Wordsworth’s Theory and Function of Poetry

Wordsworth contributed the majority of poems to Lyrical Ballads in his joint venture with S.T. Coleridge. Although Coleridge contributed fewer poems to Lyrical Ballads than Wordsworth, yet some of his poems like The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, were particularly influential. The collection published in 1798, was a direct response to the ideas and styles found in the literature written between 1660 and 1798, a period commonly referred to as the Neoclassical era. Neoclassical poetry, a product of enlightenment is defined by its use of decorated language and rigid poetic form. For example, writers such as Alexander Pope and Samuel Johnson produced poems adhering to strict, formal metrical patterns, using complicated poetic diction with emphasis on the importance of logic and rational thought. Lyrical Ballads was a clear and intentional challenge to this literary tradition. In fact, when Lyrical Ballads was published in 1798, critics were sharply divided on whether the collection was innovative and brilliant or a complete failure. Wordsworth and Coleridge reprinted the volume in 1800 with additional poems and a longer The Preface that carefully outlined their new theory of poetry.

The Preface, written by Wordsworth, was one of the first and most direct attempts to challenge the popular poetic practices of the 17th and 18th centuries and offers a new poetic theory to replace them. For this reason, Lyrical Ballads is used to mark the end of the Neoclassical period and the beginning of the Romantic period of English literature, which emphasizes nature, imagination and the importance of personal experience rather than scientific logic. In 1800, in The Preface, Wordsworth claims that the rigid aesthetics of neoclassical poetry are arbitrary and they distort the freedom and naturalness of poetic expression.
Lyrical Ballads explicitly uses the simpler and more common language spoken by children and adults who lived and worked in agrarian or rural communities. In addition to a new linguistic simplicity, the poems also tend to be shorter, adhere less strictly to formal meter, and include more naturalistic settings than what we find in neoclassical poetry.

‘A simple child, dear brother Jim,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death? (1-4) 1 (We Are Seven)

Critics and poets in all ages’, climes and countries in the world of literature right from Aristotle, Horace, Longinus, Dante, Sidney, Tasso, Dryden, Johnson, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Arnold to present, day all have tried to explain their own theory and practice of poetry in their own manner. Wordsworth was primarily a poet and philosopher but it was out of necessity he became a critic too. In his Preface to the edition of the Lyrical Ballads, Wordsworth expounded his views on poetry, its nature and functions and the qualification of a true poet. These great critics suggest the end of poetry as aim in their own fashion but obviously, delight, teaching, power to move etc are considered the main object of poetry. The word poetry is still occasionally used as a synonym of verse. “But of course, many who do not consider that all poetry must be written in verse as an indispensable accident though not the differentia.”

Of course, Wordsworth was the first to maintain that “all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings”. 3Here the poet means to say that poetry cannot be composed under pressure nor can the poet be forced to write at the spur of an opportune moment. According to the poet, poetry is a
matter of feeling and mood. When the poetic mood is on, the poet sings out songs of rapture or sorrow spontaneously from the core of his heart. The purpose of poetical work is to enhance the feeling, emotion and thoughts out of the ideas surviving from the sensation of daily life. As the poet declared in the poem to the Recluse:

I sing of Truth, of Grandeur, Beauty, Love and Hope
And Melancholy fear subdued by faith;
Of blessed consolations in distress
Of moral strength and intellectual power.” 4

Mainly Wordsworth wrote ‘The Preface’ to defend his poems against “the charges made against both their subjects matter and their diction. The overall intention of the poet was two-fold: to relate poetry as closely as possible to common life, by removing it in the first place from the realm of fantasy, and in the second by changing it from the polite or over-sophisticated amusement to a serious art. According to the poet, poetry should be “the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,” not mere satisfaction of a taste for imagery and ornament. Poet’s main goal in all this is to appeal the normal interests of mankind. According to Wordsworth, the poet “is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighted to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them.” 5

In the Preface, Wordsworth made four claims: first, “to choose incidents and situations from common life”; second, “to relate or describe them
throughout, as far as possible in a selection of language really used by men”; third, “to throw over them a certain coloring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect”; and, last, “above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature.”

The greater part of the Preface is devoted to justification of the first two claims, and this has caused too much stress on them while the fact remains that it is on the last two claims that the greatness of his poetry rests. During the eighteenth-century, critics believed that it was not a great age for English poetry. They suggest that the verse of this age is second rate or inferior to the verse of other eras. The poetry of this time, however, has a distinct identity. It offers distinctive styles, themes, and theories. Literature of this century is chiefly based on wit, civilization and social relationship. Various styles of poetry were used during this period of time. Much of the eighteenth-century poetry is described as neoclassical. This was the major style used throughout the century. Writers used particular vocabulary, phrase formations, technical terms, and archaisms. John Dryden popularized this style in his late seventeenth-century poetry. Eighteenth-century poetry has an "...anomalous style... in which descriptive words, especially adjectives, verbs turned into adjectives, and long periodic passages of description predominate; action is at a minimum; wit and irony disappear" (Quintana 16). Other poetic styles made use of blank-verse, humanistic themes, odes, allegorical imagery, and descriptive styles.

With the publication of Lyrical Ballads in 1798 ushered a new era in English Romantic poetry. However, there can be no categorical compartments between Neo-Classical and Romantic poetry. In short, in order to understand the theory and function of Wordsworth’s poetry, it is essential to have a glance over what we call Neo- Classical or so called Classical diction of 18th century
poetry. There were numerous themes used in eighteenth-century poetry. In the beginning of the century James Thompson published *winter*. This was the start of a new trend during this period. Nature was a prevalent theme in the world of literature. It inspired many writers. Satire also flourished in this century. Its most distinguished writers were Alexander Pope and Jonathan Swift.

According to Alex Preminger what we value most in eighteenth-century poetry is satire. Other themes used were English life and culture, love, humanitarianism, and death.

In the eighteenth century, there were many distinguished poets who made contribution to poetry. Alexander Pope is a prominent poet and a great satirist for *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Dunciad*. The other principal satirists of the eighteenth century are Jonathan Swift, John Gay, and Samuel Johnson. William Collins wrote "Ode to Evening." Oliver Goldsmith wrote *The Deserted Village*, which "mingles sentimental social commentary with the pastoral traditions" (Preminger 343). In the middle of the century George Crabbe began with *The Village* and went on to write humorous narratives, such as, "Peter Grimes." William Blake is regarded as one of the great poets of the century. During the earlier part of the century, he breaks with much of the strict neoclassicism. He began with *Political Sketches*, and then wrote *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*. In comparison to other literary genres, poetry had small readers during the eighteenth century; it was, however, an educated public, belonging to the aristocracy and the upper-middle class. In the eighteenth-century, the demand of poetry was heavier on modern readers than poetry in other periods of time. According to Ricardo Quintana, eighteenth-century English poetry does not raise clear of the idioms, linguistic and otherwise-of its own period; a sympathetic approach requires some historical understanding. "Even if the absolute value of poetry is ultimately an aesthetic
matter and not an historical one, all art is mediated by its particular time and place in human culture and is interesting for this reason as well" (Quintana 4). 8Thus, poetry introduced new styles, themes, and brilliant writers in the eighteenth century.

