highly intellectual journal Scrutiny supported this campaign to draw the attention of the individuals not only to the 'organic community' of the past rural England, but also to its possible contribution to the enrichment of the English language. Consequently in summer the roads to countryside were seen full of people seeking this 'holy grail' of modern England — the countryside.

In the twentieth century this hankering for rural sentimentalism and love for Nature is best displayed by the Georgians whose poetry became very popular, even more popular than those of Yeats, Eliot and others, dealing with socio-political ideas of the time. Anthologies of the Georgian poetry came out sporadically between 1911–22, and Walter de la Mare was one of the more frequent

contributors to them. The popularity of this poetry dealing with Nature is evident from its respectable size of sales. As many as 73,000 copies of the Georgian Poetry (1912-22) anthologies were sold, while no more than 6,000 copies of the New Signatures (1932) got any customers, though it contained poems by young writers interested in social change and 'progressivists' movement.

At this point the general tendencies of the Georgian poetry and its attitude to Nature deserves some attention. According to Geoffrey Bullough one of the trends of this poetry is "a naturalistic reversion to the simple life of countryside, sea and open road, allied to bold swimming regular rhythms and romantic natural imagery". They were writing of natural objects and of the countryside without being a part of it; as they were invariably the product of an urbanised culture. About their subject matter David Daiches makes the following observation:

"They took traditional pastoral motives, romantic accounts of the East, nature subjects, meditative descriptions of English scenery or accounts in a subdued lyrical strain of personal experiences in listening to birds or watching sunsets ...."10

He has also drawn attention to the regional and rural notes of this school of poetry, and observes that the Georgian poetry on the whole tends to be regional; besides the rustic England there is also the mysterious East. Their poetry bears witness to it. In this regard special mention may be made of poets like W.J. Turner, Francis Ledwidge, John Drinkwater, John Freeman, Harold Maho, Edmund Blunden, J.H. Davies; etc.

Walter de la Mare also celebrates 'the acres of the countryside he knew best'. In his case it was Kent of the Weald region, which was a part of "a country of foaming orchards, of primrose and blue bell woods, of

sedate, unostentatious villagers, and of little surprises waiting to be discovered". Though he left it as a very young child of four years, but this 'garden of England' kept on haunting him all through his life and therefore, he always sang of the beauties, sounds and sights of the English countryside. De la Mare strongly held the conviction that the impressions which an artist receives in his early childhood and the environment in which he is born and brought up always leave lasting impact on his genius and consequently moulds his creative art accordingly. This he believes about art in general but about poetry he particularly observes that besides other things ('circumstances and human beings'), "poetry is the outcome and flower of surroundings". Also initially and ultimately the genius of the landscape is the genius of the people around it. Each has influenced the other. In the course of their centuries of story the people of every country have become unconscious landscape gardeners. And for England there have been few landscape gardeners like Walter de la Mare. Who to his last breath sang of "O Lovely 11. Thomas Burke, The Beauty of England (London : George G. Harrap Co. Ltd., 1933), p. 268.
12. Walter de la Mare, "Tennyson" in Pleasures and Speculations (London : Faber and Faber, 1940), p. 32.
What the child de la Mare so early and so eagerly absorbed became the 'warp and woof' of his writings. Certainly the impressions of a child are profound and this particular child must have been 'unusually observant and sensitive'. There is much in his works which strikes us as 'remembered'. In this connection Thomas Burke provides a very good example when he compares the setting/locale of Walter de la Mare's famous poem "The Listeners" with a place called Chiddingston in Kent. It is not the case with one single poem but it holds good for many of his poems which have as their setting/background the hopfields and Cherry-orchards of Kent.

Here is Walter de la Mare speaking of England's woods, sea, sky to a 'foreign sailor':

'In England now you be,
This her wood, and there her sky,'

And that her roaring sea'.

Speaking of the flora he says:

'It is wild roses
Do smell so winsomely
And viny briartoo', says I,
That in these thickets bo'.

Describing the birds, he informs a 'foreign sailor':

'It is the navi
That perches in the tree,
And sing so shrill, and sings so sweet.

In this brief poem "The Englishman" de la Mare introduces the English flora, fauna, sea and sky — the whole of Nature around him. It shows his affinity with the Nature poets of the twenties. The way he speaks very authoritatively to "the foreign sailorman" of various trees, birds and animals besides the English sea, has a bearing upon


18. Ibid., p. 58, ll. 17-20.

19. Ibid., ll. 25-27.
the poets' interest and the knowledge of the wealth of Nature that he enjoyed and knew best as a small child, an impression which he could never shake off till his last breath when he sang of "O Lovely England" in 1956.

We may now proceed to work out details in order to explicate various perspectives of the treatment of Nature in de la Mare's early poetry published in two volumes viz. Poems 1901 to 1918 Vols. I & II, in 1920. Even a cursory glance at these volumes of poetry may confirm de la Mare as a poet of Nature, as out of 273 poems included in them, there hardly any single poem which does not have reference/references to Nature.

As pointed out earlier, one of the tendencies of the Georgians (and de la Mare is one of them) is that they were regional and patriotic poets and therefore, in their descriptions of Nature they were usually inspired by the region they knew and loved best. What Edmund Blunden says of this trend in "The Preamble" to the Pastoralas, and which holds good about his own poetry upto 1925, is equally valid in Walter de la Mare's case as well. Blunden says:

"I sing of the rivers and hamlets and woodlands of Sussex and Kent,
Such as I know them: I found a delight wherever I went,

By plat and by hatch, through ages

of hops or of corn 1.29

Similarly in Walter de la Mare this attachment to the place and patriotism is manifest. It is just by chance that he also belonged to Kent — "a country of foaming orchards, of primrose and bluebell woods of sedate, of sedate, unostentious villages, and of little surprises waiting to be discovered". His poetry is also full of the beauty of the place and patriotic love for it:

This passionately patriotic love for the place and the sensuous love for the beauties of it may be exemplified by two of his early poems, namely "The Englishman" and "England". England is certainly a poem which bears testimony to the fact that the poet was deeply rooted to his soil. He praises England's hills, valleys and woods, which to him are lovelier than any other in the world:

"No lovelier hills than thine have laid
My tired thoughts to rest;
No peace of lovelier valleys made
Like peace within my breast."21

and that

"Thine are woods where to my soul,
Out of the noontide beam,
Flees for a refuge green and cool
And tranquil as a dream."22

In stanza No 3 he praises the English sea. Though the poets' emotional attachment to the soil of England is quite clear in the very opening stanza of the poem when he declares England's hills, valleys and woods lovelier than that of any other country. It is further reinforced when he wishes to be buried in same soil:

"My heart within me faints to roam
In thought even far from thee:
Thine be the grave where to I come,
And thine my darkness be."23

Besides this patriotism and deep association with the place his poetry is also replete with the beauties, sights and sounds of Nature which he experienced as a little but observant and sensitive child in the

23. Ibid., ll. 13-16.
Kentish village of Charlton. Due to the lack of philosophical and interpretative dimensions the attitude of these early twentieth century poets has been described as "charmingly phenomenal". de la Mare's poetry, despite his philosophical and emotional aspects, is full of the loving observation of the miracle of Nature around him. He usually deals with the abstract aspect of Nature as is clear from some of the titles of his poems given below:


In these volumes the most striking poems are those in which de la Mare describes the 'foaming, orchards', 'Sunken Gardens', 'Setting Sun', 'Rising Moon', 'Evening', 'Night' or seasons like Spring, Winter, Autumn and Summer, etc. These poems show his sensuous love for the objects of Nature. The poems are rich in pictorial quality as the poet provides fullest possible details of each of them besides their emotional associations and metaphorical
suggestions. As many as fifty species of various
trees and shrubs are referred to in the Poems 1901 to
1918. They reveal the poets keen observation and the
knowledge of the flora around him. He writes of them
not only with the love of a naturalist but very authori-
tatively almost like a botanist. He refers to one single
tree or shrub or flower by its various names. For example,
the same shrub is referred to by three different names —
Convolvulus, Bindweed and White Convolvulus, in "In Vain",
"The Limpete", and "The Bindweed". Similarly, one single
flower is referred to in three different poems by its
three different names — bluebell, harebell and lycrinth
in "April", "Bluebells", and "Alone". In "The Englishman"
the poet introduces the natural wealth of England to "a
foreign sailorman" who is anxious to know about the place,
its flora, fauna and the sea, etc. He asks various
questions about trees, flowers and birds, and the sea of
England. The poet answers them all very authoritatively
and satisfactorily. The poet tells him that he is in
England. The foreign sailorman "lifts his voice yet
louder" and asks:

"What smell be this
My nose on the sharp morning air
Sniffs up so greedily?" 24

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The poet, however, replies with disarming simplicity:

"It is wild roses
Do smell so winsomely,
And winy briar too
That in these thickets be."  

In another poem entitled "Trees" he gives a detailed account of the trees and shrubs of England, with their characteristic qualities. In the opening stanzas of the poem he describes the trees used as firewood or fuel and points out the trees which give maximum heat and light when burnt. He claims to have known almost all the trees in England and finds the 'bonnie Ash' (a forest tree with silver-grey bark and hard tough wood) which burns most fiercely:

"Of all trees in England,
Her sweet three corners in,
Only the Ash, the bonnie Ash
Burns fierce while it is green"  

In stanza II the poet considers the pliant trees and shrubs and discovers the willow as the 'loveliest' and most easily bending under the driving rain of all the trees and shrubs found in England:

"Of all the trees in England,
From sea to sea again,
The Willow loveliest stoops her boughs
Beneath the driving rain." 27

In the third stanza he describes the aromatic trees and shrubs. He speaks of various trees and plants and their fragrant material like frankincense (kind of resin from trees, giving out sweet smelling when burnt) and myrrh (tree with smooth heart-shaped leaves, and sweet smelling yellow blossoms) but declares that in England:

"There is none for smell, of bloom and smoke
Like Lime and Juniper." 28

In the fourth and the last stanza of the poem "Trees" the poet speaks of the influences of various trees on human

28. Ibid., ll. 11-12.
beings; of all the trees and shrubs in England—Oak, Elder, Elm, and Thorn; Yew (an evergreen, berry-bearing tree with dark green leaves) is the only tree which leaves a solacing and comforting impact on those who are sad and sorrow-striken:

"Of all the trees in England,
Oak, Elder, Elm and Thorn,
The Yew alone burns lamps of peace
For them that lie forlorn." 29

Hence in this brief poem of four stanzas de la Mare seems to have studied almost all the trees and shrubs of England very minutely with the 'love' of a naturalist and 'interest' of a scientist.

