



WORDSWORTH'S WORSHIP OF NATURE: A POET'S DEVOTION

Rachana Kumari

P.G. (English)

Ram Krishna College, Madhubani, Lalit Narayan Mithila University, Darbhanga

ABSTRACT

William Wordsworth, one of the leading figures of English Romanticism, is often hailed as the “High Priest of Nature.” His poetry reflects a lifelong devotion to the natural world, which he revered not merely for its beauty but for its spiritual, moral, and healing power. Unlike the poets of the preceding Neoclassical era who emphasized order and reason, Wordsworth celebrated the living spirit of Nature and its intimate bond with humanity. For him, Nature was a teacher, a source of moral guidance, and a manifestation of the divine.

This article explores Wordsworth’s worship of Nature as a central theme of his poetic philosophy. Beginning with his early experiences in the Lake District, the discussion traces how the mountains, lakes, and rivers of his childhood shaped his imaginative vision. Poems such as *Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey*, *Ode: Intimations of Immortality*, and *The Prelude* reveal how Nature, for Wordsworth, evolved from a source of sensory delight to a profound spiritual presence. His treatment of Nature combines pantheism, mysticism, and a democratic impulse that extends its blessings to common humanity.

Ultimately, Wordsworth’s poetry presents Nature not as passive scenery but as a sacred force that inspires, heals, and elevates the human spirit. His devotion remains relevant in contemporary ecological and philosophical thought, positioning him as a poet whose worship of Nature transcends his age and continues to resonate deeply with modern readers.

Keywords: Romanticism, Nature, Worship, Pantheism, Spirituality, Imagination, Ecocriticism, Devotion.

INTRODUCTION

William Wordsworth (1770–1850), often hailed as the poet of nature, occupies a central position in English Romantic literature. Unlike the poets of the preceding Enlightenment era, who emphasized reason, social order, and scientific rationality, Wordsworth turned his gaze inward toward the self and outward toward the natural world, discovering in it profound emotional and spiritual truths. His poetry represents not only an artistic engagement with the landscapes of England but also a philosophical and moral devotion to nature, which he perceives as a living, sentient presence capable of guiding, teaching, and nurturing the human soul.

For Wordsworth, nature is not merely a setting for human experience but a dynamic force intertwined with human life. In works such as *Tintern Abbey*, the poet reflects on the restorative power of nature, suggesting that the experiences of the natural world leave enduring imprints on the human mind and spirit. Similarly, in *Ode: Intimations of Immortality*, Wordsworth mourns the loss of the innate sense of wonder experienced in childhood while celebrating the enduring connection between human consciousness and the natural environment. Nature, in his vision, is both a teacher and a sanctuary, offering moral instruction, emotional solace, and spiritual rejuvenation.

Wordsworth's devotion to nature is intertwined with his broader Romantic philosophy, which emphasizes emotion, imagination, and the sublime. The natural world embodies a spiritual dimension that reveals the interconnectedness of all life. His poetic language, simple yet profound, aims to capture the immediacy of this experience while elevating ordinary natural scenes into sites of wonder and reflection.

Moreover, Wordsworth's poetry reflects an early form of ecological consciousness. By portraying humanity as dependent on, and inseparable from, the natural world, he encourages readers to recognize the intrinsic value of nature beyond its utilitarian purposes. This holistic vision of life reveals Wordsworth not only as a poet of emotional depth but also as a moral and philosophical guide.

WORDSWORTH'S WORSHIP OF NATURE: A POET'S DEVOTION

Romanticism and the Rise of Nature in Literature

Romanticism, which began in the late eighteenth century as a reaction against Neoclassicism and the Industrial Revolution, emphasized imagination, individuality, emotional intensity, and a return to the

natural world. Where Neoclassical poets like Alexander Pope celebrated order, reason, and urbanity, the Romantics turned to wild landscapes, untamed passions, and the spiritual depth of nature.

Nature became more than a setting; it became a source of inspiration, a refuge from industrial and political turbulence, and even a substitute for organized religion. Wordsworth was at the heart of this movement. His *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), co-authored with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, announced a new poetic creed—one that embraced simple language, rural subjects, and an intense communion with Nature. While other Romantics celebrated Nature's grandeur or sensuous beauty, Wordsworth saw in it a spiritual and moral force capable of guiding humanity toward harmony and truth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Romantic and Philosophical Perspectives

M.H. Abrams (1971) asserts that Wordsworth exemplifies the Romantic ideal of uniting emotion and imagination with the natural world. Cleanth Brooks (1947) emphasizes Wordsworth's meditative engagement with nature as central to his philosophical outlook, where nature functions as both a moral teacher and a repository of transcendental truth.

