



AN ECO-CRITICAL ANALYSIS INTO WILLIAM WORDSWORTH'S LINES
WRITTEN A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY

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Abstract

The research study provides a new dimension to study William Wordsworth through the lens of Eco-criticism. The present study of the poem advocates that man is closely related to and has a connection with their natural surroundings from childhood to adulthood, developing into a symbiotic relationship between man and their surroundings. He had foreseen the destruction that industrialization and modernization would create in coming times. The objectives of the research are twofold: to Eco-critically highlight the importance of nature for human beings in the modern era in the light of Tintern Abbey and to highlight the relationship of man with natural surroundings in different stages of life that leads to the development of the symbiotic relationship between man and nature. As man gets everything from nature in its pure form, man must keep it safe and harmless. It not only highlights that nature is vital for man on a physical basis but also shows that through a positive and harmonious relationship with nature, man can achieve peace of soul, highlighted through his experience in the poem. The present research is qualitative, following the close reading of the text. In addition, the poem is analyzed theoretically in the framework of Eco-criticism advocated by Cheryll Glotfelty.

Keywords: Eco-criticism; Symbiotic Relationship; Man and Nature.

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INTRODUCTION

Eco-criticism considers the relationship of human beings with their natural environment. It examines the influences of one on the other and vice versa. In the context of eco-criticism, William Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* (1798) shows a direct developing and beneficial connection of man with his surrounding natural environment. It grows progressive with time. Since the start of the time, man's primary shelter has been nature. As time has evolved, man adopted modern ways of living in the contemporary world that are distant from nature. Preservation of nature for human beings remains an issue of great importance. This relation influences man's inner soul and outer appearance at different stages of life. *Tintern Abbey* (1798) unveils Wordsworth's love for natural surroundings at various phases of life. Through this connection, Wordsworth finds a way to raise his soul to the level where he sees nature as a healer, and perfect companion and ultimately achieves tranquility of soul. This research is an attempt to explore the ecocritical importance of natural surroundings and their preservation for human beings highlighting that there exists a beneficial relationship with the natural environment at different phases of life and how it becomes a companion, a healer, and a peace provider to man's soul. The poem *Tintern Abbey* (1798) "defines a new way of conceiving poetry, and the relationship between the mind of the author and the world of nature (Nicholas, 2013, p. 104).

Ecocritically speaking, Tintern Abbey is a place full of greenery and pastoral surroundings. The poem completely presents an ecocritical work, which shows that natural surroundings and human beings are closely tied up in a relationship. It shows that natural surroundings have greater tendencies to help human beings gaining inner peace. Once it is achieved, nature can help him to attain spiritual guidance at different stages of life.

Historically speaking, the Earl of Cheptow, Walter Richard de Clare, established it in 1131, now it exists there as a destroyed building near the banks of river Wye in Monmouthshire, Wales, United Kingdom. When Protestantism gained power in England, the Catholic monastic bodies were terminated and monks had to leave the place. Wordsworth took inspiration from this place to show his readers that a natural landscape is evergreen for its lovers (Britto, 2012, p. 722).

The term ecocriticism was suggested and coined by William Rueckert in his essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" (1978) and Cheryll Glotfelty greatly highlighted the term in her works in 1989 (Alex, 2007, p. 135). Rueckert (1978) defines "Ecocriticism" in the following words "the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature" (p. 107). The worldwide definition of ecocriticism is given by Cheryll Glotfelty (1996) as "the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment" (p. xviii). It means that as other theories are applied to different genres and works of literature, ecocritical theory is applied to study the relation between man and his natural surroundings. Further, Alex (2007) debates that while studying ecocriticism, man gains an understanding of his/her natural surroundings. Man always wants superiority over other creatures in the world but he must also understand that nature co-exists with man on the same earth. This is the point that man must understand and man must not treat natural surroundings as a subordinate (p.135).

