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WILLIAM WORDSWORTH, P.B. SHELLEY AND HARDY'S ATTITUDE TO NATURE

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Abstract: William Wordsworth is a mystic poet. He is a great worshipper of Nature. He believes that Nature has its own soul and own spirit. Wordsworth always perceives the presence of God in Nature. P.B. Shelley is a revolutionary poet. He is always having optimistic inspiration. His poetry reveals world of joy, love and hope. Shelley's poetry is all alive with loneliness in man and nature. John Keats and a few great Pre-Raphaelite poets only observe and feel the beauties of nature. For them a thing of beauty is a joy forever. But nature plays a great role in Hardy's novels. Hardy believes that nature has its own beautiful aspects as well as nature has other aspects too like cruelty, indifference and caprice. Not as a background, but as an actor in the play, Nature is always present in the story of the novels of Hardy and also plays a great role in the lives of the heroes and heroines of Hardy's novels. Thus, herein this paper, a comparative study of a few romantic poets and Hardy's attitude to Nature has been done.

Keyword: William, Hardy's Attitude, Pre-Raphaelite, Hardy's novels.

INTRODUCTION:

Hardy was a great lover of Nature. He had great fascination towards the natural beauty and serenity of his native place as well as that of Dorsetshire, about which he mostly delineated in his novels. He remained alert and courteous and interested in everything around him. He was a freeman of Dorsetshire and also became himself a beloved part of the Wessex, which he had so lovingly delineated in his novels.

Hardy was a person who established firmly his imaginative world of Wessex – geography, landscape, folkways, agricultural pursuits, quaint peasantry – as a background for the drama of his main characters. Therefore, his novels are called Wessex novels.

Hardy's attitude to nature dominates his scene. Beginning with the slender idyll of *Under The Greenwood Tree*, he proceeded to full length pastoral of the sheep-country of *Far From The Madding Crowd*, and reached the height of his power in *The Return Of The Native* and *Tess Of The D'Urbervilles*. His first effects were contained in the settings and ways of life that had impressed his childish imagination at his father's cottage in a picturesque hamlet of Dorsetshire. The sombre beauty of the country and the quaintness of peasant ways and thought penetrating his spirit became the very ground and substance of his imagination. Nature was to him a symbol of those impersonal forces of Fate with whom he shows mankind as being in a conflict.

In two of his novels, *The Woodlander* and *The Return Of The Native*, the setting is made to stand for the universe, and all his successful works it has a symbolic value. Nature is the incarnation of a living force with a will and purpose of its own is always present now and again taking an actual hand in the story of Hardy's novels. Now and again,

the personality of Nature seems to step forward and with one tremendous gesture to reduce the human beings in the story of insignificance.

Hardy's belief regarding nature is that the universe is a soulless, automatic process. According to him, Nature has its beautiful aspects, and no one can appreciate them more sensitively than himself. Not only so, Nature has other aspects too and these are cruelty, indifference, and caprice.

But Wordsworthian mysticism may not be found in Hardy's attitude to nature. Wordsworth presents nature as the incarnation of a spirit that lives and moves through all things, which Hardy does not, because, Wordsworth was a mystic. Wordsworth believes that God pervades the entire universe – both the animate and inanimate. It is in the thought of God that the universe exists. Wordsworth believes that the life in every flower, bud, insect, and mossy stone on the hillside is a part of the Divine Light. That is why; Wordsworth was thrilled with the sense of some inscrutable presence in Nature to which the soul of man is linked by some mysterious bond.

Nature led Wordsworth to the love of man. He does not separate nature from humanity. Nature becomes an educative influence to him. Wordsworth views that no human being can impart perfect education than Nature. To Wordsworth, Nature imparts the ideal, physical, mental and spiritual education to mankind. He considered Nature to be an ideal teacher and guide to human beings.

On the other hand, Shelley's revolutionary spirit has optimistic inspirations. An ideal of the social and political millennium to dawn on humanity animates his poetic vision and his poetry visualizes world of all joy, love and hope. Not only so, Shelley's poetry is something more than that. Shelley's poetry is all alive with loveliness in man and Nature. Shelley stood on a height to observe the panorama of

Nature and Society together. His poetic imagination turns the little bird skylark into a "blithe spirit", an "unbodied joy" and "the cloud" into a romantic heroine.

Apart from this Nature plays a larger part in Hardy's novels. It is not just the background in his drama, but a leading character in it. Sometimes it exercises an active influence on the course of events, more often it is a spiritual agent, colouring the mode and shaping the disposition of human beings.

Hardy shows a profound feeling or love for the heaths and pastures of Wessex. This feeling has little in common with the transcendental love of nature felt by poets like Wordsworth and Shelley. With his intimate knowledge of natural phenomena, Hardy makes us feel, by his delicate and multifold allusiveness, the significance of the life of the countryside.

Keats and W.H. Davies and the great Pre-Raphaelite poets observed and recorded the beauties of Nature; for them a thing of beauty is a joy forever, and Nature was a fountain of beauty. Some others like Shelley, Whitman and Dos Passos stood on a height to observe the panorama of Nature and society together. Still some others like Wordsworth and Hardy spiritualized or personified Nature; to them Nature spoke a significant language and stirred within them profound philosophical reflections. In this group can also be placed writers like Poe, Melville and Henry James. But Robert Frost's approach to nature was a fusion of all these. Sometimes Frost observed and recorded beauties of nature; at other times he found spiritual echoes in it, still at some other times he found nature to be a mirror of Man's soul. But he never saw nature away from man. That is why he said, I guess. I'm not a Nature poet. I have written no poems without a human being in them.

But Hardy's attitude to Nature dominates almost all of his novels. Nature plays a great role in the story of the novels of Hardy. Hardy establishes his imaginative world of Wessex as a background for the drama of his main characters. Nature seems to steep forward and with one tremendous gesture to reduce the heroes and heroines, in the story of insignificance in the novels of Hardy. Nature was to him, a symbol of some impersonal forces of Fate which guises or misguides the hero or heroine towards his or her ultimate doom in the story of the novels of Hardy.

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