Chapter 8.
The worth and dignity of the individual in common man and the Immanence of God.

An appraisal of the concept of God vis-a-vis the relation between God and the common man is a logical inevitability for the assertion of the immanence of the former and the worth and dignity of the latter. The concept of God is varied and full of contradictions. Reasons fail to grasp Him and, accordingly, a comprehensive knowledge of Him is absolutely impossible, but under any condition and on all circumstances, the question of the existence of God bears a universal admittance and no truth is so absolute and definite as the being of God. His existence is all-pervasive and the concept of the existence may be expressed not only through the principles of philosophy and theology, but it is also explicable through the truth of man's existence on earth in general and the preservation of the universal values by the common or ordinary man for himself through action against the severity of adversities in particular. A Wordsworthian common man is always exposed to extreme vulnerability, and his continuance at any moment, but it is the existence of God and the preponderance of His superior strength and influence over all things that keep him in the state of actuality by protecting him against the dangers of circumstantial evils.

Now, the question of the existence of God having been settled, the problem centres round not the being of God but
his Nature, God and the universe are inseparable, yet the universe is not an accident of God, rather it bears the mark of relative independence. There is an established harmony between God and the universe -- God has never been without a world and the world cannot be set apart from God. Philosophers and theologians have applied various theories to reflect human comprehensibility of the nature of God vis-a-vis the natures of the universe and man and the relation between God and man.

Wordsworth's belief in the existence of God has its basis in his realisation of God as 'the one interior life' wherein all beings live with god, themselves

Are god, existing in the mighty whole,
As indistinguishable as the cloudless East
At noon is from the cloudless west, when all
The hemisphere is one cerulean blue. (1)

The poet feels that God is one with nature and man, and is identified with the universe. The poet's conviction is akin to pantheism and it is clearly expressed in these words:

.... the eternal spirit, he that has
His life in unimaginable Things
And he who painting what he is in all
The visible imagery of all the world. (2)

Now, whatever may be the form and colour of Wordsworth's

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concept of God it is a self-made contrivance based on common factors, discernible in the vast masses of men and the related phenomena and it indicates an approach to God as a course of necessity. The concept is invested with all the forces and facilities necessary for its growth and development independent of any intrinsic and extrinsic agencies in maintenance of a relation between 'The works of man' and 'Eternity, and God'. The approach of the poet to God is closely connected with his love of man. But Wordsworth's man is a man with his existent reality: common, yet strange, humble, but unique, low by birth or rank, yet distinguished, and his concern for such people is paramount in him, and evokes the spirit of humanism to breathe

Grandeur upon the very humblest face
Of human life.

The Prelude (1805), Book XII, lines 284-285.

Now, despite the spirit of humanism which springs from a sense of recognition of the fellowship between God and all phenomenal objects, it is the simultaneous awareness of the poet of the stern realities of the universe vis-a-vis the locus standi of his people in it which invest him with a power of the highest order to perceive his men and women in their existent conditions and to endow them with qualities in conformity with their elementary natures. Different marks of identification may be attributed to these: patience in tumults and turmoils, endurance of the hardships of life, submission to the decree of an unforeseen power, composure and calmness in the event of loss and deprivation, resolution in case of inevitability of destruction through despair and dejection,
independence in dreariness and gloom, obedience to the will of the indwelling power, and so on. This sort of concept of man and of his psychological conditions is definitely not a matter of glory, but this, at the same time, is not bad because it reckons some compensation. The common men and women of Wordsworth avert defeat miraculously, and achieve profit out of failure:

Flowers laugh before thee on their beds
And fragrance in thy footing treads;
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
And the most ancient heavens, through Thee, are fresh and strong.

(Ode to Duty, lines 45-48.)

And they

grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;

(Ode to Intimations of Immortality, lines 183-188.)