But in this century, the language of the poetry was not real and its substance was far from being an interpretation of the universal spirit of man. Poet made a great effort in insisting on a new and true orientation. Rustic life and language were the simplest and purest being elementary, in close touch with nature, and unspoiled by social vanity. The fact remains that the rustic has little originality, few ideas, and makes almost no attempt to correlate them. It is also true that Wordsworth proposed to prune it of peculiarities but, as Coleridge observed, this would render it the same as the language of any other section of the community similarly treated. He also asserted that the language of poetry differs in no way from that of prose, with the single exception of meter. This is the controversy that still rages and poet’s finest poetry does not show any influence of this idea. A critic has stated categorically that in his prominent works the poet forgot his theories and he compiled the theories into significance in the form of poems but in his later works, he discarded them deliberately.

Wordsworth was an out and out inno-creater who treated things in a new way. Those who made approach to his poetry for the first time, observed two peculiarities – its austerity and its appearance of triviality. It is so in the case of those who fail to see the quality of real human sympathy. Besides, poet himself is responsible for inviting this sort of response, as he had no relish for the present. Shelley said about him that “he was hardly a man, but a wandering spirit with strange adventures and no end to them.” 9The triviality of manner is the manner through which he could convey the profoundest truths. There are
two distinguished things in his poetry that strike our mind while going through it. A poet binds the vast empire of human society together by passion and knowledge because it is spread over the whole earth and over all time. The number of fine phrases that have become the common coin of everyday speech. John F. Danby observed in his book:

“Words exist not on the page but between people: only people can mean anything.” 10

Wordsworth has an exalted conception of poetry. According to him “poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science”. 11 He not only defines poetry; but also explains the process involved in the production of poetry. His theory of poetry is comprehensive in the sense that it tells us the qualification of the poet, the function of poetry and also recommends the language of poetry. Here the poet explains the role of calm thinking and deliberate meditation in the production of poetry. Later on, in The Preface, he says,

“The emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction, the tranquility gradually disappears and an emotion kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced; and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins and in a mood similar to this it is carried on.” 12

The poetic composition is not an easy process. The poetic composition has to pass through four stages: recollection, contemplation, recrudescence and composition. To quote: Herbert Read:

“That good poetry is never an immediate reaction to the provoking cause; that our sensations must be allowed time to sink back into the common fund of our experience, there to find their level and due proportion. That level is found for
them by and then in the union of contemplating mind and the receiving sensibility raises that unique mood of expression which we call poetry.”

In fact, Wordsworth followed the above process of poetic composition. He allowed the emotions to sink and revive them at a later stage in a stage of tranquility what had been experienced at an early stage. The poet could succeed in his aim for he had been endowed by nature with a prodigious memory and a meditative mind. For other poets like Shelly the method of Wordsworth could not be applied. It was applicable to him alone for the simple reason that he alone had the gift of visualizing the past with a wonderful vividness and float over them with the fancy of a poet.

For oft when on my couch I lie,
example can be illustrated from the poem Daffodils:

In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye,
Which is the bliss of solitude?” (19-22)

The poems like-‘The Prelude’, Daffodils, Tintern Abbey, Resolution and independence and The Solitary Reaper were composed according to principle ‘recollected in tranquility.” He indulged his memory with long periods of reverie, set it to travel to and fro among the past experience of his life and loved solitude and indolence chiefly because during the lulls of social intercourse and intellectual labour, lost impressions were recaptured. He loved to set in ‘the long barren silence’ meditating the submerged feelings and images in his mind, taking hold of them, when they rose to the surface. His own function, was simply that of a still and patient chronicler. He speaks of himself as being’ not used to make a present joy the matter of a song.

The Poet tells us in the Epilogue to the Waggoner that it was his habit to keep a theme in his mind for years before putting it into verse. By recollected in
tranceility poet means to say that he does not react to an impression immediately. He allows his sense impressions of objects perceived by him to sink into his mind along with the feelings, which it has excited. There, they remain buried till their accidental ingredients have been purged and its ideal and essential truth is left. When later the impression is recalled, the original feeling is revived with it. According to the poet, poetry cannot be treated mere a discussion, nor a delicious dish for epicurean taste but it is different and it seeks to ennoble and edify. It is like the morning star which throws its radiance through the gloom and darkness of life. Poetry has its importance. as the poet mentions a few lines in The Excursion III,

“In framing models to improve the scheme of man’s existence and recast the world.” 336-37 15

Wordsworth regards that deep emotion and notion are the essential condition of poetry. It is the feeling that matters. He discards Aristotelian doctrine; that the plot or the situation is the first and most important thing. But for the poet, the first thing is feeling. It seems that he is attached to feeling more than thoughts, However, poet followed romantic and revolutionary views about the language of poetry. He objects to the artificial use of the language in the 18th century. The poet has used the word ‘spontaneous’ which means to achieve something by an act of free will. He recommends the common language of poetry that is used in daily communication. In his view this is more effective. In fact, he has a practical approach with regard to poetry. He followed, to a great extent, his theory in his own poetical work. His poems like- The Prelude, The Solitary Reaper, The Daffodils etc are based on his theory. On the basis of poetry, he initiated the Romantic era by emphasizing feeling, instinct, and pleasure above formality and mannerism. No one except Wordsworth, who gave so powerful expression to human emotion; his lyric
“Strange fits of passion have I known,” in which the poet describes an inexplicable fantasy he once had that his lover was dead, could not have been written by any previous poet. Many of Wordsworth’s important works are preoccupied with the lost glory of the past, not only of the lost dreams of childhood but also of the historical past, as in the powerful sonnet “London, 1802,” in which the poet exhorts the spirit of the centuries-dead poet John Milton to teach the modern world a better way to live.

