

**Ode On Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood :**  
**The Immortal Ode**

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***Abstract:***

*The present paper concentrates on how Wordsworth's poem 'The Immortality Ode' is immortal in English literature. The paper analyses various marked qualities of the poem like childhood glory, philosophical traits, beauty of nature, the immortality of the soul etc. The journey of the soul through lives has been a charming theme for the Romantic poets. The poem also traces the development of poet's mind. Here childhood is idealised. The poem also deals with autobiographical element. The poem is a poetic account of immortal nature of the human spirit.*

***Key Words:*** Immortality, Childhood, Soul, Romantic, Prophet, Celestial.

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‘The Immortality Ode’ is one of the most famous poems in English literature. It is the greatest poem in the whole series of Wordsworth’s poems. Wordsworth reached one of the highest peaks of the English poetry of the Romantic period with this ode. In fact it is the land mark in the history of English poetry.

The theme of the poem is very simple but thoughts conveyed are great. It deals with the theme of the immortal nature of human spirit which is intuitively known by the child and partly forgotten by the growing man. But this spirit is to be known once more in maturity through intense experience of heart and mind Wordsworth’s philosophy of nature is beautifully expressed in this poem. According to the title, the poem deals with the knowledge of the immortality of the soul, or recollection of childhood. Wordsworth believed in the divine origin of the soul. The child is aware of this divine origin and had a direct touch with divinity. His soul is in direct communion with the divine spirit. As he grows up, he goes on losing the touch with spirit because of his attachment with material world. In fact this is beautifully explained in his sonnet “The World Is Too Much with Us”. The loss of childhood glory is recurrent theme of Wordsworth’s poetry.

‘The Immortality Ode’ contains three different sections. The first section consists of the first four stanzas containing a reference ‘to the childhood light’. It speaks about childhood glory.

The objects of nature are the same now when the poet has grown up, but he has realized that 'There hath, past away a glory from the earth'. While he looks around him as the joy spread over the earth and he hears the shepherd boy shouting. The poet describes the joyous atmosphere of nature round the happy child and expresses his own joy at hearing the voices of happy children. The joyous atmosphere of nature also reminds him of 'Something that is gone'. The poet left wondering about where that 'visionary gleam has fled and where it is now'. The first section ends with this question. The poet has described the beauty of nature. He has also described his perception and enjoyment of this beauty. He is conscious of a 'celestial light' enveloping all objects of the earth. He sees the children at play and tries to feel happy with them. But very soon his happiness is cut short by his sense of the loss of glory. The first section ends with the poet's questioning about the loss.

The second part of the poem moves from childhood memory to the theme of immortality. The poet speaks about the idea of immortality of the soul and pre-existence. The poet tells where the glory has gone. According to him the child enjoys the real glory, which gradually fades as he grows up. Earth is kindly foster mother of man. She tries to lure the child away from heaven by offering all the pleasures and pleasant, pursuits. Nature makes him forget his desire for the spiritual home. But very soon he finds himself absorbed in the worldly pursuits. He starts speaking the language of business, the language of lovers and the words of dispute. Then he takes up different roles till he grows old. The poet describes the life of the child whom, he calls 'Mighty Prophet I see blest'. The child is unaware of the vastness of his soul. He is the best philosopher. This fact is interestingly reasserted by Tagore in his poem 'Playthings'. However the child despite his divine nature loses this power gradually when he gets absorbed in worldly affairs. He goes on losing his vision of glory and his 'heaven born freedom'.

The third part of the poem is an attempt to vindicate the value of a life from which 'vision' has fled. The poet offers a consolation for the anguish felt over the loss of divine glory. The theme of the recollection of early childhood is introduced here. According to poet 'the glory

has not entirely gone'. It lives in our memory and can be revived through recollections of childhood.

Though the poet is old and his recollections are shadowy, he feels happy even though he can not get back to the real splendor of former years. He decides not to grieve and to find 'strength in what remains behind'. The poem grows philosophic and tries to see things positively. The poet reaffirms his love of nature which has taken a sober colouring because of his growing awareness of the human destiny. He is conscious of man's limits but offers his thanks for the tenderness, joys and fear of the human heart which sustain him inspite of the loss of glory in this mortal world. Thus Wordsworth has developed his themes and ideas related to childhood, pre existence and immortality carefully. The three parts of the ode are not harmoniously blended together. The irregularity of structure is not due to his carelessness but due to an immediacy and powerful nature, outrush of the thoughts which could not be fixed in limited frame. The famous critic Bowra says,

"The three parts of the ode deal in turn with a crisis, an explanation and consolation and in all three Wordsworth speaks of what is most important and most original in his poetry".

'The Immortality Ode' can also be called an autobiographical poem. In this poem the poet unlocks his heart and describes a crisis in his intellectual development. The ode deals with his childhood glory and the poets loss of 'vision' in his advancing years. The 'Ode' marks the beginning of decline in his poetic power.

Like 'Tintern Abbey' in this poem the poet appears to be a philosopher. The first four stanzas of the poem are lyrical and emotional but in the fifth stanza the poet embarks upon philosophy. The middle part of the poem gives Wordsworth's philosophy of childhood. But the poet's philosophy is direct and simple. In fact Wordsworth could not become a successful philosopher though he tried to be one.

'The Ode' deals with two childhoods, the childhood everyone experiences as a child after birth and the childhood which we carry within us like memory. These two childhoods may be

called 'visible childhood' and 'invisible childhood'. The poet describes the experience of both these childhoods and contrasts with material world.

The poem is written in an irregular form though it looks like a 'Pindric Ode'. There is no definite rhyming. The diction of poem is comparatively not very simple because it deals with complicated thought, the diction is little serious.

Despite of the structural disintegrity 'The Ode' remains the greatest of Wordsworth's poems. The fusion of philosophy and poetry in this poem is perfect. It received worldwide appreciation for its sheer beauty of language and thought.

'The Immortality Ode' is one of the greatest of Wordsworth's odes. It is a poetic account of immortal nature of the human spirit. So we can say that 'Immortality Ode' is the immortal ode in English literature.

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