

Wordsworth's Ideal Community is in Tune with Human Personality

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Abstract

Wordsworth belonged to the era of revolutions; the American Revolution, the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution. The repercussions of all socio-political events were strongly felt on the English soil. In England many reformers and enthusiasts were disappointed and disillusioned by the failure of the French Revolution. In the words of Hudson, 'The age which followed upon the vast upheaval of the Revolution was one of wide spread turmoil and perplexity. Men felt themselves to be wandering aimlessly between two worlds, one dead the other powerless to be born. The older order had collapsed in shapeless ruins, but the promised Utopia had not been realized to take its place....the generous ardour and the splendid humanitarian enthusiasms which had been stirred by the opening phases of the revolutionary movement, had now ebbed away; revulsion had followed, and with it the mood of disillusion and despair. The spirit of doubt and denial was felt as a paralyzing power in every department of life and thought and the shadow of unbelief lay heavy on many hearts.' (cited in Carlyle:1963)1. After the repercussions of the French Revolution Wordsworth reached the conclusion that the real happiness of Man lies not in any social or political reforms but in transformation of human soul. Far from the confusions of advanced urban life, in the peace and solitude of nature, man can discern the shapes and the forms of evil and folly. Wordsworth claims that nature inserts in Man complacency; a spiritual balm and lead him to love of mankind. Wordsworth saw Man's happiness and freedom not in a New World order but in the renewal of the ancient one.

Introduction

The French Revolution demonstrated the contrast of Wordsworth's ideals by creating a world which was unruly and transitory. In book 10 of The Prelude he says:

It was a lamentable time for man
Whether a hope had ev'r been his or not,
A woeful time whose hopes did still
Outlast the shock; most woeful for those few,
They had the deepest feeling of the grief,
Who still were flattered, and had trust in man. (384-389)

His interaction with the modernized world confronted him with the bitter realities of life, and he discovered that his social ideals were in conflict with the concrete reality. Wordsworth was pained to think of the human world, so full of misery and violence. He wondered why there were so few examples of good person in this world. In The Prelude, Book 12 he says:

Why is the glorious Creature to be found
Only one in ten thousand? What one is,
Why many may not be? What bars are thrown
By nature in the way of such a hope?
Our animal wants and the necessities
Which they impose, are these the obstacles?(90-95)

The repercussions of The Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution showed Wordsworth how modern societies 'parted man from man'. He decides to investigate:

.....What bars are thrown
By Nature in the way of such a hope ?
Our animal wants and the necessities
Which they impose, are these the obstacles ?
If not, then others vanish into air.
Such meditations bred an anxious wish
To ascertain how much of real worth
And genuine knowledge, and true power of mind
Did at this day exist in those who liv'd
By bodily labour, labour far exceeding
Their due proportion, under all the weight
Of that injustice which upon ourselves
By composition of society
Ourselves entail. To frame and estimate
I chiefly look'd (what need to look beyond),
Among the natural abodes of men,
Fields with their rural works, recall'd to mind
My earliest notices, with these compared
The observations of my later youth,
Continued downwards to that very day. (Book 12, 89-106)

Wordsworth concluded that the so called modern world has become perpetrator of evil. An urban man lives in tumult and complexity despite its provided facilities and luxuries. In the Machiavellian world the highest forms of love are crushed and destroyed. In book 12 Wordsworth says:

..... flattering thus our self-conceit
With pictures that ambitiously set forth
The differences, the outside marks by which
Society has parted man from man,
Neglectful of the universal heart. (216-220)

Like Wordsworth many writers criticized the evils of the urban life of the time. Criticizing the English society, Austen thought that English traditions and values were in danger of being forgotten and lost. In her novel, *Mansfield Park*, she depicts the chaos in England in these words:

In almost every respect, the very reverse of what she could have
Wished. It was the abode of noise, disorder, and impropriety.
Nobody was in their right place, nothing was done as it ought to
be. (Austen 1980:381)2

Day is of the view that, 'Austen's message is that the ancient authorities and virtues of England are in danger of being forfeited, of being turned into a farce. The shallowness of the Crawfords and their association with London identify the capital with new money, with moral licence and superficial fashionableness, with social forces that were putting the old order of England at risk....'(Day,1996:140)3 Blake in his poem *London* depicts the metropolis as a place full of "marks of weakness, marks of woe" and "mind-forged manacles. He felt that the State was abandoning those in need. The poem reflects Blake's extreme disillusionment with the sufferings he saw in London, he says:

I wander through each chartered street,
Near where the chartered Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet,
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.
In every cry of every man,
In every infant's cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forged manacles I hear:

How the chimney-sweeper's cry
Every blackening church appalls,
 And the hapless soldier's sigh
 Runs in blood down palace-walls.
But most, through midnight streets I hear
 How the youthful harlot's curse
 Blasts the new-born infant's tear,
 And blights with plagues the marriage-hearse.

Thomas Hardy was against civilized society because he thought it intrudes with people's innocence. He thought it made them materialistic, especially when people from agricultural society turn to industrial one. In his novel *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Tess wants to support her family but she is destroyed by a civilized man. The simple village people love her but the civilized people despise her for her uncommitted crime. T S Eliot, in *The Waste Land*, throws light on the living conditions of people belonging to different sections of society in the modern world. Eliot suggests that the civilization of cities is rootless. The people there have no tradition, because it is a mass of people from different sections and groups without any uniform culture or ideas. Modern psychologists have shown that majority of people suffer various types of mental illness on account of the worries and anxiety and challenges of the modern city. When man is unable to face a challenging situation, he feels tense and frustration. The malady of modern society is disintegration due to loss of faith and moral values, lack of human relationship, commercialization of life, mental tension and wars. Eliot says that even in the matter of love there is a question of profit and loss. He sums up the story of European lust through the words of St. Augustine :

To Carthage then I came
Burning burning burning burning (*The Waste Land*)

Like his contemporaries, Wordsworth expresses his disgust at the busy and noisy life of the city. In *The Prelude*, book 1 Wordsworth wonders at the heartless ignorance of the man of city about his next door neighbours, like strangers, not knowing each other's name. He experienced the inhuman behaviour of some people, the most painful thing he witnessed was that they did not feel the necessity of communicating among themselves, and that each one of them was living in a sort of cocoon created by himself. Similarly in the story of Michael, Wordsworth says that Luke ruined himself in London, after he left his pastoral homeland, because he took to evil ways and manners.