Wordsworth’s poetic inheritance is based on a large number of important poems. But they are different in length and weight from the short, simple lyrics of the 1790s to the vast expanses of The Prelude, thirteen books long in its 1808 edition. But the themes and the language, he uses to embody those themes, remain consistent throughout his canon. Here, poet argues that poetry should be written in the natural language of common man, rather than in the lofty and elaborate dictions that were then considered “poetic.” He argues that poetry should have an access to the emotions contained in memory. He further argues that the first principle and chief duty of poetry is to provide pleasure through a rhythmic and beautiful expression of feeling—for all human sympathy.

Human mind is greatly influenced by nature in the poet’s work. All the depiction of the natural world—from the highest to the simplest flower—elicits noble, elevated thoughts and passionate emotions in the people who observe these manifestations. Nature plays a crucial part in intellectual and spiritual development of individuals. They are always connected to the spiritual and the social world by having the good relation with nature. As he explains in The Prelude, a love of nature can lead to a love of mankind and this is exactly what happened in the poet’s life itself. In such poems as “The World Is Too Much with Us” (1807) and “London, 1802” (1807), it is shown that people become
selfish and immoral when they distance themselves from nature by living in cities. The nobility and empathy of humanity become corrupted by involving in artificial social conventions as well as in the squalor of city life. On the other hand, people who spend a lot of time in nature, such as laborers and farmers, maintain the purity and nobility of their souls. One of the finest achievements of Wordsworth was that his simple childhood stimulated him to the value of the non-artificial, and he was not slow to appreciate the need for a reform of "poetic" language. Poetry became an immediate and intimate experience told by the experience. Beauty was to be commended for its own sake. Poet's reliance on the simplicity of living in agreement with nature wrought a revolution in poetic values. His Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* became the symbol and the instrument of romantic revolt.

The Poet’s theory of poetry and his political credo were all closely connected. One change in life wrought parallel changes in the other walks of life. In 1793, having banished from the homes of his relatives, the poet found himself in tight position. He was embittered by the excesses of the Revolution in France, and beset by personal fears and uncertainties. He took a membership of the so-called Godwin circle in London. William Godwin, the political philosopher and novelist, deplored the role of emotion in human affairs and claimed that salvation lays only in reason perfected by education. The Poet began a serious reading of Godwin and soon determined to abandon his early naive reliance on intuition and subject all his beliefs to close scrutiny. For four years, he clung firmly to his Godwinian outlook until he nearly suffered a nervous breakdown. His poetry suffered as a result of his philosophy. He said of some of *Guilt and Sorrow* that its diction was "vicious" and the descriptions "often false." *The Borderers*, from the same vintage, is as artificial in tone as to be depressing.
Wordsworth was primarily a poet who became a critic by necessity. The new experiment which he had made in the Lyrical Ballads (1798) demanded systematic defence of the theory upon which the poems were written. The poet opposed the traditions and usages set up by the pseudo-classical school during the 18th century. Views of the poet about the language which was to be employed in poetry raised a storm of protest against him even by such a close friend as Coleridge. He said that there could be no essential difference between the language of poetry and that of prose. By expounding his theory, Wordsworth did nothing wrong. He insisted on the use of a simpler language well within the reach of the cottagers and shepherds about whom he was composing his poems. Poetry was now coming out of the narrow groves of town life and was embracing the life of nature and humanity in its simplest and most unsophisticated forms. According to the poet, for the new poetry of the new age, a new language should be employed. Though Wordsworth and Coleridge collobarately composed the Lyrical Ballads, yet Coleridge differed from Wordsworth on some fundamental points. He wanted to clarify his own position. Seventeen years after the publication of the Preface, he took up Wordsworth’s theory and analyzed it part by part in his Biographia Literary. Coleridge wanted to correct Wordsworth's views about the language of poetry being "the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation" and also about the suitability of "the incidents of common life". As to the falseness and artificiality of much of the neoclassical verse, Coleridge was in complete agreement with Wordsworth. But he would not accept Wordsworth's theory that the ideal language of poetry is 'the natural conversation of men under the influence of natural feeling'. 16He is of the opinion that only on the ground of differing from the language of real life a poem cannot be condemned. Nor could he accept Wordsworth's contention that 'there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition'.
He says that this rule may be applicable only to certain classes of poetry and it need not be practiced as a rule.

In the Preface to the Lyrical Ballad of 1809 Edition, Wordsworth selected rustic life for the simple reason 'because in that condition the essential passions of the heart find a better soil, in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plain and more emphatic language'.

To disprove this belief of Wordsworth, Coleridge remarks that there is nothing extraordinarily fascinating in the characters introduced by Wordsworth in his own poems. These characters appeal to us not because they are rustics, but because they are what Aristotle called, ‘idealized beings.’ They are persons of a known class, and their manners and sentiments are the natural product of circumstances.

If we observe closely Wordsworth's statement, we find that 'the language of these common men is also adopted because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived. As for their level in the society, they don’t feel any restraint to convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions. Coleridge remarks that 'a rustic language, purified from all provincialism and grossness, and reconstructed to be made consistent with the rules of grammar will not differ from the language of any other man of common sense.'

Thus he denied Wordsworth's main assertion that a special virtue lies in the language of those who are in close touch with nature.

Coleridge also shows his disagreement with Wordsworth's assertion 'that from the objects with which the rustic hourly communicates the best part of language is formed.' His first objection to this statement is that the uneducated rustic "would furnish a very scanty vocabulary". Secondly, he denies that the words and their combinations, derived from the objects with which the rustic is
familiar, can be justly said to form the best part of language. Coleridge emphatically says "The best part of human language is derived from reflection on the acts of the mind itself. It is formed by a voluntary appropriation of fixed symbols to internal acts, to processes and results of imagination, the greater part of which have no place in the consciousness of uneducated man; though in civilized society by imitation and passive remembrance of what they hear from their religious instructors and superiors, the most uneducated share in the harvest which they never sowed or reaped." Moreover, even in rural language, the best elements have filtered down to it from the universities and the church. In fact, plain rustic language is so deficient that the missionaries who preach to the rural folk find it difficult to convey moral and spiritual ideas entirely in their vocabulary.