The poet's thought of the sufferings of mankind and his grief at what man has made of man are tranquillised in his discovery of the control of power, and accordingly, notwithstanding the severity of the loss, he brings about a rescue out of the very jaws of mishap and devastation. The poet contrives a new policy involving human predicament, and chastens and restrains the 'deep distress' by welcoming 'fortitude, and patient cheer'. He thus constructs a philosophy
of pain, and craves for 'another and a better world' to affirm God's love for the commonest creatures of the world. He has the firm belief that God also suffers with those whom he puts into sufferance and it is in reliance upon this faith that he builds his idea of the fellowship between man and God:

'The Being that is in the clouds and air,
That is in the green leaves among the groves,
Maintains a deep and reverential care
For the unoffending creatures whom he loves

(Hart-Leap Well, lines 165-168)

The poet understands pain and sufferance of life as the state of condemnation, and thinks that God extends His benign influence to enable the 'offending creatures' to tolerate the conditions of life calmly to reach the realm of peace and humility. The Pedlar of The Ruined Cottage who is the Wanderer of The Excursion is a victim of the sufferings in life, but he possesses the human spirit and capacity to accept his life quietly because he has the 'reverence for God's word'. Mischance and misfortune cannot vitiate the calm resignation and the Pedlar with his attitude to life and to God becomes an advocate of the poet's doctrine of redemption through preservation of his business in 'solitude and poverty' by accepting the verdict of God. The 'impressions' of his mind that he had received

A precious gift,

(The Excursion, Book I, lines 139-140)

endow him to feel intensely the power of Nature and God and ultimately enable him to commune 'with the glorious universe'
and he became

Sublime and Comprehensive / Low desires,
Low thoughts had there no place; yet was his heart
Lowly; for he was meek in gratitude,
Oft as he called those ecstasies to mind,
And whence they flowed; and from them he acquired
Wisdom, which works thro' patience; thence he learned
In oft-recurring hours of sober thought
To look on Nature with a humble heart,
Self-questioned where it did not understand,
And with a superstitious eye of love.

_The Excursion_, Book I, lines 233 - 243.

So, the Pedlar of _The Ruined Cottage_ or the Wanderer of _The Excursion_ establishes a secret and spiritual relation with God, and realises that sufferance in life may be an inevitability but there is every occasion to consider it also as accidental. The Pedlar sees the real value not in sufferings but in what he suffers for or in what he ultimately perceives through sufferings. So, it can be assumed that it is the immanence of God that bestows the spirit of heroism on him through establishment of a 'communion' with 'the living God' to enter the realm of 'blessedness and love' for the maintenance of his existence within his exactness in a distinct and distinguished manner.

Margaret of _The Excursion_ is another instance of redemption through pain. She suffers from the sadness of her heart. But the poet is careful neither to exaggerate her as a queen of tragedy nor as a nun, rather she is left in her actuality with the burden of adversity that has pressed her. She is
'forlorn but not disconsolate' as her faith in God fills her heart with courage of endurance. Throughout her life the trust in God embodies the condition which Margaret has achieved through suffering and now she has to place her trust in God's good love, and seek his help by prayer,

The Excursion, Book I, lines 807-308.

to relieve herself from her mental anxieties. The conditions of life of an ordinary woman are spiritualised and she is celebrated as the apotheosis of 'the secret spirit of humanity' in maintenance of her constant companionship with God for the 'best hope and comfort'. And it is only for her attitude to God and the reciprocal mercy of God that Margaret is complete in her regality and patience despite desolation.

The experience of Margaret is similar to that of the female vagrant of Guilt and Sorrow and other unfortunate heroines who are 'thoroughly forlorn' yet 'stand fast' sustained by their reliance upon God, and are

held above

The infirmities of mortal love;
Undaunted, lofty, calm, and stable,
And awfully impenetrable.

(The White Doe of Rylstone, lines 1625-1632.)

The female vagrant has 'no earthly friend' and a 'perpetual weight' of sorrows and loss pains her heart. She is at the end of her life, but she acts neither as a heroine of classical tragedy with her psychic repercussions nor as a queen of romantic tragedy with her mental perplexities and abstractions, but remains a common woman of fortitude with
her sense of recognition of an indwelling power behind all the
actions of the universe. The woman's power of endurance springs
from her spirit of sublimation with the celestial phenomena
which not only help her to continue with the sufferance in
life but also attribute prodigious prominence to her spirit
of forbearance. The woman says:

'Through tears the rising sun I oft have viewed,
Through tears have seen him towards that world descend
Where my poor heart lost all its fortitude

(Guilt and Sorrow, lines 442-444.)

