



Jibanananda Das as a Worshipper of Nature with Ecological Significance

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Abstract: Jibanananda Das, one of the foremost figures of modern Bengali poetry, emerges as a profound worshipper of nature whose works embody ecological consciousness far ahead of his time. This paper analyses his poetry that transforms the natural world into a sacred realm, portraying rivers, forests, owls, fireflies, grass, and even the most ordinary rural landscapes with an intensity that elevates them into symbols of life's continuity and fragility. Unlike the romantic idealization of nature, Jibanananda's vision is rooted in an ecological sensibility he perceives human existence as inseparable from the rhythms of the earth. His portrayal of Bengal's flora and fauna not only reflects aesthetic devotion but also underscores an ethical awareness of environmental balance. By highlighting the silent endurance of nature against human exploitation and historical upheaval, he becomes a poetic voice of ecological preservation. Jibanananda Das can be interpreted as a worshipper of nature whose works offer a timeless ecological message: that the survival of humanity is bound to the survival of the natural world.

Introduction

In the long gallery of modern Bengali poetry, Jibanananda Das (1899–1954) shines with a peculiar radiance, both elusive and enduring. Often hailed as the “*Rupasi Bangla'r Kobi*” (the poet of the Beautiful Bengal), he remains at once intensely local and strikingly universal. While his contemporary Rabindranath Tagore had already opened the windows of Bengali literature to the wide horizons of world culture, Jibanananda turned inward to the soil, rivers, foliage, creatures, and cycles of Bengal's natural world. His poetry became a testimony to the intimate relationship between human beings and their ecological habitat.

In this paper, we will explore Jibanananda Das as a worshipper of nature with ecological significance. We will discuss how his verses immortalized the landscapes of Bengal, how

he portrayed nature as both refuge and revelation, how his poems recuperate ecological wisdom, and why his vision is more relevant than ever in our climate-challenged age.

Discussion: Jibanananda and His Bond with Nature

To call Jibanananda merely a poet of nature would be a simplification; he was not a romantic escapist singing in rapture of sunsets and flowers. His gaze was simultaneously aesthetic, philosophical, and ecological. Nature for him was not a backdrop but a living presence a breathing cosmos where the destinies of human and non-human creatures are interwoven. In the twentieth century, the discourse of “eco-criticism” and “environmental humanities” gained ground; Jibanananda had already voiced a profound awareness of nature’s centrality to life and against the tragedy of its destruction.

Jibanananda Das was born in Barisal (now in Bangladesh), a region celebrated for its lush rivers, green fields, bamboo groves, and endless horizon of paddy lands. This geography left an indelible imprint on his imagination. In his autobiographical essay *Amar Kavi Jiban* (My Poet’s Life), he remarked how the natural sights of his boyhood never left him: the call of birds, the flight of cranes, the sheen of paddy under the moon, the silent flowing of rivers.

Unlike many poets who “use” nature to mirror human moods, Jibanananda fused himself into the natural environment. He saw himself not as master but as a fellow creature. In his famous poem “*Banalata Sen*”, he finds solace not in human glory but in the timeless face of a woman who embodies the calm of nature:

*“As the weary sailor who, after a thousand years,
Finds respite in the shade of Banalata Sen of Natore.”* (Selected Poems 1)

The very metaphor is ecological the face of Banalata is compared with the green shade, the nestling bird, the fragrance of forest. Jibanananda thus turns to nature not as ornament but as essence.

Perhaps no other modern poet has evoked the landscape of Bengal with such sensory depth. His celebrated volume *Rupasi Bangla* is a lyrical map of Bengal’s natural richness. The rivers like *Padma*, *Dhansiri*, and the *Ganges*; the grasslands and forests; the jackfruit, mango, and pomegranate groves; the cranes, herons, owls, and swallows all become characters in his poetry.

In the poem “*I Have Seen Bengal’s Face*” He declares:

*“I have seen Bengal’s face, which is why I do not seek
Beauty of the earth any more: I wake up in the dark*

*And see the dawn's magpie-robin perched under the parasol-like huge leaf
Of the fig tree on all sides I see mounds of leaves of
Black plum banyan jackfruit oak pipal lying still;
Their shadows fall on the spurge bushes on zedoary clumps;
Who knows when Chand near Champa from his madhukar boat
Saw such oaks banyans gamboge's blue shades
Bengal's beauty incomparable” (The World's Poetry Archive 27)*

Here nature is not abstract it is a cultural identity. Bengal's soil and rivers are celebrated not only for their beauty but for sustaining life. His nature poems are often pastoral yet never sentimental. He records the cycles of sowing and harvesting, the migration of birds, the rhythm of monsoon and winter. These natural patterns provide both comfort and a sense of continuity amidst human uncertainty. As he describes in his poem “*An October Morning*”

*In one October morning,
Some dewdrops fell on my face and hair.
The dewdrops are here through
Sarika bird's courtesy. (The World's Poetry Archive 20)*

For Jibanananda, nature is more than scenery it is a refuge for the human soul and a revelation of cosmic truth. Amidst the chaos of urban life, colonial politics, and personal loneliness, he sought sanctuary in the quietude of fields, rivers, and night skies.

