

## WILLIAM WORDSWORTH : THEORY OF PANTHEISM

**Dr. Ashish Gupta**

Asstt. Professor (English)  
J.H.Govt. P.G.College,  
Betul (M.P.)

**Bincy M. Baby**

Research Scholar  
J.H.Govt.P.G.College,  
Betul (M.P.)

### Abstract

The greatest contribution of Wordsworth to the poetry of Nature is his unqualified pantheism. He believes that God shines through all the objects of nature investing them with a celestial light, a light that never was on sea or land. He finds him in the shining of the stars; he marks him in the flowering of the fields. This immanence of God in Nature gives him mystic vision. 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. Nature is no longer or mere vegetation, subject of the law of growth and decay; not a collection of objects to be described but a manifestation of God. Nature is revelation and Wordsworth is the prophet. In the present age we need a poet like Wordsworth who worships Nature, truth and ultimate truth, in order to guide people.

William Wordsworth brought a completely new approach to the writing of English poetry. His objections to an over stylized poetic diction, his attitude to Nature, his choice of simple incidents and humble people as subjects of his poetry these well known characteristics of his are but minor aspects of his revolutionary achievement. Poetry for him was a primarily the record of certain kind of state of mind which the poem recorded.

The unity of nature is, for Wordsworth rather a fact than a theory. It is, properly speaking, a datum for iterative insight. It is, at least in its origin, that a discursive concept. Wordsworth is capable of spiritual insight quite apart from the beauties of Nature. Recall, for example, his mention of mathematical reasoning as a source of such inspiration. At any rate, he can think sometimes of natural catastrophes that would destroy all the works of imagination and art in which the human mind has, so to speak embodied itself.

As far as personal relationship, divine relationship with nature are concerned Wordsworth's poems are in real sense, practical lessons for all of us. Wordsworth's philosophy, which accentuates the eternal presence of God in universe both in animate and inanimate is there with us, just the need is to understand it. Wordsworth believes that God pervades the entire universe exists and its life is in God's thought. Not only that life is in every flower, but insect and the mossy stone on the hill side a part of divine life of its own.

'In all things in all natures, in the stars  
This active principle abides, from link to link  
It circulates the soul of all the world.'

The poems written during the spring and summer of 1798 describe a feeling of the unity of man and Nature. Wordsworth surrendered himself to this feeling which is the immediate result of the quiet contemplation of natural beauty. These all poems endure the beautiful simple account of such experiences. He was living at the time in daily conversation with his close friend, the poet Coleridge, whose metaphysical acumen and learning were both of high order. From him he learned much of doctrines of system. Indeed he admitted that Coleridge was a source of his philosophical inspiration. /

To say that the human spirit is apart of Nature, it only falsifies its own life-may help one to meet the scientific naturalist half way. Both Wordsworthian and the scientific naturalist assert certain continuity between the human spirit and the world from which that spirit and the world from which that spirit arises; and this continuity may be thought to point toward the doctrine of world soul. As Mr. Edam tells us scientific naturalists have also felt, Nature to be one, and man one with Nature.

In 'The Prelude', Wordsworth assert that the source of our inner life, that where our dignity originates, is an active power which maintains a continual inter relation between the mind and the object of its vision and is itself the excellence and pure spirit.

Imagination, which in truth  
Is but another name for the absolute power  
And the clearest insight, amplitude of mind  
And the reason, in her most exalted mood".<sup>2</sup>