Lawrence Buell (1995) presents two waves of Ecocriticism. In the "first wave ecocriticism" ecocritics advocate the study of "nature writing, nature poetry, and wilderness fiction" (p. 138). The "second wave ecocriticism" or "revisionist ecocriticism" focuses on "social ecocriticism" (Habeeb, 2012) that takes urban and degraded landscapes just as seriously as a "natural landscape" (p.22). Here, he advocates that ecocriticism looks

for the issues related to justice towards our natural environment. Ecocriticism looks for the presentation of natural surroundings in literary works, it does not merely look for a simple depiction of natural scenery or beautifying nature in a literary work but also takes into account an in-depth study of extremities related to our environment. As in the words of Garrard (2004). it looks for the links between literary writing and the natural environment to work better against environmental crises (p. 4).

The main focus of study regarding the first wave of ecocriticism is related to the study of lonesome, secluded surveys of the natural environment. It suggests exposing readers to the natural environment. The shift from one phase to another is how the reader perceives nature. (Alex, 2007, p. 2). It does not only discuss the relationship between man and physical surroundings but also how other aspects of society perceive the environment. It gives a broader view of the literature to study. It also leads to the oppression and negligence of the physical environment (p. 3-4). In the words of Bate (2000), "Ecological exploitation is always coordinated with social exploitation" (p. 48). It explores the depiction of nature within the text of a literary work, which means how the writer depicts the green world on the canvas of literature. It is not necessary to depict it as people see it.

With the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, it was the dawn of ecocritical writings. The Romantic writers, especially William Wordsworth, had foreseen its disastrous effects on the human soul. It took man away from nature and it started disturbing natural ecosystems. Pollution and global warming are effects of increasing industrialization. Many people, who used to work in the fields and farms with their hands, could not use machines and lost their livelihood. There was a group of people in the UK known as Luddites, who considered industrialization unkind and even they protested against it and took action to stop its implementation. Even the Romantic writers and thinkers took it as unkind and unnatural. Similarly, nature was a driving force for Wordsworth's writings. His work also shows that people have lost their connection with nature in gaining modern lifestyles (The Industrial Revolution and the Romantic Spirit).

RESEARCH STATEMENT

The present study of the poem advocates that man is closely related to and is connected with their natural surroundings from childhood to adulthood, fostering a symbiotic relationship between individuals and their surroundings. *Tintern Abbey* (1798) is an excellent work to showcase and predict the symbiotic relationship between man and the natural surroundings. Wordsworth's deep emotional response to nature is evident, and his advice to his sister is equally essential in illustrating this vital relationship.

OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate the relationship of man with natural surroundings in different stages of life that leads to the development of a symbiotic relationship between man and nature.
2. Eco-critically examine the importance of nature for human beings in the modern era in the light of *Tintern Abbey* (1798).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kangah (n.d.) emphasizes the evolution of Wordsworth's relationship with nature throughout various stages of his life. In his childhood, he experienced nature with the innocent wonder characteristic of youth, exploring and marveling at the landscapes around him. As he entered young adulthood, his appreciation for the beauty of nature deepened, filled with joy, though his intellect had yet to be fully engaged. Upon reaching adulthood, Wordsworth's intellect began to develop, fostering a profound connection with his natural surroundings. This connection acted as a gateway to deeper spiritual insight, enabling him

to sense a divine presence within nature. This phase is frequently referred to as "Pantheism" (p. 2) and marks Wordsworth's journey toward inner peace and spiritual fulfillment, as he perceives a living spirit in elements such as the forests, woods, and the warm glow of the setting sun. In addition to this, Farooq and Chandra (2012) quoted Warwick James (2002) saying, "At this stage, the fountain of Wordsworth's entire existence was his mode of seeing God in Nature and Nature in God" (p. 121).

Britto (2012) explores the attitude of Wordsworth towards nature in three different stages of life. He titles the first stage "the stage of Avidya (Ignorance), in childhood, Wordsworth was ignorant of the significance of natural surroundings, so he was not able to appreciate natural beauty. Ecocritically, this stage of ignorance is the depiction of man's recent stage in the modern world. People in the past were more close to nature and they were able to perceive peace and keep themselves in harmony with nature. In today's modern and materially developing world, people are dejected to find peace and joy in nature. This is also one of the causes of global warming, pollution, and extreme climatic changes on Earth. Constant variations in modes of life, urbanization, and globalization have created a huge distance between man and the natural world. From an eco-critical point of view, these things have affected man's natural environment due to which man is unable to create a direct connection with his/her natural environment often.

