Chapter 6: Sufi Element in Thoreau’s Poetry

“Poetry is the mysticism of mankind”

“My life has been the poem I would have writ,
But I could not both live and utter it.”

Henry David Thoreau

Thoreau is well-known for his great work Walden, but he had written some poems also which are considerable. Though he has only a few poems, they are saturated with philosophical elements and by gazing on them one can find that they are imbued with Sufi thought.

Being a poet is not the job of every man and it requires great art to arrange words together meaningfully and comprehensively to make a poem. Shahriyar one of the greatest contemporary poets of Iran in a poem entitled ‘Torkon Dili’ – the Turkish language, in his Turkish Divan about poet says:

شاعر اّلا بیلوسسي آًاى دّغواسا شاعر
ميس سن آبالام هر سارى کوینک قیزیل او
one can not be a poet if you are not born as a poet
You are copper my kid, every thing with golden cover can not be gold.¹

Every one can think, but comparatively few can write, can express their thoughts. Indeed, how often do we hear one complain of one’s inability to express what one feels! How many occasions are there for one to make the
following remark, “I am sensible that I understand this perfectly, but am not able to find words to convey my idea to others.”

Thoreau also said that we have two kinds of poets: poets by heart, and poets by knowledge. We respect those who write by knowledge, but we love those who write by heart.

It is true that whatever Thoreau writes springs from his heart – the clearest evidence is his genuine poetic faculty. Yet one of the outstanding features of his work is this evidence of fruits of his reading and prophetic insight. Thoreau like Emily Dickinson or Baudelaire anticipates the bold symbolism, airy impressionism, stringent realism, and restless inconsistencies of 20\textsuperscript{th} century.

The poet, then, utilized his faculties and became the expression of the divine mind. He “sometime tastes the genuine nectar and ambrosia of the gods and lives a divine life”. The poet was in harmony with the divine will, and any experiences that he had were manifestations of the divine “aura”. In the \textit{Week}, Thoreau wrote: “Poetry is the mysticism of mankind”, and hence, for Thoreau, the mightiest experience of which man is capable was the special province of the poet. Rabindranath Tagore expresses the same idea when he writes: “The progress of our soul is like a perfect poem.. It has an infinite idea which once realized makes all movements full of meaning and joy.”

Although all mystics have not been poets and all poets have not been mystics, the mystic has in general loved to tell mankind of his explorations in to the nature of the Divine. Jacob Boehme, Meister Eckhart, Thomas a Kempis, St. Augustine, Plotinus, Jonathan Edwards in the West, and in India the singers of the \textit{Upanishads}, the \textit{Bhagavad Gita}, and Sankara, Kabir, Aurobindo, and Rabindanath Targore, all have felt a compelling need to express the results of the divine life.
A poet’s emotion is celestial and pure because God inspires him to write such delightful lines and a real poet never likes to be famous due to his/her poems and nothing can stop such wonderful art. Thoreau, in his poem ‘Inspiration’ has his impression about the true bard:

Fame cannot tempt the bard
   *Who's famous with his God,*
Nor laurel him reward
   Who has his Maker's nod.

Thoreau’s allusions and images are drawn from common *nature* and from life as seen in the neighbourhood of Concord. It is with the *eye of the soul* and not of the body that his art looks toward past, future, and the ultra mundane world.  

Thoreau became sensible to the charms of the neoclassical rhetoric of the age and school of James Thomson and William Cowper. The poet who in one lyric employs the simplest and most colloquial manner, in another assumes for gravity’s sake the full panoply of Augustan artifice and eloquence. He uses a heroic or an epic diction in treating subjects where such diction seems far from inevitable. Yet here his warmth of feeling proves his salvation. There is something genuinely poetic and instinctively noble in Thoreau’s style, so that his poetry is seldom frozen into the rhetorical frigidities.

