



# Influence of Pantheism and Retreat into Privacy in Modern Poetry: A Cross-Cultural Literary Study

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## Self Introduction

My name is Soumitra Ghosh. I have completed B.A Honours In English from University of Calcutta. I have also completed M.A in English from Himalayan University, Arunachal Pradesh. I have been in teaching profession for more than 12 years. I am Independent Researcher.



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## Abstract

Pantheism and retreat into privacy are significant literary and philosophical tendencies in modern poetry across the world. This study explores how these two concepts originate from Wordsworthian Romanticism and evolve through modern poets across different cultural contexts. It examines their presence in English, Irish, African, American, Asian, and Bengali poetry along with critical theoretical perspectives such as ecocriticism, post-colonialism, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, feminism, and Marxism.

## Introduction:

### 19th century poet of the Romantic Age

Wordsworth did not merely visualize nature as only a source of beauty, but also felt the touch of God in nature and natural objects. Pantheism means God exists in every part of nature. Wordsworth believed that nature is not an abstract thing or an inanimate object; rather, it is infused with a living soul.

Wordsworth believed that emotion is recollected in tranquility. He left the external world and entered into his inner world and introspected himself. He wanted to retreat into privacy because privacy is a state of innocence, and being in that state of innocence, the perception of God is easy.

A few modern poets partially accepted Wordsworth's pantheism and retreat into privacy, or they have accepted a transformed form of pantheism and retreat into privacy.

**Key words** –Pantheism, optimism, introspection, self-analysis.

Research Objective –1)To know why modern poets accept Pantheism and Retreat into privacy indirectly.

2)To know why modern poets want to retreat into privacy.



3) To find out psychological difference between English poets and poets of other literature.

Research Questions - 1) Why psychology of English poets is different from that of poets of other literature regarding Pantheism and Retreat into privacy?

2) What did modern poets observe after retreating into privacy?

**Research Methodology** –Text book study, Study of book on criticism, imagining different forms of God, accepting existence of God in nature and natural forces, analysing representation of God by the poets of different literature.

**Literary Review** –Pantheism and Retreat Into Privacy have direct and indirect impact on modern poets. English modern poets didn't directly believe the existence of God in nature, but indirectly accepted existence of God in nature. They have visualized Divine power in natural objects. Their indirect acceptance makes literature more complex. Many modern poets of other literature have directly accepted Pantheism and Retreat Into Privacy of Wordsworth. The uncertainty, hesitation, restlessness have been subdued by natural forces that are also the symbol of God.

## Discussion --

### Pantheism and Modern English Poets

W.B Yeats perceived a mysterious, and spiritual force in nature. In his *The Lake of Innisfree*, nature is source of peace of soul. Like Wordsworth, Yeats visualizes nature not only as visible object but also a spiritual shelter. Yeats's view is linked with mysticism, Irish common belief and occultism.

Yeats thought nature is visible ladder between visible world and invisible spiritual world. According to Yeats, man can get touch of higher reality via nature. Yeats represented Gyre's conception. He thought universe is regulated by a cosmic force that is transformed into cyclic form. This force is also reflected in nature. He was always in quest of self-realisation.

### Pantheism and Retreat into Privacy in Modern Bengali Poets :----

In Jibanananda Das's poem, nature is not visible thing. It is living, conscious and mysterious. In his poems, the gap between man and nature is wiped out. Poet has interpreted himself sometimes as grass, sometimes as form of bird, or sometimes as form of river. In fact everything is part of same consciousness. Pantheism of Jibanananda Das is personal and lonely. Escaping from chaotic condition of modern world, he seeks solace in nature. Nature is absolutely personal and spiritual world. Pantheism of Jibanananda Das is also different from traditional religious belief. Here there is no definite God, ritualistic practices, or any specific worshipping; there is only worshipping nature.

Pantheism is nature and God are not different entity, rather one single entity. In pantheism, God is not seen as individual existence. Consequently, man's personal prayers, moral responsibility, connection with God become weak and inactive. If everything is God, difference between God and man will be wiped out. This will deteriorate moral justice and sense of responsibility. In spite of telling being absorbed into nature, pantheism creates real problem. There is a tendency in modern men and poets, that is escaping from society, taking shelter into personal world. Excessive inclination for loneliness makes a man indifferent for society and essential issues of society. If a poet is only absorbed into his/her own world, the literature created by him/her loses diversity.