Britto (2012) titles the second stage "the stage of Mind". At this stage, nature has occupied the poet's mind. The fresh colors of nature appeal to the poet's mind. The physical appearance of nature has softened the poet's heart and he can feel the suffering of other human beings (p. 723). Ecocritically, this symbolizes that man is attracted to nature in a way that he now understands nature's importance. Man has now become aware of the disastrous effects on the natural environment by his own hands in the shape of degradation. Britto (2012) titles the third stage "the stage of Intellect", the stage of transformation. At this stage, Wordsworth can feel and perceive the hidden principle underlying nature. Here he experiences 'one underlying principle' and starts to rationalize that same principle is present in him as well as in all human beings. His closeness with nature has made him feel the unseen principle or the unseen power of nature. Now he can feel for the sufferings of all humanity. He is of the view that every individual can develop a close connection with nature; he/she will be able to shield himself/herself from the unseen perils of the world. Here Wordsworth has become able to feel the presence of a living soul in every object of nature; critics regard this as "Pantheism". Here they assert that Wordsworth found God in nature. Therefore, nature can help man to connect to God and achieve eternal peace and spiritual guidance (p. 724).

Ecocriticism takes into account the existing relationship between man and nature. In this regard, the poems of Wordsworth are an important source to study this relation. Wordsworth is not only a poet of nature but his writings are full of ecocritical visions. These can play great ecological parts because his poetry looks for the solution to human problems. Effects of forestation and deforestation are both present in his poetry. In ecocritical terms, it shows the ecological and non-ecological activities of humans toward nature. Wordsworth points out that there is an unending, eternal, and strong bond between man and nature, in which man can find nature as a balanced and harmonious company. For Wordsworth nature is not just a physical being but also seems to play different roles in his life, "mother, teacher, companion, and even God" (Sultana, 2016). Even Wordsworth felt warned against the action of stealing during his childhood days.

Wordsworth in his poem talks about the harmonious relationship between man and nature. Abbasi (2015) also discusses the same idea that man and nature are tied up in a relationship that is based on cooperation. The decay of nature is the destruction of man himself. Human beings and nature cover a vast area of earth, which together forms earth as a huge ecosystem. Like Wordsworth, other Romantic writers also believed that for the well-being and peace of mankind, it is only possible if human beings do not detach themselves from nature and remain closer to nature. Wordsworth in most of the poems advocates and supports nature in favor of the well-being of mankind. He depicts the presence of a living soul in the natural environment for mankind to preserve nature (p. 203).

Wordsworth believed nature is not static but dynamic and called it a “dynamic nature” (Abbasi, 2015, p. 203). Everything in this active and powerful nature needs respect. Wordsworth emphasizes that the closeness and interaction of man towards nature is a healthy thing for himself. Wordsworth had seen through his visionary eyes that the latest countries of his time would bring downfall and take man away from the natural environment. It is probably one of the reasons that Wordsworth places man in the middle of nature (p. 204).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present research is qualitative based on close reading of the text including theoretical explanation and textual analysis. The present study takes into account the theoretical framework of Eco-criticism advocated by Cheryll Glotfelty. It describes and analyzes the text of the poem thoroughly to unveil the symbiotic relationship that develops over one's life. The data is collected from different sources: the primary source is the poem's text and the secondary source includes books, articles, journals, and other online resources. The study is delimited to only a single poem by William Wordsworth. This poem describes a precise and direct relationship of man with his natural environment. The three main stages of life are well found here which provide a firm ground to explore it ecocritically.

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

HUMAN BEING IN SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE

As Ecocriticism explores the relation of human beings to their natural surroundings, Wordsworth in his poem *Tintern Abbey* (1798) also highlights this relation. The poem highlights the hidden peace of mind and soul. It describes a journey from the depths of heart and mind to the poet's soul and ultimately finding peace, all in the company of nature. This journey shows that the poet has achieved peace because he has been positive and a deep lover of nature. It is a continuous journey to keep oneself peaceful and in harmony with natural surroundings leading to symbiotic relationships. The poem speaks for the harmony present in nature. If man connects to it, he may achieve this harmony. With the passage of time and consistency, it may lead to peace of mind, body, and soul.