It was through the *solitary* meeting with *nature* that he had to fashion some kind of activity that would bring him to terms with *reality*. The answer he found was poetry, in the broadest sense: the metaphorical use of observations gleaned from his walks. This represented the harvesting of *inner revelation* from the experience of the day.
The long and impressive ode entitled ‘Let such pure hate still underprop’ is clearly fashioned with the strict Horatian sense of proportion. One of his more romantic nature poems ends with an obvious recollection of Horace; the bare New England trees are pictured thus:

Poor knights they are which bravely wait
The charge of winter’s cavalry,
Keeping a simple Roman state,
Disencumbered of their Persian Luxury.¹⁰

In ‘Manhood’ Thoreau sees man and not nature as master of human fate. Man guides nature to do his will, as he might guide a horse. Experience teaches him the doctrine of ripe humanism:

And it doth more assert man’s eminence
Above the happy level of the brute
And more doth advertise me of the heights
To which no natural path doth ever lead,
No natural light can ever light our steps,
But the far-piercing ray that shins
From the recesses of a brave man’s eye.¹¹

Traces of thought and art more or less deliberately derived from medieval sources may at first seem incongruous for a lover of the Maine woods, but they are present in no negligible degree. Thus a surprising poem entitled ‘The Virgin’ reveals her [Mary] place in the Catholic system midway between Heaven and Earth, the Old Law and the New. This paradoxical account of
Mary resembles her praise as put into the mouth of Saint Bernard by Dante, yet Thoreau follows the spirit rather than the letter of medieval sources:

With her calm, aspiring eyes
She doth tempt the earth to rise,
With humanity over all,
She doth tempt the sky to fall.
In her place she still doth stand
A pattern unto the firm land
While revolving spheres come round
To embrace her stable ground.¹²

“Thee only we serve” the Holy Koran says, “to Thee alone we pray for succour, guide us in the straight path, the path of those whom Thou hast blessed, not of those against whom Thou art wrathful, nor of those who are astray.”¹³ While praying, a Sufi always pleads to God not for trivial but splendid things. Thoreau in his poem ‘Prayer’ seems to be familiar with these verses of the Holy Koran in the opening chapter which Moslems always murmur it in their daily Namaz (worship), and asks God in the same way as Moslems:

Great God, I ask for no meaner pelf
Than that I may not disappoint myself,
That in my action I may soar as high
As I can now discern with this clear eye.
And next in value, which thy kindness lends,
That I may greatly not disappoint my friends,
Howe'er they think or hope that it may be,
They may not dream how thou'st distinguished me.

That my weak hand may equal my firm faith
And my life practise what my tongue saith

That my low conduct may not show
Nor my relenting lines
That I thy purpose did not know
Or overrated thy designs.

As chapter two discussed, there are so many beautiful creatures of God in this world which have their own benefits for our life and they are really the obvious signs of the omnipresence of God in our mundane world. The moon, indeed, is one of the great beauty of the world and always it has been used by most of the eastern and western poets as a symbol of lightness and clarity and also as the face of the pretty beloved. Thoreau also is no exception and he dedicated a poem entitled ‘The Moon’ to the gorgeous light of the azure sky:

The full-orbed moon with unchanged ray
Mounts up the eastern sky,
Not doomed to these short nights for aye,
But shining steadily.
She does not wane, but my fortune,
Which her rays do not bless,
My wayward path declineth soon,
But she shines not the less.
And if she faintly glimmers here,
And paled is her light,
Yet alway in her proper sphere

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She's mistress of the night.

**Nature as a teacher** was revealed by Thoreau in his ‘**The River Swelleth More and More**’:

Here Nature taught from year to year,  
When only red men came to hear;  
Methinks it was in this school of art  
Venice and Naples learned their part;  
But still their mistress, to my mind,  
Her young disciples leave behind.\(^\text{14}\)

Thoreau’s most vigorous transcendental verses, as the superb lyric ‘**All Things Are Current Found**’, bear the accent of **spiritual assertion** belonging to the more spiritual discoveries of the pioneers of the Romantic Movement.\(^\text{15}\)

The sounds of nature like wind, sounds of leaves, sounds of cataracts, rivers, and the birds, undoubtedly, are the best and harmonic music for human beings. Whenever one lies down near the sea in sunset, the sound of waves are lullabies even most attractive and gorgeous than mother’s lullaby. Were not they obvious signs of Almighty? Who can compose such delightful music other than God? The lover of nature sounds Thoreau says about **sounds of Nature as signs of God and music**:

