

## Wordsworth Sincerity towards Man and Nature

Dr. Neetu Sethi

Asstt. Prof. Of English

J.C.C.M. Assandh

### Abstract

William Wordsworth's attitude to nature and man can be clearly differentiated from that of the other great poets of Nature. He did not prefer the stormy and wild aspects of Nature like Lord Byron, or the shifting and changeful aspects of the sea and the sky like P.B. Shelley, or the purely sensuous in Nature like John Keats. It was his special characteristic to concern himself, not with the strange and remote aspects of the earth, and sky, but Nature in her ordinary familiar everyday moods. He did not recognise the ugly side of Nature 'red in tooth and claws' as Tennyson did. Wordsworth stressed upon the moral influence of Nature and the need of man's spiritual discourse with her.

### Paper

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) is one of the greatest British Romantic poet as well as a poet of Nature. He is a high-priest of nature and worshipper of Nature. His love of Nature is perhaps truer, more sincere and more loving than that of any other English poet. He had a complete philosophy of nature. He believed that there is a divine spirit pervading all the objects of nature. This belief finds a complete expression in his nature poem *Tintern Abbey*. According to him, Nature removes the depression and agony of human mind. William Wordsworth feels that the beauty of nature is not only the pleasure to present but also will give pleasure in future. The poet regards nature as the best mother, best nurse of man and a great moral teacher. William Wordsworth believes that there is a spiritual relation between man and nature. Nature deeply influences human characters. The poet tells his sister Dorothy that nature is always sincere and faithful to her lovers.

*The anchor of my purest thought, the nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
Of all my moral being.*

Unlike the nature poet Robert Frost, Wordsworth believes that poetry is the outcome of personal spiritual or mystical experience. God reflected himself through the nature. He believes that we can achieve happiness by worshipping nature. His love of nature was boundless. For the great love he is considered a greatest poet of nature.

**Nature is a best friend of man who never deceits' her lover.**

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) changed the course of English Poetry. He made its subject the internal world of man, the strivings of the mind and the sublime experience of the soul. His immediate predecessors John Dyer (1700-1758), James Thomson (1700-1748) and Thomas Gray (1716-1771) wrote nature poetry like Wordsworth, but in a rather different manner. They described the external world in a conventional stylized way, almost as a series of two-dimensional, painted scenes, in a stage set. To the external world hints of a greater spiritual reality; trees are symbols, rocks and stones a hidden language, mountains mysterious statements made by a creator who tries to communicate with his creation. This supreme consciousness, spirit of nature, or God is present everywhere:

*And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting sins,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky and the mind of Man  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts  
And rolls through all things.*

Wordsworth produced a style of poetry which was psychologically persuasive and based on direct autobiographical experience. In his view poetry was a philosophical vehicle and meditative activity formed from 'emotion recollected in tranquility.' Above all it was a means of apprehending a natural landscape charged with divine significance. In his nature work Wordsworth did away with allusions to classical gods and goddesses, nymphs, sprites, and heroes of Mythology. As a love of the meadows and the woods and mountains; and all that we behold' this became the principle subject of his verse. Above all in poems such as The Prelude and Tintern Abbey Wordsworth's poetry is the poetry of consciousness becoming aware of itself, of man using contemplation of the natural world as a means of coming to grips with

his cosmic insignificance. It is a poetry of transcendence, in which the individual soul touches Divinity by putting aside the petty needs of ego and materialistic distractions- 'The fever of the world.'

In an epigraph before one poem he describes the child as 'the father as the man;' and later within the poem "Intimations of Immortality" he sets himself apart from the rational materialism of the philosopher Locke, and Locke's belief the human mind was a blank state at birth

*Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting  
The soul that rises with us, our life's star  
Hath had elsewhere its setting  
And cometh from afar:  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God who is our home.*

Wordsworth was not immune to human despair 'The still sad Music of humanity' as he called it, nor did he ignore the social pressure to conform in his poetry 'Heaven lies about us in our infancy/ shades of the prison house begin to close / upon the growing boy' he wrote. However, he leaves us a poetry of celebration in which consciousness reaches new heights and nature is given a new meaning. 'Wordsworth is one of the few English poets to describe mystical states and his writings contain similarities with Buddhist and Yogic scripture'. Wordsworth produced a style of poetry which was psychologically persuasive and based on direct autobiographical experience. In his view poetry was a philosophical vehicle and meditative activity formed from 'emotion recollected in tranquility.' Above all it was a means of apprehending a natural landscape charged with divine significance.