So, a number of modern poets are writing poems on pantheism, God, to evoke hope and faith from the readers. In fact men, being excessively depressed, are seeking escaping into nature in order to seek peace. Sometimes they are transporting themselves into inner world to delve into security or sometimes being absorbed into nature, they are seeking



peace. Modern poets have observed these features of modern man, and so they begin to write poems based on pantheism and retreat into privacy.

In modern poems, pantheism and retreat into privacy are the reflection of spiritual uncertainty. When due to influence of feeling of problem of existence, mental separation, deep reflection of spiritual uncertainty, industrialization, urbanization, man loses faith in God and is alienated from nature, they begin to seek existence of God in nature and natural objects. This type of tendency of human being inspired modern poets to write poems on pantheism and retreat into privacy.

In the poems written by Jibanananda Das, pantheism is brought forth through delicate, silent and deep feelings. According to him, God is not separate, rather it is intermingled with nature.

In “Balaka”, motion and conception on universal consciousness is intense and constant. Flight of bird symbolizes the expression of cosmic force. In Chitra, God does not directly exist in nature, but it is in soul of human being.

In “Manasi”, nature is not external beauty rather living consciousness. He also felt omnipresence of God in sky, air, river, light. His feelings of heart gets intermingled with nature. Poet visualizes the reflection of nature in his sorrow, joy, hope.

Pantheism is also discernible in the poems of Sukanta Bhattacharya in complex form, not in direct manner like Wordsworth. His sense of pantheism and retreat into privacy contains traces of uncertainty. Omnipresence of cosmic force or universal energy is present in the form of God.

In “Orchestral”, different notes and natural elements compose a musical song that is a part of universal harmony. Here pantheism is reflected indirectly. Pantheism is discernible in Joy Goswami in transformed form. In “Ghumiechho Jhoupata”, Jhoupata is not a leaf of a tree.

In Gitanjali, Rabindranath Tagore has shown God is omnipresent in every natural object like air, sky, river, flower. In “Leave this chanting and singing”, Tagore said, God does not live in temple, rather it lives in nature. The omnipresence of God is reflected in nature, in human activity, human thinking. Via loneliness, Rabindranath Tagore entered into his own world and introspected himself and felt the presence of God.

#### Pantheism and The Poets of Arabian countries:--

In the modern poems of Arabian countries, political turmoil, keeping anybody in exile, identity crisis and quest for spirituality are observed. In this context, two important tendencies are pantheism and Retreat into Privacy.

Desert, sky, sir, all are living being and sacred. Under the influence of Sufieism, Poets express his absorption into nature. This is a silent demonstration against political structure and orthodox religious structure. Due to two tendencies distinction between man and universe was wiped out.

Pantheism means nature, universe, God all are same. This is not said in modern poetry directly. It is expressed via symbol. Modern poets have visualised tree, river, light and darkness not as real objects but as the symbol of Divine Immanence. Tree is the symbol of steadfastness and world consciousness. River is the symbol of inner flow and unity in



creation. Sky is the symbol of Heaven and limitlessness. Retreat into Privacy means leaving external world, enter into inner world. Darkness, silence, closed room all symbolises mental state in which poets have found their real self. Symbolism evokes multi layered meaning of the text.

Pantheism and Retreat Into Privacy in Irish And Australian Modern poets:--

Modern complexity of world of modern men, loneliness, quest for spirituality. In *Digging* written by Seamus Heaney, relationship between man and soil has been shown as spiritual or divine connection between man and God. Soil, potato, fragrance of potato are all living entity and carry meaning. Nature is not an abstract thing, rather it is a living force. Leaving the external world, poet has entered into the world of memory and retreating into inner world, he tries to find out his real identity.

These two features are also discernible in Evan Boland. He, in the poem, tries to show relation of nature and human cycle that is connected with movement of perception. Poem is personal and introspective and poet is lost in his feelings and memory. Retreat into privacy is discernible in Louis MacNeice. He, in *Autumn Journal*, has brought forth personal thinking, fear, inner conflict etc. Retreating from realism caused by war into inner world, for self-realization of love, personal feelings and memory, pantheism is visible here.