In the context of eco-criticism, William Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* (1798) shows a direct developing and beneficial connection of man with his surrounding natural environment. It shows progression with time. This relation influences man's inner soul and outer appearance at different stages of life. *Tintern Abbey* (1798) unveils Wordsworth's love for natural surroundings at different phases of life. Through this connection, Wordsworth finds a way to raise his soul to the level where he finds nature as a healer, perfect companion, and ultimately a spiritual guide. Through his works, Wordsworth asserts the importance of natural environment not in terms of its physicality but in spiritual and mystical connection with God too. The spiritual connection is present in nature for man to

perceive and connect to God. By keeping in view the objectives of the research, the poem is analyzed in the framework of eco-criticism.

The poem starts with the natural setting, which in turn provides a ground to man for developing his relation to natural surroundings. "Five years have passed; five summers, with the length/ Of five long winters! And again I hear/ These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs/ With a soft inland murmur-Once again/ Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs/ That a wild secluded scene impress/ Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect/ The landscape with the quiet of the sky" (Wordsworth, 1798, lines. 1-8). The poet remembers his last visit to this place and describes the natural surroundings. The poet seems to behold the water falling down the high mountains; he feels peace in the company of tall, sky-scraping cliffs and hills. The natural surrounding provides him with a wild, seemingly untamed, and uninhibited solitude, which provides more deep thoughts for his soul. It gives the poet an impression of deep loneliness and a way to ponder deeper into his soul. The mighty hills and mountains seem to be deeply connected with the vast sky above in a way that gives a sense of oneness or unity in nature.

Bate (2000) says about being alone in Wye Valley "Wordsworthian 'deep seclusion' means dissolution of the self from perceiving eye into an ecologically connected organism" (p. 146). As this natural surrounding is as a whole 'ecologically connected organism', so being alone in the company of nature seems as if one's self is dissolved in the present living being of nature. From an ecocritical point of view, the next section of the poem also depicts that the city life being void of pure natural surroundings, does not provide peace in calmness to the mind. That is why the poet feels weary in the middle of city life and recalls his visit to regain his inner peace.

The poet himself has been very positive and harmonious towards his natural surroundings. He is very fond of and a lover of nature so, he can perceive healing effects from the landscape he has come across in "Tintern Abbey" claiming, "I have owed to them/ In hours of weariness, sensations sweet/ Felt in blood, and felt along the heart/ And passing even into my purer mind/ With tranquil restoration" (Wordsworth, 1798, lines. 27-30). Nature makes him feel sweet sensations in his very blood, and he feels it at the level of the impulse (heart) rather than in his waking consciousness and through reasoning. Man has to be positive towards nature, to allow his senses to perceive what nature wants to bestow upon him. For Wordsworth, the mind of a human being is "the creator and receiver both" (Prelude, 1859).

Further, the poet develops affection towards nature. It is an important stage because the body of the poet now becomes nearly irrelevant or unconnected with physical nature. Nature has provided all this meditation to him. Here the poet can experience a kind of meditative trance just from recalling the "beauteous forms" of nature. Towards the end of this part, the poet experiences something more in the company of nature. It is through the company of nature that the poet can look into the meaning of his soul, the purpose of his creation and existence by quoting "While with an eye made quiet by the power/ Of harmony, and the deep power of joy/ We see into the life of a thing. (Wordsworth, 1798, lines. 47-50). The poet does not only experience himself but uses "we", which means that it is not only the experience of the poet himself but anyone who keeps a harmonious relation with nature will be able to experience such a meditative trance.

