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Sub :- English (M.A, Sem-II, CC-7, Unit-3)

Topic :- William Wordsworth : Preface to Lyrical Ballads.

* What according to Wordsworth, is the true nature and function of the poet?

Ans) Like Aristotle, Wordsworth considers poetry as superior to all knowledge, so he has thrown much light on the nature and function of the poet in his "Preface to Lyrical Ballads". Wordsworth takes up the question, who is poet. He was highly conscious of the distinction between a common man and man of genius. This difference is that of degree. This leads Wordsworth to discuss the qualifications of a poet.

Wordsworth thinks that the poet is endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness. "This sensibility is the ability to feel, to be affected and it is intimately bound up with our moral nature and also with imagination. In the Preface Wordsworth draws a distinction between human sensibility and also between poetic and human sensibility. In his own life, he not only observed minutely, but

observed himself doing that. This observing his own observation is not able to co-exist with a "lively sensibility". Referring to an evening walk, he said: "There is not an image . . . which I have not observed and now, in my seventy-third year, I recollect the time and place where most of them were noticed." Though Wordsworth argued for a close relationship of an accurate observation with a pure diction, in his poems we have the poetic diction of Darwin's Botanical Garden. Yet it is suggestive of his method. The purpose of his method is to transform his mind into a mansion of all lovely forms.

The man who has all these qualifications, cannot be similar to the rest of mankind. The poet has "a more comprehensive soul" than others and he is habitually impelled to create. The poet has also "a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present and he has, "an ability of conjuring up in himself passions," which are not "the same as those produced by real events."

According to Wordsworth, the poet is endowed with more lively sensibility, which is akin to emotionalism. The poet "has more enthusiasm and tenderness, a greater knowledge of human nature." By

This is meant the power to understand the primary affections and feelings. He is also pleased with his own passions and volitions and he is not active like the rest of mankind. He is self satisfied and yet is more alive to life. As he observes human activities, he takes an unusual delight in contemplating them in a mood of tranquility.

"The poet thinks and feels in the spirit of human passions." But "his own feelings are his stay and support." Above all the poet has "a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels." This alone makes him a poet in the strict technical sense of the term.

The poet then is capable of entering into the feelings of others. He identifies his own feelings with theirs. Hence he has a "more than usual organic sensibility." At the same time we are told that the poet must have thought "long and deeply." This deep thinking is no other than the process of recollection and contemplation. During the contemplative stage, the influxes of feelings are modified and directed by our thoughts.

Such a poet, "looks at the world in the spirit of love." Guided by feelings he develops sympathy and understands that man is organic to the universe. He binds together the vast empire. It is the sense of unity that largely colours Wordsworth's own major poetry.