Abstract

Wordsworth has been regarded the finest and greatest poet of nature in English Literature and in British poetry. The poetry of Wordsworth is best characterised by his strong affinity with nature. Like Blake and Coleridge he sought solace in the grandeur and beauty of nature. Like American poet Robert Frost he was deeply associated with nature.

To his upbringing in the Lake District, rich in natural scenery must be added his keen observation to store in memory sights and sounds, seen and enjoyed once. Thus Nature provided him not only with present pleasure but with pleasure "recollected in tranquillity" He mentions four stages in his love of Nature: the boyhood stage when it served for his boyish sports; the slightly later stage when it became an irresistible passion; the thoughtful years when the joy and harmony in nature only grieved his heart to think what man has made of man; and the final stage when he began to see a heavenly presence in every objects of Nature. He has the unique power to render in words not only the visible shapes of nature or its sounds but also what is neither visible nor audible, such as silence, darkness and the very spirit of a place and time.

Keywords: Wordsworth’s strong affinity with Nature, According to him “Nature is part and parcel of God, a great moral teacher, guardian, the best mother and nurse of man.”

Introduction

Among all the Romantic poets like Shelley, Keats, Coleridge, Byron etc Wordsworth has been considered supreme and father of Romantic poets and Nature poets. Nature is the brand-name of Wordsworth’s poetry. According to Wordsworth, “Nature is part and parcel of God and it is a manifestation of God.”

Wordsworth’s love for nature and his trust in nature has been explained in the following lines:

A. Wordsworth considered nature as a living being. He realised that there is a divine spirit pervading all the objects of nature.
B. Wordsworth trusted that nature is a source of joy to the human heart and a healing influence on sorrow stricken hearts.

C. He considered nature as a great moral teacher, guardian, the best mother and nurse of man.

In “Lines composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey,” Wordsworth writes “I again repose...and view/These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts...” (9-11). The British poet affirms that when he is in “lonely rooms, and ‘amid the din/ of towns and cities,” it is these “beauteous forms” that bring him “sensations sweet,” and those sensations ultimately help him pass “into purer mind” (25, 22,27,29). Frost captures similarly beautiful natural images in his poetry.

His love for nature inspired Wordsworth to write poem after poem on it. Wordsworth offered not just a beautiful picture of nature but also illustrated the healing power of nature on the spirit of man in 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.”

In this poem “My Heart Leaps Up”, Wordsworth also uses another concept that becomes a theme throughout his poetry; the importance of childhood. For many of the Romantics, the memories or visions of an idyllic childhood become a powerful emotive force as they aspired for life of greater harmony and simplicity.

Wordsworth’s poetry does include passages of great hope, optimism and joy best summarised through his famous poem “Daffodils”.

“I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

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.”
In this poem Wordsworth suggests that man’s inhumanity appears even darker when compared to the pristine beauty and purity of nature. The words clouds, vales, hills, lake, trees and breeze reveal that Wordsworth is very sensitive to all natural objects and natural beauty. His rich emotional and enthusiastic language really does transform the simple daffodil into something of magical beauty. This style of writing is common of a lyrical poet. In Frost’s poem ‘Stopping by Woods on A Snowy Evening’ the language is also appreciative of Nature but not just so lively and enthusiastic. Frost tells us of his encounter with Nature. He describes the scene (woods) as ‘lovely, dark and deep.’ This isn’t as vibrant as Wordsworth. Frost in some senses seems to be a lot more laid back and relaxed in his environment; he almost gives this wonderful sight a solemn feel. Wordsworth brings his subject, the daffodils to life using personification in the line ‘Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.’ He pictures the daffodils as humans with energy to joyfully dance and celebrate life.

