

An Eco-Critical Study of William Wordsworth's "The Tables Turned"

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Abstract: William Wordsworth is the most prominent poet of Nature in Romanticism. He opposes the materialism in his poetry. *The Tables Turned* is a satire to the bookish knowledge of the world. He rejects the concept of scientific world through his poetry and illustrates the importance of Nature in learning. The results of Industrialization and the French Revolution jolted his nature-loving nature. He was against the anthropocentrism.

Keywords: Wordsworth, Romanticism, Materialism, Industrialization, Anthropocentrism

William Wordsworth has been associated with nature since his childhood. He was born in Lake District, a beautiful natural site with vivid natural scenery. As a child he used to spend his time in the lap of nature. For this very first period of his life (1770-1787), He likes to communicate with nature throughout the day when nature plays the role of a guardian and nurse for him. In *An Evening Walk* he writes

Dear Brook, farewell! To-morrow's noon again
Shall hide me, wooing long thy wildwood strain;
But now the sun has gained his western road,
And eve's mild hour invites my steps abroad. (*An Evening Walk* '90)

Second period of his life (1787-1797) was a period of uncertainty of storm and stress, including his university life at Cambridge, his travels abroad and his revolutionary experience. He observed the changes in natural phenomena during the Industrial Revolution from 1760. Outbreak and consequence of the French Revolution made him return to nature again. He spent three years (1797-1799) in self contemplation and speculation. As the result, we find *The Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. By this time, nature has been a teacher, a guide and a faithful friend for him. He thinks the materialism and industrialism the responsible for the destruction of nature. His passionate love for nature made him against the bookish knowledge. He satires on scientific knowledge which makes the human greedy and destructor of nature. He appeals to human beings to let the nature be your teacher and you will find more to learn than a man.

As Morton says "In order to think in a truly ecological way, we must let go of 'nature'." We find *The Tables Turned* as a suggestive ecological poem of Wordsworth for human beings. He tells the world there is no other better mode of learning than nature. We can learn from every part of nature. It is the basic truth of learning. He doesn't criticise the bookish knowledge but warns the human beings not to depend on books. It is well known that there is no book in Stone Age. Since the beginning of the civilization, human learn everything from nature. Nature has taught him to survive in difficult situations, to eat, to cultivate, to reproduce, to cure etc. afterwards our forefathers wrote their experiences in books which are an important source of our knowledge in present days. The poem raises this question why we cannot learn direct

through nature. In the light of Eco-criticism, this poem tells us that we can learn from the every natural object. We shall have to be sensitive towards nature and its messages. From morning to night, each phenomenon of nature teaches us something. It teaches us to know time and directions from the movements of the sun, the moon and the stars. We learn music from the birds. We know about the beauty from natural scenes. Even today, nature has the power to refresh us, to remove our sadness and to make us feel happy. We cannot learn new things from the books as books have what our ancestors had learnt from nature. Nature is an ultimate source of knowledge so we must go through nature and try to learn from it. Although it is not easy to learn from nature for everyone, but we can learn from it with the manner of 'try and error' As Pt. Nehru writes in one of his letters to the children of India, "You will be more sensible and open your eyes and ears to this beauty and life that surround you. How easy it is to make friends with them and everything in nature, if you go to them affectionately and with friendship!" Anthropocentrism has made the earth a laboratory where all the natural objects are the tools of experiments. On the other hand, *The Tables Turned* suggests us all the natural objects like sun, mountains, green fields, fresh air, trees, forests and birds like linnet and skylark are the teaching tools of nature. He says that our scientific knowledge and quest to know more are the main reason of destruction of nature:

Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things-
We murder to dissect. ('*The Tables Turned*' 28)

Today, there are a lot of environmental crises like global warming, COVID-19, climate change, etc. Literature and science must come on the same stage to save the environment and overcome these problems. As Aldous Huxley says in his book *Literature and science* 1963 "the gap between the Man of Letters and Man of Laboratory can be bridged only if interconnections are made between 'the relationship of living things to one another and to their inorganic environment' and described by 'a (poet's) heart that watches and receives' and a scientist's 'bird eye knowledge of science'." (108) A close observation to the present situation suggests us that we must follow the principle of Wordsworth again to save the humanity from natural disasters and accept the nature as supreme power. Wordsworth rightly says:

The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being. ('*Tintern Abbey*' 639)

We must learn again from the nature and once again accept nature as our teacher. None but nature can save all of us. All these ecological problems are the result of our manipulation with nature and its objects.

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