Wordsworth's poetry highlights the aspect of nature and its relationship with man, focusing on how man treats and perceives nature. Kim (2013) discusses Wordsworth's view of man with natural surroundings and his perception of it. He tries to investigate nature as

a perfect place for humans to live in. The poet addresses his younger sister in the last section of the poem regarding his relationship with his natural surroundings, who has accompanied him to this place. This is the stage where nature has become a guardian for him. The poet says and tells her that he has learned to achieve his inner peace through the company of nature. He has learned to overcome his fears and pains.

He admits that if he had not been taught this, his spirit would have been denied or died away. The poet sees his first stage of an immature young spirit in his younger sister's eyes. The poet claims that once one develops a positive and harmonious relationship with nature, it will never betray the heart. If one loves nature, one will perceive positive effects. The poet sees a reflection of himself in the wild and youthful eyes of his sister and advises her from his own experience that he had never been betrayed by nature. In other words, it can be said that if a man remains harmless towards nature ecologically, nature will also remain harmless towards it. "Nature never did betray/ The heart that loved her" (Wordsworth, 1798, p. 117).

The materialism in the modern world has taken man away from inner peace and harmony. Ting (2014) discusses Wordsworth, showing the effects of industrialization and modernization are not only harmful to nature but to human beings as well. Industrialization has created a gap between the rich and the poor. Poor people who used to work in the field from dawn to dusk, enjoying the company of nature, have now become jobless and industries and machines have replaced their land (p. 191). Further, he argues about "ecological inequality" and the preservation of nature and discusses another of his work. There is a knight, who is hunting a deer just for the sake of his pleasure and environment.

Wordsworth seems to be attracted towards rural life more and less attracted towards city life as cities least depict food for his soul and mind in the shape of nature. The cities mostly show the materialistic part of human societies whereas in rural areas life is close to a pure natural environment. Abbasi (2015) discusses the same idea that Wordsworth believed that it is only nature, which is a complete shelter for the devastating and disastrous technologies, which disturb ecological areas to a great extent. He finds nature so gentle towards all things about the materialistic world of civilization, "nature is the only shelter in the face of the destructive technology...It is the only source to shield humans against the corruptive forces of civilization" (p. 205). The same idea is shown in Wordsworth's other writings like in his poem "Michael" (1798), which presents a comparison of city life and life spent in the company of nature. Michael lived his life in the lap of nature and he was saved from corruption and the shadows of corrupt minds. Things grow different for his son Luke when he goes to the city; he becomes corrupted because of the materialistic approaches to city life.

Although ecological changes may have occurred in the past five years of the period at Tintern Abbey still after these five years while the poet is present at this place again, his mind can create new fresh memories which he may use as food for peace of his soul in future years. Fetterman (2015) promotes the same idea that the basis of interpretation is memory. Promoting eco-critically constructive thoughts and memories lies in the hands of the person himself. It plays an influential role in Wordsworth's development of constructive thoughts (para-35). Further, he also claims that the mind is a source to keep and provide man with a natural environment through his memory, it also acts to create "healing thoughts" (para-36). With a pause, the poet comes back to their original state of mind and tells that the time has passed now, and he does not feel detached from his

natural surroundings. The poet realizes that nature has granted him some immense thoughts. Now he has learned to look keenly and observe his relation with nature. His stage of thoughtless youth has passed. The change of time has taught him to perceive the effects of nature on him. This is the stage where the poet finds that there is a divine presence within nature. Wordsworth feels a presence in his surroundings which provokes him to his self-understanding.

Tintern Abbey (1798) is a poem, that shows a complete natural landscape, and Wordsworth is the person who tells about his experience of visiting this place twice. Wordsworth perceives a sense of finding a spiritual guide/intellect in natural surroundings. This is not restricted when the poet is in the company of nature but the poet also admits that in his memory he has saved this experience and he can enjoy them in the middle of busy daily life. Natural surroundings have been the best part of Wordsworth's life, in reality, a paramount and best part of his memories. Whether it is a simply calm and quiet morning a thousand daffodils at one glance or just the fresh green natural surroundings of Tintern Abbey, he depicts them as the best part of his life. Wordsworth emphasizes that the intellect of man develops in the company of nature. This development becomes a sign of a symbiotic relationship.

