

## **William Wordsworth as a Poet of Nature: An Overview**

**Jaivinder Singh\***

Research Scholar, ASLA,  
Amity University, Haryana

---

**Dr. Sunil Kumar Mishra\*\***

Associate Professor of English, ASLA  
Amity University, Haryana

**Abstract:** Most of the scholars are agreeing with the fact that William Wordsworth is rightly the greatest poet of the countryside and of the life of nature in its all manifestations and beauty of nature. He has rightly considered physical aspects as well as spiritual aspects of human life on this planet. However, poets earlier to William Wordsworth like Burns, Cowper, Crabbe and Goldsmith had exhibited a fine appreciation for the beauties of nature. Nevertheless, we can't ignore that they were adorers of nature's external charms without having any mystical and philosophical approach to its inner life and spiritual message. It was William Wordsworth who revealed the inner soul of nature in his poems and to make it a better teacher than moral philosopher of the present and past. Most of the poems written by William Wordsworth fall within the category of poets of nature and a lot of his poems express a sense of humanity and love with mankind and nature. In this paper the researcher has revealed the fact that William Wordsworth is a poet of nature above all.

**Keywords:** Poetry, Nature, Manifestations, Countryside, Spiritual, Philosophy.

**Introduction:** It is a well-known fact that William Wordsworth is the high priest of nature and throughout all his life William Wordsworth wrote about nature. Here it is noteworthy that William Wordsworth was concerned for less with the sensuous manifestations that delight most of our nature poets than with the spiritual that he finds underlying these manifestations. Compton Rickett remarks: "With the outward show of things, with nature bewildering profusion, her firming, concern life, her riddles, her magical appeal to the eye and the sense of touch". He also points out that he is little concerned to other aspects of human life. Actually, his contribution to the poetry of nature does not lie in the fact that he could give accurate and

closely observed pictures of nature rich and minute in detail but in the fact that he elevated nature to heights of spiritual glory and made it a better teacher. In other words we can say that William Wordsworth sacrificed all his life for the poetry on nature.

Most of the scholars also point out that William Wordsworth's poetry is characterized by a restrained yet undaunted optimism and he holds that life, despite its manifold evils is yet good and worth living. The evils themselves are stepping-stones to good. Man is not alone in the world, nor alone in his suffering, because God is always and everywhere present to protect and support him. Theme of the influence of nature on man is the noblest part of Wordsworth's teaching in poetry, and that is the theme of "The Prelude I". Here it is also to say that this book deals with his childhood and school time. The connection between Wordsworth's poetry and his personal experience is of the closest kind, and he undertook the writing of "The Prelude" in a mood of self-examination. There is no other work in English language where the early joy and wonder, the passionate, solemn, awestricken delight of the simple experiences of boyhood are more sympathetically and more graphically described. Actually William Wordsworth received his education and learnt in the lap of nature.

The most remarkable thing is that "The Prelude" is a guide book for understanding comprehensively the unbroken relationship between human life and nature, without which life to Wordsworth was no life. Book Prelude VIII describes the love of nature leading to love of man. It signifies that love of nature leads the poet to love of man. In Book Prelude XIII, we find how during his wandering on from day to day he came across humble and rustic people, poor or unfortunate and sometimes even across errant and idiots. An intense sympathy for such human beings would well up in his soul and he would realize the dignity of man as man. So the poet tells us:

Of these, said I shall be my song; of these,  
if future years mature me for the task,  
will I record the praises, making verse  
Deal boldly with substantial things; in truth  
and sanctity of passion, speaking of these,  
that justice may be done, obeisance paid where it is due.

Here it is to say that for Wordsworth, only nature can reveal to us fundamental truths. It is not at all wise to have trust in human intellect as: “Our meddling intellect / His shapes the beauteous forms of things / we murder to dissect.” This is spiritualization of nature. Here Wordsworth, undoubtedly, considers nature as, original and unique. “Tintern Abbey” poem is one of the nineteen poems that Wordsworth contributed to Lyrical Ballads. This poem may be regarded as a record of the poet’s growth or of his spiritual development. It states in clear words the gradual development in Wordsworth’s attitude towards nature. We learn from the poem a number of things connected with his life. He saw in nature the revelation of the divine law and felt the divine presence pervading in nature and the mind of man. We don’t understand the meaning and purpose of the world. But a worshipper of nature understands the mystery. He understands the meaning of the world, not by head but by heart.

The heart loved her: it is her privilege,  
through all the years of this our life, to lead  
from joy to joy: for she can so inform  
the mind that is within us, so impress.

Moreover William Wordsworth emphasized the moral influence of nature. Actually he spiritualized nature and regarded her as a great moral teacher, as the best mother, guardian and nurse of man, as an elevating influence. He believed that between man and nature there is a spiritual intercourse. “The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse / the guide, the guardian of my heart / and soul of all my moral being.” Wordsworth’s poems of Lyrical Ballads fall into two groups:

1. Those radiant with joy, and celebrating nature’s holy plan and
2. Those which interpreting the humanity, fell what man has made of man.

