

B. A. Part I

English (Subsidiary)

Wordsworth's 'The World is too much with us'

--Dr. Anand Bhushan Pandey
Assistant Professor
Department of English
S. B. College, Ara

About the Poem

'The World is too much with us' was written in 1806, but published in 1808. It is written in the form of a sonnet. It follows the Italian or Petrarchan form of sonnet with an octave and a sestet. Wordsworth was very much displeased and felt uneasy with the growing materialistic attitude of people during that period. This emotion of disgust and uneasiness finds its exalted expression in this sonnet.

Text of the Poem

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;-
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

Text & Explanation of 1st Stanza

*The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;-*

*Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!*

We are too much engrossed with the materialistic world whether it is past or present. We are wasting our power in just earning and spending money. We don't find joy or happiness in the beautiful things of Nature. Nature is personified here. Only the things present in nature can be said to be ours. But we have given our souls somewhere else and having done so we hardly think of nature.

Text & Explanation of 2nd Stanza

*This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God!*

In this stanza the poet presents the beautiful aspects of nature which we don't pay our attention to. We don't have interest in the sea reflecting its surface in the bright beams of the moon. The wind which roars all the time is quiet and closed like the sleeping flowers (with closed petals). The use of simile draws the attention of the reader here. We are not in rhythm with all these natural beauties. It hardly gives us happiness now. Oh my God!

Text & Explanation of 3rd Stanza

*I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.*

I would prefer to be a non-Christian, (because a Christian is not able to see the beauty of nature) brought up in an outdated faith so that by standing on the beautiful grassland I might have the glimpse of the sea and thereby I would have felt less lonely and have visualised the sea gods Proteus (Proteus was a primordial deity in Greek mythology, protector of the seas, rivers and other bodies of water) rising from the sea and Triton (a Greek god of the sea, the son of Poseidon and Amphitrite, god and goddess of the sea respectively) playing with his decorated twisted horn.

Conclusion

Though the poem was written in the 19th century, it is still relevant today. We are obsessed with material achievements to such an extent that we have gone far away from the nature. We have exchanged our spiritual power for vulgar gains of earthly objects. The rhyming scheme of the poem is *abba abba cde dcd*. The poem is written in iambic pentameters.