

W. Wordsworth's Attitude towards Nature and Man

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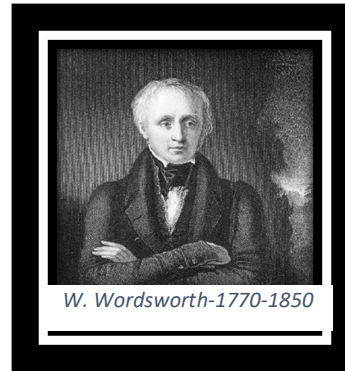
Abstract:

William Wordsworth (1770-1850), the pioneer of Romantic poetry, introduces the English world with a new type of imaginative poems which are free from the conventional 18th Century Petrarchan and Neoclassical tradition. English poetry with his endeavour gets the flavour of freedom not only in style and diction but also in subject matter and presentation. He, along with S T Coleridge, started writing romantic poetry choosing the domains **Nature** and **Supernatural** respectively for poetry. Wordsworth, a worshipper of Nature, treated Nature and the role of man in his poems and earned the reputation of a pantheist for his attitude towards nature. "**Tintern Abbey**", "**Immortality Ode**", "**I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud**", "**It is a beauteous Evening Calm and Free**", "**She dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways**", etc. are the prime poems of William Wordsworth in which his attitude towards Nature and Man is superbly delineated.

Keywords: Pioneer, conventional, Petrarchan, Neoclassical, diction, reputation, pantheist, Attitude, delineate.

Introduction:

William Wordsworth, S T Coleridge, P B Shelley, John Keats and Lord Byron are the sailors of the Romantic poetry. Wordsworth and Coleridge jointly published 'The Lyrical Ballads' in 1798 containing 23 new types of poems and through these poems (19 poems by Wordsworth) he(W) earned the reputation of a poet of nature. Actually, Wordsworth has never produced any poem without Nature. His poems are celebrated for his treatment of Nature and Man together. According to



Maurice Bowra,- 'Man's task is to enter into communion with his soul, and indeed he can hardly avoid doing so, since from birth onward his life is continuously shaped by nature, which penetrates his being and influences his thoughts, Wordsworth believed that he helped to bring this soul of nature closer to man, that he could show.' If we go through his poems- "**Tintern Abbey**", "**Immortality Ode**", "**I Wandered Lonely as A Cloud**", "**It is a beauteous Evening Calm and Free**", and, "**She dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways**", his attitude towards Nature and Man will be clear to us.

1. Purpose of this study:

The poems "**Tintern Abbey**", "**Immortality Ode**", "**I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud**", "**It is a beauteous Evening Calm and Free**", and, "**She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways**", are carefully chosen to find out Wordsworth's attitude towards Nature and Man. Though his "**Michael**", "**The Solitary Reaper**", and "**The Prelude**" are famous poems for establishing Nature-Man relationship, these five mentioned poems are renowned and so they are taken as study case to find out his attitude towards Nature and Man.

1.1 Wordsworth's Philosophy of Nature:

William Wordsworth is a worshipper of Nature. He has not only depicted the beauty of Nature, but also detected the close relation of Nature and Man in his poems. According to **William J. Long**-**"No other poet ever found such abundant beauty in the common world. He had not only sight, but insight, that is, he not only sees clearly and describes accurately, but penetrates to the heart of things and always finds some exquisite meaning that is not written on the surface."**(Page-383).

In the Poem **"Tintern Abbey"**(**Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey, on revisiting the banks of the Wye during a tour, July, 13, 1798**), the poet gives the vivid description of Nature and his own boyish and mature feelings.. He visited Tintern twice, first in 1793 and second in 1798. In his first visit, he enjoyed the outward beauty of nature and became enthralled with the beauty of it. In his second visit the poet expresses his exotic feelings even using his personal pronoun-'I' and focuses on his participation as a beauty sucker.