The mast is dropping within my woods,  
The winter is lurking within my moods,  
And the rustling of the withered leaf  
Is the constant music of my grief….\(^\text{16}\)
Or

I hear the sweet evening sounds
From your undecaying grounds
Cheat me no more with time,
Take me to your clime.\(^{17}\)

Also he chants:

They who prepare my evening meal below
Carelessly hit the kettle as they go
With tongs or shovel,
And ringing round and round,
Out of this hovel
It makes an eastern temple by the sound.\(^ {18}\)

In such poems one can see the impact of East on him. There is no doubt it is from India, because one can find so many temples in this country.

Thoreau had found many gracious matters of East which were so joyful to him. And that is why he had woven the following words for the **honour of East:**

**To the maiden the east**

Low in the **eastern sky**
Is set thy glancing eye;
and though its **gracious light**
Ne’er rises to my sight
yet every star that climbs
Above the gnarled limbs
Of yonder hill
Conveys thy gentle will.¹⁹

“enna le-allah ve enna elayhe rejeoon” – from God we are and to Him shall we return, said the Holy Koran. This temporary life is like a train of which the destination is Eternity. So many passengers are getting on into it and finally they will reach their destinations – Heaven or the home of Beloved.

Thoreau, being a perfect lover of the Great Allah saturated most of his poems with similar impressions:

**The Just Make Perfect**

Onward they move, like to the life of man
Which cannot rest, but goes without delay
Right to the death, not losing time
In its majestic tread to Eternity,
As if man’s blood, a river, flowed right on
Far as the eye could reach, to the heart of Hearts,
Nor eddied round about these complex limbs.
T’ is the slow march of life, I feel the feet
Tiny drops go pattering through my veins;
Arteries flow with an Assyrian pace,
And empires rise and fall beneath their stride.
As they move, flees the horizon wall;
The low- roofed sky o’erarches their true path;
For they have caught at last the pace of Heaven,
Their great Commander’s true and timely tread.
Lo! How the sky before them is cast up
Into an arched road, like to the gallery
Of the small mouse that bores the window’s turf;
Chapels of ease swift open o’er the path,
And domes continuous span the lengthening way.\(^{20}\)

Sufism believes that there is **perfection** in nature. Had Thoreau written the lines later in his career it might have been attributed to the influence of oriental thought, but such is not the case. Thoreau saw **nature** not as reflective of an ideal (except in a strictly metaphorical sense) but as itself an ideal. Naturally he desires to share in this **perfection**.

Was born upon thy bank river
My blood flows in thy stream
And thou meanderst forever
At the bottom of my dream\(^{21}\)

A Sufi is always a free and active man in his life. Themes of activity vs. inactivity and freedom vs. restriction are common; because both activity and freedom are necessary if man is to achieve union with nature, and they depend on each other. If man is to act, he must be free; if he is to be free, he must act.

Most of nature’s things such as clouds and fog are temporary and a Sufi refers to them as temporary things of the world though they are beautiful and he learns from them that this world is temporary. Through oxymoron Thoreau suggests the inclusive and boundless qualities of the low cloud or fog, which is ‘visible heat’, ‘air-water’ and ‘dry- sea’, each suggesting a state beyond the logical, **free from temporal restrictions**. Next he presents an extended metaphor of the cloud as a body of water with estuaries, breakers, billows, and spray. Finally the cloud is compared to the bird that rises from this earth and
establishes its ‘serenity o’er the fields’. Some poems combine several of his favourite images of freedom, especially air, wind, and water with the emphasis on the floating or drifting qualities of the images as the clouds themselves, touching both the bounded earth ad the boundless sky, become effective symbols of the closely related to cloud imagery. In the cycle of nature water produces clouds or mist which drifts upward like man’s thoughts the mist and water remaining inseparable. But water had other qualities which appealed to Thoreau although restricted by banks or shores it too was flowing and free like human situation flowing within banks but always working against them and gradually reshaping them.