The poems "The Bindweed", "The Hawthorn hath a Deathly Smell" and "Noon and Night Flowers" are other poems which may be presented as an evidence to the fact that de la Mare had got a very thorough knowledge of the flora of England. In "The Hawthorn Hath a Deathly Smell", a brief poem of three stanzas which smells of the romantic

decadence, the poet talks of various aromatic plants and shrubs and compares their fragrance. He observes that all of them have sweet smell whether it is 'meadow sweet', 'tansy', 'thyme' or 'faint-heart pimpernel', but the 'silver of the may' (white, red or pink blossom of a thorny shrub) is sweeter than all of them:

"The flowers of the field
Have a sweet smell;
Meadow sweet, tansy, thyme,
And faint-heart pimpernel;
But sweeter even than these
The silver of the may" 30

In another poem, "The Bindweed" the poet is shown studying bindweed (a kind of convolvulus with white or pink blossom) almost like a botanist. He notices various changes that occur in it from morning till night. In the opening stanza of the poem he refers to the fact that the bindweed roots go very deep down into the earth:

"The bindweed roots pierce down
Deeper than men do lie

Laid in their dark-shut graves
Their slumbering kinsmen by"31

In the second stanza he describes the frail structure
of the bindweed flower as 'thin-spun' and the fact that
it blossoms under the sun shine and spread its fragrance
in day time only:

"Yet what frail thin-spun flowers
She casts into the air,
To breathe the sun shine, and
To leave her fragrance there"32

But with the setting of the sun and rising of the moon
at night these 'thin-spun' bindweed flowers spend out all
of their energy and ultimately droop down:

"But when the sweet moon comes,
Showering her silver down,
Half wreathed in faint sleep,
They droop where they have blown."33

32. Ibid., ll. 5-8.
33. Ibid., ll. 9-12.
Such a minute and stage-wise study from the
piercing of the roots deep down into the earth to the
withering away of the bindweed's blossoms is expected
only of a man who is highly devoted to and interested
in the study of flora.

The poem entitled "Noon and Night Flowers"
is equally important in this regard. This brief poem
of four stanzas is also based on the poet's close
observation of the flowers of England. In the opening
stanza of the poem the poet emphasises that various
flowers are associated with particular hours of the day
and night, and that they have been strictly adhering to
this scheme:

"Not any flower that blows
But shining watch doth keep;
Every wsswift changing chequred hour it knows
Now to breakforth in beauty; now to sleep."\(^{34}\)

There are flowers which blow during the sunshine so
that bees may come and suck honey from them, but there

are others which are meant to blossom at night in
darkness, instead of the bees they draw moths towards
them:

"This for the roving bee
Keeps open house, and this
Stainless and clear is, that in darkness
she
May lure the moth to where her nectar is."35

These were the general remarks about the flowers of
the day and night. This study is carried on further,
and in the next stanza the poet talks of some specific
type of flowers associated with particular hours of the
day and night — pimpernel (a scarlet, blue or white
flower of a small annual plant growing wild in wheat-field)
blooms at noon in the bright sun shine while primerose (a
pale yellow flower of a wild plant) blossoms at night
under the moonlight:

"Lovely beyond the rest
Are these of all delight:—
The tiny pimpernel that noon loves best,
The primrose palely burning though the

36. Ibid., ll. 9-12.
In brief "The Flowers of Noon and Night" is an important poem in as much as it shows de la Mare's intimate knowledge of flowers. He observes minutely various flowers associated with particular hours of the day and night. And in all this the poet seems to emphasise the strict scheme or order which is governing in the world of Nature.

Some other poems also show de la Mare's exclusive interest and knowledge of the flora of England. They certainly establish him as one in whom the loving observation of a naturalist and the searching interest of a scientist (botanist) seems to have been fused together. But as a true poet of Nature who sings of the sights and sounds of hers de la Mare unfolds himself in poems in which flora is treated along with the animal and the phenomenal world — that is the whole of Nature is fused together and focussed constantly. It is in these poems that one should seek to explicate multi-layers of his treatment and attitude to Nature.

Walter de la Mare like other Georgians and early twentieth century poets was primarily a town-dweller.
He therefore, generally seems not to have been influenced and attracted by the wild, sublime and cruel aspects of Nature. What he chose to describe is generally suburban Nature or the countryside adjacent to the town. But at the same time the creative role of his childhood impressions cannot be ignored. He was, however, attracted by beautiful objects, quiet places, peaceful objects and silences of Nature. This search for the "Beauty", "Certainty", and "Quiet" is the motto of the Georgian poetry. As such in his poems we usually do not come across storms, high mountains, and breaking seas, but gardens, various flowers, small birds (not the birds of prey) and descriptions of seasons, weathers, evening and night, etc. An eerie and dreamy atmosphere characterises his entire poetry. Hence it is not usually the bright sunshine but twilight, mist, fog, moonlit and starlit skies that the readers of de la Mare's poetry come across. All this affect the landscape, seasons, and weathers that dominate his poetry.

The first thing that may be noticed in these poems describing the beauties, colours and sounds of Nature

is the element of simple delight and sensuous love for her. It is "a simple spontaneous unreflecting pleasure which all unsophisticated beings feel in free open-air life". This 'childish delight' pervades through almost all his descriptions of the natural landscapes particularly in the songs that he sings as a child or recalls any childhood experience in the midst of Nature.

Take, for example, the brief poem entitled "Myself". It is not a poem about de la Mare as such but it is important because here the poet recalls his childhood experience in a garden in Autumn. Summer, the season of warmth and life is about to give way to Autumn whose coming is visible in the atmosphere. He gives a very sensuous description of the garden — with autumn tide mist and, green and giant boughs of trees spreading far and wide:

"There is a garden, grey
With mist of autumn tide;
Under the giant boughs,
Stretched green on every side".  


The poet (as a child) goes on playing in this peaceful atmosphere without any distraction. Until evening comes and birds and bees etc. all return to their respective abodes, even winds are silent. Yet the child is there in the garden playing alone:

"After the birds are flown
From singing in the trees,
When all is grey, all silent,
Voices, winds and bees;
And I am there alone:
Playing in the evening garden
Myself with me."40

In "Wanderers" the poet describes the delight of evening walk through "the meadows of night". The meadows are wide and full of daisies which are tossing and shining their dew — this is the beauty of the earth. Over head in the sky are the constellations brightening the sky:

"Wide are meadows of night,
And daisies are shining there,
Tossing there lovely dews,

Lustrous and fair;"^41

It is through these that the wanderers go:

"And through these fields go,
Wanderers amid the stars—
Venus, Mercury, Uranus and Neptune,
Saturn, Jupiter, Mars."^42

This beauty of the earth and sky delights the wanderers
and impresses them so much that they exclaim in great
appreciation:

"Fair are the meadows of delight
Through which we stray."^43

The poem "Nod" describes beautifully a shepherd returning
home in the evening with his flock. In the opening stanza
the poet describes the hour of the day with all its
sensuous and pictorial qualities. The evening is approaching
and the light is getting dimmer, and a reddish glow ('rose')
is seen on the horizon. It is in this romantic atmosphere

^42. Ibid., ll. 5-8.
^43. Ibid., ll. 11-12.
that Nod the old 'wrinkled' and 'dew-drenched' shepherd goes:

"Softly along the road of evening,
In a twilight dim with rose,
Wrinkled with age, and drenched with dew,
Old Nod the shepherd goes."

In the next stanza the focus of attention is not the atmosphere, nor the old shepherd but his 'fold' whose beams of the sun leaning fleece is glittering like gold under the last/low on them:

"Drowsy flock streams on before him,
Their fleeces charged with gold,
To where the sun's last beam leans low
On Nod, the shepherd's fold."

In the third stanza the focus of attention is again shifted from the shepherd and his fold to the atmosphere around him. The 'hedge is quick and brier are green, and high in the sky the birds are singing as they also return

45. Ibid., ll. 5-8.
home in flocks:

"The hedge is quick and green with brier,
From their sand the conies creep;
And all the birds that fly in heaven.
Flock: Singing home to sleep." 46

A similar spectacle of silent evening is repeated in "Sorcery" where the woodman after his day’s labour is returning home, through a silent forest. The poet describes the silent atmosphere of the forest, the setting sun, reddish glow on the horizon, and in this twilight the last sun beams of the setting sun are brightening the edge of the woodman’s axe:

"The woodman passed away
Along the forest path;
His axe shown keen and grey
In the last beams of day;
And all was still as death." 47

47. Ibid., ll. 13-16.
"Winter" is another poem in which de la Mare recalls the sensuous experience he had as a child on one winter evening when he was in a 'dell of snow'. The atmosphere was calm and quiet except for a single robin which also flew away when the snowfall increased. The poet was in a dell which was experiencing heavy snowfall. Due to the heavy frost even boughs of the trees were not visible and the wintry sky was dim:

"Green Mistletoe!
Oh, I remember now
A dell of snow,
Frost on the bough;
None there but I:
Snow, snow, and a wintry sky."

In that dell of snow the poet says that there was none except a robin sitting in a tree. Hearing its shrill notes, the poet tried to seek for it with his 'snow-clubbed feet' until the sun set in the West:

"And he whistled sweet;
And I in the crusted snow

With snow-clubbed feet
Jigged to and fro,
Till, from the day,
The rose light ebbed away.49

The robin flew into the air, and 'the night frost fell'
'Into the calm and misty dell'. Then the dusk gathered low
and ultimately the moon and stars were visible in the sky,
their beams of light shone the 'hooded briers' :

"And the dusk gathered low,
And the silver moon and stars
On the frozen snow
Drew taper bars,
Kindled winking fires
In the hooded briers."50

Besides the sensuous and minute description the important
point about this poem is that it is full of the calm and
romantic atmosphere and that here the poet addresses to
'Mistletoe' (a parasitic evergreen plant, growing on
fruit and other trees with small sticky berries) as one

50. Ibid., p. 97, ll. 24-30.
of his company during his sojourn in 'the dell of snow'  
This tendency to identify oneself with objects of Nature or to give them human nomenclature is very rare in the Georgian poets who are known for the 'thinness' of their poetry and the set descriptions of the countryside.

The "Rainbow" and "Mountains" are two brief poems which may be cited as good examples of Walter de la Mare's instinct observation, power of grasping a phenomenon or natural scene and then to reproduce it with equal vividness in his poems.

After the rain is over and the 'gold sun' reappears in the sky. The poet sees 'the lovely arch' of Rainbow, 'across the sky':

"I saw the lovely arch
Of Rainbow span the sky,
The gold sun burning
As the rain swept by."51

In the second and the last stanza of the poem the poet talks of the nature and durability of the rainbow. He

tells us how it looks and how quickly it disappears:

"In bright-ringed solitude
The showery foliage shone
One lovely moment
And the Bow was gone"\textsuperscript{52}

This brief poem of only two stanzas of four lines each is important for more than one reason. It establishes de la Mare as one who is an intent watcher of the phenomena of Nature, as one who has got the power to describe these phenomena of Nature in all their vividness. And also as a lover of the beauty of the earth, sea and sky but who also believes that the beauty of the phenomenal world is transitory and mortal.

"Mountain" besides showing de la Mare's knowledge of mountains and mountain-life and his power to give sensuous descriptions of the objects, also expresses his love and longing for quiet and mysterious places.