For Wordsworth imagination is the link between the visible and the non visible world. The poet does not merely present "image of men and nature" but he also shapes, modifies and transfigures that image by the power of his imagination. Thus the imagination is creative; it is the shaping or 'plastic' power the poet is half the creator; he is not a /mere mechanical reproducer of outward reality but a specially gifted individual, who, like God is a creator<sup>4</sup> or maker as he adds something to nature and reality. It is the imagination of the poet which imparts to nature the 'glory and freshness of a dream', the light that never was on land and sea. Aesthetic enjoyment of things visible seems at times to bring the very life of the invisible before us. We can trace, the way by which Wordsworth described such experience and to make it communicable. He seems certain that in the apprehension of beauty the human soul is never isolated, but in contact with the spiritual urgency, which is the origin of beauty. Wordsworth is sensitive as a barometer to every subtle change in the world about him. In the 'Prelude' he compares himself to a Aeolian harp, which answers with harmony to every touch of the wind; and the figure is strikingly accurate, as well as interesting, for there is hardly a insight or a sound from a violet to a mountain and from a bird note to the thunder of the cataract, that is reflected beautifully in his poetry. No other poet ever found such abundant beauty in the common world. He had not only

sigh, 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.

The philosophical content of ‘The Prelude’ is made up largely of Wordsworth’s doctrine of Nature, which is outlined and repeated in other poems also especially in the Tintern Abbey and Lucy’s education of nature. It has been rightly pointed out the Wordsworthian philosophy of Nature, with its emphasis upon the divinity of Nature, Nature’s holy plan, the one life in the universe and in the man, the joy in the widest commonalty spread and Nature as a source of wisdom and moral health etc. was derived from the current speculations of the day to which poets, philosophers and scientists had contributed alike. Wordsworth took these tenets from the deep rooted convictions of the day and gave them the authenticity of personal experience and the vitality of the poetic expression. Keats has rightly stated that the conventional proverbs, percepts and dogmas of religion are meaningless to us until they are tested on our pulse, home to our business and bosom and have become the formative influences in our moral and spiritual life. This actually what Wordsworth has confessed in so many words, on so many occasions. There is therefore, little force in the observation of Arnold and others, including Morley and Raleigh, that the philosophy or doctrine of Nature in the poetry of Wordsworth is an illusion. As a matter of fact Wordsworth himself with Coleridge as a philosophical poet and his philosophy according to his own experience and entitled him to the position of a teacher of society which he was anxious to achieve and maintain.

The basic principles of this doctrine is the unity of man and Nature as partakers in one and same life, which meant a preordained harmony between the two. Nature was animated by a soul which was the ‘Eternity of thought’, wisdom, love, joy and central peace subsisting at the heart of endless agitation. Every object in Nature was alive and full of joy and energy, subsisting in perfect love and concord and waging no strife with other object as is unfortunately the case with the human individual and multitudes.

Nature, thus, is the best fitted for the position of man’s teacher; she brings sweet love as contrasted with the bookish knowledge which is an endless strife. Hence Wordsworth stresses the necessity of wise passiveness, the attuning of the mind to the mood of nature of that the whole scene may sink into it or the mind may drink in the influence like a child at the breast of the mother. Thus, it follows that influences of ‘deeper birth’ are likely to come in solitude.

Nature was both law and impulse with powers to kindle and restrain so that her beauty and fear were equally necessary for the growth of the poet’s mind. The Prelude in its early part is mostly occupied with the growth of the moral sense affected by Nature’s ministrations of the fear in the young poet. But as the story proceeds the picture of the changing pattern of relationship between the poet’s mind and Nature is clearly unrolled. The four stages distinctly marked in the Tintern Abbey are present in The Prelude also described by Prof. Dowden as those of blood, senses, heart or imagination and spirit. The first stage of childhood when he either bounded as fawn unmindful of Nature or received suggestions through fear inspired by her, the second stage covers boyhood and youth when his heart awakened to the loveliness of nature and sounding cataracts haunted him like a passion and the form and colour of the objects absorbed his whole heart. But as he advanced in life and came face to face with the suffering of humanity, especially during his stay in France, the wild joys and giddy captures of youth mingled with the melancholy note of experience.