**"Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence from among the trees!"**
(Tintern Abbey- lines-14-18)

1.2 Influence of Nature on Man:

According to Wordsworth, Nature has a mighty influence on human life. It seems that a camera of high resolution makes a video while watching the beauty of nature. Whenever, we are in mental disturbance and trauma, the stored video of nature is reflected again in our mind to heal our sore because Nature is having healing power. Nature has power and this power is experienced through human beings. So, Nature and man are co-related like ecosystem. Though the poet was not physically present at Tintern, the beauty of Tintern was stored with him and whenever he

would feel disturbed and puzzled he would get refreshment from his beauty store. The poet reveals the truth in the following way-

**"These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration."** (Tintern Abbey, lines-23-30)

The poet believes that Nature can lighten the mystery of this unintelligible world to man and it has serene and blessed mood in which the affections gently lead us on. (Tintern Abbey, lines-37-38). The influence of Nature on human being continues till the last breath of our corporeal frame. The poet, in the same poem, again tells that Nature works in us even we go to subconscious state. The poet tells-

**"And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul :"**(Tintern Abbey, lines-44-46)

2. Healing and Consolation power of Nature:

Wordsworth believes that Nature is lively and God is present in Nature, e.g. God is Nature and Nature is God. The poet feels the Nature has the healing and consolation power. The poet himself when faces problems in the din and bustle of city life and becomes puzzled, it is Nature that heals his unstable soul and consoles him. The poet again becomes pacified because of Nature's assistance. The poet depicts the influence of Nature on Man in the poem **"Tintern Abbey"** in the following lines-

**"Oh! How oft-
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart-
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee?"**(Lines-50-55)

2.1 Human's outlook changes with Age:

Man's attitude towards Nature changes with his growing age. The boyish attitude and feelings of human life change with the passage of time. Nature behaves differently with man of different ages. The impact of Nature on Wordsworth also changed and the poet could feel it in his second visit to Tintern in 1798. The poet confesses-

**“(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by)**

**To me was all in all. I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock;
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy
wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to
me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
By thought supplied, nor ant interest
Unborrowed from the eye. The time is
past,”(lines-73-83)**

2.2 Wordsworth, a Pantheist:

Nature is revealed through human beings and Wordsworth can see the spirit of God in various objects of Nature. The poet thinks that he has learned to look on Nature. Then the poet finds a pervading spirit everywhere. He can even hear the sad music of humanity in Nature. The poet tells in “**Tintern Abbey**”-

**“And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something for more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns?
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:”
(Lines-93-99)**

Wordsworth also identifies God in the form of a motion and spirit- living in all objects of nature and this concept earns him the title Pantheist. The poet in “**Tintern Abbey**” describes the presence of God in the following way-

“A motion and a spirit, that impels

**All thinking things, all objects of all
thought,
And rolls through all things.” (Lines-100-
102)**

2.3 Roll of Nature in Human life:

Nature, to Wordsworth, to all human beings, is the anchor, nurse, guide, guardian and teacher of all moral being. We do not have any scope to escape from the bounty of Nature. Nature is ever-present in our activities. The poet again tells in “**Tintern Abbey**” about roll of Nature in his life.

**“The anchor of my purest thoughts, the
nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and
soul Of all my moral being.”(Lines-109-111)**

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3. Man, devotee to Nature:

Wordsworth, in “**Ode: Intimations of Immortality**” thinks that Nature without man is invalid. Nature tries her best to attract man from his early age and she (N) establishes an invisible wall between man and God to make her attempt successful. Thus, we human beings become the worshipper of nature even forgetting the benediction of God. Nature fascinates man so strongly that he (M) forgets the eternal truth, angel, God and heaven. Then, it seems to us that our birth is nothing but a forgetting because of the attraction of Nature. In Stanza-VI, the poet makes the theme clear. Here, Nature is always busy to perpetuate her behest that is to adorn the world with various beauties to fascinate human beings. The poet tells-

**“Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her
own;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural
kind,”(lines-77-78)**

Man is so obsessed with the blessings of Nature that he (M) even ignores the blessings of God. A child feels disturbed with the kisses of his/her mother while playing with the gifts of nature. To him/her, Nature is more appealing than the love of a mother. Actually, Wordsworth believes that- like him, all men are worshippers of Nature and he uses the reference to a child in the following lines-

**“Behold the Child among his new-born
blisses,
A six years’ Darling of a pigmy size!
See, where ‘mid work of his own hand he
lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother’s kisses,”**
(lines-85-88)

3.1 Man-Nature and God are interfused:

In Wordsworth’s poem ‘**Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood**’, Man- Nature- God relationship is interfused and they cannot be separated permanently. They evolve in one center and end in one point. This is an everlasting bond among these agents. The poet recollects this relation in his mature age when he feels that Man is persuaded by Nature in different shapes and God in the form of light can be seen if the spiritual bond is close. He laments over the loss of the celestial light (God) because of his attraction to Nature and tells-

**“There was a time when meadow, grove,
and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Appareled in celestial light,”**(lines-01-04)

4. Nature and Man in the poem “I Wandered Lonely as A Cloud”:

Wordsworth has superbly delineated the Nature-Man relationship. Here, the speaker, while wandering lonely, could see cloud, vales, hills, and a host of daffodils. All are the elements of nature. The poet again can see the lake, waves and compares the daffodils, by the lake, with the stars, and Milky Way. Here the poet mentions that Nature has a mighty influence on human life. It has healing power (lines-21-23) as Nature is for man. In the last six lines of this poem, the poet makes it sure that man gets his ultimate comfort in the lap of Nature.