Further Coleridge argues that the language praised so much by Wordsworth differs from locality to locality due to various influences. He then attacks poet’s conception that words would come out of these simple rustics in their moments of natural passion spontaneously. Actually the expression depends on the general truths, conceptions and images and words already stored in mind. Giving illustrations from Wordsworth's own poems, he disproves Wordsworth's assertion that he was using the language of the rustics. He goes to challenge the last important assertion of Wordsworth, the poet answers that "there neither is nor can be any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition". He argues that prose itself differs and ought to differ from the language of conversation just like reading ought to differ from talking. There exist a still greater difference between the order of words used in a poetic composition and that used in prose, unless Wordsworth had only meant words, and not the style of using them. Coleridge's disagreement of Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction remains even now as
one of the finest examples of literary polemics. Coleridge gave imagination an exaggerated significance. For him imagination is not merely spontaneous, unconscious and passive, but is active in the highest degree. This creative act calls the whole soul of man into activity. The essence of it is certainly not some form of automatic writing or dream-like activity unguided by the conscious intellect or will. The creative act, on the contrary, is a godlike act of power; it suggests the divine power in man. The creative act by which the poet writes the poem is similar to the creative act by which god ordered the world out of chaos. The Poetical work was very artificial and unnatural that was given by the pseudo classical school. It was greatly limited in its themes. It was totally confined exclusively to the city of London and in that City to the artificial and unnatural life of the fashionable lords and ladies. It did not care for the beauties of Nature or for the humble humanity —farmers, shepherds, wood-cutters, etc.,—which lives its simple life in the lap of nature. It was Wordsworth who reacted strongly and sought to enhance the range of English poetry by deriving his themes from “humble and rustic life”. The poet passed his life in the lap of nature; he was well-known and well-acquainted with the life of these humble and innocent people. He has rendered it in his poetry, realistically and accurately.

From Wordsworth’s point of view, the language of poetry must not be separated from the language of men in real life. Figures, metaphors and similes, and other such decorations must not be used unnecessarily, as was the case with the artificial 18th century poetic diction. In a moment of emotional excitement, men naturally use a metaphorical language to express themselves forcefully. The earliest poets used only such metaphors and images that result naturally from powerful emotions. Later on, poets used a figurative language which was not the result of genuine passion. They merely imitated the manner of the
earlier poets, and thus arose the artificial language and diction of the Pseudo-
classics. A stereotyped and mechanical phraseology thus came into use. The
use of artificial language and diction must be avoided in both cases when the
poet speaks in his own person and when he speaks through his characters.

Wordsworth’s theory of poetic diction acquired a great value when it
was considered as a corrective to the artificial, inane, and unnatural
phraseology current at the time. But at the same time, it is full of a number of
contradictions and suffers from a number of limitations. The problem is that
Wordsworth does not state what he means by language. Language is a matter of
words, as well as of arrangement of those words. It is a matter of vocabulary as
well as of syntax. It is also a matter of the use of imagery, frequency of its use,
and its nature. Wordsworth does not clarify what he exactly means by
‘language’.

Wordsworth’s theory of language has strong weaknesses, but its
significance is also far-reaching. O. Elton concludes his discussion of the
subject with the admirable words: “Wordsworth, led by his dislike of, “glossy
and unfeeling diction”, but still more by the wish to find a poetic medium for
the life and speech of the simple, was led to proclaim that speech as the
medium desired; that he guided this chosen medium not indeed from his own
misapplication of it, but against the charge that it need be vulgar or trifling, that
he also proved its nobility in practice; that he did not clearly say what he meant
by, ‘language’, or see the full effect upon diction by the employment of metre;
that he did not rule out other styles, either his own or those of other men, which
are equally poetical, though he did not touch on their theoretic basis; and that
in many of his actual triumphs, won within that sphere of diction which he does
vindicate, he employs a stratum of words which in prose would not strike us as
over-poetical.” 21
Undoubtedly, the poet culminated the power of communication but the language which he uses is not so lively and true; the language of men who have actually experienced those passions. The poet writes of emotions which he himself has not experienced, but which his characters have experienced, and so the passions which he communicates are “mere shadows” of the passions of real men. So, the language used by him is likely to be mechanical, lacking in the warmth and liveliness of the language used by men in real life. Therefore, the poet should try to achieve emotional identification with the characters whose feelings he has to convey, and he should do so in a language which such characters do actually use in real life. This language should be modified only by one consideration that is based on pleasure. The function of poetry is to give pleasure, and keeping this view, the poet should apply the principle of selection, and purify his language totally, that is coarse, vulgar, painful and disgusting. However, it may be pointed out here that by ‘pleasure’ Wordsworth does not mean mere idle amusement. His conception of ‘pleasure’ is much higher. There is no need at all for the poet to elevate his language; no language is nobler and more elevated than the one which is really used by men, and which the poet truthfully and faithfully imitates.

Wordsworth emphasized the role of feeling and emotion in all poetry. These are his famous words: “I have said that poetry is the ‘spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species, of reaction, the tranquility gradually disappears, and an emotion kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind.” 22 Cazamian observes: “Intense emotion coupled with an intense display of imagery, such is the frame of mind which supports and feeds the new literature.” 23 In The Preface to Lyrical Ballads
Wordsworth writes: “… each of these poems has a purpose; the feeling therein developed gives importance to action and situation. 24

Wordsworth considers a poet essentially a man, a man speaking to men. Yet, Garrod says "if he will allow no difference of kind between poets and men, it must be conceded he makes as wide as he can the difference of degree." 25 He has sufficiently stressed the individuality of the poet. Garrod says, ‘The Preface to the Lyrical Ballads is quite as much a defence of the employment of metre in poetry as a protest against the use of poetic diction.’ 26 Wordsworth does not consider metre as essential to poetry. He regards it as merely, ‘pleasure superadded’, but all the same he allows its use, while he rejects the use of poetic diction. He rejects poetic diction because it is artificial, capricious and lawless. He allows the use of metre for it obeys definite laws, and its use is sanctified by tradition and authority. Further, Wordsworth justifies the use of metre by referring to the process of poetic creation. We get his famous definition of poetry as, “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,” and that, “it has its origin in emotions recollected in tranquility.”, The earlier emotions are recollected and revived in moments of tranquility, but they are now purged of much that was accidental, temporary and disgusting. Thus the particular emotion is universalized. Such is the process of poetic creation, and it gives joy to the poet. When he communicates, he wants to convey his own joy to his readers, and metre helps him in this respect. The pathetic and painful emotions are tempered by the use of metre and the lighter emotions acquire an added ease and gracefulness. The use of metre gives the readers a sense of the skill of the poet in overcoming artistic difficulties and this in itself gives pleasure. Further, metre makes even ordinary, commonplace language of real life look different and unusual, and the contrast produces a feeling of delight. It is for all these reasons that most people prefer verse to prose.
Wordsworth had an exalted conception of his own calling. In the Preface he calls poetry, "the most Philosophical of all writings", "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge", "the impassioned expression that the countenance of all science", "the image of man and nature", etc. 27 In one of his poems he says that, "Every great poet is a teacher; I wish either to be considered as a teacher, or as nothing." 28 In one of the celebrated passages of the Excursion he writes that poetry has its value and significance in framing models, "to improve the scheme of man's existence and re-cast the world." 29

