



# **Wordsworth's Spiritual Aspect of Mysticism and Pantheism**



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## **Abstract**

“Wordsworth loves all object of Nature; but he is concerned far less with the sensuous manifestation that delight most of the poets of Nature, that with the spiritual. The divinization of nature, which began in the modern world at the Renaissance and proceeded during the 18<sup>th</sup> century, culminates, for English literature in Wordsworth. It was his aim as a poet to seek for a beauty in meadow, woodland. It was his aim as a poet to seek for a beauty in meadow, woodland and the mountain top, and to interpret this beauty in spiritual terms.”

**Keywords** Mysticism, Pantheism, Nature

## **Introduction :**

Wordsworth's approach to nature is that of spiritual as well as mystic as his friend Aubrey De Vere Puts it.

“Wordsworth looked at nature as the mystics of old perused the pages of the holy writ, making little of the letter, but passing through it to the spiritual interpretation. Wordsworth found in the meadows and the word and mounting the spiritual stimulus that Blake sought in purely imaginary vision.” In his copy of Wordsworth's poems, Blake wrote the comment:

Natural object always did and now do weaken, deaden and obliterate imagination in Mr. Wordsworth must know that what he writes valuable is not be found in Nature.

As the more comprehensive poet, Wordsworth wanted to go beyond but not away from Nature. Wordsworth remained a poet of 'the mighty world of eye and ear' till the end of his life. So his mysticism is grounded and rooted, actually in the senses. His nature mysticism is clearly evident in 'Tintern Abbey'

Nor less, I trust  
 To them I may have owed another gift,  
 Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,  
 In which the burthen of the mystery  
 In which the heavy and the weary weight  
 Of all this intelligible world,  
 Is lightened .....

### **The Prelude book IV**

The Wordsworth prefers to employ an ascetic style. It demands a nature and thoughtful reader to appreciate the power and comprehensiveness. Fortunately Wordsworth's splendid Imagination was often too powerful for his theory: and in his best work he unconsciously ignores it altogether. His natural diction is the 'grand manner' throbbing with stately beauty. The spiritual aspect of nature is clearly visible in his later poems; he has shown us invisible world of nature. In the Prelude Book VI he speaks of the moments in which moments all visible nature appears at the manifestation of one indwelling spirit:

Were all like workings of one mind, the features  
 Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree  
 Characters of the great Apocalypse,  
 The types; and symbols of eternity  
 Of first and last, and midst, and without end

Melvin Rader has remarked :

Wordsworth was not only a poet he was also a scene and mystic and a practical psychologist with an amazingly subtle mind and an unusual capacity for feeling, It was not the beauty of Nature which brought him joy and peace, but the life in Nature. He himself had caught a vision of that life. He knew it and felt it and it transformed the whole of existence for him. He believed that every man could attain this vision which he so fully possessed and his whole life's work took a form of minute and careful analysis of the process of feeling in his own Nature.

It is 'Nature's law' Wordsworth says, that 'forms created the most vile and brute' should not 'exist divorced from good' The life of the whole imparts a pulse of good to each fragment value is not confined ; it spreads outwards until it affects the entire circumambient region. As the poet declares in 'The Excursion',

Whate'er exists hath properties that spread

Beyond itself, communicating good,

A simple blessing, or with evil mixed;

Spirit that knows no insulted spot,

No Chasm no solitude

Since every object of Nature impresses itself on other and each reflects it neighbors, the vice of ever 'dividing' falsities reality.

For all things in this little world of ours are in one bosom of close neighborhood.

Wordsworth's disposition to regard natural objects as neighborly appears in poem after poem. The spiritual unity of nature enters into the design of, I wandered lonely as a cloud, Nutting, Heart leaps well and lines written in early spring.

A suggestion of life and interplay distinguishes many scattered lines :

Loud is the vale! The voice is up

With which she speaks when storms are gone,

A mighty unison of streams !

Of all her voices, one !

There passages bring out the mysterious bonds of unity behind the apparent disconnection of things. Wordsworth has a kind of primitive sense of intuition.

