

Nature in the poetry of William Wordsworth

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Abstract

William Wordsworth is an illuminating star in this vast poetic galaxy. His unique contribution to Nature Poetry has made him immortal. His nature poems give solace to each and every tormented soul. His poetry reveals a spiritual wave between the natural universe and the universe of human beings. His visualization of nature as a living entity differentiates him from other great Nature poets. All the three stages of his Nature poetry astonish poetry lovers. For Wordsworth, Nature is the best teacher in the universe who inculcates even moral values in Human beings and nurtures beautifully for an overall development of a child. Wordsworth's treatment of Nature has been criticised as onesided and partial but we should remember that he was a poet and not a scientist. His contribution to nature poetry is priceless.

Key words: illuminating, spiritual, immortal, solace, universe etc.

Introduction

William Wordsworth was a prolific voluminous poet. He has been called a priest of Nature. His contribution to 'Nature Poetry' is unique. Present Technical era moves every poetic heart to listen the voice of such a worthy poet: William Wordsworth. His nature poems give solace to each and every soul. Mark the following statement of Cazamian:

"To Wordsworth, Nature appears as a formative influence superior to any other, the educator of senses and mind alike, the sower in our hearts of the deep-laden seeds of our feelings and beliefs. It speaks to the child in the fleeting emotions of early years and stirs the young poet to an ecstasy, the glow of which illuminates all his work and the rest of his life. Life is a safe guide to wisdom and goodness: it is instinct with the irradiating presence of the divine: in his adoration of it, Wordsworth's creed is a mystical pantheism."

William Wordsworth's poetry reveals a spiritual wave between the natural universe and the universe of human beings. His nature poetry acclaims worldwide recognition due to its supremacy and unparallel aspects. His visualization of Nature as a living entity differentiates him from other great Nature poets. How beautifully! Wordsworth states in the poem "Lines Written in Early Spring":

"And it is my faith that every flower

Enjoys the air it breathes."

Wordsworth believed Nature to be laced with emotions and aims and marked with an Active Axiom. In "Tintern Abbey" Wordsworth states:

"Whose dwelling is the light of setting sun,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

William Wordsworth's perception of Nature was not the result of any momentary emotion or feeling rather the germination of an experienced process from childhood to manhood. His relationship with nature revolves around three distinct levels/stages.

1. **The First Stage** (the stage of physical pleasure) - At this initial stage, Nature satiated his childish ecstasy. As a small innocent child, he enjoyed bathing in rivers, climbing trees, gathering May blossoms, hunting hare, skating and so many such activities. During this boyish stage Nature is:

"But secondary to my own pursuits

And animal activities, and all Their trivial pleasures."

2. **The Second Stage** - (Sensuous Joy and Emotional Passion) At this second stage, Wordsworth's intimacy to the natural world evolved from physical activity to an intense sensibility. Nature appealed to his senses. He developed a passion for sensuous beauty of Nature. He portrays this period as one of "aching joys" and "dizzy raptures". His spell bound emotions are captivated beautifully in the following lines of "The Prelude, Book XII":

"I roamed from hill to hill, from rock to rock,

Still craving combinations of new forms,
New pleasure, wider empire for the sight,
Proud of her own endowments and rejoiced
To lay the inner faculties asleep."

At this stage, Wordsworth enjoyed nature for its external beauty. He was trapped by the picturesque beauty of nature. "Tintern Abbey" depicts realistically the very second stage of emotional passion:

The sounding cataract

Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colors and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
Unborrowed from the eye.

3. **The Third Stage** (Philosophical and Spiritual Communion)

At this stage, Wordsworth's love of nature reaches at its height. He develops a philosophical and spiritual communion with nature. He realizes a divine presence in each and every object of Nature. He enjoys nature by the eye of soul not by the physical eye. He realizes the "blessed mood". This third stage was the consequence of the poet's despair and pain caused by his interest in politics which tormented him internally at the pathetic sight of the suffering humanity. He realizes Almighty in Nature and obtains a divine pleasure amid nature. "Tintern Abbey" reveals the presence of Eternal spirit:

"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 suns,
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man."
 And the round ocean and the living air,
 A motion and a spirit, that impels
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
 And rolls through all things.

Thus, in the third stage of his Nature Poetry, Wordsworth realizes that Nature paves the path to Union with God. He achieves a wise passiveness and focuses on the spiritual and ethical effect of nature. He with open eyes visualizes an invisible universe. Mark the following lines of "The Prelude, Book VI":

"The Light of sense

Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed

The invisible world."

William Wordsworth considers Nature as his greatest benefactor. He had found the principle of joy in Nature. Raleigh remarks: "It was happiness that Wordsworth taught and this happiness was a happiness found, not made. His poems are one long and various exposition of 'the grand elementary principle of pleasure', as he calls it "by which man knows and feels and lives and moves."

Wordsworth describes Nature as the best teacher in the universe who selflessly inculcates even moral values in Human beings and nurtures beautifully for an overall development of a child. "The Prelude" is an account of the best part of the poet's education that he received from Nature. The poet was always thankful to Nature for his intellectual and spiritual prosperity. Nature taught him discipline and therapeutically made him strong and confident. This discipline enabled the poet to realize Nature's presence in all his activities:

I heard among the solitary hills

Low breathing coming after me, and sounds
 of undistinguishable motion, steps
 Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

Wordsworth as a teacher guided him and of course guides each and every lover of nature. In "The Tables Turned" how amazingly Wordsworth writes:

One impulse from a vernal wood

May teach you more of man
 of moral evil and of good,
 Than all the sages can.

"The Rainbow" highlights the continuity of pleasure that the poet had in his childhood when he saw a colorful rainbow in the sky. The poem gives a message that man's persistent and sympathetic linkage with nature can alone bring spiritual communion with divinity. Mark the following lines;

My heart leaps up when I behold

A rainbow in the sky;

So was it when my life began;

So is it now I am a man;
 So be it when I shall grow old,
 Or let me die!
 The Child is father of the Man;
 And I could wish my days to be
 Bound each to each by natural piety,

Moreover "The World is Too Much with us" is one of the most striking poems of William Wordsworth. This poem is an attack on materialistic life and ofcourse leaves a message to the human beings of present technical era who are selling their souls for materialistic gain. It's really pathetic that we human beings are rushing blindly after this materialistic race. How realistically these lines penetrate us:

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
 Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers
 Little we see in Nature that is ours;
 We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

However, William Wordsworth's treatment of Nature has been criticised as one-sided and partial. He remains blind to the pain that pervades all objects of Nature. He has not revealed the entire truth of Nature. He remains reticent when every winter thousands of birds are frozen to death and in storms countless trees are up rooted in their prime. But we should remember that W. Wordsworth was a poet and not a scientist. He has described Nature as both law and impulse, as a healing balm and the manifestation of all pervading spirit. He believed that a communion could be established between the soul of man and the spirit of Nature. His contribution to Nature Poetry is remarkable. He is regarded as the high priest of Nature who still resides in the heart of each and every lover of nature.

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