He in the dissolute city gave himself
To evil course: ignominy and shame
Fell on him, so that he was driven at last
To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas.

Wordsworth was very much influenced by the ideals of the French Revolution but after its failure he 'experienced moments of great "despondency"'. Like Shakespeare's *King Lear*, he quarreled with the horrifying memories of the September Massacre which tortured him:

As Lear reproch'd the winds, I could almost
Have quarrel'd with that blameless spectacle
For being yet an image in my mind
To mock me under such a strange reverse. (505-510)

Wordsworth recovers from despair, when he returns to his Lake District where in the company of Dorothy, his belief in the virtue of inward consciousness that guides individuals towards mutual good and trust in humanity is restored, which in turn develops his faith in his Cockermouth model of society. Carol, Ann and Barbara are of the view that Wordsworth 'found relief and consolation in thoughts of the country, and the restorative powers of nature...' (cf. *Tintern Abbey*);....' http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/~dmiall/prelude/wproj_vi.htm)⁴ When Wordsworth was offered a house in Racedown by his friend, Basil Montagu, he leapt at the chance and in 1795, shifted to his city-dwelling in the country side. Day in his book, *Romanticism*, says :

' From such confusion of soul at the souring of the political and social revolution
Wordsworth turned for consolation to nature and to contemplation of the depths of
his own mind.....' (Day, 1996:133)⁵

Wordsworth thought that real happiness could be achieved by interacting with nature by interaction with the natural surrounding. Far from the confusions of the urban life, Wordsworth is able to discern the shapes and the forms of evil and folly. He says that nature inserted in him complacency; a spiritual balm and led him to love of mankind. According to Basil Willey:

‘...with Dorothy, with Racedown, and ‘long months of ease and undisturbed delight’ in prospect, he could forget France....and all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy.....His greatest need were to recover contact with his own past self and to resolve the inner discord set up in him by the revolutionary period. And his peaceful retirement with Dorothy, who gave him eyes and ears, and an ‘exquisite regard for common things..... He seeks Nature now,with the longing of a sick man for the source of health. His dealing with Nature is now those of a man who has been depressed ‘by false opinion or contentious thoughts,’ who lived ‘amid the many shapes of joyless daylight’, and known the ‘dreary intercourse of daily life.’ It is in this spiritual context, and after such knowledge, that Nature acquires for him her great soothing and cheering power,...’(Willey,1974:272) 6.

Wordsworth observes that ‘higher minds’ are not slaves to the sensory world but are stimulated by nature to see beyond it:

To hold communion with the invisible world.
Such minds are truly from Deity,
For they are powers; and hence the highest bliss
That can be known is theirs. (1805,X111.105)

Wordsworth was a poet who experienced spiritual crisis,, his dreams dissolved in blood and terror; and he realized that the attempt to overthrow the social structure meant striking at the very roots of the spirit of man. John Dover Wilson writes in *The Enchanted Island* that

.....gradually, the spiritual convalescent.....recovered his lost self and his first love ; his love of the country side on which his infant eye had rested, amid which he had grown to manhood, from which he had learned to become a poet.....He seemed to have escaped from subjection to some barren witch who had offered him an impossible and detestable mirage in exchange for the paradise that lay around him. Nature, the birds, youth, the peasant, the simple traffic of family life, all that drew blood from that accumulated wisdom of centuries which we call instinct and tradition, were the only teachers, the only healers.... Wordsworth recovered by falling in love a second time with the Lake country’(Wilson, 969:P.36)7

Wordsworth’s experiences of life were an eye opener for him. He suffered in life but at the same time his sufferings raised him to a superior status. Shakespeare advocates the same idea in *King Lear*:

O! sir, to wilful men,
The injuries that they themselves procure
Must be their schoolmasters,...(Act 2, Scene 4)8

Wordsworth return to Grasmere in December 1799 was a homecoming after many years of wandering. His poem *Home at Grasmere* depicts misery and see the value of Grasmere as home, not only in the sense of habitation but also a deeper sense that the poet feels at peace with himself and at home with his surroundings in ways which he could never feel elsewhere. In Book 12 of *The Prelude* Wordsworth says:

Thus moderate, thus composed, I found
Once more in Man an object of delight
Of pure imagination, and of love;
And as the horizon of my mind enlarged,
Again I took the intellectual eye
For my instructor, studious more to see
Great Truths, than touch and handle little ones.
Knowledge was given accordingly; to my trust
Was firmer in the feeling which had stood
The test of such a trial; clearer far
My sense of what was excellent and right; (48-58)

Such an environment led him 'back to the earlier counsels between head and heart' In the Prelude Wordsworth says:

Behold me then
Once more in the Nature's presence, thus restored
Or otherwise, and strengthened once again.