\textsuperscript{52} Poems \textit{1901 to 18}, Vol. II, p. 19, ll. 5-8.
hills overgrown with 'frosty ulys'. They are standing in 'secret silence':

"Still and blanched and cold and lone
The icy hills far off from me
With frosty ulys overgrown
Stand in their sculptured secrecy."53

The lonesomeness is further reinforced when the poet emphasises that over these 'ice-marbled glaciers' no animate object (bird or animal) is seen. Even Chamois, a small goat-like animal that lives in the high mountains of Europe, and Eagle, usually found on high peaks of mountains and hills, are not seen.

"No path of theirs the Chamois fleet
Treads, with a nostril to the wind:
O'er their ice-marbled glaciers beat
No wings of eagles in my mind — 54

Yet the poet is not afraid of the perils of these 'cold and lone' hills. He is in love with their quietude and

54. Ibid., ll. 5-8.
mystery, and therefore longs for reaching these 'untroubled snows'.

"Yes, in my mind these mountains rise,
The perils dyed with evening's rose;
And still my ghost sits at my eyes
And thirsts for their untroubled snows."^55

This brief poem contains the truthful descriptions of a natural scene, of the atmosphere of peace and mystery. Elements which characterise even the sublime and grand aspects of Nature in this poetry.

De la Mare's interest in, and power to describe objects and phenomenon of Nature becomes manifestly clear in poems dealing with seasons and weathers, particularly in the descriptions of morning, evening and night. Like James Thomson, the author of *The Seasons* (1730), de la Mare also provides very detailed accounts of various seasons and their corresponding impact on animate and the human world.

Spring is the first of the cycle of seasons in Europe. It is the season of the renewal of life and growth, and starts from the third week of March and continues till the last week of June. But the most important month of this season is April in England. Chaucer and Langland spoke of it in the 14th century and T.S. Eliot spoke of it in the twentieth century. Then how could it be possible for de la Mare, who had an abiding interest in Nature to forget this important season. In the poem of the same title that is "April" he invokes it almost in the same vein as
Chaucer, Langland, and James Thomson had done before him:

"Come, then, with showers; I love thy cloudy face
Gilded with splendour of the sunbeams thro'
The heedless glory of thy locks."

The first half of the poem merely describes the changes in the phenomenal world — 'splendour of sunbeams', 'brimming rivers', and 'dim dells where in azure bluebells blow' — in view of the approaching Spring, in the month of April:

"I know
The arch, sweet languor of thy fleeting grace,
The windy lovebeams of thy dwelling place,
The dim dells where in azure bluebells blow,
The brimming rivers where thy lightnings go.
Harmless and full and swift from race to race."

57. Ibid., ll. 3-8.
While in the second half of it the poet takes into account the corresponding change in the animate (birds and bees), flora (bluebell and poplar), and the human world. Like Chaucer and James Thomson de la Mare also considers the month of April (i.e. Spring) as the season of regeneration, increased vivacity and harmony:

"Thou takest all young hearts captive
with thine eyes;
At rumour of thee the tongues of children ring
Louder than bees; the golden poplar rise
Like trumps of peace; and birds, on homeward wing,
Fly mocking echoes shrill along the skies,
Above the wave's grave dispensing."

Similarly in the "The Scarecrow" the poet speaks of the regenerating spirit of Spring after winter is over. The "Scarecrow" which has been dull and dead during Winter regains life and resumes its duties when 'that child called Spring' revisits the field and a new

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life reawakens everywhere:

"All Winter through I bow my head
Beneath the driving rain"\textsuperscript{59}

But when Spring came even the Scarecrow felt some rapture in its rags:

"But when that child, called Spring, and all
His host of children, come,
Scattering their buds and dew upon
These acres of my home,
Some rapture in my rags awakes;
I lift void eyes and scan
The skies for crows, those ravening foes,
Of my strange master, Man."\textsuperscript{60}

The Scarecrow is getting ready to watch the fields because sterility will soon turn into fertility:

"Soon will the wheat swish body high
Where once lay sterile snow;\textsuperscript{59,60}

\textsuperscript{60. Ibid., ll. 9-16.}
Soon shall I gaze across a sea
Of sun-begotten grain,
Which my unflinching watch hath sealed
For harvest once again. 61

Continuing the description of renewed life and gaiety
in the phenomenal world de la Mare speaks of the impact
of "Spring" in his poem entitled "The Reawakening", in
the following words:

"GREEN in light are the hills, and
a clam wind flowing
Filleth the void with a flood of the
fragrance of Spring;
Wings in this mansion of life are
coming and going,
Voices of unseen loveliness carol and
sing." 62

Following is the impact of Spring on the flora :

"Coloured with buds of delight the
boughs are swaying,
Beauty walks in the woods, and wherever
she rove

Flowers from wintry sleep;  
her enchantment obeying;  
Stir in the deep of her dream,  
rewaken to love."^63

This is also a season that makes care-free and inspires  
him to love as new life sprouts every where:

"Oh, now begone sullen care —  
this light is my seeing;  
I am the palace, and mine are its  
windows and walls;  
Day break is come, and life from the  
darkness of being  
Springs, like a child from the womb,"^64

After Spring comes Summer, a season of warmth  
and stability. Though it does not strike the heart of  
man as suddenly as does Spring after the long slumber of  
winter; yet it is also associated with warmth, love and  
regeneration. In the "Bright Life" which is a love poem,  
the poet deals with the plenty of life in the phenomenal  
world in the Summer season and its impact on human beings.  
He advises the beloved, who is sad and mourning for some  

^64. Ibid., p. 243, ll. 9-12.
one who is dead and gone, to shake off the memory of the dead in view of the coming of the season of warmth and regeneration:

"COME now", I said, 'put off these webs of death,"

He persuades her to feel the presence of warmth and life as spread in the phenomenal world/Outside world and seek inspiration from them:

"Lay thy warm hand on earth's cold clods and think
What exquisite greenness sprouts from these to grace
The moving fields of summer
on the brink
Of arched waves the sea horizon trace,
Whence wheels night's galaxy; and in silence sink
The pride in rapture of life's dwelling-place!"

Similarly in "The Vacant Day", another poem which treats of "the summer noon", the poet emphasises the pervasiveness of warmth and life. The promises of a

66. Ibid., ll. 9-14.
resurgence of life on earth, water and sky are described briefly in the poem. In the opening stanza he tells us how the abundance of life and warmth in the phenomenal world convinces him of the presence of Summer:

"As I did walk in meadows green
I heard the summer noon resound
With call of myriad things unseen
That leapt and crept upon the ground."

Describing the same abundance of life and gaiety in the sky he says:

High overhead the windless air
Throbbed with the homesick coursing cry
Of swallows that did everywhere
Wake echo in the sky."

Beside him in the water also he saw life and gaiety blooming full:

"Beside me, too, clear water coursed
Which willow branches, lapping low,

68. Ibid., ll. 5-8.
Breaking their crystal gliding forced
To sing as they did flow."69

One feels the poet's total absorption with
plenitude of the beauty, warmth and life in the summer
season. He even becomes almost dumb, and therefore
expresses his inability to write of them. He says,
'I listened; and my heart was dumb'/ 'with praise no
language could express.'70

After Summer comes Autumn which is followed by
Winter. Spring is the season of reawakening and revived
activities, while Summer is comparatively stable season
of warmth and plenty of life. But after Summer comes
Autumn with which starts desolation and sterility. It is
in this season that crops ripe and harvest is done; as
such the fields etc., give a dismal and desolate look. In
"Autumn", a brief poem of three stanzas' de la Mare deals
with this desolate aspect of the face of earth after Spring
and Summer are over. In the opening stanza he contrasts
the awakening, warmth and abundance of life of Summer, to the
dullness, coldness and decreased activities in the season

70. Ibid., ll. 13-14.
of Autumn — no rose, no grass on the earth, and grey
clouds with no birds in the sky:

"There is a wind where the rose was;
Cold rain where sweet grass was;
And clouds like sheep
Stream o'er the steep
Gray skies where the lark was." 71

In the second and the third stanzas of the poem
de la Mare speaks of the corresponding change that has
occurred in man's heart. It is not a season that inspires
love and warmth even in dull and dismal hearts, but a
season which affects their vitality and makes them gloomy
and sad. A kind of correspondence is suggested between
the forlorn heart of the poet and the dull and dismal
atmosphere prevailing in the outside world:

"Sad winds where your voice was;
Tears, tears where my heart was;
And ever with me,
Child ever with me,
Silence where hope was." 72

72. Ibid., ll. 11-15.
Thus in this poem "Autumn" too de la Mare has followed the tradition of James Thomson and the Romantic poets of Nature, who considered autumn as a season of decreased activities, dullness, desolation and lack of warmth and love.

The last and the fourth of the cycle of seasons is Winter. Winter is generally associated with the suspension of life, death and decay in English poetry. The brief poem entitled "Winter" describes beautifully a winter evening, when the sun becomes 'rayless' after 'Day's journey is done.' The first stanza beautifully describes the characteristic winter evening in the West, when the sky is 'clouded' and the trees become 'leafless'. The icy cold wind produces shrilling sounds as it blows through the 'leafless boughs'. The only bird that can be seen in such a desolate atmosphere is the robin who is pouring out his heart-felt and tragic songs:

"\textit{Clouded} with snow
The cold winds blow,
And shrill on leafless bough
The robin with its burning breast
Alone sings now."

In the second stanza de la Mare portrays a photographic picture of the setting sun: As the 'Day's journey (is) done' the sun has grown 'rayless', it sheds its last reddish glow on various objects of earth, then starts snowfall and they are covered with snow:

"The rayless sun,
Day's journey done,
Sheds its last ebbing light
On fields in leagues of beauty spread
Unearthly white." 74

The twilight image is one of the most recurring images in de la Mare's poetry.

In another poem of the same title i.e. "Winter" the poet describes his experience in a dell in a winter evening. The whole of the dell was full of snow and fog with no sign of life except a robin shrilling from within a tree. The poem, however, has touches of mysticism. After the 'rose-light (had) ebbed away', the 'dusk gathered low' and the moon and stars come out in the sky.

shedding their beams on various objects of the earth:

And the dusk gathered low,
And the silver moon and stars
On the frozen snow
Drew taper bars,
Kindled winking fires
In the hooded briers.”

The revived interest in Nature, particularly in the countryside, was a conspicuous phenomenon amongst the Georgian poets. But they returned to her beauties, sights and sounds under a "changed intellectual set-up"; consequently their poetry is devoid of an ardent love and devotion for her; a fact which de la Mare himself refers to in his essay entitled "Naturalists" in Pleasures and Speculations. He writes, "Thus naturalists, patient, ardent, imaginative devotees of that perpetual miracle, we so easily dismiss as Nature are rare.” They go to her as town-dwellers either out of curiosity or out of their desperation with humdrum city-life, in search of refuge or

76. Walter de la Mare, "Naturalist" in Pleasures and Speculations (London: Faber and Faber Ltd. 1940), p. 48.
shelter. Hence their response to the countryside, of which they usually speak in their poetry, is not sensuous. As these poets were town-dwellers and they were visiting the countryside only as the week-end picnickers; their poetry is largely descriptive of phenomena, but lacking in 'loving accuracy' and minute observation of a countryman.