However, Wordsworth’s life was on many occasions touched by tragedy. His sorrows and awareness of humanity’s varied sufferings inevitably led to passages where the beauty of nature contrasted with the fate of man. Frost captures similarly beautiful natural images in his poetry. In “Directive,” readers see the beauty of nature as he attempts to retreat from the chaos of the world, as Wordsworth does, into the beauty of nature: “Back out of all this now too much for us, / back in a time made simple by the loss/ of detail...There is a house...upon a farm” (1-2, 3, 5, 6). Many critics have been attracted to the two poets and have compared their similar styles. Wordsworth and Frost use common natural ingredients but in different ways to make their works beautiful and approachable. Lines Written In Early Spring:

“I heard a thousand blended notes,  
While in a grove I sate reclined,  
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts  
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.  
.............

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?”

Especially in his early years Wordsworth was a genuinely radical poet, perhaps influenced to some extent by the American and French Revolution and the new ideas of democracy sweeping the world. (For some time he lived in France but had to leave when the revolution made it dangerous). His poem London 1802 is a strong advocacy for social change. These sentiments were shared by other contemporaries such as Blake, although Blake and Wordsworth were mostly unknown to each other. As Wordsworth grew older he became more conservative and his poetry lost its “radical” edge however he was still held in high regard and in 1848 was appointed to be Poet Laureate. Wordsworth’s small poem “A Slumber Did My Spirit Seal” a famous and popular poem points out Wordsworth’s love for nature at his best:

A slumber did my spirit seal  
I had no human fear;  
She seemed a thing that could not feel  
The touch of earthly years.  
No motion has she now, no force
She neither hears nor sees;  
Rolled round in earth’s diurnal course  
With rocks and stones and trees.

This poem expresses the deep anguish of the poet at the sudden and shocking death of Lucy. Wordsworth loved Lucy so much and she has now been buried in earth making herself part of the entire world, with rocks and stones and trees symbolizing entire nature. If he wants to love the dead Lucy, He will have to love the entire nature of which Lucy has become an ingredient. This love for nature inspired Wordsworth to write poems based on Nature and makes him finally the finest poet of nature in British poetry. Loving entire earth means loving all the people of the earth. This universal love transforms love for an individual to the level of worldly or universal love, points out the elements of deep humanity to the poetics of Wordsworth. In Wordsworth’s poems there is a blending of naturalism and humanism which makes him a great poet and also presents Wordsworth’s true association with nature and humanity at his best.

For these reasons Arnold considers him “the third greatest poet among English poets in English after Shakespeare and Milton”. He is one of the very chief glories of English poetry. Wordsworth’s other poems “Lines Written In Early Spring” and “The solitary Reaper” which make him a great poet and also present Wordsworth’s true association with nature and humanity at his best. The five Lucy poems consist of “A Slumber did my spirit seal”, “Strange fits of Passion have I known”, “Three years she grew in Sun and Shower”, “She dwelt among the untrodden ways”, and “I travelled among unknown men”, portray deep and intimate relationship between humanity and nature. Wordsworth’s Lucy Poems point out how does nature looks after Lucy? ‘Three years she grew in Sun and Shower’ presents a story which is narrated by nature herself. In this poem Lucy is a 3 years old girl. Nature takes the responsibility of her upbringing:

“This child I to myself will take  
She shall be mine, and I will make  
A lady of my own”.

Nature promises to make Lucy an almost perfect woman. She reveals those methods by which the complex unity of a living being would be created. Nature will take the help of opposite words to give completeness to Lucy.

“Myself will to my darling be  
Both law and impulse: and with me  
The girl, in rock and plain,  
In earth and heaven, in glade shower,  
Shall feel an overseeing power  
To kindle or restrain.”

These lines have been taken from ‘The Education of Nature’. In these lines Wordsworth makes nature declare what education she plans to impart Lucy. All the three pairs of images in the poem—‘rock & plain,’ ‘earth & heaven,’ ‘glade and shower’—represent the duality in human personality. If plain, earth & shower—represent the duality in human personality. If plain earth & shower stand for impulse, the other three are the embodiments of nature’s law. Without a perfect harmony between the two, ideal education is impossible. Hence nature proposes to educate Lucy after the great ideal. Lucy is going to be shaped by a pattern of anti-thesis, ‘Between
law and impulse, ‘glade and shower’, ‘kindle and restrain’. Lucy’s personality will be filled with energy produced by the natural forces.