After experiencing the world of sorrow and grief, the poet seeks nature 'not as in the hours of thoughtless youth', not for the sake of adventures but with the longing of a depressed man for peace and tranquility. His love for nature is in fact his sense of the value of nature in relation to human life. In the beautiful environment of nature he discovers the difference between the disturbed world of man and the peaceful world of nature. In *Lines Written In Early Spring*, Wordsworth suggests that man's inhumanity appears even darker when compared to the gracious world of nature. He writes:

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.
To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

Wordsworth's love for nature does not mean that he is against social activities and other relations which are essential for human identity on contrary, he prefer frugal life-a simpler life; closer to nature - a life which is purposeful and active. Wordsworth himself declares in Book 10 of *The Prelude* that he always thought and struggled for human welfare whether in the city or in the village:

For howsoev'r unsettled never once
Had I thought ill of humankind, or been
Indifferent to its welfare, but inflam'd
With thirst of a secure intelligence
And sick of other passions, I pursu'd
A higher nature, wished that Man should start
Out of the worm-like state in which he is,
And spread abroad the Wings of Liberty,
Lord of himself, in undisturbed delight- (245-254)

Wordsworth's concept of an ideal society is based on his own experiences of life. When he was in cities, he saw men, being grinded by social injustice. The poet is eager to know the cause of man's presumptions, unsound thoughts and moral degradations. When he writes about nature, he wishes to declare to the world that in contrast to the mechanical and the diseased life that is encouraged by modern urban society, there are ways of living that allow the fuller development of mind and heart.

He recoils from the city life to discover and to preach about the ‘ might of Souls and what they do with themselves,’ when in close association with nature. In Book 3 of The Prelude he says:

.....Not of outward things
Done visibly for other minds, words, signs,
Symbols of action; but of my own heart
Have I been speaking, and my thoughtful mind.
O Heavens how awful is the might of Souls,
And what the
do within themselves,.....
This is in truth, heroic argument,
And genuine prowess; which I wish'd to touch (175-185)

For Wordsworth nature is not just beautiful tall trees, magnificent mountains, or beautiful blue sky, it is so much more. In The Prelude he shows not only external influences of nature but also its effects on human mind. In Book 1 he says:

For I, methought, while the sweet breath of heaven
Was blowing on my body, felt within
A correspondent breeze, that gently moved
With quickening virtue, but is now become
A tempest, a redundant energy,
Vexing its own creation. (34-39)

In Book 2 of The Prelude, Wordsworth, while sharing his childhood experiences, describes mood and dealings of his friends with one another during various games which they played in the company of nature. His contenders were not jealous or aggressive. When the race was over they all enjoyed the beauties of the surroundings-the musical birds-the leafy oak towering above fragrant lilies. Wordsworth says:

.....When summer came, (54)
Our pastime was, on bright half-holiday,
To sweep along the plain of Windermere
With rival oars; and the selected bourne
.....In such a race (66)
So ended, disappointed could be none,
Uneasiness, or pain, or jealousy:
We rested in the shade, all pleased alike,
Conquered and conqueror. Thus the pride of strength,
And the vain-glory of superior skill,
Were tempered, thus was gradually produced
A quiet independence of the heart; (54-72)

Wordsworth therefore claims that in a natural environment, the essential passions of heart find a better soil to mature and develop. In the company of nature man has no vanity which an urban man possess. In Goslar, he sees a shepherd tending his flocks in the open pasture, the loveliness of nature reflected from his personality and Wordsworth says that

.....I found
Once more in man an object of delight,
Of pure imagination, and of love.... (Bk 13,43-50)

Wordsworth realizes that Man cannot perform his duties sincerely in a world which is cruel and vain and is cut off from the natural inlets of just sentiments. His moral sense can develop only in a world which is free of corruption, selfishness, bondage and poverty, where individual members are wise and good. Wordsworth assumes the role of a guide who passes his rich knowledge of many experiences down to the reader, thereby leading his reader towards a better world. He thought that some unfair social regimes or systems deprive men of their humanness: such men should be reformed. He argues that man can create paradise on this earth not from some other person’s efforts but only as the result of strengthening his own personality.

Wordsworth takes man to the heights of spiritual and moral elevation on the basis of love and says that man can enter the blissful heaven only by following the path of love which is the primary law of nature. This supreme passion can bind man to man. It rises man above his ordinary life, increases his power of perception, refines his feelings, broadens his sympathies. In Book 14 he says:

.....and he whose soul hath risen
Up to the height of feeling intellect
Shall want no humbler tenderness, his heart
Be tender as a nursing Mother's heart;
Of female softness shall his life be full,
Of little loves and delicate desires,
Mild interests and gentlest sympathies. (225-231)

He thought that man, when raised above the trivialities of this world, can contact with essentials of life. Love leads man to higher forms of truth than mere faithfulness to appearances; it is unveiling of reality, residing neither in the world of sense perception nor in its abstraction, the world of intellect but in the world of soul, the world of essence. For Wordsworth, another name of love is poetic passion. In such exalted state of mind and spiritually exalted moments, Wordsworth felt as if :

..... heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened....

He wanted man to enter into an inward Arcadia as blissful as Rousseau and Plato's ideal State by virtue of this activity. He wants humanity to face up the hostile forces arrayed against him with courage and determination, and to reshape the world around him in accordance with his aspirations and ideals. In order to achieve this Bliss, man must endeavour to overcome the mechanical vision of the world and strip all utilitarian motives; the attributes of his profession and of class and emerge in all his essential humanness. Wordsworth focuses on the moral and spiritual regeneration of man by preaching him the lesson of love. Sarker believes that 'Wordsworth's conception of humaneness has perhaps the widest meaning, which includes not only the element of the joy of human life, but also the elements of human life's fears and tears'. (Sarker,2001:334)⁹ Wordsworth achieved this level only by retreat of his mind into the peace and calm of nature and was able to extract from it ennobled human form. Deliberately distancing himself from the so called modern world, he had chosen his home, not as an escape from the real world but as a positive commitment to a dedicated life among the elemental forms of nature for the betterment of humanity. In The Prelude Wordsworth claims that he has been chosen by God to be an instrument for national salvation. In Book 1 he says:

My spirit, thus singled out, as it might seem,
For holy services: great hopes were mine;
My own voice cheer'd me, and, far more, the mind's
Internal echo of the imperfect sound;
To both I listen'd, drawing from them both
A cheerful confidence in things to come. (62-57)

Wordsworth reminds man that it is his divinely appointed destiny to rise from one state of being to another. He claims that his job is to create in the members of society concern for its progress as a whole and unite them in bonds of solidarity. He wanted to stir up new impulse in the society, place high ideals before it and aspire it with the will to strive for their achievement. Wordsworth's society had lost its zest for life, after the failure of the French Revolution. He aspires to pour his own vigour in its veins, by giving a new set of values , a new philosophy of life. Coleridge, in one of his letters to Wordsworth, writes: 'My friend...I wish you to write a poem,.....addressed to those, who, in consequence of the complete failure of the French Revolution, have thrown up all hopes of the amelioration of mankind, and were sinking into an almost epicurean selfishness....'(Cited in,Abrams,1969:327) ¹⁰ Wordsworth wrote many poems for the restless and the disappointed souls.