In his nature work Wordsworth did away with allusions to classical gods and goddesses, nymphs, sprites, and heroes of Mythology. As a love of the meadows and the woods and mountains; and all that we behold' this became the principle subject of his verse. Above all in poems such as The Prelude and Tintern Abbey Wordsworth's poetry is the poetry of consciousness becoming aware of itself, of man using contemplation of the natural world as a means of coming to grips with his cosmic insignificance. It is a poetry of transcendence, in which the individual soul touches Divinity by putting aside the petty needs of ego and materialistic distractions- 'The fever of the world.'

In an epigraph before one poem he describes the child as 'the father as the man;' and later within the poem "Intimations of Immortality" he sets himself apart from

the rational materialism of the philosopher Locke, and Locke's belief the human mind was a blank state at birth

*Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting  
The soul that rises with us, our life's star  
Hath had elsewhere its setting  
And cometh from afar:  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God who is our home.*

Wordsworth was not immune to human despair 'The still sad Music of humanity' as he called it, nor did he ignore the social pressure to conform in his poetry 'Heaven lies about us in our infancy/ shades of the prison house begin to close / upon the growing boy' he wrote. However, he leaves us a poetry of celebration in which consciousness reaches new heights and nature is given a new meaning. He remains a revolutionary poet, one whose concerns are not out of place in our eco-sensitive age. He will always be read with profit, the rolling cadences of his verse the repository of a rare, and marvellous vision.

### **William Wordsworth as a Poet of Nature:-**

As a poet of Nature, Wordsworth stands supreme. He is a worshipper of Nature, Nature's devotee or high-priest. His love of Nature was probably truer, and more tender, than that of any other English poet, before or since. Nature comes to occupy in his poem a separate or independent status and is not treated in a casual or passing manner as by poets before him. Wordsworth had a full-fledged philosophy, a new and original view of Nature. Three points in his creed of Nature may be noted:

(a) Wordsworth believed that the company of Nature gives joy to the human heart and he looked upon Nature as exercising a healing influence on sorrow-stricken hearts.

(b) Above all, Wordsworth emphasized the moral influence of Nature. He spiritualised Nature and regarded her as a great moral teacher, as the best mother, guardian and nurse of man, and as an elevating influence. He believed that between man and Nature there is mutual consciousness, spiritual communion or 'mystic intercourse'. He initiates his readers into the secret of the soul's communion with Nature. According to him, human beings who grow up in the lap of Nature are perfect in every respect.

Wordsworth believed that we can learn more of man and of moral evil and good from Nature than from all the philosophies. In his eyes, “Nature is a teacher whose wisdom we can learn, and without which any human life is vain and incomplete.” He believed in the education of man by Nature. In this he was somewhat influenced by Rousseau. This inter-relation of Nature and man is very important in considering Wordsworth’s view of both.

### Development of His Love for Nature

Wordsworth’s childhood had been spent in Nature’s lap. A nurse both stern and kindly, she had planted seeds of sympathy and understanding in that growing mind. Natural scenes like the grassy Derwent river bank or the monster shape of the night-shrouded mountain played a “needful part” in the development of his mind. In *The Prelude*, he records dozens of these natural scenes, not for themselves but for what his mind could learn through.

Nature was “both law and impulse”; and in earth and heaven, in glade and bower, Wordsworth was conscious of a spirit which kindled and restrained. In a variety of exciting ways, which he did not understand, Nature intruded upon his escapades and pastimes, even when he was indoors, speaking “memorable things”. He had not sought her; neither was he intellectually aware of her presence. She riveted his attention by stirring up sensations of fear or joy which were “organic”, affecting him bodily as well as emotionally. With time the sensations were fixed indelibly in his memory. All the instances in Book I of *The Prelude* show a kind of primitive animism at work”; the emotions and psychological disturbances affect external scenes in such a way that Nature seems to nurture “by beauty and by fear”.

In *Tintern Abbey*, Wordsworth traces the development of his love for Nature. In his boyhood Nature was simply a playground for him. At the second stage he began to love and seek Nature but he was attracted purely by its sensuous or aesthetic appeal. Finally his love for Nature acquired a spiritual and intellectual character, and he realized Nature’s role as a teacher and educator.

### References.

- The Excursion, being a portion of The Recluse, a Poem (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orem & Brown, 1814; New York: C. & S. Francis, 1849).
- Poems By William Wordsworth, Including Lyrical Ballads, and the Miscellaneous Pieces of the Author, 2 volumes (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1815).

- Miscellaneous Poems of William Wordsworth, 4 volumes (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1820).
- Oems of Wordsworth, chosen and edited by Matthew Arnold (London & New York: Macmillan, 1879).
- Wordsworth's Literary Criticism, edited by Nowell C. Smith (London: H. Frowde, 1905).
- William Wordsworth: Selected Poems and Prefaces, edited by Jack Stillinger (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965).
- George McLean Harper, William Wordsworth, His Life, Works, and Influence, 2 volumes (London: Murray, 1916).
- [www.onlinelibrary.com](http://www.onlinelibrary.com)