In this poem, Wordsworth says that the flowers, leaves, buds etc. enjoy themselves in nature, but man has become a stranger to this joy.

If this belief from heaven be sent,  
If such be nature’s holy plan,  
Have I not reason to lament  
What man has made of man?

William Wordsworth in the poem “The world is too much with us” deplores the extreme materialism and spiritual degradation of his times. Men are actuated only by economic motives. They have become too materialistic. People are too much engrossed in the pursuit of wealth and pleasure and waste their energies. They have given themselves up, heart and soul, to the pursuit of material prosperity. Their mind is so much obsessed with material gain that they fail to appreciate the beauties of nature. 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 and we have given our hearts away a sordid boon!

It is also remarkable that in his own poems, the poet would rather be a pagan with his keen sensitiveness to the mysteries and beauties of nature than lead the modern pseudo-enlightened life of materialism. In a word, he prefers paganism to excessive materialism. Wordsworth’s love of nature was boundless. A profound religious feeling pervades in all his nature poetry. Nature was for him the embodiment of the divine spirit and when he insists that nature is the greatest of all teachers, he means that between the in dwelling soul of the universe and the soul of man, spiritual communion is possible.

Great God! I’d rather be  
A pagan suckled in a creed outward;  
So might I standing on this pleasant lea,  
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn.

In the poem “To a skylark” poem so characteristic of the genius of Wordsworth opens with a description of the peculiar characteristics of the bird. It soars high up in the sky and keeps singing there but its age and heart are with its nest on the ground. It can drop down into that nest at will.

Ethereal minstrel! Pilgrim of the sky!  
Dost thou despise the earth where care abound?  
Or while the wings aspire, as heart and eye  
Both with they nest upon the dewy ground?  
Thy nest which thou canst drop into at will.

In this poem (skylark) the character of the bird is distinguished from that of other birds. Skylark soars beyond the last point of vision and yet the song reaches the bosom of the plain and thrills all hearers. The song is prompted by the bird's love for its mate and its young ones which remain on the earth. Other birds sing only in the spring time, but the skylark sings all the year round. This is a heart beating poem how Wordsworth has related a bird to humanity or our common life.

A privacy of glorious light is thine,  
whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood  
of harmony, with instinct more divine,  
type of the wise who soar, but never roam;  
true to the kindred points of heaven and home!

In his other poem "Daffodils" he points out that he wandered lonely as a cloud. Moreover it is not as imaginary poem but based on actual formation and experience. Wordsworth fills joy in every creation of nature. He regards nature guide source of enjoyment. For him, nature gives pleasure and solace in man's life. Once poet was wandering aimlessly like a patch of cloud floating in the sky over hills and valleys. All of sudden, he saw a large number of daffodils by the side of lake, growing under the trees. They were of golden colour and were waving and dancing in the air. In solitude, when the mind is undisturbed by outward things, old memories revive. Hence, when the memory of that sight appeared to the poet, he derived from it the same pleasure which he had enjoyed when he had actually seen it.

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.

**Conclusion:** Now we can point out and justify that William Wordsworth has rightfully been called by the critics and readers alike, the high priest of nature, the harbinger of nature or the worshipper of nature, as no other poet has understood nature as Wordsworth does. His treatment of nature is original and unique. To Wordsworth nature is not inanimate. Nature is a

living and organic unity with a life and personality of its own. That is why; William Wordsworth is a well-known and remarkable poet of nature.

**References:**

- William Wordsworth, "To a Skylark", William Wordsworth The Prelude with a Selection from the Shorter Poems, the Sonnets, (ed.) Carlos Baker (New York: Rinhart & Winston, 1948).
- William Wordsworth, The Prelude, (ed.) Ernest de Selincourt (London: O.U.P., 1970).
- William Wordsworth, "The French Revolution", The Prelude, (ed.) Ernest de Selincourt (London: O.U.P., 1970).
- William Wordsworth, "Descriptive Sketches", The Prelude, (ed.) Ernest de Selincourt (London: O.U.P., 1970).
- William Wordsworth, "Tintern Abbey", William Wordsworth Selected Poems, (ed.) Walford Davis (London: Dent, 1975).
- William Wordsworth, "Lines Written in Early Spring", William Wordsworth Selected Poems, (ed.) Walford Davis (London: Dent, 1975).
- William Wordsworth, "The World is too much With Us", William Wordsworth Selected Poems, (ed.) Walford Davis (London:Dent, 1975).
- William Wordsworth, "Daffodils", William Wordsworth Selected Poems, (ed.) Walford Davis (London: Dent, 1975).
- <https://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/gk-magazine/wordsworth-the-poet-of-nature>.
- [https://www.academia.edu/27363863/Wordsworth\\_as\\_a\\_Nature\\_Poet](https://www.academia.edu/27363863/Wordsworth_as_a_Nature_Poet).
- <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/william-wordsworth>.