'In private, people wrote to him to bear witness that his poetry had saved them in their darkest hour, succouring them with nourishment only found otherwise "at the Fount of Life itself,"..... or else they made pilgrimage to visit the Sage of Rydal Mount in person. Publicly, Wordsworth was honored as "the poet of humanity," whose message, "breaking down the factitious barriers between human hearts," was sorely needed in troubled and divided times. . (<http://www.questia.com/googleScholar.qst?docId=5000251035>) 11

His business is not to seize the world of imagination but a world of the future. This world is perfect in a different manner; it is a world of humanity, where human feelings, desires and aspirations are shaped and developed. He was of the view that human soul develops in accordance with the laws of nature and if this process of development is not nourished properly, due to vain and vicious environment, it inclines towards corruptions. One who is guided by consciousness and purity of heart, rejects all misleading temptations. Man is virtuous by nature but he is corrupted by corrupt society. Prophet Ali (May Peace Be Upon Him) stated about human nature:

If ,supposedly, we did not have to hope for paradise and fear from hell and had there been no promise of reward or any other threat of punishment, it would still behoove us to seek moral virtue and excellences, because the acquisition of desirable qualities and the practice of virtue leads to happiness and felicity in life and is one of the important means of salvation. .
(S. M Musawi Lari,1997:102) 12

Wordsworth's concerns for the betterment of mankind remained the substance of his poetry and in 1798 in the company of Coleridge, he published Lyrical Ballads. Discussing Wordsworth's characters in the Lyrical Ballads, Coleridge explains that his friend was interested in the universality of human nature, universality of lofty and dignified kind, rather than in ranks or other qualities. Wordsworth struggles against the artificialities and inhumanity of society which makes vile things precious for men. In book 10 he says:

That Man was only weak through his mistrust
And want of hope..... (161-162)

He never abandoned the real world, rather felt keenly about life, and sympathized with the sufferings of people. As he probes about the basis of better social life , he learns that those people who lived by excessive toil:

They need not extraordinary calls
To rouse them, in a world of life they live
By sensible impressions and not enthrall'd
But quicken'd rous'd, and made thereby more fit
To hold communion with the invisible world. (13-104-108)

The inner richness of common men with whom Wordsworth came into contact made him appreciate and admire men in general. He, therefore , deems pastoral life as the source of greatest joy. In The Prelude he contrasts urban and rural life so as to enhance the difference between suffocated environment of urban life and free and open atmosphere of a rustic life, and their negative and positive effect on mind. For example he compares scholars of Cambridge with Nature's child. In The Prelude, Nature's child is a boy of Winander. As compared to the students of Cambridge he is happier and creative. His classroom is not a museum-like room, but the hills, lake, forest and his teachers are owls that he imitates. . In Book 5 of The Prelude he portrays himself as a child who schooled in nature rather than in spiritually vacuous urban environment. The boy imitates the call of owls:

And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
Press'd closely, palm to palm, and to his mouth
Uplifted,he, as through an instrument,
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls
That they might answer him- And they would shout
Across the watry Vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his call, with quivering peals,
And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud
Redoubled and redoubled;..... (395-403)

The boy is reared by nature but there is an element of wilderness, of imaginative freedom to his education, which Wordsworth prizes highly. Wordsworth instead of rejecting the society redefines way of living . He upheld that:

Youth should be aw'd, possess'd, as with a sense
Religious, of what holy joy there is
In knowledge, if it be sincerely sought
For its own sake, in glory, and in praise,
If but by labour own, and to endure.
The Passing Day should learn to put aside
Her trappings here, should strip them off, abash'd
Before antiquity, and steadfast truth,
.....and overall
Should be a healthy, sound simplicity
A seemingly plainness, name it as you will,
Republican or pious. (390-400)

Wordsworth walked aimlessly through hills and winding paths. He felt that his journey was a 'guide into eternity' and on the roads he met simple people which acquainted him with the variety of human passions 'by words, looks, sighs, or tears, revealed. Wordsworth says that he learned more about human life from wandering through nature than from formal education. Nature strengthened and increased his understanding, gave him hope for future years and provided a balm for his injuries.

The Prelude discusses sublimity of souls attained by putting aside the petty needs of ego and material distractions. It depicts the struggle of the mind to regain that 'blessed mood' in which the human mind irradiates and transforms the world which it perceives, giving life and meaning to what is considered dead. Wordsworth says:

I never, in the quest of right and wrong,
Did tamper with myself from private aims;
Nor was in any of my hopes the dupe
Of selfish passion; nor did willfully
Yield ever to mean cares and low pursuits;
But rather did with jealousy shrink back
From every combination that might aid
The tendency, too potent in itself,
Of habit to enslave the mind, I mean
Oppress it by the laws of vulgar sense,
And substitute a universe of death,
The falsest of all worlds, I place of that
Which is divine and true..... (150-162)

Nature stirs man's imagination and clean his doors of perception, rescuing him from 'the visionary dreariness' of a life without joy' When Wordsworth was troubled by the voices of the city and the horrible events of the French Revolution and was pushed into isolation, he withdrew from it. Not to escape in his world of imagination but to inhabit in the world of nature; on the social outskirts, along a public road and think not of what man is but what man could become. He discovers that man is capable of achieving a state of existence better than the one typified in the city life. He suggests purification of heart in response to nature. For him the elements of nature inspires men to work in a sublime way. He says that during his long walks in the wilderness he meditated and got a clear sight of a new world , ' that was fit to be , and to others eyes/ Made visible.'