From the poems discussed in the foregoing pages it may be concluded that while de la Mare was in harmony with other Georgians in his love for Nature, he differed from the majority of them in his treatment and attitude to her. Like other Georgians his attitude too is 'charmingly descriptive' but unlike these 'casual observer', an exact perception and minute observation are the characteristic marks of his poetry. He paints all the details that he observes and in painting them shows an intensely sensuous love for them. Unlike other Georgians, of course with the exception of W.H. Davies and Hasfield, etc., de la Mare's approach to Nature is essentially sensuous. He described what he received through his senses. In this regard special mention should be made of his poems about seasons and weathers. In all these poems his central interest is however, in earth, sea and sky as they appear to the eye.
These poems largely convey the colours, sights and sounds of English landscape.

But it is to his credit that having been brought up in the metropolis de la Mare loved to talk of the meadows and pastures, snow-covered hills and icy pools. He describes the simple features and the innocent activities of the countryside — the herdsman with his cattle, the woodman with a faggot of wood and axe on his head returning home through a meadow in the evening twilight, or the children playing in a 'dale of snow', etc. But in all respects he always "sings the England we all love, the wholesome out-of-doors England, the types, the cries, the sights and sounds."77 His descriptions are comprehensive enough to include water, the overhanging sky and the flora-fauna inhabiting the space between the two. He is "with Wordsworth and Keats in his passionate response to the present loveliness of earth, sea and sky."78 De la Mare is more a delineator of Nature's sights and sounds than a philosopher pondering over her ways and means, over the designs and intentions of the power behind her. Let


us conclude this chapter with the view of D.R. McCrosson, a famous critic of Walter de la Mare who considers the natural description in de la Mare’s poetry as a proof of his immense power of observation and extraordinary perception, and also that he describes in his poetry the English landscape that he knew and loved best.

CHAPTER III

TREATMENT OF ANIMAL AND AVIARY WORLD
From the poems discussed in the fore-going chapter viz., Treatment of Flora, Seasons and Weathers, de la Mare's interest in the inanimate objects of Nature becomes quite manifest. But these inanimate objects are not the whole of Nature; to use Emily Dickinson's words,

"Nature" is what we see
The Hill — the Afternoon —
Squirrel — Eclipse — the Bumble bee —
May —— Nature is Heaven —
Nature is what we hear —
The Bobolink — the Sea
Thunder — the Cricket ——

That is Nature does not simply mean static and inanimate objects only, but it also includes the animate objects like "Squirrel", "the Bumble bee", "the Bobolink", and

"the Cricket", that is animals, birds including the little creatures like the insects, etc. They constitute an important part of what the term "Nature" denotes. As pointed out earlier, de la Mare's treatment of English flora, seasons and weathers is enough to designate him as a poet of Nature in English poetry. These poems are ample proof of his interest in and love for Nature. But what H.C. Duffins says about Hardy's treatment of the animate Nature would closely apply to de la Mare's poetry as well. He writes:

"But it is towards the animate section of lower nature that his tenderness is specially exhibited. A deep and real love worthy of comparison with that which man is capable of extending towards his own species, is rare; probably even more rare, than genuine philanthropy. It is in this high sense that Hardy is a lover of animals."2

A similar tenderness, love and compassion is shown by

de la Mare towards the animate objects, particularly towards little creatures. In fact his love and compassion for animals, birds and little creatures like insects, etc. have prompted some of his memorable and representative poems.

"The Bandog" is a poem which may be cited as a good example of the poet's love and affection for the tame animals. He is worried about the missing of his pet "the Bandog" whose name was 'Mopser'. He is out to search for his dog and enquires every body who so ever meets him.

"Has any body seen my Mopser?"

Describing its identity, civility and obedience the poet of the dog speaks/as affectionately as one is expected to speak of one's own child.

A similar feeling of love and affection is expressed for a hound in "The Gage". This hound which belonged to a Lady Jane, was very notorious and a

permanent problem for the neighbour's "timorous deer". Once the neighbouring Lord came to Lady Jane and complained against the notorious activities in which the Lady's hound had been indulging in the neighbour's premises:

"Lady Jane, O Lady Jane!
Your hound hath broken bounds again,
And chased my timorous deer, O
If him I see,
That hour he'll doe;
My brakes shall be his brier, O."

Since the hound was very dear to Lady Jane, she took no serious notice of the complaint. On the contrary she almost like the loving mother of a notorious child who is proud of his activities, challenges her neighbour, pointing out the qualities of her pet:

"Hoots! lord, speak not so proud to me!
My hound, I trow, is fleet and free,
He's welcome to your deer, O;
Shoot, shoot you may,
He'll gang his way,
Your threats we nothing fear, O."

5. Ibid., ll. 7-12.
Unfortunately the day came when the neighbour could bear no more and shot the hound dead. He brought the bleeding and dying dog to its mistress;

"He's fetched him in, he's laid him low,
Drips his life blood red and slow,
Darkens his dreary eye, 0;
'Here is your beast,'
And now at least
My heart in penance shall lie, 0."

She could not put up with the painful scene of the dying hound which was very dear to her. Out of her anger for the neighbour who killed the hound and her sympathy for the dead, her cheeks became red and tears trickled down on them from her eyes:

"Her cheeks burn angry as the rose,
Her eyes with wrath and pity flows."

This surprises the lord; he is moved by the condition.

of Lady Jane at the loss of her dear hound:

"He gazes fierce and round, O, —
'Dear Lord,' he says,
'What loveliness
To waste upon a hound, O.'"\(^8\)

He consoles the lady and tries to compensate the loss by offering his entire property to her:

"I'd give my stags, my hills and dales,
My storm-cocks and my nightingales.
To have undone this deed, O!"\(^9\)

But out of her deep love for the hound she turns down his offer and became almost mad; and in her fit of madness started cursing the neighbouring lord. But after some time the ghostly hound, by some miracle, became alive. It started smeling for its sorrow-striken mistress and rushed to her who became at once cheerful and looked no longer forlorn. The important point about this poem is the mutual

\(^8\) Poems 1901 to 1918, Vol. II, p. 48, ll. 39-42.
\(^9\) Ibid., p. 49, ll. 45-47.
love between man and animals; not only was the Lady Jane mad and forlorn for the hound, but the hound itself was restless to meet its mistress; from the moment it regained its life, the hound started a search for her.

De la Mare's genuine love for the animate objects is expressed in the poems where he shows compassion for their suffering and strong hatred for those who commit atrocities on them. Like Hardy, de la Mare too "cannot simply mention an animate object without showing his intense personal sympathy with and consequent understanding of its life and feeling". Take for example his poem "Alas, Alack!", which is about a frying fish in the boiling fat. At the pathetic scene of a frying fish the poet's in-born sympathy for the animate objects is evoked. He understands the feeling of the fish and realises the pain it is undergoing; and describes these mutually shared (by the fish and the poet) feelings so sincerely that even a casual reader of the poem cannot overlook its pathos. The poet calls Ann and says that the frying fish is moaning' because of the torture it is put to by dipping deep into the boiling fat.

10. H.C. Duffin, Thomas Hardy: A Study of the Wessex Novels, the Poems and the Dynasts, p. 132.
It comes up on the surface and seems to look at the poet with beseeching eyes:

"Out of the fat,
As clear as glass,
He put up his mouth
And moaned 'Alas!'"\(^1\)

As it realises its helplessness to come out of/frying pan, the fish surrenders to its fate:

"Then turned to his sizzling,
And sank him back."\(^2\)

The important thing about this brief poem of twelve lines is that fish is an essential part of an Englishman's daily meal, yet the spectacle of the frying fish moves de la Mare's heart as is clear from pathos which run through the poem.

De la Mare was vehement in his denunciation of man's cruelty to his fellow creatures. "Considering how

\(^1\) Poems 1901 to 1918, Vol. II, p. 111, ll. 4-9.
\(^2\) Ibid., ll. 11-12.
man has treated the animals, isn't it surprising that any animal should trust him?"; de la Mare once remarked in conversation, and this observation is a preoccupation in many of his poems in which the butcher and the butcher and the hutsman are the main target of the poet's "vehement denunciation" as McCrosson describes it.

In "I can't Abear", for instance, the poet expresses his strong hatred for the butcher's shop. He describes various shops — "Baker's are warm, cobbler's dark, / Chemist's burn watery lights;". He can bear all these shops. But the worst shop of all is that of the butcher, for it is the place where his "dear fellows" that is animals are slaughtered. Expressing his strong dislike for it de la Mare openly declares:

"I can't abear a Butcher,
I can't abide his meat,
The ugliest shop of all is his,
The ugliest in the street;"

16. Ibid., ll. 1-4.
An equally denunciatory attitude of the poet is shown towards the huntsman. In "Hi!", for example, his tone is savagely denunciatory:

"Hi! handsome hunting man
Fire your little gun.
Bang ! Now the animal
Is dead and dumb and done
Never more to peep again, creep again, leap again
Eat or sleep or drink again. Oh, what fun!"

This brief poem of only six lines is enough to show de la Mare's hatred for the huntsman who kills the innocent creatures for no fault of theirs but just for fun. He strongly condemns this silly sort of pastime in just three words which carry the total force of the poet's disapproval and denunciation of animal killing — "Oh, what fun!".

A similar observation and tone are to be found in "Tit for Tat" in which he "envisions the huntsman and his quarry as having reversed roles. Ostensibly for children,

this poem should give the most callous adult pause."  

Addressing himself to Tom Noddy the speaker asks how the hunting is:

"Have you trod like a murderer through the green woods ... 

While every small creature screamed shrill to Dame Nature, 

He comes —— and he comes !" 

The poet does not like the huntsman as is clear from the tone of the poem, and therefore, he wishes for him a total doom. The speaker then suggests to Tom that perhaps one day, "An Ogre from space will stoop a lean face"/ "And lug you home". He then imagines what will happen to Tom the "murderer. The Ogre will,

Lug you home over his fence, Tom Noddy, 

Of thorn-sticks nine yards high, 

With your bent knees strung round his old iron gun 

And your head dan-dangling by: 

And hanging you up stiff on a hook, 

---Tom Noddy---


From a stone-cold pantry shelf,
Whence your eyes will glare in an empty stare,
Till you are cooked your self." 20

De la Mare's knowledge and love of the animate objects of Nature are not confined to the domestic pets and wild beasts, but his poetry also bears evidence of his knowledge and love of the aviary world. Poems on many of the English birds like Wrens, linnets, cuckoos, larks, robin and nightingales are scattered through his pages. The mere fact that in twenty-four poems about birds he has described more than twenty-four different species of birds, is an ample proof of his interest in ornithology. In the first group of poems about birds the poet describes various birds particularly song birds. Here he is seen as a lover of birds who is always anxious to study them closely — their plumage, sounds, and habits etc., like an Ornithologist.

Let us first of all take up a poem entitled "The Mother Bird", which has a bearing upon de la Mare's habit of visiting bird nests and studying their behaviour.