The still sad music of humanity  
Nor harsh, nor grating but with ample power  
To chasten and subdue.<sup>3</sup>

It is a Being which pervades the universe, as described in *The Tintern Abbey* in the grand but well known passage, as something far more deeply interfused, whose dwelling is the light of the setting sun and the wide ocean, and the living air and in the mind of man, a spirit and motion which moves all thinking things and all objects of all thoughts, and roll through all things.

The greatest contribution of Wordsworth to the poetry of Nature is his unqualified pantheism. He believes that God shines through all the objects of nature investing them with a celestial light, a light that never was on sea or land. He finds him in the shining of the stars; he marks him in the flowering of the fields. This immanence of God in Nature gives him mystic vision. Nature is no longer or mere vegetation, subject of the law of growth and decay; not a collection of objects to be described but a manifestation of God. Nature is revelation and Wordsworth is the prophet.

Wordsworth's love of nature underwent a gradual process of evolution. In the beginning it was merely a healthy boy's love of the open air. In the second stage he loved the sensuous beauty of nature spiritually. During this stage he felt the presence of some divine power in nature and this feeling excited him with intense joy and noble thoughts. Now he has witnessed the suffering and misfortunes of land has hard the subdued groups of affected humanity. The sounds of human suffering and pain are not harsh or jarring to him but possess a purifying and mellowing effect on his mind. He had now the lofty feelings that some divine power was immanent through all nature. This divine power or soul is present everywhere. It is present in the setting sun, in the round ocean, in the air which gives life and vitality, in the blue sky, and in the mind of man. It is a spirit which gives life and movement to all living beings, it inspired all thought, and it is also the creator of all lifeless objects. In short, it pervades the entire universe. This philosophy of Wordsworth is akin to Vedic philosophy which says that it is only one soul which is present in universe and governs all the principles of the same. Nature is the custodian of the poet's moral thoughts. In the concluding line, he states that:

Nor perchance,  
If I were not thus taught, should I the more  
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:.....  
....this green pastoral landscape were to me  
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake! 4

The speaker says that even if he did not feel this way or understand these things, he would still be in good spirits on this day, for he is in the company of his 'dear, dear sister', who was also his 'dear dear friend', in whose voice manner he observes his former self. He offers a prayer to nature that he might continue to do for a little while, knowing as he says that 'nature' never did betray / the heart that loved her'. But leads rather 'From joy to joy'. Nature's power over the mind impervious to 'evil tongues' 'rash judgments' and 'the sneer of selfish men', 'instilling instead a 'a cheerful faith' that the world is full of blessings. The speaker then encourages the moon to shine upon his sister and the wind to blow against her and he says to her in later years, when she is sad or fearful, the memory of this experience will help to heal her. And if he himself is dead, she can remember the love with which he worshipped nature. In that case, too she will remember what the woods meant to the speaker, the way in which after so many years of absence, they become more dear to him both for themselves and for the fact that she is in them.

For thou art with me here upon the banks  
Of this fair river, thou my dearest friend'  
My dear, dear friend; and in thy vice I catch

He language of my former heart and read  
My former pleasures in the shooting lights  
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! Yet a little while  
May I behold I thee what I was once,  
My dear, dear sister! 5

The purpose behind, describing the crux of poem, is to exemplify Wordsworth's philosophy which stresses that Nature has an ennobling uplifting and elevating influence on the minds of human beings. Nature can so mould and strengthen our minds that no kind of evil can disturb or distress us or upset our mental equilibrium. People taking ill of us or forming hasty and ill-considered opinions about us or casting scornful looks at us or making merely outward show of good will towards us neither this nor the monotony and dullness of over daily social relations will upset our mental balance or shake our optimism on the contrary, all that we see appear blessed to us..