Of unknown modes of being which on earth,

Or in the heavens, or in the heavens and earth

Exist by mighty combinations, bound

Together by a link, and with soul

Which makes all one.

There is a pair

There is a spirit or a pervasive atmosphere that draws things together into a natural community.

Wordsworth is concerned far less with the sensuous manifestations that delight most Nature poets, than with the spiritual significance that he finds underlying these manifestations. The primrose and the daffodils are symbols to him of Nature's message to man. The grandeur of the mountain torrent appeals to him because he can link its beauty in his mind with the glory of floating clouds, and with the charm of a young girl's face, a sunrise for him is not a pageant of color, it is a moment, of spiritual consecration.<sup>4</sup>

He writes :

Pater feels that Wordsworth's spiritual ideas have a certain appeal. Wordsworth had pondered deeply, for instance, on those strange reminiscence, and forebodings which seem to make our lives, stretch before and behind us, beyond where we can see or touch anything. The speculative boldness of Wordsworth's thoughts constitutes, at least for some minds, the secret attractions of much of his best poetry, as he writes :

My heart was full ; I made no vows, but vows  
 Were then made for me; bound unknown to me  
 Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly  
 A dedicated spirit.

To combine his spiritual ecstasy with a poetic presentment of Nature, to be both deeply mystical and nobly poetical, is the content aim of Wordsworth, and it is the source of some of his greatest pieces grand rhapsodies such as Tintern Abbey.<sup>5</sup>

Wordsworth's strong moral and philosophical tendency clearly comes out in poems like 'Intimations of Immortality' Wordsworth expresses his faith in immortality and his view about unreality of the world of the senses. This child, according to him, comes into this world from heaven. The child is vaguely aware of his prenatal existence and is wrapped up in clouds of heavenly glory. As the child grows, he forgets his memories of heaven and becomes engrossed in earthly interests. The grown-up man, however, by recalling his experiences of childhood, can come to conclusion that the soul is immortal. This belief is known at the doctrine of reminiscence. Again on the basis of certain experiences of his boyhood, Wordsworth declared the world of the senses or the material world is an illusion. This is a platonic view. The last two stanzas of the poem are particularly reflective and meditative. The following two lines are full of spiritual and moral instruction.

To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
 Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

The ethical purpose of the poem is apparent in the lines where Wordsworth talks about the soothing thoughts that spring out of human suffering and the lines in which he thanks the human heart for his tenderness, its joy and fears.

'Ode to Duty' is frankly did active and spiritual poem. Duty is the power that guides human beings along the right path and teaches them to distinguish between right and wrong. Duty is a light to guide, and a rod to check the erring. The poet declared his resolve to submit himself to the strict discipline of Duty. He seeks from Duty wisdom, humanity. The spirit of self sacrifice etc. he wants to become a bondman of duty because he does not wish to be troubled and more by chance desires and changing hopes the poem is obviously intended to influence the reader in his conduct in daily life. Ode to Duty is not pure poetry; It is loaded with ethics and morality. Its purpose in instruction an moral elevation not pleasure or delight. In the later poems of Wordsworth the mood of philosophical thought becomes so marked as to be almost irritating. This aspect of his poetry in sharply contrasted with the lyrical side of his genius.

'The old Cumberland Beggar' is devoted to a worthy purpose, for the Beggar is represented as the unconscious means of touching those spring of human kindness without which life on earth could not be endured:

Man is dear to man; the poorest poor  
 Long for some moments in a weary life  
 When they can know and feel that they have been,  
 Themselves, the father and the dealers out  
 Of some small blessings.....

Hearth leaps well, like much of Wordsworth's teaching looks forward to the time when the delights of violent excitement involving indifference to the suffering of living creatures shall give place to the pleasures of a 'milder day.' The shepherd who tells the story and the poet hears it may each arrive at a common lesson to be learnt from Nature.

One lesson, shepherd , let us two divine,  
 Taught both by what she shows and what conceals;  
 Never to blend our pleasure or our pride  
 With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels.