As for the function of poetry, Wordsworth maintains that it is, “to produce excitement in co-existence with an overbalance of pleasure.” 30 His insistence on pleasure as the primary aim of poetry, the poet differs from the Neo classics who considered that the aim of poetry was both to “instruct and delight”. Thus the proper function of poetry is to give pleasure, but Wordsworth’s conception of pleasure is not a purely aesthetic one. His conception of pleasure is moral. Poetry does not merely provide momentary pleasure, merely such idle amusement as is provided by drinking sherry or rope-dancing. Poetry does provide such momentary pleasure, and it is provided by the use of metre, rhyme, and such other external aids which temper and soften even the painful emotions. But such pleasure is not the real aim of poetry. Poetry aims at a pleasure which is much higher, the pleasure which stems from the realization of truth, from inner enlightenment, and from the strengthening and purification of the emotions. Poetry makes the readers saner and purer than before.

Poetry is the instrument of the propagation of moral thoughts. Wordsworth’s poetry does not simply delight us but it also teaches us deep moral lessons and brings home to us deep philosophic truths about life and religion. Poet censured the commonly accepted theory of poetry calling it false
and vicious as it was artificial and stilted. Its spirit was also wholly wrong and mistaken as it had no hold on nature and common life. From Wordsworth’s point of view, common life also has the sufficient interest to inspire the noblest achievements of a poet, and that nature must be observed with unflinching fidelity if she was to be described with truth or freshness. He asks in The Recluse, book I, why poetry should be:

A history only of departed things
Or a mere fiction of what never was?
For the discerning intellect of man,
When wedded to this goodly universe. (803-806) 31

Wordsworth had great expectations that his poems would operate to extend the domination of sensibility for delight, honour and benefit of human nature. He believed that it was their fate, “to console the afflicted; to add sunshine to daylight, by making the happy happier; to lead the young and the gracious of every age to see, to think and to feel, and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous.” 32 Since he is a poet, he looks before and after. Poetry is immortal like the heart of man as it is source of all knowledge. Wordsworth emphasized the fact that if the labors of man of science should ever create any material revolution, poetry will then act as the complement of science. If the time should ever come when science, familiarized to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration. Wordsworth states:

“The human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants, and that one being is elevated above another…… Poet had an invincible faith that his poetry discovered the truth of nature in some new way and that it was bound to make an audience for itself—by reason of the widened sensibility, its fresh discovery of the truth of nature, and the new
pleasure it gave. To probe something fresh and original in the manifold beauty of Nature and in the mind of man and to teach or communicate this truth to his readers—that he thought was the mission of poetry.”

Poetry also plays a role of science, as it is the source of pleasure, like science, it also pursues truth and truth when discovered and communicated is always commendable. It adds to our knowledge of human life and human nature, and makes us wiser and nobler. The discovery of its truths are not through the 'meddling intellect’, but through imagination and intuition. That is why its truths are universal and general, while the truths of science are merely personal and particular. Moreover, the truths of science can be enjoyed only by the scientist, while the truths of poetry are common to all, as it is a source of pleasure to all. The poet advocates simplicity in poetic language. He argues that the language of poetry is the language spoken by common men and he develops his theory of language as a general rule but there is already difference between appearance and reality. No doubt, in major part of his poetry, we find use of simple language but he fails to stick to his own theory, when he comes across his philosophical poems particularly. In philosophical poems the poet is led away so much by philosophical thoughts that he is driven away from common speech. That is why his philosophical poems became difficult to understand. This is case in particular with highly philosophic poem like Tintern Abbey, Ode on Intimations of Immortality, and Ode to Duty:

To humbler functions, awful Power!
I call thee: I myself commend
Unto thy guidance from this hour
O, let my weakness have an end!
Give unto me, made lowly wise,
The spirit of self-sacrifice;
The confidence of reason give;
And in the light of truth thy bondman let me live! (57-64) 34

It is the power of imagination which enables the poet to universalize the particular and the personal. It is through this power that the poet arrives at universal truths. Henry Crabbe Robinson describes the process in the following words: "The poet first conceives the essential nature of his object, and then strips it of all casualties and accidental individual dress, and in this he is a philosopher; but to exhibit this abstraction nakedly would be the work of a mere philosopher; therefore, he re-clothes his idea in an individual dress which expresses the essential quality and has also the spirit and life of a sensual object. And this transmutes the philosophic into a poetic exhibition." 35

Let’s take for example, Wordsworth's theory of poetry which can perhaps be best illustrated with the poem, "Daffodils". In his "Preface to Lyrical Ballads" poet says that poems should have, as their subject, not the high and mighty or the novel, but the simple, the accessible. Poems should deal with what everyone is familiar with and then turn that familiarity on its head by imaginatively recreating the object so as to make the reader see it in a new light. He calls it "colouring of imagination". As far the use of language is concerned, the poet feels that there is no need to write in a way so as to surprise the reader with the turn of phrase, as the turn of thought would do that job. The use of simple language will lead the reader to willingly accept the new perspective. He wishes the reader to view something familiar, so that there is no resistance at the outset to 'what' the reader will see in the poem. In other words, familiar objects and familiar words are used in the poem to win over the reader. But the presentation of the poem insists upon the reader to step out of their familiarity trap. Wordsworth merges forms and words together in one
green hue and then emphasizes the silence and seclusion that one is prepared to deal with more than literal landscape.

“The sweet sensations, the feelings of pleasure and the blessed mood in which one sees into the life of things rise in sequence from the purely organic to the merging once again of human and natural.” 36

After some stanzas, the verse turns from the literal scene to its deeper significance. The literal, being minimized, the deeper significance finds human and natural in a spiritual union.

“Wordsworth’s imagery in ‘Tintern Abbey’ tends to idealize, to harmonize, and to unify. His subject is the past, present and future significance of the scene that he beholds: as he dwells on the wild green landscape, human and natural blend into one idealized whole in which the one life lives and moves and has its being.”37

After the Lyrical Ballads of 1798, landscape imagery of the purely happy sort decreases though it is present in some poems on ‘Naming of Places’. In these poems, places and persons are identified. ‘It was an April Morning’ repeats most strongly the sense of landscape alive and active as a presence:

The spirit of enjoyment and desire
And hopes and wishes from all living things
Went circling, like a multitude of sounds. (6-8) 38

In The Prelude, Wordsworth writes about his own life and constantly draws on water imagery. Water provides images for the mind and its power, for the imagination and for poetry. Water metaphors gain in significance and weight from the presence of so much actual water. The recurrent water metaphors lend weight to the water symbol of the great climatic scene on Mount Snowdon. Here literal and metaphoric waters hold together. The poet on
the mountain looks over the moonlit sea of mist covering the surrounding hills and hearing from a distant chasm the roar of waters:

**The universal spectacle throughout**

**Was shaped for admiration and delight.**

**Grand in itself alone, but in that breach (The Prelude XIII, 60-62)**  
It is the roars of water through which the homeless voice of waters rose.