In the causation of the affairs of Nature and of the woman
Wordsworth strives to define a divine catholicity by maintaining
an organic unity between the two. This is an order of life
wherein 'the still, sad music of humanity' is included with
a separate entity of both the sadness and the music though finally
the two are to be viewed together. This is also a form of life
wherein the pathetic conditions of a life stimulated with the
belief in God is celebrated exactly and entirely and the ordinary
woman with the common qualities of her mind bears a brilliant
mark of distinction for her submission to the supremacy of God.

The woman in Maternal Grief is presented with the burden
of 'anguish worse / Than desolate'. But the mother is forbidden
to despair in reliance upon the spirit of submission to the
'will' of God and ultimately achieves the final settlement
through the benign influence of the divine power:

Heaven afforded to uphold her maimed
And tottering spirit

and the 'grief' of her mind is 'soothed and sweetened by the
grace of Heaven'. So it is the immanence of God that helps
maintenance of the common woman with the actualities and realities of her life against the background of agony, and she attends such a state of mind that attaches the sense of worth to her existence.

Wordsworth knows that the emergence of man on earth is not historical, rather it is anthropological. He raises the question as a logical inevitability:

That Man, who is from God sent forth,
Doth yet again to God return?---
Such ebb and flow must ever be,
Then wherefore should we mourn?

(Lines composed at Grasmere in 1806, lines 21-24)

The idea develops a sort of spiral culminating in a central confrontation which turns back to the destined focus of the immanence of God, and also establishes a relation between the relative position of man in connivance with his central confrontation and its ratification through a choice for the course of action. 'Poor Matthew' with the qualities of mind is the configuration of this concept. The poet apostrophises:

--- Thou soul of God's best earthly mould/
Thou happy soul/

Matthew maintains the sequence by dwelling on his ultimate choice:

'The will of God be done!'

He finds no alternative to the 'will', and says:

I looked at her, and looked again:
And did not wish her mine!
Matthew acknowledges the providence of God beyond conceivable approximation. The shepherd forgets the pain of loss through the vitality and maturity of mind, and rejects the offer for substitute. The endurance of mental anguish and subsequent refusal to accept the child which is not his own appears to be a negative approach to life, but Matthew discovers the dignity of tolerance through the benign influence of God because he knows that God will chasten whom he dearly loves.

("By a blest Husband guided, Mary came", line 6.)

It is in reliance upon this faith that he gets rid of his self-indulgence and self-pity. He prefers the will of God to worldly compensation and, accordingly, his response to God is organically original and delicate with his spirit of self-sacrifice. Matthew's spirit of resignation and renunciation based on his strenuous ratification of choice bears testimony to his wise passiveness of mind and realisation of the supremacy of God in the affairs of the universe through his vast experience in life. The syntactical pattern of Matthew's life and his conception of God is existential: it is final. So, he seems to echo Raphel who tells Adam:
Be strong, live happy, and love, but first of all Him whom to love is to obey, and keep His great command; take heed lest Passion sway Thy judgment to do aught; which else free Will Would not admit; thine and all thy Sons The weal or woe in thee is plac'd; beware.

(Paradise Lost, Book VIII, lines 633-638.)

It is Matthew, an ordinary man who achieves distinction in life through belief in God.

Similarly Michael in his 'unfinished' 'Sheep-fold', Simon Lee with his boundless solitude, the leech-gatherer in the 'weary moors' triumph over worldly pain and anguish, and ultimately achieve their sovereign settlement of mind not through any vulgar and trivial process, but through their understanding of the design of God which gives them the true independence of mind and endows them with the power of recognition of permanence over process. Wordsworth strives to offer a blend of pastoral sadness transcendentalised with Christian sanctity and the suggestion of the radiant other-life music and prayer through these figures. It is the transformation of the understanding of themselves into the psalm that speaks of merger of all with God in the subliminal state.

