

Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction

(BA Part 3rd Eng Hons paper 5th 2019-20)

Dr. Vishnulok Bihari Srivastava
Department of English
Rohtas Mahila College
Sasaram, VKSU, Ara
Mob – 7061253035

Vishnuloksrivastava@gmail.com

Wordsworth was essentially a poet. He was a die-hard supporter of romantic approach to poetry and wanted to take poetry as a platform to express personal feelings and emotions. He launched a stern opposition with classical ideology where there was least opportunity for the poet to share his feelings with the masses. He on the contrary took poetry as a medium to develop an association with the masses which was largely denied to his predecessors. He launched a tirade of vilification against any attempt to thwart the possibility of personal feelings migrating within the framework of poetry.

He was destined to be a critic neither by training nor by temperament. Wordsworth theory of poetic diction is found in the preface to the Lyrical Ballads published in the year 1800. It was written in collaboration with his friend Coleridge. His theory of poetic diction revolves round the idea that there is no essential difference between the language of poetry and the language of prose. No specific vocabulary should be preferred for both of them. Poetry can be written in the same language which is accepted for the composition of a prose piece. In the words of Wordsworth, "there is neither is nor can be any essential difference between the language of prose and the language of poetry". This implies that no special vocabulary is

reserved for poetry. Any attempt to use a specific vocabulary or diction for poetry should not be allowed since it does not require a vocabulary other than that use for prose. Actually Wordsworth was fed up with the artificial use of language in poetry which is characterized in the poetry of the Neo- Classical poets. The 18th century poets invented a special vocabulary for poetry. They craved for police, refinement and ornamentation in poetry for which specific terminology was required. Ordinary language or the language of prose was incapable of carry forth poetic refinement. Dr. Johnson praised the poetry of Dryden and Pope for using well-chiselled and high sounding words which suited to his Augustan during that period poetic language had become completely artificial and ornamental. Figurative language was used in poetry. The result was that poetry had travelled far away from common speech. Wordsworth raised his voice against artificial poetic diction and inane phraseology. He pleaded for the language spoken by men of rural areas to bring poetic language nearer to the language of common masses and detested and figurative language in poetry.