Closely related is the recurrent theme, nature as teacher, which provides the best example of that harmony and integration Thoreau sought. He often described how a natural phenomenon could be used to suggest a moral or ethical lesson. Along with nature as a teacher goes a general distrust of organized society, expressed more often in the prose than in the poetry.22

No earnest work that will expand the frame,
And give soundness to the muscles too?
How ye do waste your time!
Pray make it wor[th] the while to live,
Or worth the while to die.
Show us great actions piled on high,
Tasking our utmost strength touching the sky,
As if we lived in a mountainous country.
Hell were not quite so hard to bear
If one were honored with its hottest place.
And did ye should spoil hell
By making it sublime?23
Thoreau talks as much about art; in fact, any study of his poetic theory will indicate that he thinks of them as synonymous. Finally, he views nature’s instruction as superior to any other kind:

My books I’d fain cast off, I cannot read  
Twixt every page my thoughts go stray at large  
Down in the meadow, where is richer feed,  
And will not mind to hit their proper targe.24

Again his ‘fusion theme’ eliminates the distinction between himself and nature.

I am the autumnal sun,  
With autumn gales my race is run;  
When the hazel put forth its flowers,  
Or the grapes ripen under my bowers?  
When will the harvest or the hunter’s moon,  
Turn my midnight into mid-noon?  
I am all sere and yellow,  
And to my core mellow.  
The mast is dropping within my moods,  
And the rustling of the withered leaf  
Is the constant music of my grief.25

Elsewhere he lists a long, rapid series of images from nature, suggesting this transcendent but sensual union:

I melt, I flow,
For Thoreau Walden pond was a little universe **calm and eternal, self sufficient**, depending on no inlet or outlet, fed by its own springs and mysteriously drained of surplus. In his poetry, **water imagery** usually takes the form of streams or oceans upon which one sails. Although he nowhere treats the voyage symbol so impressively as he does in *A Week* and it is not frequent. For example he said, “Time is but the stream I go fishing in” describing man’s life as slow contented flow joining the ocean.

Thoreau approached the archetypal symbol of the voyager when he treated the **ocean** as a symbol of **time or eternity** with a vessel inevitably sailing on that sea. “In life” he said “but still it [a solitary bark] plows the shoreless seas of time/breasting the waves with an unsanded bow”. Similar to the ship on the ocean image is the lonely island which supports the theme of man’s inherent loneliness his inability to communicate with others. Witness his poem about the fabled lost island of the Atlantic, the Atlántides:
The smothered streams of love which flow
More bright than Phlegethon, more low
island us ever, like the sea,
in an Atlantic mystery.\textsuperscript{30}

Although Thoreau loved each part of the day, morning impressed him with its liberating characteristics as the time of \textit{reawakening and rebirth} when cares vanish and freedom is realized. At that time nothing hinders nothing restricts. \textit{Walden} closes with the promise of morning: “there is more day to dawn. The sun is but the morning star”.\textsuperscript{31} And Thoreau concludes in ‘The Inward Morning’ emphasizing the relationship between \textit{man and nature}.

The images associated with the morning are the \textit{crowing cock} and \textit{the sun}. Where the former appears frequently in Thoreau’s prose and is central to “upon the bank at early dawn” the \textit{sun, symbol of the eternal} and the stable pervades his writing.

\textit{The Thaw}

I saw the civil sun drying earth’s tears-
Her tears of joy that only faster flowed,
Fain would I stretch me by the highway side,
To thaw and trickle with the melting snow,
Mingled soul and body with the tide,
Too may through the pores of nature flow.
But I alas nor trickle can nor fume,
One jot to forward the great work of time,
Tis mine to hearken while these ply the loom,
So shall my silence their music chime.\textsuperscript{32}
The sun, a life giving force, is different from other image groups in being beyond earthly forces. The clouds respond to changes in the atmosphere; the sun responds to its own laws. Although Thoreau’s images of celestial bodies have been attributed to his interest in the seventeenth century Metaphysical Poetry probably his reading of the Metaphysicals merely reinforced what his natural inclination would have used astronomical imagery for several reasons: first, the stars and plants, like the sun, are beyond the earth’s influence and hence free. Second being beyond any preoccupation with time, they are eternal; finally the infinite reaches of the universe afford Thoreau a symbol of the infinite reaches of the self, as in ‘Inspiration’ which describes the creative process.