Now, Wordsworth's treatment of beggars shows that the hardships in their lives are intrinsic to the causes of the scheme of organisation which allots every being position and function and these causes are aggravated through deprivation and parochial arrangement of social orders. Their existence on earth proceeds from God in the sense that they are created by God as pure and perfect and it is only the material and
corporeal conditions that put them into uncongenial state of affairs. So the poet resorts to the poetic conciliation by dwelling upon the idea that

one Almighty is, from whom

All things proceed, and unto him return.

(Paradise Lost, Book V, lines 469-470).

The poet comprehends that the nature and condition of the old Cumberland beggar with all his component elements may be congenial to treat him as 'the meanest of created things', but yet he is neither 'useless' nor 'A burthen of the earth'. He is not even divorced 'from good — a spirit and pulse of good'. He expresses a spirit of Christian dignity in his endurance of hardship and also in his patience. He himself is not responsible for his lot. 'The tide of things has borne him' to the 'vast solitude' and accordingly,

he appears

To breathe and live but for himself alone,
Unblamed, uninjured, let him bear about
The good which the benignant law of Heaven
Hass hung around him.

These lines metaphysically aspire for immortality of the beggar, ethically establishes his purity and perfection, philosophically state of his perpetual continuance. But it is the mercy of God that helps the beggar to continue in the world with his individuality against the background of vast adversities in life. The poet's comprehensions of the old beggar and other beggars are similar and they all maintain their equilibrium within the realm of their respective exactitude through the benign spirit of God.
Wordsworth's view of the crisis of Goody Blake and her method for its solution through theft and Harry Gill's resistance to the solution involve a doctrinal question of the right of self-preservation in the kingdom of God and arouses the intellectual tendency to accommodate theological insight into the concept of divine laws. The poet's derivation has its basis on the biblical revelation as the entire situation leads to the pronouncement of

'The just decree of God'.

And,

kneeling on the sticks, she prayed
To God that is the judge of all.

She prayed, her withered hand uprearing,
While Harry held her by the arm —

'God / who art never out of hearing,
0 may he never more be warm /

Theologically the situation makes Goody winner because 'the powers of Heav'n support the cause of self-preservation of the weak. Philosophically it proves that God protects the image of humble people from obliteration through social deprivation and finally it creates an object of serious consideration out of a poor woman's miserable plight which achieves the divine support as its defence.

The figure of the discharged soldier of The Prelude is the assertion of the supremacy of the faith of man in God even at the moment when hardship predominates and life itself passes to the lowest level of sunken state. The soldier's condition is miserable and beyond endurance, but the principle which sustains his singularity is the absolute reliance on the
will of God. The trust on God serves as the resolution of the crisis as well as the restoration of the spirit in him because it affirms his existence on earth with the conditions of life as an object collateral with the immanence of God. The man with the exactitude of life vis-a-vis the pervasion in the universe by God constitutes human nature and human history. So, the soldier prefers reliance on God to worldly assistance to assuage hardships in life and says:

'But trust is in the God of Heaven,
And in the eye of him who passes me' (The Prelude, Book IV: lines 459-460.)

The discharged soldier's realisation anticipates the suggestiveness of a conscious reality and comprehends an integral relation between the material and the spiritual worlds unto the final event, and lastly, embodies the principles of consolation and happiness.

The story of Peter Bell is the expression of attainment of celestial bliss through transformation of psychological disposition into theological determinism. The 'wild and rude' ruffian who indulged in atrocious crimes in life is taught to feel

That man's heart is a holy thing through the benign influence of Nature. So it is the immanence of God that sets Peter in an interaction between fall and redemption — a fall culminating in the form of an ordinary man's psychic abnormality and redemption springing from self-realisation through aboriginal simplicity. Supernatural elements act as agents of salvation in maintenance of responsive relation with God though ultimately supernaturalism disappears.
without altering the essence of redemption. It is a sort of
divine revelation and it is the indwelling power of God that
reveals Peter as a common yet derivative entity — an entity
complete in itself with the spirit of submission, having its
basis on the capacity of understanding the love of God. So,
Peter Bell

the ruffian wild,
Sobs loud, he sobs even like a child,
'Oh / God, I can endure no more/'

This is a sort of purgation and Peter finds the asylum in the
breast of God for relief of his mind and purification of his
soul through the process of submission. The tears in his eyes
transcendentalise his dedication and he

Became a good and honest man

through the blessings of God.