In 'Michael' Wordsworth traces the disappointment of great affection. During his long years of childlessness, the old shepherd in the poem had been sustained by the simple pleasures of his hard life. With the birth of a son, his heart seemed 'Born again' and all his instincts of life and love were centered in the child of his old age. With the loss of this son, for his love has grown to be an independent spiritual power this is the sense of the famous passage beginning:

“There is a comfort in the strength of love.....

The poem teaches these two obvious lesson

- (1) Family affections, especially the love of a father to his son, are a great sustaining power in human relations and
- (2) A alms, uncomplaining endurance of misfortunes is one of the noblest qualities of a human being but a third lesson should no be ignored, namely the city life tends to corrupt human beings.

The Brothers is as outstanding a poem “Michael” No other poem by words worth depicts more convincingly the strength to which the affections may grow in a small population where life is hardy and simple and memories are long. The irony of the situation, in which one speaker in the dialogue knows his interlocutor but the other does not, produces a growing tension which captures and holds the reader’s interest Leonard has returned from sea to his native village, wishing to settle with his younger brother whom he has not seen for years. The sight of a new grave in the Churchyard, however has aroused the dear that he may have come too late. In conversation with the village priest who des not recognize the newcomer, Leonard is torn between desire and dear to knew the truth about the brave. At length the news that james, the younger brother, had developed the habit of sleep – walking, produces a strong emotion in Leonard who asks the question.

But this youth,

How did he de’at last?

The priest replies that James had fallen in his sleep from the summit of a rock where he had remained alone after climbing thither with some companions. ‘The Brother’ is a masterly poem of the mountains in their two-folds power to deepen the domestic emotions and to tranquilize the mind. In Leonard the first influence prevails in the priest the second.

“We have no need of names and epitaphs. We talks about the dead by our firesides. And then for our immortal part! We want no symbols, sir, to tell us that plain tale, the thoughts of deaths sits easy on the man who has been born and does among the mountains.”

It is indeed as Wordsworth classified it, a ‘poem of the affections’

‘Resolution and Independence’ is award by a poem with a moral. Wordsworth expected his reader to derive instruction from contemplating the fortitude, independence persevering spirit and the general moral dignity of the old leech–gather’s Character. Wordsworth believed that the value of this poem lay in the lesson it conveyed namely, that the spectacle of meek endurance of hardship may at times strengthen the faint hearted.

‘Laodamia’ teaches its reader the lesson that they should endure their sorrows and calamities patiently and should not revolt against providence. The stern conclusion of this poem expresses Wordsworth’s true mind of the ‘Divine Justice’ , which no weak pity moves. The end of Dion is still more striking. When Dion has expiated his one crime by death is transcended. Goody Blake and Harry Gill has the obvious moral that God punishes those who have no charity in them.



But many are the occasions when Wordsworth's simplicity deteriorates into triviality, batches and banality. While the daring simplicity is often highly successful, there is also the other kind of simplicity which has been called the bleat, as of an old, half-witted sheep. This creates a strange inequality in Wordsworth's verse and inequality, which has been noted and commented upon by almost every critic.

"Compton Rickett", discussing this deplorable me quality, observes that, while no poet has descended to greater depths of bathos and puerility than he. The poet who could write with a fine austere reserve"

She is dead,

The light extinguished of her lonely but.

The hut itself abandoned to decay

And she forgotten in the quiet grace.

Could also perpetrate these lines about a grave

I've measured it from the side to side

It is three feet long and two feet wide

The poet who could write such four lines as :

The silence that is in the starry sky,

Could also commit the following absurdity.

The silent heavens have going on

Wordsworth's experiments in a simple style were intended to arouse the ordinary man's sympathy for his fellow men, but when he sacrifices the idiomatic order of words to preserve simplicity of diction and the demands of rhyme, or resorts to repetitiveness and garrulity for the sake of realism he undermines his purpose with amazing effects.

We can see in the following lines :

Poor Susan moans poor Susan groans,

Or "as sure as there's a moon in heaven"

Cries Betty "he'll be back again;

They'll "he'll be back again;

They'll both be here – 'tis almost ten.

They'll both be here before eleven.