Now question is—why did the modern poets arrive at these two features?

Here gate is not external gate made of building materials, rather internal gate of human being and with the opening of this gate journey of soul towards God begins.

W. B. Yeats perceived a mysterious spiritual force in nature. In his poem “The Lake Isle of Innisfree,” nature becomes a source of peace for the soul. Like Wordsworth, Yeats visualizes nature not merely as a visible object but also as a form of spiritual shelter.

Yeats’s ideas are closely connected with mysticism, Irish folk beliefs, and occultism. He believed that nature acts as a visible link between the material world and the invisible spiritual world. According to Yeats, human beings can come into contact with a higher reality through nature.

Pantheism and retreat into privacy are also discernible in modern Australian poets. In Australian modern poets, nature is living and spiritual force. In *The Company of Lovers*, the lovers are not only two human beings, but also they are part of a larger stream of nature, time, existence where man is transient but feelings and nature are permanent. Lovers come to the world, sojourn here and go back to the place from where they came. But abstractions of love and feeling of love is permanent.

Here the feeling of love is intermixed with nature. In *Cycle of Love*, written by Judith Wright, Wright did not see time as linear but as repetitive; change of season, birth and death, appearance of love and its departure all are parts of cycle of nature. Love is temporary in form but eternal in continuity. Here pantheism is not directly reflected, rather a divine unity between nature and life is reflected.

Influence of pantheism and retreat into privacy in modern human being → for Irish modern poets these two features are not only poetic features but also a vision of life. W.B. Yeats, Seamus Heaney, Louis MacNeice, Evan Boland in their poems have modern complexity of mind of modern man, loneliness, quest for spirituality. In *Digging* written by Seamus Heaney, relationship between man and soil has been shown.



Modern man feels isolated and disconnected from nature. Therefore, he tries to find solace in nature. Nature becomes a source of peace and spiritual comfort. The poet expresses his personal feelings and emotions in his poetry.

In modern literature, the theme of retreat into privacy is very common. The poet withdraws from society and focuses on his inner world. This helps him to understand himself better and gives depth to his poetry.

#### Pantheism and Retreat Into Privacy, Unavoidable for Modern poets:----

In brief, time, society and psychological situation compelled modern poets to follow pantheism and retreat into privacy. From 1910 to the 1950s, two world wars occurred; there was a decline of moral values and faith in religion dwindled. For all these things, man fell into deep despair. T. S. Eliot, in his poems, drew a picture of a broken world. Consequently, for not getting consistency and stability, the poets were prone to pantheism and retreated into privacy.

Modern poets were not satisfied with traditional religion; they were seeking a new type of religion and faith that could satisfy their soul and desire. So, pantheism was a new religion to satisfy their soul. Experiment on the subconscious mind began. With the growth of experiments on the subconscious mind, inclination for pantheism began to increase.

Man begins to believe that it is easier to see God via the subconscious mind. We all are in the age of industrialization. In the age of industrialization, the life of human beings is infested with anxiety, tension, fear, uncertainty and insecurity. Men are always desiring restlessness. They are feeling lonely; they all are seeking inspiration from pantheism. That is why they are being inclined towards God more and more.

#### Pantheism And Retreat Into Privacy in Modern African Poets:----

Pantheism and retreat into privacy is also discernible in modern African poets. In a work by Wole Soyinka, the cycle of life and death, soul, nature, all are intermingled with each other. The frequent rebirth of a child's soul produces a border between nature and supernatural world. Soyinka has visualized nature not only as context but also as dwelling place for soul. Like Wordsworth, nature is not calm and peaceful, rather mysterious, powerful, cruel force before which man is helpless.

Sense of pantheism is also reflected in "Heaven's Gate" written by Christopher Okigbo. The title symbolizes indication to enter into spiritual world. In the first line the poet has dedicated himself to God in sacred situations; that means he has left ego and fully dedicated to God. Poet, leaving old identity, has proceeded to acquisition of new spiritual knowledge. Poet has created a bridging between African traditional belief (Gods) and western modernist influences.