Wordsworth conceived of nature as a living personality. He believed that there is a divine spirit pervading all objects of nature. This belief finds complete expression in Tintern Abbey. Wordsworth in one of his immortal work talks about 'Divine spirit' and says that all things in universe are subordinate to him and his creation. As Warwick James put it: "At this stage the foundation of Wordsworth's entire existence was his mode to see God in Nature and Nature in God". This known as the stage of pantheism. This faith of the poet that the Eternal spirit pervades all the objects of Nature is forcefully expressed in Tintern Abbey Where he says:

And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far 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  
A motion and a spirit, that impels.  
All thinking, all objects of all thought'  
And rolls through all thing. 6

In an interview with Astronauts and scientists there was a discussion on radio Australia known as 'Window on the world', the participants were some Astronauts and scientist. After listening to them and the discovery of moon, the man's landing on the moon and the size of space, planet etc. was breath taking. What modern science has achieved is tremendous. During the discussion when lady astronaut described her experience in space and her experience as a person who dived into the sea and also went into the depth of 11km. Into Australian ocean(Pacific Ocean). She gave an account about the many varieties of sea life. During this discussion one scientist remarked that the modern science does not know yet how many different kinds of lives are there in a 'spoonful of sea water'. This shows the vastness of the material world in the task before modern science.

It's the matter to imagine that if the scientists require so much time, mind, man power to discover the world or universe, than how much time the Creator would have taken to make it . According to the first chapter of the Bible(Genesis) God said ' let there be light ' and there was light on earth, ' let there be land on he earth' and there was land on earth etc. Thus according to this faith written in holy Bible , God took six days to create earth and man and for the man of today's world even after so much of scientific development, its impossible to create even one

man with breath, heart and mind. Thus, God is a genius and perfect. Wordsworth also through the medium of poetry and source of nature explains the same funda that God is supreme being and is omnipresent, he is even present within us, just the need is to find him in ourselves with the means of communion with nature i.e. coming in contact with the forms of nature which are present in their crude stage without the polish and artificiality of modern world. He suggests us to seek peace and tranquility in Nature.

In Tintern Abbey he is so overwhelmed with the present joy of recovering his ‘General spirits’ that he does not fully for see the revival of his past as a living power in the future. Without the language of the sense he could not have been a poet at all, but something was needed to stir ‘awakening to noble aspiration’. He admitted later that the description of himself as a worshipper of Nature ‘was a passionate expression uttered in cautiously’<sup>7</sup> i.e. Nature’s devotee or high priest.

Nature never engrossed all his thoughts. Many were given to man chiefly to the feelings of man. He shows the same mastery in his delineation of the hidden germs of feeling as of those of sensation. He again, excels when describing the moral emotions in the blending of the subtle and the simple , of the strange and the essential. That he often tries to lift us and himself to the poetic mood rather than takes this mood for granted cannot be denied. Poetry often seems to be his object rather than possession. He made the training of man to poetry his chief office here below. He leads us verily from the inlands of prose to the shore, marking out the way with unprecedented care; but he is sometimes content with gaining on the element and leaves on it to others boldly to soil upon it or plunge into it\ . The main body of his poems is educative and preparatory. Yet he has left sufficient of absolute verse, heart searching and beautiful, enough for a Wordsworthian theology that will remain among the most enduring treasures of romanticism.

In the present age we need a poet like Wordsworth who worships Nature, truth and ultimate truth, in order to guide people. But we need not to regret over not having such a person with us, as words are immortal; and what Wordsworth had written or practiced is also immortal. So, we should worship his words which have worshipped Nature and God.

## References

1. Letter to George Beaumont written while Wordsworth was at work on The Recluse. Professor Selincourt’s Edition of The Prelude.P.608. Print
2. Wordsworth, William, The Prelude XIV: Conclusion (1.189-192). Oxford anthology of English literature The Vol.I. Print
3. Wordsworth, Jonathan. William Wordsworth: The Pedlar, The Tintern Abbey, The Two Part Prelude, Edited with a critical introduction and notes. Press syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1995. The Tintern Abbey, lines 93-95. Print
4. ---, Stanza v.
5. ---, Lines 114-121.
6. ---, Stanza iv line 93-102.
7. ---, Stanza v Line 152.