The spiritual aspect of the great 'immortality ode' has a significance that cannot be ignored. This poem tells us of the unique experience of Wordsworth as a child when every earthly sigh appeared to him to be clothed in a celestial light. The passing away of that glory

from the earth makes Wordsworth talks about God, who is our home' and the later stanza IX in which he speaks of "those Wordsworth's mysticism and the unique character of his childhood experiences he write :

In the soothing thoughts that spring  
 Out of human suffering ;  
 In the faith that looks through death,  
 In years that bring the philosophical mind.

The poem closes on a cheerful note, a note of perfect reconciliation because the poet has run another race and won other palms;

The clouds that gather round the setting sun  
 Do take a sober coloring from an eye  
 That path kept watch o'er man's mortality

'The Ode to Duty' is an ethical sermon. The poet recalls the time when being inexperienced he sought freedom of action, even though he did not ignore and mandate of duty. Now, however he wishes to submit himself to the discipline of Duty more rigidly : But thee I now would serve more strictly, If I may. He does not seek the supervision of Duty because he has done any wrongs, but because he tired of too much freedom;

Through no disturbance of my soul,  
 Or strong compunction in me wrought,  
 I supplicate for thy control;  
 But in the quietness of thought;  
 My this unhardened freedom tires.  
 He ends the poem by placing him self under the charge of Duty:  
 I myself command  
 Into thy guidance from this hour  
 Oh, let my weakness have an end!  
 And in the light of truth thy Bondman let me live.

The death of his brother changed the current of Wordsworth's thoughts and turned them to seek the consolations of revealed religion, with its promise of personal immortality. The story of his reconversion is found in "The Excursion" The solitary represents the eclipse of faith through which Wordsworth had passed in the 1790's: the Wanderer represents the mystical religion of Nature described in Tintern Abbey; returning. The pastor has the last word, but there is no conflict between him and the wanderer; the religion of Nature is not abandoned, but melts into the fuller light of revelation when he writes :



Poor humanity's afflicted will

Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny

The intellectual power through words & things

Went sounding on a dim & perilous way.

According to Carlos Baker.

Wordsworth dimensions are heightened by his being a philosophical poet. It is wrong to overstress the naturalistic element in his thought as over against the humanistic & theistic components. All three conspire to fructify in his belied in the motherhood of Nature, the brotherhood of pain. If words worth can write like a Nature mystic, or a pantheist, he can never be said to have forgotten the human figured in the foreground or the supreme intelligence in the background.

The eloquent opening of his unfinished master work, *The Recluse*, informs us that he chose to tell;

Of the individual Mind that keeps her own

Inviolate retirement, subject there

To conscience only, and the law supreme

Of threat intelligence which governs all –

He fixed his contemplation upon the inherent and indestructible powers alike in Nature and human nature. From that Standpoint, it was possible to understand that moral evil can not finally cancel out the universal good. Under 'nature's holy plan', one could discover a sufficient justification God's ways to men. This was Emerson's cogent summary of the point Wordsworth made in thousand ways throughout the source of his poetical career and it is this which permits us to claim for him the title of 'philosophical poet.'

Wordsworth's strong moral and spiritual tendency clearly comes out in poems like 'Intimations of Immortality' and 'ode to duty'. In these two poems, spiritual and philosophical poetry reaches at height. These two poems represent a perfect combination of Profound thought and deep emotion.

"in 'Intimations of Immortality' Wordsworth expresses his faith in immortality and his view about the reality of the world senses. The child, according to him comes into this world from heaven. The child is vaguely aware of the prenatal existence and is wrapped up in cloud of heavenly glory as the child grows he forgets his memories of heaven and becomes engrossed in earthly interests. The grown up man, however by recalling his experiences of Childhood, can come to conclusion that the soul is immortal. This belief is known as the doctrine of reminiscence. Again on the basis of certain experiences of his boyhood. Wordsworth declares that the world of senses is an illusion. This is a Platonic view. The last two stanzas of the poem are particularly reflective and meditative. The following two lines are full of moral instruction:

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Wordsworth walked with a nature in a spirit of religious love which was fed by various sources. In the prelude book I Wordsworth follows the empiricists philosophers who regarded man's soul or spirit at the aggregate of his experience. According to empiricist theory, one's character at any given juncture is the aggregate of one's past experiences, which unless forces of suppression have been at work, will inspire one to excellence of life. An experience of the beauty of Nature will produce feelings of benevolence towards man,

and eventually lead to the bliss of Theopathy (that is, a sense of union with God) the following lines are remarkable :

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows  
 Like harmony in music; there is dark  
 Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles  
 Discordant elements makes them cling together.