#### Pantheism And Retreat Into Privacy in Modern American Poets:-----

"Burnt Norton" garden is the symbol of memory and the conscience of human beings. Nature's silence opens the way to the interpretation of human existence. Nature is the mirror of eternity. The cycle of nature is connected with the timeline of human conscience. A man finds the meaning of self-realization within this timeline of his conscience. In nature, there exists a sense of calmness and steadiness through which the human conscience feels and perceives the ultimate truth of Almighty God



In Four Quartets, the garden and time symbolize memory; the rose symbolizes the uncertainty of life and man's dependence on God; and fire symbolizes purification and the maturity of spiritual conscience. T. S. Eliot wants to prove that external nature and introspection are not separate but are two forms of a single truth.

Like Wordsworth, Robert Frost visualizes nature as an embodiment of a mysterious universal force. However, this force is not always kind or divine. At times, it assumes a serious and profound dimension. For example, in "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," Frost presents nature as a hypnotizing and deep mystery. In nature, there is neither absolute good nor evil force, nor is it entirely divine. Human beings often retreat into their inner selves in search of self-realization.

#### Pantheism And Retreat Into Privacy In Brazilian Poets:-----

Brazil is a country in which there is unity in diversity. Amazon forest, rivers, mountains etc. are inseparable parts of literary imagination. In the poems written by Carlos Drummond de Andrade, a delicate relationship between man and nature is discernible. In his poem A Máquina do Mundo, the world has been represented as a mysterious entity. Here pantheism is a type of philosophical perception.

In the poetry of João Cabral de Melo Neto, natural objects like river, dry land are like living characters. Pantheism takes practical form—the struggle of man and nature are interconnected with each other.

In the poems of Manuel Bandeira, personal pain, agony, restlessness, loneliness are deeply reflected. Escaping from reality, he has taken shelter in the world of dream, memory, imagination and introspection.

#### Pantheism and Retreat into Privacy in Russian Modern Texts:

In Russian modern poets, these two features are discernible. In the poems of Boris Pasternak, a keen relationship between man and nature in divine nature is an embodiment of God. In "Feb Tussy Take Sun and bay, Boris Pasternak's emotional response to man in the change of nature has been brought forth. The mommy of nature, rain, scenery of melting snow have been reflected in a lively way. Pantheistic feeling can be observed in his poems nature is reflection of man's emotion. Boris Pasternak's poems are not only expression of beauty, rather a type of spiritual journey. In his poems, nature, love and loneliness brings forth hidden truth in the life of human beings.

Pantheism and Retreat into Privacy in Korean modern poets :-These two features are also observed in the modern poets of South Korea. A famous South Korean poet Kobla had universalised nature as symbol of spiritual force. In Azaleas by Kim Sonal nature has been intermingled with passion of human being. Flower, Mountain, river all these are the objects of sense from in South Korean modern poems, pantheism and retreat into privacy are not only the literary features, but also these two tendencies are existential reaction. Being pressed under war, colonialism, modernism, poets are seeking God in nature and have taken shelter into his inner world.

#### Analysis of Pantheism And Retreat Into Privacy According to Plato And Aristotle:-----

Soumitra:

##### ► Plato's Perspective:

Plato divided the world into two forms:

The world of Forms (Ideas) → eternal, perfect, and ultimate reality





The physical world → imperfect and incomplete copy of the Forms

Pantheism makes conflict with Plato because:

It identifies God with the physical form

Plato separates the divine (Forms) from the material world

Aristotle believes in empirical observation and logic. He was in quest of truth via knowing real world. To some extent pantheism is in keeping with philosophy of Aristotle, but it is out of keeping with Plato.

Analysing From Feminism: — feminism gives priority to woman's independence and self expression and this also can be related to nature. Feminism exhibits power to nature. But in this case individual and individual does not represent all. But their experience and feelings do not reflect the people in larger social pattern. So in Marxism, power relation and identity are resolved in this point of view. There is a potential similarity. According to Marxism, we cannot concentrate on self communication and privacy. We can not bring social change through this. Women are exploited in patriarchal society and they neglect the power and independence. Reflecting privacy shows them an opportunity to take social action and to rebuild identity but in it not sufficient for formation of structured society.