**“For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude?
And then my heart with pleasure fills,**

And dances with the daffodils.”(Lines-19-24)

4.1 Nature and Man in the sonnet “It is a beautiful Evening Calm and Free”:

Wordsworth has shown a clean and strong tie between Nature and Man. Wordsworth visited France twice. First in 1790-during French Revolution and second in 1802 with his sister Dorothy. In his first visit, Wordsworth was in love with a French girl -Annette Vallon and they begot a child namely Caroline in 1792. In the second visit, the poet along with his sister Dorothy, spent a very good time with his daughter near Calais by English Channel. The poet could enjoy the affinity between the child and the nature all around and became enthralled. A bond among Man- Nature and God is shown here.

5. “She Dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways”:

“She Dwelt among the Untraded Ways “is an exquisite elegiac poem based on Man-Nature relationship. In this poem, the poet has depicted the nature picture and probably the beauty of Lucy (an enigmatic subject of a series of five poems written by Wordsworth between 1798 and 1801, mostly while the poet was living an isolated life in Germany) so fascinatingly. The landscape, stream, house, nature, people around the stream all are interrelated and through this poem, the poet has again focused on the Nature-Man inseparable relationship. The poet perhaps narrates the beauty of Nature to compare the beauty of that imaginary and enigmatic girl Lucy -

**“A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!
Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.”**(Lines-5-8)

6. Methodology:

This article adopts a qualitative and analytical approach to explore Nature-Man relationship in Wordsworth’s selected poems like- “**Tintern Abbey**”, “**Ode on Intimations of Immortality**”, “**I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud**”, “**It is a beautiful Evening Calm**

and Free”, “She dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways”. This study is based on close reading of the above mentioned five poems. Primary data come from meticulous reading of these poems and the secondary sources includes-critical essays, scholarly writings on Romanticism and the poet’s philosophy of nature. The analysis identifies the themes- Wordsworth’s Philosophy of Nature, Influence of Nature on Man, Healing and Consolation power of Nature, Human’s outlook changes with Age, Wordsworth, a Pantheist, Roll of Nature in Human life, Man, devotee to Nature, Man-Nature and God are interfused, and evaluation of the last three poems.

6.1 Limitations:

This study is confined to only five selected poems of William Wordsworth and it focuses on the thematic analysis rather than historical and linguistic aspects.

6.2 Expected Outcome: This article shows that Wordsworth has endeavoured although his life to present nature as a living power that has healing and soothing capability. The Spiritual forces shown by Wordsworth in nature has mighty power to move us. We are definitely moved by the influence of Nature and thus Wordsworth has established a relationship between Nature and Man.

7. Conclusion:

William Wordsworth, with prestige, is known all over the world as a poet of Nature. In most of his poems, Wordsworth has established a close affinity between Nature and Man. He is a worshipper of Nature in which man is dominant and draws a vital focus. His poems – “Tintern Abbey”, “Ode on Intimations of Immortality”, “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud”, “It is a beautiful Evening Calm and Free”, “She dwelt Among the Untrodden Ways”, “Michael ” etc. are widely read and studied to seek the magnitude of his positive attitude towards Nature and Man. According to Maurice Bowra- “For Wordsworth, nature was not merely a background for human action but a living presence, a moral guide and a source

of spiritual strength,” “The Romantic Imagination”. Again, according to William J. Long- “Nothing is ugly or commonplace in his world; on the contrary, there is hardly one natural phenomenon which he has not glorified by pointing out some beauty that was hidden from our eyes.” Actually, Wordsworth’s aim was to highlight Nature in his poems keeping a close relation with Man. He has collected subject matters, characters and language of his poetry from common and rustic life. So, it can be firmly asserted that William Wordsworth’s attitude towards Nature and Man is speculative and both elements are carefully represented in his poems to make them meaningful and appealing.

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