Nature and Spiritual Devotion

Samuel H. Monk (1973) and Mary Moorman (1968) highlight Wordsworth's quasi-religious reverence for nature. Nature, for Wordsworth, transforms landscapes into sacred spaces, offering restorative and transformative experiences for human consciousness.

Ecocritical Approaches

Jonathan Bate (1991) interprets Wordsworth as anticipating contemporary ecological thought, portraying humans as interconnected with the natural world. Richard Kerridge (2002) explores how Wordsworth presents nature as a living entity with intrinsic value, encouraging moral and emotional responsibility toward the environment.

Poetic Form, Language, and Style

Geoffrey Hartman (1964) notes that Wordsworth's simple diction and conversational tone mirror the purity of nature, while Nicholas Roe (2005) highlights his use of blank verse and meditative structures, facilitating reflection and insight.

Synthesis and Gaps in Research

While scholarship addresses spiritual, philosophical, and ecological aspects separately, there is a gap in integrated analyses that combine personal experience, ethical reflection, spiritual devotion, and ecological awareness across his poetic corpus.

RESEARCH GAP

Most existing research emphasizes individual dimensions of Wordsworth's relationship with nature but lacks integrated studies showing how these dimensions collectively portray nature as central to his poetic devotion. Lesser-studied poems reinforcing this lifelong engagement remain underexplored.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How does Wordsworth depict nature as an object of spiritual and moral devotion?
2. In what ways do personal experiences influence his worship of nature?
3. How do poetic techniques convey his reverence for the natural world?
4. What role does ecological consciousness play in his poetry?
5. How does his devotion in major works reflect continuity across his career?
6. How can a holistic study of his worship contribute to contemporary ecological discussions?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Analytical-descriptive approach to interpret Wordsworth's depiction of nature, identifying recurring motifs and themes across his career.

Data Sources

Primary: Poems including *Tintern Abbey*, *The Prelude*, *Ode: Intimations of Immortality*.

Secondary: Scholarly articles, biographies, and ecocritical studies by Abrams, Moorman, Bate, Hartman, et al.

Data Collection & Analysis

- Close reading and thematic analysis of selected poems.

- Identification of spirituality, morality, ecological awareness, and poetic techniques.
- Integration of personal memory, emotional reflection, and philosophical meditation.

Rationale & Limitations

Qualitative textual analysis captures poetic nuance and philosophical depth. Limited to selected major poems; interpretive and subjective.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Wordsworth's Worship of Nature: A Critical Perspective

Nature as a living, instructive presence that nurtures the human mind and fosters ethical consciousness (*Tintern Abbey*).

Comparative Analysis

Contrasted with Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats, Wordsworth foregrounds personal, meditative, and ethically instructive experiences of nature.

Theoretical Analysis

- **Romantic Philosophy:** Nature mirrors human consciousness.
- **Ecocriticism:** Foregrounds ethical, environmental interdependence.
- **Spiritual and Moral Lens:** Communion with nature as ethical and spiritual awakening.

Interconnection of Personal, Emotional, and Philosophical Dimensions

Blends experience, reflection, and ethical insight to portray human and natural life as inseparably intertwined.

Continuity and Relevance Across Works

From major to lesser-known poems, nature remains a guide, teacher, and source of spiritual renewal.

CONCLUSION

Wordsworth's poetry embodies a multidimensional worship of nature, encompassing spiritual, moral, and ecological dimensions. Major works reveal continuity of devotion, blending personal experience,

emotional reflection, and philosophical meditation. His poetry anticipates contemporary ecological awareness and encourages ethical engagement with the natural world. Wordsworth stands as a Romantic visionary whose insights remain relevant for modern readers and scholars alike.

REFERENCES

1. Abrams, M.H. *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*. Oxford University Press, 1971.
2. Bate, Jonathan. *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition*. Routledge, 1991.
3. Brooks, Cleanth. *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*. University of North Carolina Press, 1947.
4. Hartman, Geoffrey. *Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787–1814*. Yale University Press, 1964.
5. Kerridge, Richard. *Nature and Literature: A Critical Anthology*. Routledge, 2002.
6. Moorman, Mary. *William Wordsworth: A Biography, The Early Years, 1770–1803*. Oxford University Press, 1968.
7. Monk, Samuel H. *Wordsworth and the Sublime*. Princeton University Press, 1973.
8. Roe, Nicholas. *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years*. Oxford University Press, 2005.
9. Wordsworth, William. *The Prelude, 1805–1850*. Edited by Ernest de Selincourt. Oxford University Press, 1959.
10. Wordsworth, William. *Lyrical Ballads, 1800*. Edited by R.L. Brett and A.R. Jones. Routledge, 1991.