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B. A. Part I (English Honours)

Date :

02.06.21

Characteristics of Wordsworth's Poetry

As Pope is our greatest poet of the town and of artificial life, so Wordsworth is our greatest poet of the country and of natural life. As an interpreter of nature he still holds the first place unchallenged. His love of nature was boundless and his knowledge of nature was equal to his love. He wrote always with his eye 'steadily fixed upon his object' nothing was too small to escape his attention and his controlling purpose was to render with absolute fidelity what he had seen. He has been called and rightly 'the keenest eyed of all ~~modern~~ modern poets for what is deep and essential in nature' and it has justly been said that in all his descriptions 'every touch is true, not the copying of a literary phrase but the result of direct observation' yet love,

Knowledge and fidelity are not after all the most specific and personal qualities in Wordsworth's nature poetry but rather the profound religious feeling which pervades it. As he shows us again and again in many of his poems in the lines written above Tintern Abbey, for example and the ode on the Anniversaries of Immortality nature was for him the embodiment of the Divine Spirit and when he insists that nature is the greatest of all teachers, he means that between the indwelling soul of the universe and the soul of man which is akin to it, spiritual communion is possible through which we may gain constantly in power, peace and happiness.

While however Wordsworth is essentially the poet of nature, he is not the less the poet of man and in what he writes about human life his great-

greatness as a moralist is specially apparent. This greatness results largely from his firm hold upon the central facts of conduct and duty, and his abiding sense of the supremacy of the moral law. His emphasis is everywhere thrown upon those spiritual forces within us which give us power over ourselves and the ability, if we exercise them aright, to lift ourselves through conscious and patient effort, above the reach of circumstance and the flux of external things. The limitations of Wordsworth's genius are very obvious. He had no humour and little passion, and was singularly deficient in dramatic power. Even those who reverence him most are bound to acknowledge that he wrote more uninspired and unpoetic verse than any other poet of equal rank. In his stately philosophical poetry particularly and notably

in 'The Excursion', he often indulges for hundreds of lines together in prolix moralisings of the dullest and most prosaic kind. There is indeed an immense amount of perishable matter in his collected works, and beyond most great poets, therefore, he gains by judicious selection. But if what is best and really vital in his voluminous output is relatively to the total bulk of it small in amount, it comprises some of the finest treasures in English poetry and suffices to give him a high place among those of whom he himself writes!

'Blessings be with them,
and eternal praise,
who gave us nobler loves,
and nobler cares -
The poets, who on earth
have made us heirs
of truth and pure delight
by heavenly lays!

The end. //

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