

*Tintern Abbey* of Wordsworth is usually regarded as a poem of mystical vision. Discuss.

Or

✓ Trace the different stages of Wordsworth's love of Nature as reflected in *Tintern Abbey*.

Ans. *Tintern Abbey* of Wordsworth has been called by Myres as "the consecrated formulary of Wordsworthian faith". This poem records the poet's attitude towards Nature. Unlike most of Wordsworth's poems, it presents no story, but an account of the poet's own thoughts and feelings. Though the lines are in the eighteenth-century manner, both in subject-matter and verse-form, there remains an important difference between the nature poetry of Thomson or Cowper and Wordsworth's achievement. Wordsworth undoubtedly possessed greater intellectual powers.

*Tintern Abbey* is undoubtedly the poet's autobiography in miniature unfolding his spiritual evolution and different stages of development in his attitude towards Nature—a change in his attitude from boyhood to manhood. It was written when Wordsworth was slowly recovering from a 'grave spiritual crisis'. He tells us how he had visited the scene, *i.e.*, the valley of the river Wye five years earlier. The poem begins with an evocation of the past :

"Five years have past ; five summers, with the length  
Of five long winters ! and again I hear  
These waters, rolling from their mountain springs  
With a soft inland murmur."

In the words of Durrant, "Wordsworth is here creating, not merely a word-picture of a remembered scene, but an image of an Eden of peace, an Eden that is no less a mythic paradise for being a real place in real country. For Wordsworth, paradise is a world that can be completely unified and harmonized by the mind, and in this opening passage we can see Wordsworth's imagination imposing that order and harmony on the scene as he observes it."

The experience of the beautiful landscape always remained with the poet. The landscape had not been 'as is a landscape to a blind man's eye',

"But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the dim  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart ;  
And passing even into my purer mind,  
With tranquil restoration."

As the experience of the daffodils, this experience also reminds the poet of man's capacity for a harmonious relationship with other men and with the world around him. These, no doubt, are the 'sensations sweet' which pass into his mind 'with tranquil restoration' creating a state of joy in which, as Wordsworth believes, a man is more likely to be kindly and moral person.

In *Tintern Abbey*, Wordsworth calls himself 'a worshipper of Nature'. The poem gives a vivid account of the growth of his love of Nature. His love of Nature can be studied in three distinct stages. In the first stage it is marked by the 'glad animal movement' when the poet in his boyhood delighted to play in the open air—

"When like a roe  
I bounded over the mountains, by the sides  
Of the deep rivers, and the lovely streams,  
Wherever nature led ; more like a man  
Flying from something that he dreads than one  
Who sought the thing he loved."

In the second stage, his love of Nature grew more sensuous. It was, as Hudson also remarks, marked "with an unreflecting passion altogether untouched by intellectual interests or associations—the kind of passion which found such full expression in the poetry of Keats." "The majesty of the mountain tops, the darkness of the forests, the fragrance of flowers and murmur of running stream, the chirping of birds and the sounds of the waterfall held him spellbound. He was fascinated by the external loveliness of Nature." Wordsworth tells about his attitude to Nature at this stage :

"The sounding cataract  
Haunted me like a passion : the tall rock  
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
Their odours and their forms, were then to me  
An appetite ; a feeling and a love,  
That had no need of a remoter charm,

By thought supplied, nor any interest  
Unborrowed from the eye."

But gradually Nature assumed sober and mystical dimensions for the poet. It no more remained 'an attractive arrangement of form and colour and sound, alluring the sense'. This stage is marked with a communion with Nature. It is the stage when the poet sees Nature through the eye of soul, and not through the physical eye. At this stage Wordsworth passes through spiritual experiences of Nature. The youthful jollity turns into a 'blessed mood':

"that serene and blessed mood,  
In which the affections gently lead us on,—  
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame,  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul :  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things."

In fact, the third stage of Wordsworth's conception of Nature was the result of the poet's mood of despair and gloom caused by his interest in politics which gave him a shock at the sight of the suffering humanity. According to Walter Raleigh, when the crisis was past, the love of Nature returned to him, but shorn of its old despotism; it was subdued to a dominant scheme of thought, and became fellow-inmate in his mind with the love of man, and with 'a deep sense of pathos of things'. At this stage the poet's love of Nature was no longer as passionate as it was earlier. Mixed with an attachment to humanity, it grew calmer and sober. Now he began to realise the existence of a unifying spirit running through all things. In fact, it was a state of the poet's pantheistic creed, and as Warwick also puts it, "At this stage the foundation of Wordsworth's entire existence was his mode of seeing God in Nature and Nature in God." The following lines give expression to this faith of Wordsworth :

"And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts : a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling in the light of setting suns,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man  
And the round ocean, and the giving air,  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought  
And rolls through all things".

These lines suggest the mystical vision of the poet. He now sees the world in its relationship to human needs. He has attained to a sense of the ultimate unity of the universe, and of the one life that interpenetrates all things and all beings. About the mystical vision of Wordsworth in this poem, Durrant observes :