His poem “*A Moment*” captures this retreat into nature:

*“In the moonlight forest
Reigns the smell of the tiger -
My heart is as the flying deer-
Where am I headed?
In the silent forest night” (Selected Poems 17)*

Here the poet becomes an anonymous walker, losing himself in the embrace of nature. This act of immersion is both spiritual and ecological he finds healing not in human society but in the companionship of earth and sky. What makes Jibanananda especially significant today is his ecological vision. Long before “environmentalism” was a movement, he perceived the fragile interdependence between man and nature. His poems often mourn the destruction of natural habitats and the reckless violence of civilization.

In *Abar Asibo Phire* (I Shall Return Again), he imagines returning to Bengal not as a man but as a bird, a cloud, a blade of grass:

*“I shall return to the Bengal of autumnal harvest,
To the rows of ripe paddy swaying in the breeze,*

*I shall return again in the dark of night,
As a silent bird in the shade of the trees” (Poetry 3)*

This poem is ecological in essence. The poet envisions reincarnation not in human form but in natural forms, showing deep empathy with non-human existence. By identifying with birds and crops, he breaks the anthropocentric boundary and affirms the sacredness of all life.

At the same time, Jibanananda’s poetry records a sense of ecological loss. His urban poems, such as *Bonolota Sen* and *Shrestha Kobita*, often contrast the sterile city with the fertility of the countryside. He was aware of how industrial modernity alienates human beings from the environment. His quiet worship of rivers and fields thus becomes a protest against the mechanized destruction of nature.

Nature in Jibanananda is not mere description but a symbolic framework to explore deeper philosophical concerns. The seasonal cycles autumn’s harvest, spring’s bloom, winter’s fog mirror the transience of human life. Just as flowers bloom and fade, human joy and sorrow pass away. His evocation of Bengal’s rivers and fields also recall the historical memory of a land shaped by centuries of life and toil. Nature becomes a repository of collective memory. Animals like owls, bats, jackals, snakes appear in his poetry not as threats but as companions in the existential solitude of man. The ecology of night is as sacred as the daylight pastoral. Thus, nature becomes a cosmic text through which he reads human existence.

Jibanananda has often been compared with *Wordsworth* and *Keats*, but his difference is striking. Wordsworth saw nature as moral teacher, Keats as source of beauty, *Shelley* as symbol of freedom. Jibanananda, however, saw nature as an ontological home the very ground of being. Unlike the *Romantics* who celebrated alpine grandeur or mythic landscapes, Jibanananda’s world was humble: the paddy field, the village pond, the crane in flight. His ecological worship lay in cherishing the ordinary, not the spectacular.

Moreover, while the Romantics sometimes elevated nature as “*Other*,” Jibanananda merged himself with it. His reincarnation fantasies, his empathy with birds and rivers, show a proto-ecological humility rarely found in European poetry. In our age of climate crisis, Jibanananda Das appears astonishingly prophetic. He reminds us that human identity is rooted in ecological belonging. His poems tell us that:

To destroy rivers and forests is to destroy our own soul. To find peace, we must listen to the rhythms of birds, rains, and harvests. To imagine the future, we must imagine it not in human isolation but in ecological symbiosis.

Modern eco-critics find in his poetry a de-colonial ecology an affirmation of local landscapes against colonial modernity that exploited nature. His celebration of Bengal's flora and fauna is thus both aesthetic and political, asserting the value of local ecology against imperial erasure.

Conclusion

Jibanananda Das was indeed a worshipper of nature, but his worship was not passive adoration it was a participatory immersion. His poems celebrate the beauty of Bengal's soil, rivers, birds, and seasons while simultaneously acknowledging the fragility of life and the tragedy of ecological loss. In doing so, he emerges as a poet of profound ecological significance.

He teaches us that nature is not a resource to be exploited but a home to be cherished. His words echo with today's ecological wisdom: the realization that humans are but one species among many, bound by the same cycles of birth, decay, and renewal. In his quiet verses, we hear the voice of the earth itself pleading for recognition, reverence, and love. Thus, Jibanananda Das stands not only as the poet of *Rupasi Bangla* but also as a forerunner of eco-poetry, reminding us that to love the land is to love life itself.

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