Chapter XII Brute Neighbors

HD Thoreau

Q. **What do you know about Thoreau's attitude to nature. Substantiate your nature on your reading of *Brute Neighbor.***

**Ans**: Compare to all the writers of American literature, Henry David Thoreau has always been a different writer , not in terms of what he has written about the nature, but how and in what condition he has written them. Chapter XII i,e Brute Neighbors from his famous Walden is yet another illustration of his preoccupation with nature.

Spending most of his time in the glade of forest Thoreau became at the same time a poet, a prophet and a philosopher of nature. His method is always just the opposite of how the other writers write; He would compare human life or any human aspects not with nature, rather he would use human life to explain various aspects of nature. The present chapter begins with a reference to 'a companion in my fishing', but immediately the beginning of the second paragraph thwarts the reader's expectation in a pleasant way- “*I wonder what the world is doing now*”. It follows that he doesn’t know much about the human world and instead he knows a locust or a pigeons. Very soon he declares that it is better not to keep a house as he has been enjoying the domestic pleasure in the midst of the hollow tree, woodpecker tapping and i,e without suffering under any man-made turmoil. He listen to the voice of birds, the repelling sounds of water, the cleavage of earth and mountain, he sees the green color of the earth and the blue color of the sky and thus he joins the earth and heaven together, to be rightly called the 'poet naturalist' as consider by William Ellery Channing. The call of his appetite , however could not be ignore and therefore he was requested for a fishing by the poet; he was at the same time aware of his meditation and therefore avoided the situation for some moments. Here the spiritual forces working is that of a transcendentalist who looks at the whole realm of spirit pervading the apparent atmosphere. Nature for him was another name of divinity. It is the manifestation of God on earth and for gaining this by heart, he must have a life distanced from the human word.

There is a reference to his experiences with the mice continued through his association with a Phoebe, a Robbin, the Partridge and also with some Callow. All of them are living a life of peace and serenity “without suspecting their neighborhood”. Thoreau could identify the remarkably adult and innocent expression of their own and lovely eyes reflecting the entirety of intelligence combine with the purity of infancy. Even when he was witnessed to a less peaceful character i,e a red ant, his comment is that of a full-fledged naturalist- *'it was the only battle which I have only witnessed and the only battle field I ever trod while the battle was raging'.* The comment is ironical in the context of the human world intensified by the way he led his life in that forest. He in a sense was the atony of the indigenous plants; He knew all their names and he observed them in a manner comparable to that of the English Romanticist. His power of observation, enhance obviously by his proximity with nature, seems to indicate additional senses, as if he has been looking at them with his microscope of inner light, as if he has been hearing with ear-trumpet and since his memory had been working as a photographic register, his “Walden” becomes the mirror to his attitude towards nature.

*Brute Neighbors* is a title aimed at the bruteness of nature which is positive particularly when set against the hypocrisy of the American world lying outside. Henry David Thoreau, in this context is a poet of nature, prophet of the entire realm of nature and a philosopher of what he visualizes about the nature. The present essay is a store House of the illustrations to be drawn in favor of establishing him in the best possible lineage.

Q2**. Illustrate Thoreau's power of observation with the help of any three episode mention in *Brute Neighbors.***

**Ans**:- To be a poet of nature is to be a keen observer of the scene. It is truer incase of the author of Walden- Henry David Thoreau. He has been a writer of several aspects of nature not using his faculty of fictitious secretion, but using his faculty of being a witness to almost all the episode of nature. There are more than three episode narrated in *Brute Neighbors* establishing the observer as a pioneer of transcendental spirit characterized by a prophet like approach to nature.

Apart from all the picturesque description about the birds, the trees, the streams, the animals there is a list of numerous incidence relating to the author 's proximity to his nature. He has been busy with the meditation in the first part of the essay and by the time the second section begins the essay is enliven with the spirit of a true naturalist i,e in the process of his association with the mice. He could identify that those mice had never seen a man before and the same has been proved by the fact that some of them not only picked up the crumbs from his feet but also ran over his shoes and clothes. One day when the author was leaving on a bench with the help of his elbow one of such mice ran up his clothes, even up to his sleeves before coming to nibble a piece of cheese kept between his thumb. Thus, as narrated in the second section of his *Brute Neighbors* Thoreau encounters a special wild breed of mice commonly unavailable in the country itself.

There is yet another encounter illustrating his proximity with birds. Thoreau had the experience of even taking some partridge on his palm. Under normal situation, a person could hardly discover their presence as they were too small to come to human notice. As if all of them were following the same instinct and the author was a keen observer of how one accidently falling from the leaves was immediately followed by others. He could remember the adult and innocent expression of their open and serene eyes reflecting intelligence and wisdom. “The woods do not yield another such a gem” – this is how Thoreau observes about those birds.

Thoreau was also a constant witness to the violent nature of the otherwise peaceful ants. Describing their color, their sizes and their disposition Thoreau had already exemplified how closely he had been associated with them, more interestingly he could observe the battle that took place between the two large ants. It was the only battle which he had ever witnessed- a proof showing in what terms the author had been far away from the world of human affairs. Better than human world full of inhumanity and superficiality, was the war between the ants and almost everything the author observe amidst his brute neighborhood.

As Walden was structured on an elaborate metaphor of a traveler, *Brute Neighbors* as a part of it touches upon the issue on which the author has amplified his manner of describing the things. *Brute Neighbors* is an essay “extended with the metaphor of living – a living which was to be located not simply in human world but equally in the world of nature as reflected in the above three episodes.