So, the choice of 'Daffodils' has more to do with its commonality. Readers are very familiar with this common flower. Hence, 'ten thousand saw I at a glance', i.e. it is not a rare subject for a poem. Flower is neither rare nor noble. It is of no great consequence. Thus, it is simple, easily accessible to the reader, within the experiential horizon of the reader. If the poem were about a strange subject, the reader would not be familiar with it and hence, have no attitude toward it. So, no refashioning of the readers' taste is warranted. Whereas with daffodils, that is not the case. So, we can say that this poem reveals William Wordsworth's notion of the simple subject. The lines of the poem are largely devoid of any stylisation. 'I wandered lonely as a cloud' is as straightforward a line as 'I want a glass of water'. Thus, the language of the poem doesn't warn the reader of the estrangement he will experience. Thus, we understand the opinion of the poet when he says that the language of poetry and of prose should be the same.

In the ‘Preface to the Lyrical Ballads’, William Wordsworth protested the doctrine of eighteenth century and said that the life of a poor man can serve as a fit material for the poetry. He insists that doctrine of poetry should be derived from daily speech and coloring of imagination and material of the poetry should be simple. His poems like ‘Michael’, ‘The Solitary Reaper’, and ‘To a Highland Girl’ – to name only a few have been written keeping this in mind. Wordsworth has remarked that “all good poetry is the spontaneous
overflow of powerful feelings. It takes its origin from emotions recollected in tranquility, the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquility disappears and an emotion kindered to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and doest itself actually exist in the mind.” 40

If we consider this statement divorcing it from the part that precedes it, it would mean that a poet writes a poem as an immediate reaction to some experience. He expresses this through powerful feelings. A poem would be spontaneous if it comes directly from the pen of the poet without any premedication as a song comes from the throat of a bird. But Wordsworth qualifies his statement. He goes on to say that poems can be produced only by a man who has also thought long. Thus, it means that Wordsworth does not rule out contemplation or meditation. According to Wordsworth, our feelings are modified and directed by our thoughts which are indeed the representatives of our past feelings. He himself admits that he has “always looked steadily at his subject.” According to him, the poet is a man of great sensibility whose mentality has been already shaped.

Wordsworth’s lifelong crusade against artificial poetic diction was, as he himself did not wholly free himself from the stilted phrases of the so-called classical school. Even he could write about the ‘deadly tube’ (The Recluse, I, 27), the ‘thundering tube’, (descriptive sketches, 61), where in either case he himself means a gun; or when speaking of an eclipse of the sun, could call it-

The hour
When soul was destined to endure
That darkening of his radiant face” 41
Here Every reader will be conscious of a likeness to Wordsworth. Still Wordsworth’s use of a Burns-like simple style has something unique and unmatchable.

“Nature herself seems, I say, to take the pen out of his hand, and to write for him with her own bare, sheer, penetrating power. This arises from the profound sincereness with which Wordsworth feels his subject, and also from the profoundly sincere and natural character of his subject itself” 42

The poet can and will treat such a subject with nothing but the most plain, first-hand, almost austere naturalness. His expression may often be called bald, as for instance, in the poem The Resolution and Independence; but it is bald as the bare mountain tops are bald, with a baldness which is full of grandeur. Indeed, we feel happiest in reading his lines coming directly out of door study of nature; he is as accurate an observer as Tennyson, though his expression is simpler. Let us have a look at beautiful lines from ‘Early Spring’

**The budding twigs spread out their fan**

**To catch the breezy air. 43**

Diction is the vehicle of thoughts and words are the clothes that they wear. In fact, beautiful words are the very light of spirit. In the study of literary composition, words have paramount importance. Generally, diction seeks to observe two principal criteria, mood, fitness to theme and purpose and to sustain different interest. The problem is to determine which words fit. It’s through familiar words that the style bites into the reader. It’s through them that great thoughts gain currency and are taken in good faith…” 44

There is a difference between the diction of poetry and the diction of prose. We are concerned with poetry only. Poetry not only speaks to the intellect but also directed to the emotions as well. As Joubert points out:
“In the style of poetry, each word reverberates like the note of well-tuned lyre and always leaves behind it a multitude of vibrations.” 45

Poetry is the successful blending of the undefined and the defined in words that constitutes the triumph of the poet’s art. Diction has always associated itself with the natural speech of the time in English poetry. Wordsworth did not like the trend of poetic diction prevalent before him which he called it ‘vicious poetic diction.’ As a result of the revolution in poetic diction, Wordsworth affected Shelly, Keats, Tennyson and Swinburne. Wordsworth was not only a poetic thinker but also a literary artist. He adopted various literary forms- the narrative, the lyrical, the elegiac and the sonnet. His heroic poetry metre, sometimes cast into heroic metre, sometimes into that of the ballad but in each medium he achieved distinction. His earliest poems ‘An Evening Walk’ and ‘Descriptive Sketches’ are written in Miltonic or Spenserian Stanzas.

Wordsworth published some poems in ballad form written in narrative pattern to be sung and some are in lyric form, simple, subjective and non-narrative songs. Goody Blake and Harry Gill, The Thorn and The Idiot Boy are the only real ballads by Wordsworth in the volume. This volume is unified, of course, not by any prevailing type of poetry represented, in spite of the expectation aroused by the title, but by the uniformity of poetic style.

‘Simon Lee’ begins as a narrative poem. Its gait and its language are clumsy, even ludicrous. The first eight stanzas present a kind of narrative. Then Wordsworth changes the point of view. After Sixty nine lines Wordsworth proceeds to dramatize the incident of ‘Simon Lee’

The poem, ‘We are seven’ presents a dialogue between an adult and a little cottage girl, who is eight year old. The form is fitted to content. Wordsworth has modified the ballad stanza in this poem by rhyming the first
and the third lines except in the concluding stanza where an extra line is added after third to form a rhyming couplet.