“She shall be sportive as the fawn.
That wild with glee across the lawn.”
Lucy shall not fail to discover grace even in the motions of the storm:
“The floating clouds their state shall lend
To her; for her the willow bends
Nor shall she fail to see
Even in the motions of storm”

The storm is usually associated with the forces of disruption, but the discerning eye of nature will not fail to find beauty in it. The poet also illustrates nature’s influence on Lucy in the following lines:

“The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her, and she shall lean her ear
............
Shall pass into her face.”

The poet during his evening walk on the sea –coast with his small daughter, observes the calm beauty of the evening. Wordsworth is very sensitive to natural objects. His true love for birds is amazing and praiseworthy. His attachment with Cuckoo and Nightingale in the poem “The Solitary Reaper” is appealing.

“No Nightingale did ever chaunt
More welcome notes to weary bands.”
“A voice so thrilling never was heard
In spring-time from the cuckoo-bird”.
His love for Cuckoo bird in his poem “To the Cuckoo” is appreciable.

“O blessed Bird! The earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, fairy place
That is fit home for thee!”

Wordsworth’s attitude to nature can be clearly differentiated from that of the other great poets of nature. He did not prefer the wild and stormy aspects of nature like Byron or the shifting aspect of nature and the scenery of sea and sky like Shelley or the purely sensuous in nature like Keats. It was his special characteristic to concern himself with nature in his ordinary, familiar and every life. He did not recognize the ugly side of nature ‘red in tooth and claw’ as Tennyson did. Wordsworth stressed upon the moral influence of nature and the need of man’s spiritual discourse with it. For all these reasons Arnold considers him “the third greatest poet in English after Shakespeare and Milton”. Like American poet Robert Frost, Wordsworth had true devotion and love for nature. He had real natural taste and temperament. Even the ordinary object of nature
appealed to him too much. The two poets have different agendas, but they choose similar natural scenes with which to begin their poems. Nature and natural things support both poets. For Wordsworth the natural scene is a launching pad, from which he soars into associations and toward transcendent realities. For Frost the natural scene is sufficient and his ideas bloom from it, are rooted in it, are (ultimately) impossible without it. Wordsworth does not stay on the physical scene because the transcendent reality is his goal. Both poets do share this common starting point. Nature holds up both poets, and they hold it in their poetry. Frost holds it with reverence and with suitable boundaries, so he can appreciate its physical existence from a philosophical distance. Wordsworth holds nature and natural things in his gaze, from his physical distance so these objects will stimulate his ideas—begin the associative process—and philosophically to penetrate them and ultimately transcend all of the physical reality.

To the poet William Wordsworth, the glory of Nature was everything, right from childhood. Even as a baby where he grew up in a house on the banks of a beautiful but powerful river, Nature permeated his everyday life in an area of outstanding natural beauty near the Lake District of northern England. However, Wordsworth was aware of its terrible power of dark brooding mountains and the isolation of lonely moors. This contrast made him reflect on the mysteries of life and death as a human. Truly, he felt ‘my heart leaps up when I behold’ the glories of Nature, yet it made him think and write also of the idea of duty and the stages of human life. He shared this appreciation of the world around him with his sister Dorothy. Wordsworth’s early circumstances rendered him extraordinarily introverted, and solitude with nature was a vital element in his psychological makeup. Another of his most famous poems, “Daffodils,” opens with the line “I wandered lonely as a Cloud.” Loneliness within a natural world and creativity from the natural world are at the heart of Wordsworth’s poetry, and loneliness, for him, is a creative state.

Works Cited

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