

**MURSHIDABAD ADARSHA MAHAVIDYALAYA**

**ACADEMIC YEAR-2023-24**

**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

**TEACHER: SUKANTA BARMAN, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, STAGE-II**

**Study materials provided to CLASS: 4<sup>TH</sup> SEM DATE: 11/08/2024**

**Topic of Discussion: Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey"**

- **WORDSWORTH'S TINTERN ABBEY AS A MYSTICAL POEM**
- **AS A SPIRITUAL POEM**
- **ANALYSE "THAT BLESSED MOOD"**

**MARKS-10/SEM-4/CC-9**

Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' has two climactic passages which are a report of mystical experience, and which poetically recreate that experience. The first evokes a 'blessed mood' in which 'we see into the life of things'; in the second 'a presence' is felt, 'a motion and a spirit' that 'rolls through all things.' Wordsworth's pantheism can be mentioned in this regard.

First mystical passage is found in the lines 35-49:

**Nor less, I trust,**  
.....  
**We see into the life of things. (ll. 35-49)**

The impact of nature is also a matter of faith: 'I trust.' The faith bears on its connection with the sights and sounds of nature.

The phrase 'the affections gently lead us on' suggests the process whereby this mystical breakthrough is enabled. The word immediately preceding this section is 'love.' Feelings of love become so absorbing that they change the entire consciousness into a living act of joy and vision. The shift from 'I' to 'we' marks the threshold to a new quality of experience, deeper, simpler and more universal. Bromwich thinks that if Wordsworth had written 'I' instead of 'we' he would have had trouble being accepted, whereas the plural 'gave a normal glow to peculiar and estranging experiences' 'The power of harmony,' another mysterious phrase, could refer to the harmony of shared affection among human beings, bringing the soul to rest.

Just as the **'sensations sweet'** had a counterpart in the din of cities, so here the **'blessed mood'** is opposed to the weary weight of the world, perhaps particularly as experienced in cities. The sensual elements previously mentioned are now invoked to be transcended (blood) or interiorized (eye). Does this leave the soul **'adrift in a condition of disembodied, centerless spirituality'**? Could one not equally say that the soul is centred and steadied?

In the **'blessed mood'** this motion is **'almost suspended,'** evidently in contrast to the **'sensations sweet,'** and so it is rather in the absence of motion that the inner eye is **'situated.'** The light of seeing is coextensive with the lightness of being that comes with the sense of the essential emptiness of all things, their essencelessness. It is hard to find this Buddhist emptiness in this passage, and the possible analogies with Vedantic mysticism are more promising. To be a **"living soul"** in this sense is to be one with a world in which all things including the human individual are in motion and interanimate with all other things, hence disembodied, lightened, continuous with a moving environment. The picture here is filled out with help from the second mystical passage, which indeed refers to **'motion.'** Here, in contrast, the language suggests a perfect stasis.

Admitting that the **'blessed mood'** can be called **'visionary insight,'** Fry nonetheless says that it **'resembles a coma'**. The stilling of body, sense, blood, and breath in Wordsworth resembles the accompaniments of Buddhist meditative *samadhi*, which is a state of heightened consciousness, not a coma.

Second mystical passage is found in lines 93-102:

**And I have felt**  
.....  
**And rolls through all things.(ll. 93-102)**

The key words **'joy'** and **'sublime,'** recurring from the first mystical passage and prominently placed at the end of two successive lines, indicate that we have again crossed the mystical threshold. The passage is again set off from what precedes it by a comparative: **'more deeply interfused'** corresponds to **'aspect more sublime.'**

In the second passage, the presence is more deeply interfused than **'the still, sad music of humanity.'** On both occasions the mystical insight is **'another gift,'** surpassing a preceding gift or gifts. Here it is the second of the **'other gifts'** mentioned as **'abundant recompense.'** The first gift is that **'I have learned/To look on nature...'** and the second is that **'I have felt/A presence.'** Wordsworth's **'presence'** is emphatically *in* the mind. **'A motion and a spirit'** dwells in the mind of man, but it is not confined to the mind of man.

Paul H Fry makes Wordsworth a mystical materialist: **'Is this not a monistic poem straining rhetorically to find transcendence but finally anchored in materiality?'** Wordsworth is not concerned with divine transcendence in a high theological sense, but neither does his recognition of divinity dwelling in nature mean that material nature is all there is.