20. Complete Poems, p. 173, ll. 5-12.
from close quarters. In the opening lines of the poem, he tells us how once he came across a nest in the hedges
with bird in it sitting on its eggs:

"Through the green twilight of a hedge
I peered, with cheeks on the cool leaves pressed,
And spied a bird upon a nest." 21

Then he describes the behaviour of the sparrow very realistically how meekly but bravely it expressed its protest against the poet's interruption of its privacy, until it opened its "dagger bill" to utter "one passionate note of victory:

"Two eyes she had beseeching me
Meekly and brave, and her brown breast
Throbbed hot and quick above her heart;
And then she opened her dagger bill: — 22

And then it uttered "One passionate note of victory."

22. Ibid., ll. 4-7.
The poet differentiates this particular sound of the sparrow from their singing sounds at the break of the day, or at the sun-set. This delicate distinction between the "fierce and vivid cry/ Of valiant tears, and hopeless joy,"; and the "chirp" and "trill" of a sparrow while singing in morning or evening; proves beyond any doubt that de la Mare's ears were trained enough to make such a delicate distinction which in turn is an evidence of his habit of studying birds closely. Mark how minutely and distinctly he differentiates the three different sounds of a single sparrow on three different occasions:

't was not a chirp, as sparrow pipe
At break of day; 't was not a trill,
As falters through the quiet even;
But one sharp solitary note,
One desperate, fierce, and vivid cry,
Of valiant tears, and hopeless joy,
One passionate note of victory."^23

This experience of de la Mare is comparable to the youthful days of Wordsworth who also used to visit bird nests in order to "spy their sheltered bed." Like

de la Mare, Wordsworth also relates his experience of visiting daily the sparrows' nests "with in the leafy shade" in the company of his sister, in his poem "The Sparrow's Nest" in the following words:

"I started — seeming to spy,
The home and sheltered bed,
The sparrow's dwelling, which, hard by
My father's house, in wet or dry
My sister Emmeline and I together visited." 24

"Rooks in October", "Jenny Wren", and "Chickens" are poems which may be quoted as an evidence of de la Mare's knowledge of birds — both domestic and wild; and also the fact that he was a very intent observer of the activities and behaviour of the birds. In "Rooks in October", for example, he recalls his childhood experience of watching the rooks. In the opening stanza the poet tells us how they look like while flying against the blue sky at dawn:

"They sweep up, crying, riding the wind,
Ashen on blue outspread —

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Gilt-lustred wing, sharp light-glazed beak,
And low flat, ravenous head."

In the second stanza he describes how with hanging claws these rooks in the morning come down and rush on to "the yellowing green-leaved boughs," :

"Claws dangling, down they softly
drop swoop
Out of the eastern sun.
Into the yellowing green-leaved boughs —
Their morning feast begun."

and then they grip the delicate twigs and pick up their food from the stalked embossed green cup."

"Clasping a twig that even a linnet
Might bend in song, they clip
Pat from the stalked embossed green cup
Its fruitage bitter-ripe."

26. Ibid., ll. 5-8.
27. Collected poems, p. 25, ll. 9-12.
But "Jenny Wren" is a poem in which de la Mare speaks with the authority of an ornithologist, here, as in "Tree" in which he describes various trees of England very authoritatively, and also compares and contrast them; de la Mare talks of wren a song bird of the robin family. In the opening stanza the poet claims that wren is the most "nimble", "feat" and "trim" of all the birds that rove and sing near places inhabited by men:

"Of all the birds that rove and sing,
Near dwellings made for men,
None is so nimble, feat, and trim
As Jenny Wren." 28

He then emphasises the loudness and intensity of a wren's cry. In this regard James Edmund Harting's view about wren's shrilling sound is worth consideration, commenting on "the wonderfully loud song" of a wren Harting says, "It must have struck others that for so small a throat the wren has wonderfully loud song. There is not much variety or tone in it but the notes at once attract attention, and would lead any one unacquainted with them to inquire the

Similarly de la Mare describes the shrilling sound of the wren as follows:

"With pin-point bill, and a tail a-cock,
So wildly shrill she cries,
The echoes on their roof-tree knock
And fill the skies."

A comparison of the two—Harting’s statement about the shrilling sound of a wren and its description by de la Mare in the above quoted passage shows that the poet’s knowledge of the birds was in no way inferior to that of an Ornithologist while in the third stanza of the poem he tells us of the size, physique and the enthusiastic and active nature of the bird. So in the poem "Jenny Wren" de la Mare has given a very true picture of a wren which speaks of his knowledge and interest in birds.

Besides wren de la Mare has also written many poems on other song birds, they include limnet, black bird,


30. Collected Poems, p. 17, ll. 5-8.
lark, robin, thrush and cuckoo, etc. On the other hand, king-fisher, hawk, falcon, and stare, etc. represent the birds of prey. But of all the singers in the wood-land choir the Nightingale, by common consent, stands first. For quality of sound, variety of notes, and execution, she is probably unrivalled. Hence with poets she has ever been the chief favourite. Issac Walton has truly said, 'The Nightingale breathes such sweet' loud music out of her little instrumental throat that it might make mankind to think that miracles are not ceased.' Walter de la Mare also speaks of this miraculous throat of a nightingale in many of his poems, particularly of its association with human melancholy and how it allays that when other means fail. Since it pours out sad notes, the nightingale in de la Mare's poetry is addressed to as "lovelorn thing" and the "Most melancholic Nightingale". The most quotable of his poems about nightingale is "King David". It is the sorrow-striken and melancholy man. He called for hundreds of musicians but they all failed to ease his melancholy:

"King David was a sorrowful man;
No cause for his sorrow had he;

And he called for the music of a hundred harps,
To ease his melancholy."[^32]

"But the sorrow that haunted the heart of King David
They could not charm away."[^33]

But one night he went into his garden, and as he was walking there he listened to the song of a nightingale hidden in a cypress-tree. The King felt as if the bird was echoing and sharing his own grief. He asked her as to who had told the bird of his grief:

King David lifted his sad eyes
Into the dark-boughed tree —
'Tell me, thou little bird that singest
Who taught my grief to thee?"[^34]

The bird paid no heed to the King who went on listening to the melancholy song of the nightingale until his own sorrow was completely cured:

"But the bird in no wise heeded;

[^33]: Ibid., ll. 7-8.
[^34]: Ibid., ll. 13-16.
And the King in the cool of the moon
Hearkened to the nightingale's sorrow-
fullness,
Till all his own was gone."

It is a common belief about the nightingale's song and
English poetry is full of it; and de la Mare's poem "King
David" is a valuable addition to the poems written about
the melancholy nightingale. "The Linnet" and "The Riddler"
are other important poems of Walter de la Mare dealing
with the English song birds, they describe their songs,
the beliefs associated with them and their various
activities like a close watcher of these birds.

Like his vehement denunciation of the butcher
and the huntsman, de la Mare out of his love for little
birds also strongly dislikes those who imprison them
or kill them for their pleasure. In this regard he may
be compared to Hardy in whose novels and poems too, we
find various quotable instances of love and compassion
for animals, birds and other little creatures. In Jude
the Obscure for instance, both Jude and Sue are unable to

rest until the trapped rabbit has been put out of its pain. Similarly, de la Mare's love and compassion for the animate objects make him uneasy at the sight of a 'caged bird' in his poem "The Cage". His heart is moved when he sees a bird "hard-pressed" in "a small cage of clay", trying desperately by fluttering its wings in vain to come out of it, because the poet knows that it would not be possible for the poor bird to break through its imprisonment. He reminds it to the bird in the following words:

"Why did you flutter in vain hope, poor bird, hard-pressed in your small cage of clay?"  

The poet advises the bird not to 'fret' any more and thereby to impress upon the fowler its desire to be set free because he knows the coldness of the huntsman whose heart unlike the poet's will never relent to the bird's restlessness. Also this fluttering seems painful to the poet, he therefore, advises the bird in the following

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36. Quoted by H.C. Duffin, in *Thomas Hardy: A Study of the Wessex Novels, the poems and the Dynasts*, p. 135.

words, which also shows his strong hatred for the oppressor of the bird:

"Fret now no more, bestill,

for

"Those folded hands, they cannot set you free;" 38

The poem is certainly full of pathos and poet's compassion for the bird, besides his strongly critical attitude towards those heartless and cold-blooded people who deprive these little creatures of their freedom. Hence this brief/ is enough to show de la Mare's love and compassion for birds.

In his love and compassion for the animate objects and his strong denunciation of those who either kill them or commit atrocities on them de la Mare may be compared to another Georgian poet Ralph Hodgson (1871-1964). In his poetry too, compassion for animals and hatred for their oppressors were dominant; and "he expressed this

with passion and vision." For example, his poem "The Buli", (first published in Georgian Poetry II, 1913-15), is "an attempt to present psychologically and poetically the history of a leader of a herd, dethroned in his old age and decrepitude by a young rebel." The old monarch stands — bewildered unhappy, sick — waiting only for death, while vultures with patience and remorseless persistence:

"See him standing dewlap-deep
In the rushes at the lake,
Surly, stupid, half-asleep ...

Dreaming things of days he spent
With his mother gaunt and lean
In the valley warm and green,
Full of baby wonderment,
Blinking out of silly eyes
At a hundred mysteries."

He relives, in a dream, the glories of his past, but

39. A.C. Ward, 20th Century English Literature 1901-60

40. Ibid.,

the dream fades; he wakes from his vision, and finds clouds of flies about him:

"And the dreamer turns away
From his visionary herds
And his splendid yesterday,
Turns to meet the loathly birds
Flocking round him from the skies,
Waiting for the flesh that dies."  

Like Ralph Hodgson, de la Mare too is very hostile towards those who commit tyranny on animals. To him they are "murderer" because for de la Mare/are not different, but they are fellow-beings. He puts at least both children and animals in the same category.  

Savage, though he can be concerning men's indifference to his fellow creatures, "de la Mare often looks with humour and with a wry good will at the kinship with them which underlies man's brief sojourn on earth."  

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44. McCrosson, *On cit*, p. 76.
Such for example is the poem "Comfort" in which a man and his cat, seated before the fire, share the warm solitude. The cat speaks to the man:

"Dear God, what security,
Comfort and bliss!
And to think, too, what ages,
Have brought us to this!"\textsuperscript{45}

What the cat means by "this" is revealed in the next stanza:

"You in your sheep's-wool coat,
Buttons of bone,
And me in my fur-about
On the warm hearthstone."\textsuperscript{46}

Here, as he often does, de la Mare laughs at the pretensions of man who has come how many countless ages, to this comfort, this security, this bliss — "a sheep's wool coat", with "buttons of bone" — while the cat

\textsuperscript{45} Complete Poems, p. 283, ll. 17-20.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., ll. 21-24.
has always had its "fur-about". The underlying irony in the situation is of course that the "comfort and bliss" of both man and beast are so ephemeral.\(^47\)

De la Mare's attitude towards the animate objects of Nature cannot be simply summed up in merely two or three words like love, compassion, humour and understanding; etc; but these poems about animals, birds and other little creatures are, certainly not devoid of philosophical dimensions. The poet's observation of the animate objects and the general human attitude towards them inspire him to philosophise on human nature, human potentialities; human predicament; and also the relationship between man and God.

