

## **Depiction of Water as a Nondirective Therapist in Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach"**

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### **Abstract**

Water is one of the five basic elements of the nature. Water is an inevitable source for the living as well as non-living in the universe. Living being can live without food for a while but not without water. Even the climatic changes and seasonal changes take place in earth due to the presence of water. This proves water as the life bearing cradle with a tint of less pigments. Currently the developments in the medical field prove the importance of water as a healing product in the health issues of the living beings. It is discovered that the main cause of blood related and stone related problems in the body are due to the less intake of water. Beyond all these boons, water is blessed with the power to control the mind and act as a curable medicine for mental stress and strains. This proves the resemblance between water and depth of soul in human being. Thus, Psychiatrists suggest their patients to dwell beside oceans, lakes, waterfalls and streams because they know; it will bring a fresh atmosphere around them and help to have control over their own mind. Matthew Arnold, an imaginative prolific writer, in his poem "Dover Beach" pictures the major role played by water in healing the stress.

**Keywords-** Tint, Boon, Cradle, Dwell, Ecocriticism, Therapy, Representation

### **Introduction**

Water is one of the five basic elements of the nature. Water is an inevitable source for the living as well as non-living in the universe. Though scientists have discovered lot of planets, scarcity of water is one of the main reasons for not promoting humans to other planets. McCartney, et al. sketches water as,

Water is the life blood of our planet. It is fundamental to the biochemistry of all living organisms. The earth's ecosystems are linked and maintained by water, it drives plant growth

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and provides a permanent habit for many species, including some 8,500 species of fish, and a breeding ground or a temporary home for others, such as most of the world's 4,200 species of amphibians and reptiles described so far. These ecosystems offer environmental security.  
(Keynote speech)

The truth is living being. It can live without food for a while but not without water. Even the climatic changes and seasonal changes take place in earth due to the presence of water. This proves water as the life bearing cradle with a tint of less pigments. All these are known facts to everyone but lot of its miraculous characteristics are unknown to the world. Currently the developments in the medical field proves the importance of water as a healing product in the health issues of the living beings. It is discovered that the main cause of blood related and stone related problems in the body are due to the less intake of water.

Beyond all these boons, water is blessed with the power to control the mind and act as a curable medicine for mental stress and strains. According to John Gregory Brown, "The depth of the water stands for the subconscious, the unexplored thoughts, emotions and feelings that are not visible on the surface" (*Literature and Water*). This proves the resemblance between water and the deepness of the soul of a human being. Thus, Psychiatrists suggest their patients to dwell beside oceans, lakes, waterfalls and streams because they know, it will bring a fresh atmosphere around them and help to have control over their own mind.

Matthew Arnold, an imaginative prolific writer, in his poem "Dover Beach" pictures the major role played by water in healing the stress but has made its individuality hidden. Through the close reading of the poem, one can untie and visualise water as a non- directive therapist. Non-directive therapy is a psychological approach used by the psychologists and counsellors to treat their clients who suffer from mental illness due to stress. This approach is also known as person-cantered approach and humanistic approach. Grummon and Gordon in their survey article "Short Term Counseling at the College Level" portrays that, "the non-directive counsellor is more concerned about the client's perceptions of her or his problems, than the problems *per se*. The counsellors task is to handle the client's emotionalized attitude and feelings non-judgementally, leading to exploration, insight and change in behaviour" (169). Based on this approach a non- directive therapist should have the quality to attract their client by their physical as well as through their emotional appeal reflect their client's problem as their own. The most important thing in this therapy is the therapist never gives suggestions for solving the problem of their client but by their companionship and by their presence they have to make their client to find solution for their problem by themselves. In this poem the poet stands in front of the sea as that of a client in front of a non-directive therapist.

In the poem “Dover Beach” the poet Matthew Arnold indirectly represents the water in the sea as a clever non directive therapist who has the ability to make the person analyse their problem and find their own solution. His poetic words represents the attractive beauty of the sea waves. Arnold beautifies the sea as,

The sea is calm to-night.  
The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
Upon the straits;-on the French coast the light  
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,  
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay. (1-5)

All these lines depict the attractive and the appealing nature of the aqua. As that of a good therapist, water has the external features to seduce any mind towards itself and it has the capacity to share its tranquillity over the needy. Though movements of the water in the sea pictures tranquillity, the poet could sense his emotion [sadness] in the sea. It acts as a non-directive therapist who reflects the emotion of their client’s emotion as their own.

Listen! you here the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling  
At their return, up the high strand,  
Begin and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in. (9-14)

The sudden change in the picture of the sea reflects the adaptive nature of the sea, which reflects the sorrowful condition of the poet through its roaring sound produced by the pebbles in the sea. This sorrowful roaring of the sea guides the poet to find out his own problems and makes him to reveal his misery to the readers as,

The sea of Faith  
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth’s shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl’d  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
Retreating, to the breath. (21-26)

Through these lines the poet reveals that his sadness is because of the decline of religious beliefs in the universe. Thus the movement of the water in the sea helps the poet to know the reason behind his sadness and also pays the path for the poet to solve his problem by himself. In the poem the poet finds that love can be replaced instead of declining religious faith so that it will regain the values

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of faith and he praises love as, “Ah, love, let us be true/To one another! For the world, which seems” (29-30).

In this poem, the poet regains his happiness by finding the solution for his sadness by himself and here the nature of the water acts as a non-directive therapist which guides the poet to find out his problems and supports him to resolve it by himself. Here the poet regains the confidence that he can control his mind and mental illness. This poem proves the action of the water in the sea which act as that of a professional non- directive therapist.

Psychologists believe that non-directive therapy is the best therapy because it evokes confidence in human and make the client to believe that they are capable to control themselves and leads them to believe that they are not patients any more. Seligman remarks that, “The humanistic approach [non-directive approach] views people as capable and autonomous, with the ability to resolve their difficulties, realize their potential, and change their lives in positive ways”. This most successful non-directive therapy is discovered by American Psychologist Carl Rogers in the year 1940’s and still now it acts as a prominent method to treat the people with mental disorder. The important thing that should be noted is, the poem “Dover Beach” is published by Matthew Arnold in the year 1867. This proves that before the discovery of non-directive therapy by Carl Rogers, the same therapy is portrayed indirectly by Matthew Arnold in his poem “Dover Beach”. This confusion validates the importance of literature as well as the medicinal value of aqua as a source of natural remedial healer. Romans and Greeks regards the poets as *vates* (prophecy) and Mathew Arnold as a poet has given his prophecy of the role of aqua in the medical treatment in his poem “Dover Beach”.

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