She with one breath attunes the spheres,
And also my poor human heart,
With one impulse propels the years
Around, and gives my throbbing pulse its start.\textsuperscript{33}

The study discussed about the simplicity as an element of Sufism and chapter five mentioned that the hero of simplicity is Thoreau himself and as a proof the study traced out many lines from his \textit{Walden} about simple life. Furthermore, one can find such simplicity in his writings where he confesses himself:

It is no dream of mine,
to ornament a line\textsuperscript{34}
A Sufi is the child of time. It means a Sufi should live in the present time otherwise he will lose his energy for past and future and it would be a great hindrance for him to use his time efficiently. His aim is the finding of God through contemplation and meditation and thinking for yesterday and tomorrow is wasting time and prevents him from finding the destination. Thoreau also has the same idea as Sufis to enjoy the present in his poem ‘This Is My Carnac, Whose Unmeasured Dome’:

This is my Carnac, whose unmeasured dome
Shelters the measuring art and measurer’s home.
Behold these flowers, let us be up with time,
Not dreaming of three thousand years ago,
Erect ourselves and let those columns lie,
Not stoop to raise a foil against the sky.
Where is the spirit of that time but in
This present day, perchance the present line?
Three thousand years ago are not agone,
They are still lingering in this summer morn,
And Memnon’s Mother sprightly greets us now,
Wearing her youthful radiance on her brow.
If Carnac’s columns still stand on the plain,
To enjoy our opportunities they remain.  

Hell and Heaven always are controversial places as man’s last destinations. In Sufism it is mentioned again and again about these places as retributions. In
the *Holy Koran* also one can find many verses about these places as bonus for good and bad people: “then what ails them, that they believe not, So give them good tidings of a painful chastisement, except those that believe, and do **righteous deeds** – theirs shall be a wage unfailing.”

Also the *Holy Koran* says:

Surely the Day of Decision is an appointed time, the day the Trumpet is blown, and you shall come in troops, and Heaven is opened, and become gates, and the mountains are set in motion, and become a vapour. Behold, Gehenna (Hell) has become an ambush, for the insolent a resort, therein to tarry for ages, tasting therein neither coolness nor any drink, save boiling water and pus, for a suitable recompense.

In order to avoid going to the hell Sufis always pray great God and they do good deeds, because they know they can remove such horrible fire only by spending their time in worship. Thoreau also as a close follower of God recommends us to not waste our time but to pray and one has to make even the hell for himself a sublime place:

No earnest work that will expand the frame,
And give soundness to the muscle too?
How ye do waste your time!
Pray make it worth the while live,
Or worth the while to die.
Show us great actions piled on high,
Tasking our utmost strength touching the sky,
As if we in a mountainous country.
Hell were quite so hard to bear
If one were with its hottest place.
And did ye fear ye should spoil Hell
By making it sublime?\textsuperscript{38}

‘Monday’, ‘Tuesday’, and ‘Wednesday’ in his \textit{Walden} outline Thoreau’s preoccupation with \textbf{contemplation}. So certain expressions having direct relation with contemplation occur frequently in this section words like ‘thought’, ‘intellect’, ‘\textit{wisdom}’, ‘\textit{truth}’, etc, recur throughout the section. The epigraph at the beginning of ‘Monday’ indicates his change of subject from action to \textbf{contemplation} or \textbf{knowledge}:

\begin{quote}
I thynke for to touché also…
Hym hold in your mind…
Gazed on the Heavens for what he
Missed on earth \textsuperscript{39}
\end{quote}

It is not an exaggeration to state that Thoreau was the best friend of God because in most of his poems he talks about the One Compassionate and Almighty. It is not a wrong idea to claim that he was very familiar with mystical and Sufi elements due to his study of Oriental Scriptures. The most interesting and outstanding poem ‘Inspiration’ envisages many celestial and splendid elements of Sufism and it is enough to read this poem to trace out Sufi element. In this poem, Thoreau reveals the elements such as faith, blessing of God, polishing of the soul and heart, true love, the best creatures of God like Sun and Moon, and some others. As poem is very delightful and impressive, the poem needs to be quoted in full.
Inspiration

Whate'er we leave to God, God does,
And blesses us;
The work we choose should be our own,
God leaves alone.