Like Milton, Dante and Shelley, Wordsworth saw heaven and hell merely as internal state. He believed that on earth, man can reach a far more excellent state of grace and glory than from which he fell. In Milton's time the failure of the Republican movement pushed Milton into a focus on the reconstruction of individuals as a necessary preliminary to the transformation of institutions, a move away from political situations to inner change. The theme of Paradise Lost is that men can regenerate on earth.

Dante also propagated that man's duty is to attempt to achieve earthly happiness and everlasting life. This was part of his political belief. Similarly, Shelley's Ode To The West Wind, promises of a better world and says:

.....Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My Spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!
Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And by the incantation of this verse,
Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be thou my lips to unawakened earth
The trumpet of a prophecy! O, Wind,
If winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

Wordsworth saw the political and social hurricane as a signal of the regeneration of human beings who would inhabit a better and a happier world. Stephen Bygrave in *Romantic Writings*, writes, 'Wordsworth puts his faith neither in the Utopia of the French revolutionaries nor in a new heaven and earth but in a renewal of the old world.' (Bygrave,1996:135)¹³ He was certain that man's reformation was possible, not in some imaginary Utopia but in the 'world of all of us.' In *The Prelude* he says:

O pleasant exercise of hope and joy! (105)
The beauty wore of promise, that which sets, (118)
For great were the auxiliars which then stood
Upon our side, we who were strong in love;
And in the region of their peaceful selves, (135)
Did now find helpers to their hearts' desire,
And stuff at hand, plastic as they could wish,
Were called upon to exercise their skill,
Not in Utopia, subterraneous Fields,
Or some secreted Island, Heaven knows where,
But in the very world which is the world
Of all of us, the place in which, in the end,
We find our happiness, or not at all. (144)

Wordsworth envisions a brighter future for mankind, attained not through some political or social change, but through transformation of man's soul. Abrams says:

'Romantic literature,..... recourse is from one secular means of renovating the worldby imagination or cognition....the mind of man confronts the old heaven and earth and possesses within it self the power, if it will but recognize and avail itself of the power, to transform them into a new heaven and new earth, by means of a total revolution of consciousness.' (Abrams,1969:334).¹⁴

In one of his sonnet, *On Liberty and Independence*, he says:

.....Is not conscious ours,
And Truth, whose eyes guilt only can make dim;
And will, whose office, by divine command,
Is to control and check disordered Powers?

Wordsworth's world is gloomy. But unlike Thomas Hardy, he is an optimist and believe that 'the original child of nature could be rescued from universe of death...and enjoy a sense of grandeur as the result of the awakening of the imagination in co-operation with spiritual love...' (Piniolin,1984:84)¹⁵

In book 13 of *The Prelude*, he says:
.....the mind of man becomes
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
On which he dwells, above the frame of things
(Which, 'mid all revolutions in the hopes
And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)
In beauty exalted, as it is itself
Of substance and of fabric more divine. (448-454)
One song they sang, and it was audible,

Wordsworth seeks the interdependence of mind and the external world and seeks a firm basis for morality. By contemplation of natural world he discovers his worth and is able to see the wholeness behind the miscellaneous shapes. With the assistance of nature, he sees meaning of the external and for him all external things mingle into one song. In book 2 of *The Prelude* he says:

Most audible then when the fleshly ear,
O'ercome by grosser prelude of that strain,
Forgot its functions, and slept undisturb'd. (415-118)

Wordsworth discovers that even our moral character develops and proceeds towards maturity and it can fully develop only in the company of nature. In urban societies it is shattered by the over pressure of time and its disastrous issues. Wordsworth is cured in the solitude of nature by a gradual reintegration of all that had been divided in him: his senses, his feelings, his mind and outer nature. He seeks a way to exist in a new-world. In a Letter to his friend John Wilson, Wordsworth says:

‘ ... now it is manifest that no human being can be so besotted and debased by oppression, penury or any other evil which unhum[anises] man as to be utterly insensible to the colours, forms, or smell of flowers, the [voice] and motions of birds and beasts, the appearances of the sky and heavenly bodies, the [genial?] warmth of a fine day, the terror and the uncomfortableness of a storm,.....in tracts of country where image of danger, melancholy, grandeur, or loveliness, softness, and ease prevail, that they will make themselves felt powerfully in forming the character of the people....’ (Cited in Owen,1974:105)16

Nature is not only the external object but something which interacts with the inward mind, with the soul. Wordsworth discovers a :

.....A plastic power
Abode with me, a forming hand, at times
Rebellious, acting in a devious mood,
A local spirit of its own, at war
With general tendency, but for the most
Subservient strictly to the external things
With which it commun'd..... (362-368)

In Book 2 of *The Prelude* he says:

.....Oh ! then the calm
And dead still water lay upon my mind
Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky
Never before so beautiful, sank down
Into my heart, and held me like a dream. (170-174)

Albeit Wordsworth knew that the ‘multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and unfitting it for all voluntary exertions to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor, he hoped that the mind of man, in the company of nature can become the mirror of the fairest and most interesting qualities of nature, and can convert sensory objects into ideal forms.

