



By William Wordsworth

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Understanding the Poem

1. Why does the poet prefer to be a primitive Pagan rather than a member of civilised society?

Answer: Wordsworth is deeply disturbed by the materialism and consumerism, brought to us by the industrialisation. It has encompassed humanity, who is too busy “getting and spending”. He mourns that humanity has such wonderful powers that are being laid waste. The mankind has given her heart away to this destructive blessing, the poet calls it a “sordid boon”, an oxymoron. Thus, Wordsworth decides to become a Pagan and prays to God. Pagans were the people of Southern Europe, they were not worshippers of a monotheistic God. They were rustics or rural folk. Wordsworth admires their tradition and perceives that to be close to nature he should be one of them. He wishes to feed on and relish the mesmerising beauty of the nature. He wishes to enjoy the lea he stands on, so that he might feel a little less lonely. He wants to have the glimpses of the countryside and wants to taste the rural and rustic life that a Pagan lives. He wishes to go back in time where he might get a chance to see “The Old Man of the Sea”, Proteus, rising from the sea. He wishes to see “The Messenger of the Sea”, Triton, the son of Poseidon. Wordsworth wishes to be in absolute harmony with the nature.

2. What, according to the poet, are human beings out of tune with?

Answer: Wordsworth has always been close to nature. Whether in his Tintern Abbey or The Tables Turned, he has appreciated nature profoundly. His “The world is too much with us” lays scathing criticism on the humanity that is distanced from the nature. The materialistic belief of “getting and spending” that the industrialisation dawned upon us, Wordsworth calls it a “sordid boon”, a contradiction. The poet talks about the worlds of past and the future, “late and soon”. He is unhappy because mankind has given her heart away to this destructive blessing. We consider the Industrial Revolution a boon, while the poet has deeply condemns it. We do not see “the nature that is ours”. Wordsworth appreciates nature’s beauty. He talks of how the fragile sea, in the night, bares her bosom to the moon. The beauty of the white light reflected on the mirthful waters appears magnificent. Then the poet talks of how the wild winds gather above us, hovering like a sleeping flowers. However, he deplores the loss of it; he suffers due to the mechanical advancement of the society. Lamenting the poet declares how the humanity is “out of tune” with it all and wishes to become a Pagan so he might get glimpses of the beauty of nature.

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