If with light head erect I sing,
Though all the Muses lend their force,
From my poor love of anything,
The verse is weak and shallow as its source.

But if with bended neck I grope
Listening behind me for my wit,
With faith superior to hope,
More anxious to keep back than forward it;

Making my soul accomplice there
Unto the flame my heart hath lit,
Then will the verse forever wear--
Time cannot bend the line which God hath writ.

Always the general show of things
Floats in review before my mind,
And such true love and reverence brings,
That sometimes I forget that I am blind.

But now there comes unsought, unseen,
Some clear divine electuary,
And I, who had but sensual been,
Grow sensible, and as God is, am wary.

I hearing get, who had but ears,
And sight, who had but eyes before,
I moments live, who lived but years,
And truth discern, who knew but learning's lore.

I hear beyond the range of sound,

I see beyond the range of sight,

New earths and skies and seas around,

And in my day the sun doth pale his light.

A clear and ancient harmony

Pierces my soul through all its din,

As through its utmost melody--

Farther behind than they, farther within.

More swift its bolt than lightning is,

Its voice than thunder is more loud,

It doth expand my privacies

To all, and leave me single in the crowd.

It speaks with such authority,

with so serene and lofty tone,

That idle Time runs gadding by,

And leaves me with Eternity alone.

Now chiefly is my natal hour,

And only now my prime of life;

Of manhood's strength it is the flower,

'Tis peace's end and war's beginning strife.

It comes in summer's broadest noon,

By a grey wall or some chance place,

Unseasoning Time, insulting June,

And vexing day with its presuming face.

Such fragrance round my couch it makes,

More rich than are Arabian drugs,

That my soul scents its life and wakes

The body up beneath its perfumed rugs.
Such is the Muse, the heavenly maid,
The star that guides our mortal course,
Which shows where life's true kernel's laid,
Its wheat's fine flour, and its undying force.

She with one breath attunes the spheres,
And also my poor human heart,
With one impulse propels the years
Around, and gives my throbbing pulse its start.

I will not doubt for evermore,
Nor falter from a steadfast faith,
For thought the system be turned o'er,
God takes not back the word which once He saith.

I will not doubt the love untold
Which not my worth nor want has bought,
Which wooed me young, and woos me old,
And to this evening hath me brought.

My memory I'll educate
To know the one historic truth,
Remembering to the latest date
The only true and sole immortal youth.

Be but thy inspiration given,
No matter through what danger sought,
I'll fathom hell or climb to heaven,
And yet esteem that cheap which love has bought.

Influence of Persian Poets on Thoreau’s Poetry:

Though there is no clear evidence about Persian influence on Thoreau as much as on Emerson, as he was a close friend of Emerson and spent most of
his time in his library and also read so many Oriental books, the study expects to find some similar elements of Sufism in Thoreau.

Sufism says when we are born we are innocent infants and our place is the Paradise which is a pure place and there is no sin there, but this world is a place of violence and sin and lucky are those who seek purity and goodness in this wild world. Sa’di says:

سعدیا مرد نکو نام نمیرد هرگز
O Sa’di, Good man never dies.

Thoreau in his writings has cited such elements of human life and has the same idea about goodness as Sa’di has. He goes further and asks for a wise man who can teach him purity.

“Our whole life is startlingly moral. There is never an instant’s truce between virtue and vice. Goodness is the only investment that never fails. In the music of the harp which trembles round the world it is the insisting on this which thrills us.” A little later he says: “If I knew so wise a man as could teach me purity I would go to seek him forthwith.”

As Thoreau was a close friend of Emerson and he spent his time in his private library, it seems that he had read many oriental books there and Khayyam might be one of them also. Here the study would like to compare the quatrain of Khayyam and Thoreau’s sentences which are strikingly similar.