Earnest De Selincourt is of the view that ‘To Wordsworth, the poetic mind..... was stimulated and worked upon by the creative power of Nature, since Nature was possessed by that same divine being, which ran through all things,.....’ (Selincourt,1965:619)17. Nature serves the need of the human spirit. and make it transcend the bodily senses and communicate with the spiritual world. Wordsworth’s thought that nature is spiritually conscious. It is cathedral of Presence and it ‘never did betray the heart that loved her. In The Prelude he says:

Ye Presences of Nature, in the sky
Or on the earth! Ye Visions of the hills!
And souls of lonely places! can I think
A vulgar hope was yours when Ye employ’d
Such ministers, when Ye through many a years
Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
Impress’d upon all forms the characters
Of danger or desire, and thus did make
The surface of the universe earth
With triumph, and delight, and hope and fear,
Work like sea?

Wordsworth claims that if man does not benefit from nature, the blame is ours and not of nature. When nature revives Wordsworth’s peace of mind he says:

.....Nature’s Self, by human love
Assisted, through the weary labyrinth
Conducted me again to open day,
Revived the feelings of my earlier life,
Gave me that strength and knowledge of full peace,
Enlarged, and never more to be disturb’d
Which through the steps of our degeneracy,
All degradations of this age, hath still
Upheld me,.....(Bk 10,350-358)

For Wordsworth nature has the power to restore human dignity. In the company of nature, men rise above his sufferings by calling forth for help strength of his moral life, he extols the noble savage and says that in more natural environment, away from modern restraints, the inherent goodness of people would come out:

The dignity of individual Man,
Of Man, no composition of the thought,
Abstractions, shadow, image, but the
.....whom we behold. (83-87)

As Wordsworth sees a bond between man and nature, he believes that mankind can live in peace and harmony in the company of nature. In cities men and women live in tumult. In childhood Wordsworth saw himself as a part of nature, by imitating the owl’s voice he tried to convince the bird that he is one of their kind. Wordsworth believes in the integration and not the subjugation; a marriage of humankind to the natural world. Wordsworth thought that nature ensures the spiritual health of both the individual and the community. According to Pinion, Wordsworth’s ‘nature worship then....was peculiarly subject to an almost primitive belief in the ‘souls of lonely places’, as well as their ability to exert moral influence.....(Pinion,1984:84)18 To go back to nature was to create a relationship of love between man and man and between man and nature. In Book 14 Wordsworth says:

.....At a time
When Nature, destined to remain so long
Foremost in my affection, had fallen back
Into a second place, well pleas’d to be
A Handmaid to a nobler than herself,
When everyday brought with it some new sense

Of exquisite regard for common things,
And all the earth was bubbling with these gifts
Of more refined humanity,

In Prospectus to The Excursion he says:

Such grateful haunts foregoing, if I oft
Must turn elsewhere-to travel near the tribes
And fellowship of men, and see ill sights
Of madding passions mutually inflamed;
Must hear Humanity in fields and groves
Pipe solitary anguish; or must hang
Brooding above the fierce confederate storm
Of sorrow, barricaded evermore
Within the walls of cities-may these sounds
Have their authentic comment; but even these
Hearing, I be not downcast or forlorn! (Excursion 72-82)

. Wordsworth places his ideal community in the lap of nature. He envisions an ideal community for man, which would deliver him from misleading schools of thoughts and lead into suffering. A community in tune with human personality which would bring up better human beings and provide an environment for a fuller development of personality leading to realization of humanity. He links human happiness with good environment and denounces the evils of society, charging himself with the mission of reforming both individual and the nation. Wordsworth emphasizes that people, who live in the company of nature are more virtuous. For him, man and nature are not apart. The nearer the social conditions approach the patriarchal man, the more accurately does Man hear Nature's voice, and more fully does she reveals herself to him. In his rustic characters, Wordsworth depicts strength of character such as endurance, courage, hope and simplicity. He is the only poet who makes his reader feel that God is with simple men and that their lives are moral lesson. Simple men are closer to God because they are away from all the trivialities of this world. Unlike an urban man, they have power of imagination which help them perceive the presence of a Divine power in this world. They are religious people. In book 14 Wordsworth says:

.....in a world of life they live
By sensible impressions not enthrall'd,
But quicken'd, rous'd, and made thereby more fit
To hold communion with the invisible world.
Such minds are truly from the Deity,
For they are Powers; and hence the highest bliss
That can be known is theirs, the consciousness
Of whom they are habitually infused
Through every image, and through every thought,
And all impressions; hence religion, faith
And endless occupation for the soul
Whether discursive or intuitive; (105-120)

An urban man is blinded by artificial lights of city. His heart is devoid of love which strips him of his nobility In book 3 he says:

.....Yet I could shape
The image of a place, which, sooth'd and lull'd
As I had been, train'd up in paradise
Among sweet garlands and delightful sounds,
.....
With Nature magisterially, yet I,
Methink, could shape the image of a place. (371-375)

He conceives of natural sounds and images as moulding the human countenance to nobler types. To him every natural object seem to possess something of moral or spiritual life, to be really capable of a companionship with man, full of fine intimacies. When he thought of men and women, it was of men and women as in the presence and under the influence of effective natural objects. To Wordsworth they seem directly to dignify human nature. In Preface to Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth writes about ordinary rustic people because their passions are incorporated with the beautiful and the permanent forms of nature. Their emotions appear more pure, as they seem less worried about trivialities of world. In book 2 of The Prelude, Wordsworth describes a girl and says:

Whatever scene was present to her,
And through a perfect happiness of soul (159-162)

The natural world offers nourishment for the redemption of Wordsworth's man. Wordsworth has great admiration for people who live according to the rules of nature, rather than the social constraints imposed by society. His ideal man is:

Man free, man working for himself, with choice
Of time, and place, and object; by his wants,
His comforts, native occupations, cares,
Conducted on to individual ends
Or social, and still followed by a train
Unwoo'd, unthought-of even, simplicity,
And beauty, and inevitable grace. (102-110)

Cockermouth, for Wordsworth is a model of incorruptible society which presents best in man. It is governed by the order and relation of nature, where mountain's steady form impart a lasting grandeur to individuals whereas the transitory things of the city life debase its population. The people of Cockermouth pursued their personal or social interests but they still followed the train of virtue. Wordsworth believes that nature's virtuous influence created a sense of proportion in them and moderated their passions and thereby, guarantee social accord. In urban setting man is imprisoned and crushed, overpowered and brutalized by the crowd. In book 13, Wordsworth says:

True is it, where oppression worse than death
Salutes the Being at his birth, where grace
Of culture hath been utterly unknown,
And labour in excess and poverty
From day to day pre-occupy the ground
Of the affection, and to Nature's self
Oppose a deeper nature, there indeed,
Love cannot be; nor does it easily thrive
In cities, where the human heart is sick,
And the eye feeds it not, and cannot feed (195-205)

Wordsworth steps outside the realm of the picturesque, into sublime, focusing on nature's absolute and reviving powers. He learns that man suffers due to his aloofness from nature and this aloofness from nature takes him away from his real self and originates dissatisfaction and unhappiness in life. Wordsworth connects with natural world as a way of breaking away from the tyranny and insensitivity of the so called civilized world and declares that people, who stand further away from nature suffer. The distractions and diversions of urban life blurs the discriminating power of mind and reduced it to a state of savage torpor. Wordsworth focuses on a friendly relationship of both, man and nature. In Preface to Lyrical Ballads, he declares that the passions of rustic men appear more pure, as they seem less worried about trivialities of world. In book 8 of The Prelude, Wordsworth describes a shepherd and says:

Mine eyes have glanced upon him, few steps off,
In size a giant, stalking through the fog,
His Sheep like Greenland Bears; at other times
When round some shady promontory turning,
His Form hath flash'd upon me, glorified
By the deep radiance of the setting sun:

Or him have I desired in distant sky,
A solitary object and sublime,
Above all height! like an aerial Cross (265-273)

Wordsworth’s ideal society leads to the ‘Pathways’ and the ‘Roads’, enriched with kindness and with ‘Nature’s joy’ its natives are meek men, the gentle English soul whose activities are aroused not by the ‘pompous names/ Of power and action’ but instead by pure domestic passions shaped by the forms of nature. Wordsworth’s rustic characters represent ennobled human beings to which all men bear likeness. They transcend the world of happy Corin of the groves who lives for his own fancies, in order to achieve sublimity. Nature in its hard reality ennoble its inhabitants. In Book 8 of *The Prelude* Wordsworth says:

..... Thus was man
Ennobled outwardly before my sight,
And thus my heart was early introduced
To an unconscious love and reverence
Of human nature; hence the human form
To me became an index of delight,
Of grace and honour, power and worthiness.
Meanwhile this creature- spiritual almost
As those of books, but more exalted far;
Far more of an imaginative form
Than the gay Corin of the groves, who lives
For his own fancies, or to dance by the hour,
In coronal, with Phyllis in the midst –
Was, for the purpose of kind, a man
With the most common; husband, father; learned,
From vice and folly, wretchedness and fear;
Of this I little saw, cared less for it,
But something must have felt. (275-293)

A rustic man is stripped of all vain influences of the world and lead a frugal life. They are humane and pure. They are stripped of all utilitarian motives and live in all humanness. In book 8 Wordsworth says;

The heart of Man, a district on all sides
The fragrance breathing of humanity, (102-103)

The Wordsworthian shepherd represents man 'in his primeval dower'. He is a figure of terrific magnitude, he is an ennobled man. The purpose of book eight of *The Prelude* is not so much to show shepherds as they are but rather to bring forward an image of human greatness, to express faith in the perfectibility of mankind. Wordsworth makes the shepherd into a symbol of his personal sublime, and emphasizes that humanity only survives in nature. In *Michael* also, we get a glimpse of Wordsworth’s ideal man in the character of Michael. He is a shepherd who belong to a rustic society. He lives on the forest side in Grasmere. He is strengthened against seasons, climate, hunger and fatigue, has a keen and intense mind fit for all affairs of life. He is alert, active and watchful, more than ordinary men. His sharp senses and keen mind enables him to understand the ‘meaning of all winds.’ Away from the materialistic society, the bonds of affection in his family are very strong. Not only Michael but his wife Isabel is equally industrious. She has two spinning wheels and either of them are always working. Although they led a frugal life, they are quite content with their life. And when Michael loses his dear son, he demonstrates extreme patience and performs all tasks of life sincerely. Wordsworth says:

There is a comfort in the strength of love
.....
He went, and still looked up to sun and cloud,
And listened to the wind: and, as before
Performed all kinds of labour for his sheep

Wordsworth appreciates this quality in men. He preaches that man is precious because inspite his sorrows he rises above his sufferings by calling forth strength of his moral life. In *The Prelude* he describes a rustic maid and says:

.....and yet I knew a Maid,
Who, younger as I was then, conversed with things
In higher styles from appetites like these
She gentle Visitants, as well she might
Was wholly free, far less did critic rules
Or barren intermeddling subtleties
Perplex her mind; but, wise as Women are
When genial circumstances hath favour'd them,
She welcom'd` what was given, and craved no more. (151-158)

Wordsworth believes that in beautiful and pure environment of nature the innate beauty of man blossoms and develops. Love of nature leads to love of man. In his poem *The Last of the Flock* he discusses shepherd's love for his family which he demonstrates by selling of his sheep despite the fact, as the man says:

Sir 'twas a precious flock to me,
As dear as my own children;