The Borderers is a study of criminal psychology. It
deals with horrible affairs of human malignity, but there
exists a spiritual element in the drama. Herbert's recognition
of the celestial significance in the worldly affairs and Idonea's
reciprocity bears testimony of the poet's conception of a
harmony between the state of man and the divine elements and
God. Herbert says:

There is a psalm that speaks
Of God's parental mercies — with Idonea
I used to sing it.

This sort of confession attributes a sense of dignity to the
feebleness and oldness of an humble man and brings into
prominence the existent conditions of life. God is the asylum
of the helpless man who relieves the pains of life through
the establishment of a fellowship with Him. So, Herbert, in his exhaustion and despair, prays:

God help me /

And he discovers the possibility of self-restoration with the help of the mercy of God, and consoles himself. Herbert projects life in terms of the principles of reliance on God and his projection is redemptive, because he believes that

Thy virtues He must judge, and He alone,

The God upon whose mercy they are thrown.

(Elegiac Musings in the Grounds of Coleorton Hall, lines 63-64)

Again, the story of the commission of the crime by the sailor in *Guilt and Sorrow* and his ultimate confession of sin to bring upon himself the capital punishment appears to be paradoxical, but attributes a sense of dignity to the individuality through the revival of his conscience. The sense of realisation of the gravity of the crime prompts him to affirm his faith in the Almighty God. Says he

My trust, Saviour/ is in thy name/

The attitude of the sailor comes from the noblest of human sentiment and human feeling, and his conception of God is absolute as it contains in itself the creed of dedication to the scheme of God's creation of man and it serves as the means for his redemption. The sailor achieves the victory of virtue by patience of mind and endurance of punishment simultaneously in maintenance of a belief in God, and seems to echo Milton:

For with thee

Certain my resolution is to Die:

(Paradise Lost, Book IX, lines 906-907.)

The sailor's judgment is consistent with moral propriety, and
once again formulates the theory of man's final solace in the breast of God. The mutual conciliation is complete here because it not only involves the atonement but also the restoration of man.

Thus it is the immanence of God that helps the common people of Wordsworth to maintain their exactitude within the perspective situation through an unconscious identity with Him, and also involve spiritual and theological implications of the conditions of the life of man. The poet's range of treatment is vast, and includes men and women of various categories and standards. The criminal of Guilt and Sorrow maintains his mental equilibrium in reliance upon the name of God, old and miserable people like the leech-gatherer, Simon Leo, the old Cumberland beggar, Goody Blake — all exist on earth and bear the burden of worldly miseries through their faith in His judgment. Matthew and the man of Animal Tranquility and Decay preserve the serenity and calmness of mind being endowed with the benign influence of God and Michael dispels his mental agony being strengthened with divine mercy. Margaret of The Ruined Cottage and the female vagrant of Guilt and Sorrow endure the hardships and pains in life through their recognition of the supremacy of the power of God on affairs of the mundane world. The women figures of The Lyrical Ballads bear testimony to the same state of affairs, and remain distinct and singular despite the severity of sufferance in their lives. It is their realisation of the pervasion of God which acts as a stimulus to maintain their own selves in the face of the rigorous oddity and to sustain their dignity and worth through tumults and turmoils in life. The figures of Wordsworth essentially and
fundamentally establish a mutual relationship with God, and consider Him as Apocalyptic power for all things of life. It is this faith that enables them to perceive that

Through God, is raised a spirit and soul of love
Without whose blissful influence Paradise
Had been no Paradise; and earth were now
A waste where creatures bearing human form,
Direst of savage beasts, would roam in fear,
Joyless and comfortless.

(Written after the death of Charles Lamb, lines 66-67.)

Wordsworth designs for a world where men and God are identical and where the possibility of eclipse and the potentiality of restoration of men are co-existent. Misfortune and uncondusive conditions cannot annihilate the essential likeness of God in man despite temporary eclipse. So, the common people of Wordsworth with their pains and sufferings, joys and sorrows, remain as men within themselves and prevail in the universe as the image of God and this is at the centre of Wordsworthiana conception of the worth and dignity of the individual in the common man through the Immanence of God.

THE END.