***Role of nature***

**William Wordsworth as a Poet of Nature:**

As a poet of Nature, Wordsworth stands supreme. He is a worshipper of Nature, Nature’s devotee or high-priest. His love of Nature was probably truer, and more tender, than that of any other English poet, before or since. Nature comes to occupy in his poem a separate or independent status and is not treated in a casual or passing manner as by poets before him. Wordsworth had a full-fledged philosophy, a new and original view of Nature. Three points in his creed of Nature may be noted:

(a)   He conceived of Nature as a living Personality. He believed that there is a divine spirit pervading all the objects of Nature. This belief in a divine spirit pervading all the objects of Nature may be termed as mystical Pantheism and is fully expressed in*Tintern Abbey*and in several passages in Book II of *The Prelude.*

(b)   Wordsworth believed that the company of Nature gives joy to the human heart and he looked upon Nature as exercising a healing influence on sorrow-stricken hearts.

(c)   Above all, Wordsworth emphasized the moral influence of Nature. He spiritualised Nature and regarded her as a great moral teacher, as the best mother, guardian andnurse of man, and as an elevating influence. He believed that between man and Nature there is mutual consciousness, spiritual communion or ‘mystic intercourse’. He initiates his readers into the secret of the soul’s communion with Nature. According to him, human beings who grow up in the lap of Nature are perfect in every respect.

Wordsworth believed that we can learn more of man and of moral evil and good from Nature than from all the philosophies. In his eyes, “Nature is a teacher whose wisdom we can learn, and without which any human life is vain and incomplete.” He believed in the education of man by Nature. In this he was somewhat influenced by Rousseau. This inter-relation of Nature and man is very important in considering Wordsworth’s view of both.

Cazamian says that “To Wordsworth, Nature appears as a formative influence superior to any other, the educator of senses and mind alike, the sower in our hearts of the deep-laden seeds of our feelings and beliefs. It speaks to the child in the fleeting emotions of early years, and stirs the young poet to an ecstasy, the glow of which illuminates all his work and dies of his life.”.

**Development of His Love for Nature**

Wordsworth’s childhood had been spent in Nature’s lap. A nurse both stern and kindly, she had planted seeds of sympathy and under-standing in that growing mind. Natural scenes like the grassy Derwent river bank or the monster shape of the night-shrouded mountain played a “needful part” in the development of his mind. In *The Prelude,*he records dozens of these natural scenes, not for themselves but for what his mind could learn through.

Nature was “both law and impulse”; and in earth and heaven, in glade and bower, Wordsworth was conscious of a spirit which kindled and restrained. In a variety of exciting ways, which he did not understand, Nature intruded upon his esca­pades and pastimes, even when he was indoors, speaking “memora­ble things”. He had not sought her; neither was he intellectually aware of her presence. She riveted his attention by stirring up sen­sations of fear or joy which were “organic”, affecting him bodily as well as emotionally. With time the sensations were fixed indelibly in his memory. All the instances in Book I of *The Prelude*show a kind of primi­tive animism at work”; the emotions and psychological disturbances affect external scenes in such a way that Nature seems to nurture “by beauty and by fear”.

In *Tintern Abbey*, Wordsworth traces the development of his love for Nature. In his boyhood Nature was simply a playground for him. At the second stage he began to love and seek Nature but he was attracted purely by its sensuous or aesthetic appeal. Finally his love for Nature acquired a spiritual and intellectual character, and he realized Nature’s role as a teacher and educator.

In the *Immortality Ode*he tells us that as a boy his love for Nature was a thoughtless passion but that when he grew up, the ob­jects of Nature took a sober colouring from his eyes and gave rise to profound thoughts in his mind because he had witnessed the suffer­ings of humanity:

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

**Spiritual Meaning in Natural Objects**

Compton Rickett rightly observes that Wordsworth is far less concern­ed with the sensuous manifestations than with the spiritual significance that he finds underlying these manifestations. To him the primrose and the daffodil are symbols to him of Nature’s message to man. A sunrise for him is not a pageant of colour; it is a moment of spiritual consecration:

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 is the cons­tant aim of Wordsworth. It is the source of some of his greatest pieces, grand rhapsodies such as *Tintern Abbey.*

**Nature Descriptions**

Wordsworth is sensitive to every subtle change in the world about him. He can give delicate and subtle expression to the sheer sen­suous delight of the world of Nature. He can feel the elemental joy of Spring:

It was an April morning, fresh and clear  
The rivulet, delighting in its strength,  
Ran with a young man’s speed, and yet the voice  
Of waters which the river had supplied  
Was softened down into a vernal tone.

He can take an equally keen pleasure in the tranquil lake:

The calm  
And dead still water lay upon my mind   
Even with a weight of pleasure

A brief study of his pictures of Nature reveals his peculiar power in actualising sound and its converse, silence.

Being the poet of the ear and of the eye, he is exquisitely felicitious. No other poet could have written:

A voice so thrilling ne’er was heard   
In springtime from the cuckoo-bird,   
Breaking the silence of the seas   
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Unlike most descriptive poets who are satisfied if they achieve a static pictorial effect, Wordsworth can direct his eye and ear and touch to conveying a sense of the energy and move­ment behind the workings of the natural world. “Goings on” was a favourite word he applied to Nature. But he is not interested in mere Nature description.

Wordsworth records his own feelings with reference to the objects which stimulate him and call forth the description. His unique apprehension of Nature was deter­mined by his peculiar sense-endowment. His eye was at once far-reaching and penetrating. He looked through the visible scene to what he calls its “ideal truth”. He pored over objects till he fastened their images on his brain and brooded on these in memory till they acquired the liveliness of dreams. He had a keen ear too for all natural sounds, the calls of beasts and birds, and the sounds of winds and waters; and he composed thousands of lines wandering by the side of a stream. But he was not richly endowed in the less intellectual senses of touch, taste and temperature.

**Conclusion:**

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 and changeful aspects of Nature and the scenery of the sea and sky like Shelley, or the purely sensuous in Nature like Keats. It was his special characteristic to concern himself, not with the strange and remote aspects of the earth, and sky, but Nature in her ordinary, familiar, everyday moods. 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 her.