From an eco-critical perspective, he made the pivotal choice to leave his job in pursuit of a deeper connection to nature and, consequently, to divinity itself, committed to doing everything he could to preserve the environment. The overwhelming materialism of the modern world has distanced humanity from inner peace and the harmonious rhythms of life. Ting (2014) delves into a compelling work of Wordsworth, illustrating how the forces of industrialization and modernization wreak havoc not only on the natural world but on human beings as well. The rise of industrialization has widened the chasm between the affluent and the impoverished; individuals who once labored in the fields from dawn until dusk, savoring the serenity and companionship of the natural world, have now found themselves displaced and unemployed, their lands replaced by cold, unfeeling machines and sprawling factories (p. 191). Additionally, Ting addresses the concept of "ecological inequality" and emphasizes the urgent need for nature preservation. He also references another of Wordsworth's poignant works, depicting a knight who indulges in the thrill of hunting a deer—not out of necessity, but for sheer pleasure—thus portraying a stark contrast between humanity's desires and the health of the environment that sustains it. As Naess (as cited in Sessions, 1995), advocates that human beings can only fulfill their basic needs through nature otherwise they have no right to destroy and harm nature by any means (p. 68-70). The attitude of the knight is not sound towards natural beauties. First, he exploits horses then chooses one and chases a deer, for whom Wordsworth used "him", lastly deer dies. The place where the deer died has now become a deserted place. This inequality is not only to living souls but also to natural beauties (p. 193).

Wordsworth through his poem conveys an ecocritical idea that "nature undisturbed is balanced and harmonious" (Gerrard, 2004). It shows that when man becomes harmless towards nature it remains balanced and at peace with man too. Man's non-anti-ecological activities support his mind, body, and soul to develop a tie-in connection with nature in such a way that it becomes beneficial for both, man and nature. "Wordsworth is not only a spiritual thinker but also an ecological activist of his time" (Sultana, 2016). His work, especially *Tintern Abbey* (1798) openly and deeply shows that there is a bonding relationship between man and nature, which one cannot deny. The poem shows that nature affects man's nature at different stages of life. A person may perceive this connection

at any stage sooner or later. It does not have to do something with man's age but his soul. Although in today's world of industrialization and scientific progress where man successfully travels in space, it is only the earth (ecologically connected as a whole) that is a place for man to live in. The poem shows that it is through the harmonious relationship between man and nature that man can attain a mutually beneficial relationship.

CONCLUSION

The poem *Tintern Abbey* (1798) by William Wordsworth plays an important role in the ecological awareness studied under the field of ecocriticism. From an eco-critical perspective, he made the brave decision to leave his job in pursuit of a deeper connection with nature and, consequently, with the divine, believing it essential to prioritize the preservation of our environment. The unrelenting materialism of modern society has led humanity away from authentic inner peace and harmony. Here, Wordsworth's work becomes a bridge for man to take him into the realm of nature because, for him, nature is a source that provides everything to man that he needs. As *Tintern Abbey* (1798) suggests a relationship of symbiosis where man and nature are about mutual bonding, therefore, man's first duty is to preserve nature, and nature in return will provide him with food, shelter, and inner peace. Wordsworth, through his writings, gives the idea of protecting nature. Nature, in its authentic form, is inherently pure and uncorrupted. It offers humanity not only material sustenance but also serves as a timeless companion throughout life's journey.

Wordsworth illustrates the relationship between man and nature as profoundly intimate, likening it to the bond shared between close friends. Throughout his poetry, he consistently emphasizes the necessity of harmonizing man with the natural world in all circumstances. This theme is particularly evident in his advice to his younger sister, where he highlights that a deep connection with nature is vital for maintaining a healthy mind and life. Living during a period characterized by the degradation of natural environments due to industrial progress, Wordsworth felt a deep sense of concern regarding this destruction. He conveys his heartfelt appreciation for nature to his sister, encouraging her to foster a relationship with the natural world akin to his own. He assures her that by doing so, she too can achieve the serenity and peace of mind that he has discovered in his connection with nature. Therefore, he says to his sister, "Nature never did betray/ The heart that loved her" (Wordsworth, 1798, p. 117).

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