The shepherd selflessly sells his sheep in order to support his family. Similarly in *We Are Seven* Wordsworth admires the contentment, the happiness, and the lack of feeling of alienation of a young rustic girl. ' Throughout Wordsworth's work, nature provides the ultimate good influence on the human mind. All manifestations of the natural world—from the highest mountain to the simplest flower—elicit noble, elevated thoughts and passionate emotions in the people who observe these manifestations. Wordsworth repeatedly emphasizes the importance of nature to an individual's intellectual and spiritual development. A good relationship with nature helps individuals connect to both the spiritual and the social worlds. In such poems as *The World Is Too Much with Us* and *London 1802*, people become selfish and immoral when they distance themselves from nature by living in cities. Humanity's innate empathy and nobility of spirit becomes corrupted by artificial social conventions as well as by the squalor of city life. In contrast, people who spend a lot of time in nature, such as laborers and farmers, retain the purity and nobility of their souls.' <http://www.sparknotes.com/poetry/wordsworth/themes.html> 19
Wordsworth's own character, as we have already observed, was dominated by a certain contentment, a sort of naturally religious placidity. His flight to the Vale of Grasmere, is the most marked event of his existence. This placid life developed in Wordsworth, to an extraordinary degree of self control and sharpened his mental faculties. In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth says:

A happy man, and therefore bold to look
On painful things, slow, somewhat, too, and stern
In temperament, I took the knife in hand
And stopping not at parts less sensitive,
Endeavoured with my best of skill to probe
The living body of society. (10,279-284)

Similarly in *The Prelude*, Wordsworth recalls his affectionate Anne Tyson and says that during his summer vacations in Cambridge, when he used to go back to Hawkshed, he enjoyed the company of Ann Tyson, his old Dame, who was a second mother to him during his Hawkshed years. He compares the simple folk of the Lake District with the students in Cambridge and says that they were vain and superficial but the natives of the Lake District were unpretentious and spiritual. They led simple domestic life. They were affectionate and religious minded and attended church on every Sunday. In Book 4, Wordsworth says:

This chiefly, did I view my grey-hair'd Dame
Saw her go forth to Church, or other work
.....
.....Her smooth domestic life,
Affectionate without uneasiness,
Her talk, her business pleas'd me, and no less

Her clear though shallow stream of piety,
That ran on Sabbath days a fresher course.
With thoughts unfelt till now, I saw her read
Her Bible on the Sunday afternoons;
And lov'd the book, when she had dropp'd asleep,
And made of it a pillow for her head.

Wordsworth suggests reformation of men, by bringing them under the rule of traditional, narrowly localized scenes. Wordsworth's rustics are under this influence of stately and sublime objects that can enhance and restore, in man, natural dignity of manners and highest courtesy. Seeing man thus as a part of nature, elevated and solemnized in what Wordsworth appreciates in the rustic. He defines his notion of an ideal community, as a place, which is remote from the crowded streets, far from the dull and dreary wilderness of the world. A society, which is not a crowd but a true community of people. One household, under God, for high and low, one family, and one mansion. Wordsworth's idea of many into one incorporate and insist upon a comprehensive notion of community, which evokes the image of natural unity also. He sees his ideal community in Grasmere; a village protected by the mountains. 'Grasmere is perfect Republic of Shepherds and Agriculturists, and a pure Commonwealth. Its members existed in the midst of a powerful empire like an ideal society or an organized community, its constitution had been imposed and regulated by the mountains which protected it. Grasmere as a small ideal republic here offers a contrast to the city of London. It is idealized by Wordsworth, due to his affection for humble people who are about to disappear, it centres on a small rural village. Wordsworth describes Grasmere Fair where he witnesses same kind of correspondence between nature and man that he witnessed in childhood.

Immense
Is the Recess, the circumambient World
Magnificent, by which they are embraced.
They move about upon the soft green field:
How little They, they are their doing seem,
Their herds and flocks about them, they themselves,....
.....and yet how great!
For all things serve them; them the Morning light
Loves as it glistens on the silent rocks,...

Wordsworth in the above lines emphasis that the Grasmere community participates in nature's greatness since all things in nature serve it. The Prelude indicates that we depend on nature's superior influence to correct our exaggerated passions, nature excite virtuous passions in us. He learns this in his childhood only when after stealing the shepherd's skiff nature punishes him and chasten his devious mood. He says that nature ensures the spiritual health of both individual and the community. Retreat into nature, for Wordsworth, re-enforces social and sacred links with place in a way that nurtures both tribal society and local ecology over generations. Wordsworth believes that the rush and roar of city life weakens the social relations and man has no regard for tradition and moral values. The rural society is surrounded by steady mountains which are like barriers that keep out the negative influence of the urban life. London is devoid of such steady forms and therefore it is subject to perpetual change and lack of order. London dwellers are too much absorbed in the hustle and bustle of city life and have no time to pay attention to the enduring ties between man and community that are important for fellow feelings. The corrupting influence of urban things and the violence that they perpetuate are largely responsible for the failure of humanity in the present age. In The Prelude, to go on a retreat is to return to our instincts and begin to open those chambers through which the authentic feelings for life – awe, dread, wonder, marvel, joy – can pour. In urban setting, affections of men are crushed by the excess of mechanical way of living. In book 13 of The Prelude Wordsworth writes:

True is it, where oppression worse than death
Salutes the being at his birth, where grace
Of culture hath been utterly unknown,
And poverty and labour in excess
From day to day preoccupy the ground

Of the affections.....
Love cannot be;nor does it thrive with ease
Among the close and overcrowded haunts
Of cities, where the human heart is sick,
And the eyes feeds it not, and cannot feed.

Conclusion

Wordsworth emphasizes on genuine liberty of man's inner self. His ideal men in The Prelude, symbolize the renovated human kind. Wordsworth seeks to save humanity from the frustrations and disappointments of life. When he retreats into the world of nature, he discovers a man who is blessed by God with many powers, above all, his moral sense. With the help of these gifts of God, man can transform the old world into a paradise. He emphasizes on the need of following highest principles in life. He compares the unrest and disintegration of the existing social order in his country and Europe as a whole, with the simple rural life amid the beautiful forms of nature. He invites men of cities to 'their hearth-fires and to live ordered lives, submitting to traditional notions of virtue, prudence and piety. (Day,137)²⁰ Wordsworth thought that by following the path of prudence and piety man can root out licentiousness and all the evils from the society.

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