**But they are dead; those two are dead**

**Their spirits are in heaven,**

**Twas throwing words away;**

This poem is more closed to the hymnal common measure than to ballads, as the monotonous with little variation. Four poems of simple diction in Lyrical Ballads are openly didactic. They illustrate words, ideas and beliefs. These poems ‘Lines Written in Early Spring”, to my Sister’ Expostulation and Reply and Tables Turned’. The language of these poems does not suggest the naiveté of either peasant or child. It is the language of a poet disciplined to simplicity. ‘ The Tables Turned’ modifies the ballad stanza only by cross rhyming a4-b3, a4-b3 the other three extend the second line to four feet, a4, b4, a4, b3.

Without diminishing its poetic power, Wordsworth succeeded in bringing blank verse constructively close to the language of prose and speech. In spite of a few poetic expression, the style of the poem ‘Michael’, keeps noticeably close to the language really used by men. The simplicity of language and action in ‘Michael belong to Wordsworth’s own noble severity and it was warmed by his sharing of liberty, fraternity and equality with the shepherd. The dialogue, which comprises about 125 lines of the poem, is the noblest that Wordsworth ever wrote. Written in blank verse of a rather stiff simplicity, much of it is straight narrative so unelaborated that it reads on the verge of the prosaic. “But the grave movement of the blank verse avoids the sudden slippery descents of some of the stanza poems. Equally it avoids the interspersed, detachable splendors and beauties that we find elsewhere, the obviously lovely
lines and stanzas that stand out from passages of less intensity and make an immediate effect.” 47

In “Tintern Abbey”, Wordsworth has employed the double exposure technique which gives dramatic life to this philosophic lyric. It is quite unlike both lyrics and ballads in style; for its language is not simple by any standards, in it Wordsworth has not used the language of ‘the middle and lower classes of society’. Words like ‘elevated’, ‘sublime’, ‘interfused’, ‘genial’, ‘ecstasy’ and ‘zeal’ are certainly not used by the Cumberland shepherd in his daily life. The syntax, too, is as far removed from ordinary conversation as the actual words. In ‘Tintern Abbey’, we see what is often labeled the Miltonic’s side of Wordsworth- the long involved sentences, the lofty emotions and the grand manner. Here for the first time practically Wordsworth speaks the language that he was afterwards to speak in prose and in verse, in the tract on the convention of Cintra as well as in The Prelude and The Excursion, in private letters and even in domestic conversation. With its long sentences, its involved grammar and its polysyllabic vocabulary, it was a form of discourse that abandoned all pretence to being the poetry of the people. But it was a style that came much more easily to Wordsworth, sometimes indeed too easily, and it clearly expressed something fundamental in him that had so far been denied an outlet.

The Prelude containing fourteen books has an epic like structure and sublime expression. It bears a distinctly Miltonic tone. Wordsworth’s style is sublime as it should be in an epic poem. He is indisputably the most sublime of our poets since Milton having the grandeur, austerity, sublimity in his poetry. The Prelude is a unique specimen of his poetic ‘grandeur’ ‘austerity’ and ‘sublimity’ nothing is sublime unless it transports. As we see the uplifting power of the following lines:
…..for there’s not a man
That lives whose path not known his godlike hours,
And feels not what an empire we inherit
As natural beings in the strength of Nature,  (The Prelude III, 191-94) 48

In The Prelude, different kinds of blank verse, narrative, reflective, philosophical, rapturous exist together. The Prelude might be an autobiography but it is an autobiography of epic significance, sweep and stature. The Prelude is something unique in the literature of the world. It combines the epic power and range of poems like The Divine Comedy and Paradise Lost with the introspective of voice of the writer himself. It bears several lofty utterances of Miltonic blank verse.

In his long poetic career, Wordsworth wrote more than 500 sonnets. He revived the sonnet sequence, for the nineteenth century, after two centuries of somnolence. He regarded sonnet as a great form of poetry. Wordsworth’s use of sonnet form is subjective, but hardly personal. In Elizabethan era, sonnet was a notable form of love lyric, but the poet produced no love sonnets. His sonnets are divided in various groups- ‘Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty and Order’ (1802-10), ‘Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty and Order’ (1831-45), ‘Sonnets upon the Punishment of Death’(1839-40), and the two ordered series, ‘The River Duddon’ and ‘Ecclesiastical Sketches’ and ‘Miscellaneous Sonnets’.

The sonnet is divided into two forms- Petrarchan and Shakespearean, according to the rhyme scheme employed in it. The Petrarchan sonnet has two parts of eight and six lines respectively- the octave and sestet. The octave has two rhymes and the sestet has two or three rhymes different from those employed in the octave. The Shakespearean sonnet consists of three quatrains with alternate rhymes followed by one couplet. Wordsworth usually employed
the Petrarchan form as used by Milton. He followed with little innovation Milton’s practice of driving the sense past the line-endings, with the resultant run-on lines and heavy internal pauses. Milton tends to reverse the flow of thought, with question and answer or thesis or antithesis, so does Wordsworth.

Wordsworth was highly praised for other genre of poetry also. He was highly original in odes and lyrics also. His ‘Resolution and Independence’, ‘The Solitary Reaper’, ‘I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud’, ‘Elegiac Stanzes’, ‘Intimations Ode’, etc., are the most anthologized poems in the language.

In ‘Resolution and Independence’, Wordsworth has employed a style of perfect plainness. In fact, it is a good example of Wordsworth’s ‘profound simplicity’. When we read the poem, we find many lines of extraordinary grandeur, but mingled with them are lines more pedestrian than could be found in an impressive poem from any other hand.

And, drawing to his side, to him did say,

This morning gives us promise of a glorious day. (83-84) 49

In this poem, where Wordsworth adopts a form of the Spenserian stanza, he introduces a simile, which is a fine example of the modern handling of this classical type. It is the most characteristic of his greater lyrics.