In the "Unstooping" for example, the poet's observation of the animate world leads him to compare and contrast man's life to that of the wild animals and thus provides a starting point to philosophise on the basics of human nature. He observes the "Lion" and "the surly Bear" walking together with their heads downward, which is

\(^{47}\) McCrosson, \textit{Op. cit.}
indicative of the humility and fraternity in the animate world; both are the virtues of human nature. But on the contrary man's attitude towards his fellow beings and towards those who are in any way weaker, is atrocious. They are proud of themselves, and always walk with their heads upward:

"Low on his fours the Lion
Treads with the surly Bear;
But Men straight upward from the dust
Walk with their heads in air; 

They even build the gates of their houses high enough to enter them "Unstooping" on the back of their "four-foot beasts", which is again indicative of their pride, despite "Men's" knowledge of the fact that they are born of dust and will become dust ultimately:

"The doors of all their houses
They arch so they may go,
Uplifted o'er the four-foot beasts,
Unstooping to and fro."

49. _Ibid._, ll. 9-12.
Hence in this brief poem the apparently insignificant spectacle of the wild animals, "walking low on their fours" leads the poet to deliberate on the elements of pride and cruelty deep-seated in human nature.

"All But Blind" is also an important poem in this regard. It is another good example of de la Mare's habit of observing the animate objects of Nature which ultimately leads him to philosophise on human limits and limitations. The opening three stanzas of the poem hint at man's pride and the concept of his superiority over others, particularly over small and humble creatures. He considers them less sighted and less knowledgeable in comparison to himself. In the opening stanza the poet says the mole (a small insectivorous animal with tiny eyes and soft fur) can look for the insects in the darkness of its narrow hole while no body else can see properly in that darkness and thus all are blind to the "four-clawed Mole":

"All but blind
In his chambered hole
Gropes for worms
The four-clawed Mole." 50

Similarly, in the second and the third stanzas of the poem, the poet describes his observation of other insignificant creatures; they are the "hooded-Bat" and the "Barn-Owl". The "hooded-Bat" is capable of looking things in darkness, which man, and for that matter other creatures cannot do. Hence in the darkness of night all are blind to the "hooded Bat":

"All but blind
In the evening sky
The hooded-Bat
Twirls softly by."

This observation of de la Mare swings his imagination back to human beings, and he realises that like other creatures of God, man too, has got his limits and limitations. If other creatures are blind to the mole and the bat in the darkness of night man must also be blind to "Some-one", as is clear from the capital 'S', refers to some Supreme Power which is Omniscient and Omnipotent, and therefore the poet humbly concludes:

"And blind as are
These three to me,

So, blind to Someone
I must be” 52

While in the "Titmouse" poet’s observation of a very little bird which lives in a very small hole made in the tree-trunk, leads him to think of human predicament, and his ultimate fate in this ephemeral world. He says, if you dangle a palm-nut from a tree you would see a "nimble titmouse enter in/ Its snow-pulped kernel for bait"; and in this way this little creature becomes almost non-existent for the outside world:

"Out of earth's vast unknown of air,
Out of all summer, from wave to wave,
He'll perch, and prank his feathers fair
Tangle glass-clear wildering stave,
And take his commons there —— "53

This entering of the little creature into a small hole made in the tree-trunk and then becoming non-existent for the outside world reminds the poet of man's short span of life after which he too ceases to exist and becomes, like

the titmouse, a part of what de la Mare calls "Time's enormous Nought":

"This tiny son of life; this spright,
My momentary Human sought,
Plume with his wing in the dappled light,
Clash timbrel, shrill and gay —
An into Time's enormous Nought,
Sweet-fed, will fit away."

Similarly, in the "Haunted" his observation of the animate world leads him to deliberate on human world. The poet is very much impressed by the peace and sense of security which the animate objects — birds and beasts — enjoy. But he does not find the same in the human world:

"The rabbit in his burrow keeps
No guarded watch, in peace he sleeps;
The wolf that howls in challenging night
Cowes to her lair at morning light;

The simplest bird entwines a nest
Where she may lean her lovely breast,
Couched in the silence of the bough,
But thou, O man, what rest has thou?" 55

This peace and sense of security of the world of the animate objects when compared and contrasted to the human world by the poet he finds that there is restlessness and "subtler questioning" in the "divided heart" of man. Unlike "The Wolf that howls in challenging night" and "Covers to her lair at morning light," to enjoy sound sleep man's cares are increased by every night, and consequently every morning he finds himself more burdened of cares than before:

"Thy emptiest solitude can bring
Only a subtler questioning
In thy divided heart. Thy bed
Recalls at dawn what midnight said
Seek how thou wilt to feign content," 56

The poet discovers the source of man's restlessness, and

56. Ibid., ll. 9-13.
insecurity in his pride, high hopes and desires, and the worldly pomp and show. He regrets that man has to give up all these things at the time of the commencement of his final journey when he leaves behind this world of pomp and show with a sense of dissatisfaction:

"Pomp and great friends may hem thee round,
A thousand busy tasks be found;
Earth's thronging beauties may beguile
Thy longing love sick heart awhile;
And pride like cloud of sunset, spread
A changing glory round thy head;
But fade will all; and thou must come
Hating thy journey, homeless home." 57

In view of the poems discussed in the foregoing page(s) about the animate objects of Nature—birds, domestic pets, wild beasts and little creatures like the titmouse, mole, moth, and wasp, etc., it may be safely concluded that de la Mare is a very intent and close watcher of these creatures of God. Even the smallest creatures like the titmouse and the mole, etc.; usually

hidden from the common eye, are within the range of his observation. Further his attitude towards these animate objects, whether they are tame or wild, is very sympathetic. He treats them at equal footing with man, as is clear from the love, compassion and understanding found in his poems for these animate objects, and vehement denunciation of their oppressors like the huntsman and the butcher, etc.

Also the poet's observation of the animate objects of Nature inspires him to philosophise on human nature, human predicament and his ultimate fate in this ephemeral and material world. If the behaviour of the wild animals like the lion and bear leads him to think of pride and violence deep-seated in man, the mole and the "hooded bat" etc. remind him of human limits and limitation. Similarly, the little titmouse's habit of shutting itself up into a small hole in the tree-trunk hints at man's journey into the "Time's enormous Nought". We may therefore conclude, to use Duffin's words, that "a sympathy warm, live, full of complete and humorous understanding" characterises all of de la Mare's poems about the animate objects of Nature.

58. H.C. Duffin, Thomas Hardy, p. 137.
CHAPTER IV

NATURE AND THE POET'S MOODS AND IDEAS
As pointed out earlier, the dominant trend of the Edwardian and Georgian poetry was the portraiture of phenomenal/external Nature with an eye on her abstract aspects; particularly in their descriptions of gardens, meadows, seasons and weathers; morning, and evening. But in de la Mare's poetry Nature has also come in as a background to human actions and emotions. He uses her as an object of comparison to moralise on human fate. Sometimes natural phenomena merely seem echoing the human moods, while sometimes it creates moods. They also inspire him to ponder on human predicament and the poet concludes that all the inhabitants of the earth "share the same consciousness". Now we consider some poems in which Nature is used as a background to human actions and emotions.

"Autumn" is actually a love poem describing how the poet feels after the death of a child who was very dear.

to him. It is a good example of harmony/correspondence between the poet's emotions and the atmosphere around him. The death and decay in the season of Autumn in the phenomenal world reminds him of the sterility and barrenness of his own heart after the death of a child dear to him. In the opening stanza, he describes the dismal atmosphere in the season of Autumn:

"There is a wind where the rose was;  
Cold rain where sweet grass was;  
And clouds like sheep  
Stream over the steep  
Grey skies where the lark was."^{2}

This loss of life and activity in the phenomenal world reminds him of the loss of his beloved. He is no longer able to caress the golden hair or feel the warmth of the child's hands. The only thing possible to visualise is the ghost of him.

"Nought gold where your hair was;  
Nought warm where your hand was;  

But phantom forlorn
Beneath the thorn
Your ghost where your face was. 3

And the atmosphere echoes his grief and despondency:

"Sad winds where your voice was;
Tears, tears where my heart was;
And ever with me,
Child ever with me,
Silence where hope was." 4

"The Ghost" is also a good example of correspondence between the poet's emotions and objects of Nature. Here also the poet feels as if the objects of Nature are echoing his mood or as if they are sharing the poet's grief. In the opening stanza the poet hints at the fact of death of someone dear to him through a significant word "Peace", which has also silenced the heart of the poet:

PEACE in thy hands,
Peace in thine eyes,

3. Walter de la Mare, Poems 1901 to 1918, (London: Constable & Company Ltd., 1922), p. 95, ll. 6-10.
4. Ibid., ll. 11-15.
Peace on thy brow
Flower of a moment in the eternal hour,
Peace with me now. 5

The poet's heart is no longer full of joy and enthusiasm.
It is silent and so is the atmosphere around him — the
bird is not singing, nor the sea breaking. Everything is
echoing the 'silence' of the poet's heart whose 'storm'
is over now:

"Not a wave breaks,
Not a bird calls,
My heart, like a sea,
Silent after a storm that hath died
Sleeps within me." 6

Everything — 'night's dew', 'world's leaves', and
'winter's snow', etc., — seems to have become quiet.
They are sharing in the sorrow that has striken the poet's
heart:

All the night's dews,
All the world's leaves,

5. Walter de la Mare, Poems 1901 to 1918, Vol. I (London:
6. Ibid., ll. 6-10.
All winter's snow
Seem with their quiet to have stilled
in life's dream
All sorrowing now. 7

"Alone" is also a love poem giving expression
to the poet's loneliness and boredom after the death of
his beloved. Once, when the beloved was alive, everything
was full of life and gaiety, there was 'summer' everywhere:

"Once the pink cast a winy smell,
The wild bee hung in the hyacinth bell,
Light in effulgence of beauty fell." 8

But after the death of his beloved he is left alone in
this world; instead of 'summer' it is 'winter' that is
prevailing all around:

"Alas, my loved one is gone,
I am alone;
It is winter." 9

Here, as elsewhere, there is not only harmony between the

7. Walter de la Mare, Poems 1901 to 1918 Vol. I (London:
   Constable & Company Ltd., 1922), p. 95, 11.11-15.
8. Ibid., p. 196, 11. 7-9.
9. Ibid., 11. 10-12.
emotions of the poet and the atmosphere in the external world, but also the changes in the external world create moods and intensifies the poet's grief. The winter in the outside world reminds him of the winter (symbolic of sterility, barrenness, and suspension of life) within his own heart. He notices that

"The abode of the nightingale is bare,
Flowered frost congeals in the gelid air,
The fox howls from his frozen lair."

Similarly, he feels in his heart as if

My candle a silent fire doth shed,
Starry Orion haunts o'er head;
Come moth, come shadow, the world is dead.