### The Prelude , Book I

Hellen Darbishire remarks :

In the Prelude Wordsworth gives a record and he will vouch for the truth of its of that inner life of which his poetry grew he reveals a strange world, and the deeper we dive into it the stranger it becomes. It is the full intense life which he lived through his senses as a child and youth that he first tries to recapture and record invaluable – this is the surprising thing is its sheer in questionable spirituality.

Thus we can say Wordsworth's Natural aspects are mystic, spiritual and full of ethos and pathos, but he differed from other mystical and spiritual poets. In his poetry the spiritual meaning was added to the natural beauty, not substituted for it. We can see in the following liens of Wordsworth's famous sonnet :

-----Great God! I'd rather be  
 A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;  
 So might I standing on this pleasant lea,  
 Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;  
 Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;  
 Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

The world is too much with us

However, in the sonnet The World is too Much with Us, Wordsworth expressed his concern over people's preoccupation with materialism. The industrial Revolution had led to the growth of great drift of England rural population to sprawling urban areas. Wordsworth felt that life in town slums distorted people's individuality and robbed them of the vital, renewing powers of nature. We dare 'out of tune' without own human nature, he insisted when we lose that original, personal report with nature.

Arguably, a profound change in Wordsworth's attitude to nature appeared in Resolution and Independence (1802). The poet recognized the leech gatherer's uncomplaining, dignified endurance of particularly hard life. The old man's strong resolution and independent spirit revealed a human strength that had to fight against nature to survive. However, independence from nature and the poet's appeal to God to 'be(his) help and stay secure' heralded a new direction in Wordsworth's thinking.

Wordsworth's visionary ability to see 'into the life of things' in nature deserted him, as he grew older. His ode, intimations of immortality (1806) – one of the most famous poems in English literature – contains the pessimistic confession, 'The things which I have seen I now can see no more. During the latter half of his long life, Wordsworth poetry and attitudes (political, religious and philosophical) became depressingly conservative and conventional. His writing lacked inspiration and was, mostly mechanical. An exception was an inspired series of sonnets about the River Duddon, written between 1806 and 1820. With the poem consider the separate stages of the river's life, from birth to death. River and poet progress through their own lives towards similar destinations ; but while the river 'shall for ever glide' , man 'must vanish.' Nevertheless, the poet is brought to the realization that it will be 'Enough, If something from our hands have power/To live, and act, and serve the future hour, -as, indeed, does his verse.

The French Revolution taught Wordsworth that every human being was intrinsically great, and capable of infinite development. He would not give up his hopes for man till he had tested human nature in its elements. 'By stripping our own hearts naked and by looking out of ourselves towards men who lead the simplest lives and those most according to nature, men who have never known false refinements, wayward and artificial desires, effeminate ways of thinking.

In his wandering on the country roads he came in contact with humblest human beings. Their strength and energy surprised him. He saw into the depths of human soul which seems to have no depth to careless eyes. We can conclude in the words of H.W. Garrod.

Wordsworth's poetry is essentially mystical. But whereas the mysticism of other men consists commonly their escape from the senses the mysticism of Wordsworth is grounded and rooted actually, in the sense.

## Religion

Religion, while not as prevalent as in the poetry of the Enlightenment, does have a place in much of Wordsworth's poetry. Often religion is included simply to help Wordsworth's more pious readers understand the level of his commitment to and faith in nature. Wordsworth uses religious imagery and language in his poems in order to convey his ideas about the power of nature, the human mind, and global interconnectivity.

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