در پرده اسرار کسی را راه نیست
زن تعبیه جان هیچکس آگه نیست
Nobody can inter into the house of mysteries
Nobody knows anything about such planning
There is no home except under the soil
Drink wine! Such fables are not short.

Similarly Thoreau in his ‘Sublimity’ writes:

“Who can contemplate the hour his birth, or reflect upon the obscurity and darkness from which he then emerged into a still more mysterious existence, whiteout being powerfully impressed with the idea of sublimity?”

In ‘I Am a Parcel of Vain Strivings Tied,’ like Khayyam Thoreau writes:

I am a parcel of vain strivings tied
By a chance bond together,
Dangling this way and that, their links
Were made so loose and wide,
Methinks,
For milder weather.

The import of Thoreau’s words like the philosophers’ smile is obvious enough. In contrast to the many-sided Emerson, Thoreau is a single-track mind, but his is the great virtue of consistency. It should be remembered that it was from Sa’di he took the motto for a manuscript title-page of Walden:
“The clouds, wind, moon, sun, and sky, act in cooperation, that thou mayest get thy daily bread, and not eat it with indifference; all revolve for thy sake, and are obedient to command; it must be an equitable condition, that thou shalt be obedient also.”

The common denominator of all that Thoreau took from the Hindu, Chinese, and Persian was a mystical love for nature.

Khayyam in most of his quatrains had referred to the passing of time and mortality of the world. Also he knows not how he came to this world and where he should go back and always he recommends others to enjoy and think not of the mysteries of the universe.

Whether in Naishapur or Babylon,
Whether the cup with sweet or bitter run,
The wine of life keeps oozing drop by drop,
The leaves of life keep falling one by one.45

Also he says;

Alas, that spring should vanish with the Rose!
That Youth’s sweet-scented Manuscript should close!
The Nightingale that in the Branches sang,
Ah, whence, and whither flown again, who knows!46

Being familiar with Khayyam as already the study mentioned, Thoreau also in his poem ‘Epitaph on the world’ explains his ideas about the passing of life and its mysteries. He also knows not how and when this world came to exist and he knows one has only to go:

Here lies the body of this world,
Whose soul alas to hell is hurled.
This golden youth long since was past,
Its silver manhood went as fast,
An iron age drew on at last;
’Tis vain its character to tell,
The several fates which it befell,
What year it died, when ’twill arise,
We only know that here it lies.

Humankind and humanity are always most important and delightful subjects of life. Who is human? How can one be called human? All are in the shape of human, but rarely are humans. In Sufism the human is one who is a complete one not by shape but by spirit. Human means *ensan-al-kamil* and it is a hard task to be such a human. Rumi after getting to know Shams Tabriz found him such a human being and when he lost him he went all places to find him but in vain. He mentions the matter in his *Divan*.

Last night the Sheikh wandered around the city with a light
I got bored of beasts and devils and I desire human
They told you cannot find it already we sought
Sheikh answered I wish whatever is not findable.

Thoreau a lover of humanity and nature also寻求s the best human being in his poem ‘Great friend’:

I still must seek the friend
Who does with nature blend,
Who is the person in her musk,
He is the man I ask. 47

From the above mentioned poems which are similar in Persian and Thoreau one can find that Thoreau was greatly influenced by Persian poetry both in his prose works and poems.
Notes and References:


5. Ibid


7. Paul. P. 133

8. Ibid. 137

9. Taylor. P. 56


11. Ibid

12. Ibid. P. 135


15. Ibid. P. 138

17. Ibid. P. 223
18. Paul. 139

20. Sanborn. P. 364

22. Ibid. P.4

24. Ibid. p. 76
25. Ibid. p. 80
26. Ibid. p. 242
27. Ford. P. 9
28. Bode. p. 87
29. Ford. P. 9
30. Bode. p. 67
31. Ford. P. 10

33. Bode. P. 232
34. Ibid. P. 26

35. Ibid. Pp. 239-230
36. Arberry. Vol II. The Rending. P. 331
37. Ibid. The Tiding. P. 320

39. Tripathy. P.54

40. Deshmukh. P. 48


43. Paul. 137


45. Khayyam. P. 14

46. Ibid. P. 13

47. Bode. P. 237