'silent fire', 'moth' and 'shadow' etc. all symbolic of death come to the mind of the poet because his beloved is dead and gone, and he is left alone:

'Alas my loved one is gone,

I am alone;
It is winter.12

And finally a case of correspondence between human mood and the phenomenal world may be exemplified from the poem entitled "They Told Me". A child named Pan is dead. The poet, because of his love for the child, is not ready to believe it. People say that he is dead and gone but he is not convinced. He feels as if Pan is still alive and speaking through various objects of Nature, like 'the green valley' and 'the grey elder-thickets', etc. He is very sad and think that the whole of Nature is sharing in his grief and therefore, like Matthew Arnold in his "Dover Beach" thinks that even the sea is sad and the poet is able to realise it:

"Sometimes it seemed my own heart heard
Inland the sorrow of the sea."13

There are poems in which natural phenomena lead the poet to ponder over human predicament, they inspire him to moralise on various aspects of human life. In this

group of poems he predominantly dwells on the theme of death and mortality. He is convinced by the cycle of creation, growth and decay in the phenomenal world that the human life and beauty is also ephemeral, because to de la Mare, "all of earth's inhabitants, animate or inanimate, share the "same consciousness"; for they all have at least, the same fate" — as in the "Titmouse" at a feeding station:

"This tiny son of life, This spright;
Plume with his wing in the dappled light,
Clash timbrel shrill and gay —
An into Time's enormous Nought,
sweet-fed will flit away."

Not just snow drop and birds, however, share with man "the inevitability of the journey into the 'Times enormous Nought'."15

Here, in the same vein is the last stanza of "A Rose in Candlelight":

Lo, now the light that bathes this rose,
That wondrous red its cheek to give! 14

14. McCrosson, op. cit., p. 73.
It breathes, "We, too, a secret share;
Fleeting we are, however fair;
And only representative." 17

Similarly in the poem "When the Rose is Faded", which is a love poem, the poet by drawing an analogy reassures/convinces himself of the transitoriness of the beauty of his beloved. He observes that even very beautiful flowers are subject to death and decay. Their beauty disappears as soon as they fade:

"When the rose is faded,
Memory may still dwell on
Her beauty shadowed
And the sweet smell gone." 18

Similarly, the beauty of her beloved would vanish the moment she dies:

"Oh, thus, thy beauty,
Loveliest on earth to me,
Dark with no sorrow, shines
And burns, with Thee." 19

19. Ibid., ll. 13-16.
The poet's belief in the transitoriness of beauty and the inevitability of the journey of all the inhabitants of the earth into "Time's enormous Nought" finds fullest expression in his poem "Shadow", as the title of the poem itself suggests. His observation of the phenomenal world confirms, much against the imagination of the poet which makes "the changing, unchangeable", the inevitability of death in this world. He observes that life and death goes hand-in-hand in this world. Even the beautiful object like rose, are born but to die:

"Even the beauty of the rose doth cast,
When its bright, fervid noon is past,
A still and lengthening shadow in the dust;
Till darkness come
And take its strange dream home."  

In the second stanza of the poem the poet takes some other objects of Nature like 'bubbles of water', 'golden nimbus of the windowed saint', etc., who are simply journeying to mortality:

"The transient bubbles of the water paint

'Neath their frail arch a shadow faint;  
The golden nimbus of the windowed saint,  
Till shine the stars,  
Casts pale and trembling bars.\(^{21}\)

This journey of the objects of Nature to meet their ultimate end, that is, mortality reaffirms the poet's belief that every thing in this ephemeral world is subject to mortality:

"The loveliest thing earth hath,  
a shadow hath,  
A dark and livelong hint of death,  
Haunting it ever till its last faint breath.\(^{22}\)

Most of the imagery used in this poem is functional particularly the image of 'darkness', 'shadow', 'dust' and 'asphodel' (which blooms eternally in the Greek Elysium, the home of the dead), etc. are used symbolically in the poem.

The phenomena of Nature also inspires the poet to ponder over human predicament and philosophise about

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\(^{21}\) Poems 1901 to 1918, Vol. I, p. 85, ll. 6-10.  
\(^{22}\) Ibid., ll. 11-13.
human nature. Take, for example, his poem "When the Rose is Faded". It is a love poem, but here also, the changes in the phenomenal world, particularly death and decay which is the ultimate fate of all the inhabitants of the earth reminds the poet of the fact that the beauty of his beloved is transitory and that she too is a mortal being, as he notices that the beauty and smell goes out the moment "the rose is faded" though "Memory may still dwell on":

"When the rose is faded,
Memory may still dwell on
Her beauty shadowed,
And the sweet smell gone." 23

The poet realises that the beauty of his beloved is ephemeral, and also the insignificance of the immortality that he had been trying unconsciously or emotionally out of his love, to confer upon her. He is convinced that it is only at the thought-level that imagination or memory may make "of the changing/ The unchangeable."; otherwise it is not possible in the real world. Therefore, the

poet concludes that human beauty too is transitory and mortal:

Oh, thus thy beauty,
Loveliest on earth to me,
Dark with no sorrow, shines
And burns with Thee. 24

"The Miracle" is a good example of de la Mare's belief in pantheism or to see the presence of the Creator behind the creations, but here also we find that the changes in the phenomenal world inspire the poet to think of human predicament and hence to moralise on human nature. His observation does not remain confined to the beauty of the created objects in the phenomenal world but he also recognises death and decay as the other side of the same coin, that is, a co-partner of life. He starts in the characteristic style of questioning (bred by science in the later nineteenth century in England) and says,

"Who beckons the green ivy up
Its solitary tower of stone?"

What spirit lures the bindweed's cup
Unfalteringly on?"25

and that

"Who bids the hollyhock uplift
Her rod of fast-sealed buds on high;
Fling side her petals — silent, swift,
Lovely to the sky?"26

He believes that as these objects are created and they are created they die and meet their decay:

"Since as she kindled, so she will fade,
Flower above flower in squalor laid."27

This "kindling" of green ivy, 'bindweed' starry lichen and hollyhock; their growth, when they 'stand upright' and climbs over walls and tree trunks; and then ultimately their withering away lead de la Mare to ponder on man whose "ambitions" and "vaunting thoughts", too, climb high like

26. Ibid., ll. 7-10.
27. Ibid., ll. 11-12.
ivy or lichen. But man forgets the reality of his existence that he is to die, like other objects on this earth, after "brief time":

"So creeps ambition; so climb
Man's vaunting thoughts. He set on high,
Forgets his birth, small space, brief time,
That he shall die;
Dream blindly in his stagnant air;
Consumes his strength, strips himself bare." 28

De la Mare regrets this tendency on part of man to forget the reality of life and the short span of time that he is to live. And that he spends all his resources for "past earthly promise" at the cost of his 'delight', 'ease' and 'pleasure' for one aim:

"Rejects delight, ease, pleasure, hope,
Seeking in vain, but seeking yet,
Past earthly promise, earthly scope
On one aim set." 29

29. Ibid., ll. 25-28.
Here, as elsewhere, de la Mare impresses us as a minute observer of the phenomena of Nature. But unlike the majority of the Georgian poets, he is not simply interested in the spectacle of Nature for its own sake. On the contrary, the changes in the phenomenal world swing the poet's imagination back to the human world. In these natural phenomena he sometimes does find an echo of his own mood or for that matter they sometimes also create mood in him. But that is not all that one can think of de la Mare's nature poetry. "His first quest" in McCrosen's words "in all situations, is to find out some solution to a 'lifetime's mystery'".

Hence these natural phenomena and the changes in them, which de la Mare recognises as the law of Nature, make him ponder over human predicament and philosophise about human nature. He is convinced that "The loveliest thing earth hath, a shadow hath,/ A dark and livelong hint of death." It is because of this recognition of death and decay of all the objects of this ephemeral world that he expresses his concern on human flaws like high ambitions for things unattainable, or his attempt to make mortals immortal, etc., and he disapproves of them strongly as a realist.

30. McCrosen, op. cit., p. 73.
The beauty of the phenomenal world has a special appeal for the poet, not only because it satisfies his sensuous or aesthetic urges and is a creative objectification of his moods but because they suggest divine manifestation. As H.C. Duffin points out, "there is no escaping the fact that de la Mare's interest in the beauty of earth is seldom pure. It never has the simply sensuous motive of Keats or the youthful Wordsworth. It is more akin to Wordsworth's mature vision." 32 The poet of The Prelude stood

"Beneath some rock, listening to sounds that are
The ghostly language of the ancient earth,
Or make their dim abode in distant winds." 33

To de la Mare too the wandering wind and the dark breakers beating on the shore "ever call to the lone ghost" in him, making him homesick, wasted with "vain and unassuageable desires", "The simple sounds of nature may convey their own significance: the tapping of a bird at window may portend the coming of a spirit, the calling of an owl


hints at mysteries, the lapwing's anguished cry disturbs the soul. "There is something mystical in the contemplative peace, brought by the tranquil loveliness of England's hills and valleys, woods and breaking sea." "The Vacant Day" is a good example in this regard. Here the poet is able to commune with the in-dwelling spirit. While walking in "the meadows green" he hears the "summer noon resound", High overhead the windless air, Throbbed with the homesick coursing cry of swallows", and

"Beside me, too, clear water coursed
Which willow branches, lapsing low,
Breaking their crystal gliding forced
To sing as they did flow." 35

The poet listens to the sounds. He is very much impressed by them and strongly desires to meet the Divine Presence responsible for creating all these objects of Nature. He acknowledges very clearly that he listened to these mysterious sounds but at the same time he realises his inability to express this mystical experience adequately:

"I listened; and my heart was dumb
With praise no language could express;

34. Duffin, op. cit., p. 62.
35. _Poems 1901 to 1918_, Vol. I, p. 244, ll. 4-8.
Longing in vain for him to come
Who had breathed such loveliness."36

"Nature has pantheistic moods of her own, and
they are not to be denied at the bidding of science."37
So thinks de la Mare also, like Yeats, Barrie, Kipling,
James Stephens, and Lord Dunsay, etc. and other major
writers of the later nineteenth century. Pantheism as a
philosophic creed holds that the Universe is permeated,
sustained and interpenetrated by one 'Universal Mind' and
that every portion of the universe is but an expression of
this animating principle, as is also each individual mind
while subject to the limitations of mortality. His poem
entitled "Evening" offers a clear example of pantheism.
It is a very realistic and detailed description of the
approaching evening. As the twilight darkens, birds return
to their abodes; and glow-worms break through the darkness,
then stirs the owl in its nest to prowl through the dewy
air, etc. "Now all is still" and the whole atmosphere is
shrouded with wonder and mystery, and it is through all
these things that the poet is able to feel the presence of

"their ancient Masters":

"O, what an arch of light now spans
These fields by night no longer Man's!
Their ancient Master is abroad,
Walking beneath the moonlight cold:
His presence is the stillness, He
Fills earth's wonder and mystery."\(^{38}\)

"The Scribe" is also an important poem for two reasons — it shows de la Mare’s passion for beauty, secondly it brings out quite manifestly the fact that the poet's attitude towards beautiful objects is not simply sensuous or aesthetic, but in his poetry "Nature's beauty seems sometimes to clamour for mystic interpretation —".\(^{39}\)

Here the poet's meditation is not confined to the description of the beauty of various objects of Nature but their loveliness leads him to think of their Creator. In the opening stanza of the poem he sings in praise of God, the Creator:

"What lovely things
Thy hand hath made:

The smooth-plumed bird
In its emerald shade,
The seed of the grass,
The speck of stone
Which the way faring ant
Stirs — and hastens on!  