Analysis On The Basis Of Deconstruction:----

Deconstruction shoes concept and feelings about God is not fixed. It comes to human mind in different forms. According to Deconstruction, personal place is not truly personal and independent, this is formed through social, cultural and linguistic structure. Privacy is not infallible truth, it changes according to different types of condition and context. Jibanananda Das visualised God in nature and natural objects like forest, tree, river, etc, and he also visualised God in himself, but his feeling when he visualized God in nature and natural objects is not same as his feeling when he visualized God in himself. Naturally a conflict is created here. Deconstruction is also applicable to Rabindranath Tagore. Rabindranath Tagore found divine feelings in moral world, nature, natural objects and he also found and perceived divine feelings in his love for human being, in his memory, in his psychological insights, but both the feelings are not same. The conflict is created here.

Analysing from Marxism → Pantheism shows nature as incarnation of God. But according to Marxism this underestimates man's economic and social reality. So personal experience or spiritual experience is the result of social and economic situation. Pantheism advises us to be intermixed with nature that overlooks class conflict, social difference. In other words the people who are exploited in the society seek spiritual peace that lies in inner world of people, not focus on social and economical structure, their retreating into privacy will never bring any solution. Pantheism pays heed to meditation and spiritualism and in course of doing this, this ignores the necessity of social and economic change. According Marxism, true emancipation comes from changes in social structure, but Pantheism says it comes from belief in God and Spiritualism.



### Analysis From Psychoanalytic Theory:---

According to psychoanalytic theory, any reader is under no compulsion to follow any deep spiritual feelings. Rather than like that, traditional relationship in reading and creativity. The person must bring from long time as a result in repetition. Some person can see it as a vehicle to escape from reality. Some random nonsense of an art form for body interpretation. So the readers have explicit it in a way to escape from reality.

Archetypes and Psychoanalytic — In Pantheism man sees nature and God are same. Everything is God. According to psychoanalytic theory it is psychological security nature. Pantheism differs in denial. Nature seems filled divine. Thinking nature as God means to get rid of limitation and restriction of private life. According to the theory of collective unconscious of Jung, being absorbed in nature is archetype of primitive communion. when the ego of human starts into privacy hidden any body relation in external world, he feels unity with nature inwardly due to Pantheism. Escaping from pain, anxiety of real world, he creates an imaginative world in which he feels secured. Sometimes Pantheism and Retreat Into Privacy is crucial for inner healing.

Analysis on The Basis Of New Historicism:--- According to New Historicism, Pantheism is a historical process. Pantheism gets much importance when influence of structured religion decreases and man seeks emancipation from restrictions and control of Institution. It is a counter discourse against so called religious power. Man establishes God in nature and consequently the centre of power gets destroyed. Pantheism shows nature as uninstitutional entity and retreating into privacy means being separated from company of human being. These two things create an alternative word that is beyond the centre of power.

**Research findings** –1) We have come to know how God exists in the form of natural forces. 2) We have come to know why modern poets, in spite of being pessimistic, want to retreat into privacy. 3) We have come to know why English poets of modern era didn't accept Pantheism directly. 4) We have come to know similarity and dissimilarity between English and other literature on the two perspectives

### Conclusion:---

In modern society, pantheism and Retreat into Privacy have crucial role and they have impact on human life in different ways.

#### Relevance of Pantheism

Pantheism is the belief that God and Universe are same and closely related with each other.

Its importance today:

#### Environmental Awareness

In an age of imbalanced climate and ecological imbalance, pantheism inspires people to see nature as sacred force controlling the living being. This provokes to show respect and responsibility toward the environment.

#### Religious Tolerance

Pantheism does not focus on any single religion. It promotes unity and harmony among different faiths, which is essential in a diverse and globalized world.

#### Spiritual Fulfillment





In life driven by technology and science, people often feel isolation from nature. Pantheism makes individuals reconnect with nature and helps to find inner peace and spiritual satisfaction via introspection.

**Relevance of Retreat into Privacy** Retreat into Privacy refers to the inclination of individuals to enter into their personal space, giving priority and solitude and independence.

Its importance today:

**Protection of Personal Data**

In the modern technology driven world, where life has been full of anxiety, tension, privacy is crucial. Individuals seek to attain calmness and peace.

**Mental Health and Well-being**

Continuous work pressure and struggle for existence can lead to stress. Spending time alone (me-time) helps to bring back emotional balance and mental health.

**Individual Freedom**

Modern individuals value their independence in thoughts, lifestyle, and choices. Privacy ensures the protection of this personal freedom