Wordsworth’s Ode to Duty is one of the noblest poems in the whole range of English literature. This ode is based on the model of Gray’s ‘Ode to Adversity’. Although a little strained both in language and sentiment, it is in its way a noble and dignified poem. To Quote:

“Gray and Horace are its models; it has, therefore, great majesty of sound, and is designed with much of the orderly and sever harmony that it celebrates. Wordsworth has forgotten his war against the eighteenth century diction, which here he uses with all his apostrophes, periphrases, antithesis and
ceremonies; but the ending is that of a prosaic hymn. Few lyrics contain so many noble and proverbial sentences.” 50

‘The Solitary Reaper’ remains a very delightful lyric with its simplicity, suggestiveness, pathos and verbal music. It illustrates Wordsworth’s theory that simple and common words should be used. Generally it is felt that Wordsworth advocates for his theory of poetry. But it is not that Wordsworth always adhered to his theory of writing in a language within the comprehension of those who used simple prose. In some poems as in Tintern Abbey, Laodamia and Immortality Ode, his diction became chaste, poetic sublime and dignified. One could not say after reading lines from Tintern Abbey that Wordsworth had propounded a theory of poetic diction insisting that there is no essential difference between the language of prose and poetry. When we read the following lines, we can notice the dignity, sublimity and philosophic intensity of the poet’s diction:

That serene and blessed mood  
In which the affections gently lead us on,  
Until the breath of this corporeal .......
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy  
We see into the life of things. (42-50) 51

In The Preface to Lyrical Ballads, poet has delineated the function of poetry. The prime object of poetry is to give pleasure to its readers. First pleasure of entertainment and then pleasure of value. Here pleasure of entertainment means mirth and relaxation, while the pleasure of value indicates information and learning. Wordsworth says:

“Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science.” 52
Poetry is an ancient and persistent element in language and evidently corresponds to a characteristically human way of seeing the world. It has been belittled as mere fancy or deceit by hard minded exponent of practicality, but on the other hand, it has also been exalted as the great revealer of truth. Shelly, in his Defence of Poetry wrote:

“It strips the veil of familiarity from the world and lays bare the naked and sleeping beauty which is the spirit of its form…..it makes the inhabitant of a world to which the familiar world is a chaos….it purges from our inward sight the film of familiarity, which obscures from us the wonder of our being. It compels us to feel that which we perceive, and to imagine that which we know. It creates a new universe after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impression blunted by reiteration.” 53

The analysis of the definition of poetry gives a sense that poetry should be of such type that can make reader nobler. It is like the torch that leads its readers on the dark path. Poetry is like the moral guide which imparts lesson. Keats, the worshipper of beauty, believes that the function of poetry is to soothe the cares and lift the thoughts of men. Moreover, poetry is the prime source of knowledge and information. It is fruitful from educational point of view. It is thought provoking that can make changes in the thinking of the people. As we see that each and every country has got some own literature, some of them are in the form of prose while other are in form of poetry and they are read and enjoyed by and large. It helps them in shaping their attitude and sharpening their thoughts.

Wordsworth was fully conscious of the distinction between the man of genius and the common man. The difference, he admits is only a difference of degree and in asserting it, he is seeking to democratize literature. But let us look minutely at poet’s qualities. 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. The poet is a man speaking to men. Speaking is an essential term since Wordsworth preferred reciting his poems. The poet thinks and feels in the spirit of human passion. Moreover, the poet is capable of entering into the feelings of others. Wordsworth expresses his views about a poet and his personality. He is one man among men who speaks quietly what moves his heart and what is most central to his deeper thoughts on the interrelation of man, nature and transcendental. In fact, the poet has a distinctive imaginative faculty which enables to conjure up passions different from ordinary beings.

From Wordsworth’s point of view, a poet has a noble mission to carry out. In spite of being a distinguished personality, he has to discharge some social and moral duties. It is the role of the great poet to rectify the feelings in men, and make their feelings more pure, sane and permanent. His work should be designed in such a way that it can humanize the readers and they may be purified. The poet is a teacher and through the medium of poetry he imparts moral lessons for the welfare of mankind. In another words, we can say that the poet should teach the great lesson how to live in society and he should at the same time offer both an emotional and rational gratification to the human mind.

Generally it is said that the dimension of a poet’s imagination is beyond thinking. Wordsworth was gifted with imaginative faculty and he used this power to see into reality. In order to understand Wordsworth’s view on imagination, we have to go to his poems, and to his letter. In ‘The Preface’, the word occur first when Wordsworth tells us that his purpose has been to select incidents and situations from humble and common life and make them look uncommon and unusual by throwing over them a coloring of imagination. In The Preface 1815, poet says that:
“Imagination in the sense of the word as giving title to a class of the following poems, has no reference to images that are merely a faithful copy, existing in the mind of absent, of absent external objects, but is a word of higher import denoting operation of the mind upon those objects, and processes of creation of composition governed by certain fixed laws” 54

This clarifies that imagination is a transforming and transfiguring power which presents the usual in an unusual light. Thus imagination is creative and a shaping power. It is the imagination of the poet which imparts to nature, the ‘glory and freshness of a dream’, the light that never was on land and sea. There is a saying among men that a poet is highly imaginative. On the wings of imagination he travels faster than ever The Sun. To Quote Wordsworth:

“The poet is the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs, in spite of things silently gone out of mind and things violently destroyed, the poet binds together by passions and knowledge; of the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth and over all time.” 55

A poet is a man of extraordinary intellect and observation who has command over human nature which permits him to convert the emotion of people in to poetic form. It is the duty of the poet and citizen of the society to preserve the existence of the language used by them. As a lot of changes are taking place in the world, these continuous changes in the society require a enhancement in the form of language, but it should be achieved only through literature and it should be based on purest form. Hence, the level of the language is also affected. That is why, a poet should have a command over language so that its natural form does not get distorted. Language plays a very crucial role in connecting people and in revealing cultural identity without
which we cannot unite people and society. In this regard, Coleridge announced in a lecture:

“The poet is one who carries the simplicity of childhood into the powers of mankind; who, with a soul unsubdued by habit, unshackled by custom, contemplates all things with the freshness and wonder of a child.” 56

To conclude, the discussion focuses Wordsworth’s peculiar view of his theory of poetry. He announces a return to simplicity, to simple themes and simple language and teaches that a true poet finds sufficient inspiration in the simplest sights of life and nature. He speaks only what we are, and is prepared to write nothing that is not justified by the actual truth of things. He sets himself against that species of poetry which finds its impulse and passion in morbid or exaggerated sentiment. According to the poet, even the meanest flower that blows can give thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears’, and by preserving his soul in poetry which will affect even the lowliest of men, because it is expressed in the plain and unadorned language of common life. Wordsworth’s theory of poetry has become a matter of debate. It is said that occasionally his theory of poetry itself breaks down. Even in 1798, he departs from his theories in order to obtain his most striking poetical successes. The poems such as ‘Expostulation and Reply’, ‘the Tables Turned’, ‘To My Sister’, ‘Ode to Duty’ and ‘Tintern Abbey’ belie his theory of poetry yet Wordsworth’s contribution to English poetry and poetic diction is superb. In fact he ushered a new era in English poetry by his theory of poetry and poetic diction. In history of English literature he is awarded a pre-eminent place of honour and distinction.
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