He is overwhelmed, and therefore, wishes to write in
praise of their Creator. For this he would sit by some
tarn, using its water as ink as his "spirit wills to
write of Earth's wonders":

"Though I should sit
By some tarn in thy hills,
Using its ink
As the spirit wills
To write of Earth's wonders
Its live, willed things."  

But,

"Flit would the ages
On soundless wings

41. Ibid., ll. 9-14.
Ere unto Z
My pen drew nigh;
Leviathan told,
And the honey fly."42

The poet, therefore, realises as in "The Vacant Day" that it is impossible to write of the immense beauty created by God:

"And still would remain
My wit to try —
My worn reeds broken,
The dark tarn dry,
All woods forgotten —
Thou, Lord, and I."43

De la Mare may be compared to Hopkins who in the "Pied Beauty" also praises God for "the dappled thing" He has created, he says:

"Glory be to God for dappled things —
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim

43. Ibid., p. 249, ll. 21-26.
Similarly, de la Mare also sings in praise of God for the "lovely things" He has created and they are manifestation of Himself. He, therefore, strongly longs for eulogizing Him with the religious reverence of Hopkins. Moreover, in the words of Megroz, here he is "very close to the oriental mysticism of a poet like Rabindranath Tagore."

But in de la Mare's Poetry this concept of the Divine Presence manifesting itself through various objects of Nature is not always as all-pervasive and distinct as in the poetry of the Romantic poets, particularly in Wordsworth and Shelley. On the contrary, in de la Mare it is some mysterious Presence with whom the poet communes. It is this mysterious Presence which charges even ordinary objects in his poetry with wonder and mystery, hence the difference between de la Mare and Wordsworth, since his first quest "in all situations is to find out some solution


to a life times mystery therefore, in most of his poems his style is interrogative. He usually does not simply confer praises or identifies himself with the Divine Presence pervading all objects of Nature like Wordsworth but seems to be exploring that all-pervasive Spirit through various queries. It is characteristic of most of his poems. Take, for example, "The Miracle". The poet cannot name with certainty the agency that has created various objects of Nature. In his characteristic questioning manner he expresses his anxiety to know that Power because "the hackneyed miracle of growth" still remains a mystery for the poet though it is presented as an unambiguously animate object:

"Who beckons the green ivy up
Its solitary tower of stone;
What spirit lures the bindweed's cup
Unfalteringly on?
Calls even the starry lichen to climb
By agelong inches endless time"

The same idea is repeated in the "Nobody Knows".
The poet does commune, like other mystic poets, with the

wind but fails to understand it, hence what it says remains a mystery for ever. He says:

"Often I have heard the Wind sigh
By the ivied orchard wall,
Over the leaves in the dark nights,
Breath a sighing call,
And faint away in the silence,
While I, in my bed,
Wondered, what it said." 48

He admits his inability to understand fully the voice of the wind and seeks consolation in the generalisation that "Nobody Knows what the wind is".

Like Shelley, de la Mare also seems to subscribe to the view that human soul does not die with the physical death. On the contrary, it is absorbed in the "Eternal Spirit". By this absorption in the Divine Spirit he does not mean complete loss of the individual identity but that personality loses its earthly dross and participates in the universal 'Light' and "Loveliness". Thus Shelley speaks

of Keats, in his *Adonais*, who has become one with the "Loveliness":

"He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely: he doth bear
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull world

And bursting in its beauty and its might."

Similarly in "They Told Me" Walter de la Mare hears the rationalist's call that "Pan was dead", yet he is often surprised to listen to his voices in "the green valleys" and "elder thickets":

"They told me Pan was dead, but I
Oft marvelled who it was that sang
Down the green valleys languidly
Where the grey elder -- thickets hang."

The same idea is repeated in another poem

49. P.B. Shelley, *Adonais*, St. 43.
entitled "Sorcery". Here also "Pan is not dead" but still sings sweet out of earth's fragrant shade" and leaves amongst the violets "tears of an antique bitterness".

It may, therefore, be concluded that de la Mare's poetry is not completely devoid of mysticism. Pantheistic notes are readily recognisable in some of his poems. In some of these poems he expresses his conviction to feel the Divine Presence behind objects of Nature, to whom he sometimes addresses as "the ancient Master" and sometimes as "the Creator". De la Mare believes that the Creator manifests himself through his creations. He also communes with various objects of Nature and also believes in the identification of the human and the divine after the physical death. But what makes him different from other mystic poets is his sharper perception of mystery and wonder which predominate his entire poetry and entitles him to be designated as the poet of "the other world". Hence he is not simply a delineator of the beauties and sounds of Nature, or one who may find an echo or correspondence between his moods and ideas, and the phenomenal world. He is not only "the divine child of fantasy" but also "The Scribe" of God. 51

51. Megroz, op. cit., p. 262.
CONCLUSION
The tradition of Nature poetry in English which formally started with James Thomson reached its zenith with the Romantic poets, particularly in the poetry of Wordsworth who explored her utmost philosophical limits. In the Victorian poetry too some sort of a continuation of the attitudes of the Romantic poets is observed, but it is considerably affected by the rationalistic and scientific temperament of the age. By the twentieth century the divorce between man and Nature was once again evident with the shift of the centre of activity from village to the metropolis. Consequently the socio-political ideas of the time became the main source of inspiration for poets. The only groups of poets who still continued to write about Nature were the Georgians. They chose Nature subjects for treatment in their poetry. But in their attitude towards her they were quite different from the 18th and 19th century English poets. Their poetry is mainly descriptive of the sights and sounds of Nature and is wanting in interpretative and reflective aspects. These Georgian poets were usually impressed by the beauty of her sights
and sounds with rarely or no spiritual concept of Divine presence about her.

But an analysis of the early poetry of Walter de la Mare reveals that his interest in Nature was conspicuous. Though he left Kent, a place known for its natural beauty at the age of four years and spent the rest of his life in and around the metropolis (London). Yet his poetry gives the impression of a man who never cut himself off from Nature; the reason is that the impressions of his childhood experiences with the beautiful place of his birth, continued to be a permanent passion with de la Mare; a fact which is reflected in many of his poems in which he describes his childhood experiences in a garden or a dale of snow. In this connection mention should be made of poems like "All That's Past", "The Little Green Orchard", "Winter Dusk", "The Mountains", and "A Dale of Snow", etc.

Besides these abstract aspects of Nature de la Mare has also written many poems on English flora. They include the "Tree", "The Hawthorn Hath a Deathly Smell", "Noon and Night Flowers" and "The Birdweed", etc. All these poems are remarkable, besides the richness of
the colours and sound and the pre-Raphaelite details; for the element of simple delight and the poet's sensuous love for Nature; in this regard he may be compared to the youthful Wordsworth and the sensuousness of Keats. But merely simple delight is not enough for him, every thing comes to him with certain human associations most of his descriptions of Natural phenomena are interpersed with some features of human interest. In some of these poems Nature serves as a background to human actions and emotions, and the poet feels as if the objects/phenomena of Nature are echoing his moods; while in some other poems they create moods in the poet. Poems like "Alone", "Winter", "Autumn", "Remembrance", and "The Reawakening", etc. are important in this regard.

Unlike most of the Georgian poets de la Mare's poetry is endowed with interpretative and reflective dimensions. His observation of the spectacles of Nature often swings his imagination back to human life and the poet gets inspiration to deliberate on human nature human predicament and his ultimate fate in this ephemeral world. In this group of poems the predominating themes are man's pride and mortality. In this connection mention may be made of poems like the
"Shadow", "An Epitaph" "The Hawthorn hath a Deathly Smell" etc. To him even the noblest manifestation of Nature are subject to ruin, decay and death. Change he accepts, as the law of Nature but he finds it according to a certain fixed pattern. Hence she is never clothed in any conception of permanence.

Besides the reflective or interpretative strains do la Mare's attitude towards Nature has also a theological touch about it. Like Wordsworth and Shelley streaks of 'Deism' and 'Pantheism' are also seen in his poetry. In some of these poems he clearly recognises the "Divine Presence" manifesting itself through various objects of Nature and the poet acknowledges that "Their Ancient Master is abroad,/ Walking beneath the moonlight cold;/ His presence is the stillness, He/ Fills earth with wonder and mystery". He is able to "hear summer noon resound", but feels as if his "heart was dumb/ With praise no language could express". In "The Scribe" he speaks of the lovely things created by God with the religiosity of Hopkins, as A.C. Ward remarks that 'The Scribe' is about the subject of all great verse — God and Man and the Universe. Milton made ten thousand lines on
the theme; de la Mare made twenty-six lines only". It should however, be borne in mind that this concept of the Divine Presence in de la Mare's poetry is not always as certain and distinct as in Wordsworth and Shelley. More often than not it is some mysterious presence with whom the poet is/communion.

De la Mare's interest in and love for Nature is further expressed in his poems about the animate objects of Nature. These poems show his wide range of observation and include animals, birds, and even little creatures like insects. In most of these poems he has expressed his intense love and sympathy for the animate objects and is savagely critical towards those who commit atrocities on them for their pleasure. Poems like "Alas, Alack!", "I can't A bear", "The Cage" and "Hi", etc deserve mention. These poems about the animate object of Nature are also important for their philosophical aspect. The poet closely studies the behaviour of various animals and birds, etc. and it leads him to philosophise on human nature and human predicament in this regard "Haunted" "Unstooping" and "All But Blind", etc are important poems. These poems about the animate objects bear testimony to the poet's
power of observation as he does not even miss the little and insignificant creatures like mole, fly, moth and wasp, etc.

Since de la Mare spent the better part of his youth in London working either as a clerk or a journalist, he does not seem to have been impressed by the cruel and sublime aspects of Nature. He rarely talks of mountains, sea and valleys, storms etc., Out of 273 poems included in Poems 1901 to 1918 Vol I and II, there is only one single poem entitled "Mountains" and two poems in which he talks of the 'roar of the sea of England'. Actually, to him Nature's cruel and malicious aspect is very much less important than her benevolence. He, therefore, emphasises a close affinity with Nature, out of which emanates joy and peace which solace the distressed humanity. In this regard he regrets his own insensitiveness and confesses:

What now my anxious soul doth lack
Is energy in peace to be
At one with Nature's mystery. 2

He considers Nature's plans benign and holds man responsible for the mal-distribution of her wealth.

2. Collected Poems, p. 321. ll. 3-5.
In view of the various perspective as revealed during the course of the present study it may be concluded that Walter de la Mare is a thorough naturalist in whom the searching interest of the scientist and the loving observation of the poet are fused together.
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