

## THE THEME OF LIVINGNESS, FREEDOM AND IDENTITY IN THE SELECTED WORKS OF P.B. SHELLEY

**Dr RAMESH KUMAR SHUKLA**

Assistant Professor and Head,  
Dept. of English, M.L.K P.G. College, Balrampur  
Mob. 9451032296

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### ABSTRACT

P.B Shelley (4 August, 1792- 8 July 1822) is one of the most Romantic Poets of England. He is known for his prophetic vision, lyrical brilliance and revolutionary ideas. His major literary works are Queen Mob (1813), Mont Blane (1816), Hymn to Intellectual Beauty (1816), and Love's Philosophy (1819), Ode to the West Wind (1819), To A Skylark (1820), The Cloud (1820), Prometheus Unbound (1820), Ode to Liberty (1820), Adonis (1821), and The Defence of Poetry (1821).

P.B Shelley's poetry explores his belief that all existence is in the connected. Moreover, nature and human mind both are dynamic, constantly shifting and intimately connected. Nature is a living and breathing entity. It is governed by an unseen "spirit of beauty" or "intellectual beauty". The wind, river, mountain, cloud, skylark and so on; all are manifestations of a vast and living universe. Shelley believes that the human mind is a lens through which the world achieves "livingness". Shelley believes that the poet has a prophetic mind. He has inner power to guide humanity towards freedom. His bending of mind is full of freedom and individuality.

This paper explores Shelley's visionary thought of freedom, prophecy, identity and romanticism. He has quest for freedom in his own life is well as cosmic. In his Ode to Liberty, he argues that freedom is an absolute necessity for human creativity and happiness. He has a strong voice against the corrupting institutions of monarchy and tyranny of England in 1819.

**Keywords:** Individuality, Nature, Imagery, Beauty, Romanticism

### INTRODUCTION

P.B. Shelley sets the standard for literature of his own period. He focuses on man's ability to remove himself from the commonplace and initiate for change. He explores new ideas through the power of imagination and creativity. P.B Shelley emphasises man's continual struggle to deal with ever changing state of the universe. He uses both his poetry and prose to highlight the inevitability of change within the human realm. His revolutionary spirit is shaped by his profound disillusionment with the political and social reality of his era. The revolutionary spirit in Shelley's work is not confined to his critiques of political structures. It extends to his vision of the role of the poet, thinker, reformer and an artist in the society. Shelley believes that poetry can inspire social change by awakening people's imaginations to higher ideals. Shelley's works also delve into broader humanistic themes, questioning the nature of power, the fragility of human existence and the possibilities of transcendence. He believed that war is a tool for ruling

classes to maintain their power at the expense of ordinary people. Like William Wordsworth, Shelley observes a spirit permeating the objects of Nature. This spirit in Shelley's views is the spirit of Love and the poet identifies the spirit of Nature with the spirit of Love. Shelley sees in every object of Nature a subtle beauty of the spirit capable of thinking, feeling and expressing, in quite the same way as man. P.B. Shelley believes that if Nature is approached with love, it can make one's life really lovely.

### **Freedom and Identity in Ode to Liberty**

Shelley is fond of freedom and liberty. He loves the spark of idea of freedom to scatter in the whole world. He believes that freedom is a living and breathing force of nature. He suggests to the humankind for a wild historical road trip which is essential for creativity and innovation.

#### **P.B Shelley says-**

“A glorious people vibrated again  
The lightning of the nations: Liberty  
From heart to heart, from tower to tower, o'er Spain,  
Scattering contagious fire into the sky,  
Gleamed. My soul spurned the chains of its dismay,  
And in the rapid plumes of song  
Clothed itself, sublime and strong;  
As a young eagle soars the morning clouds among,  
Hovering inverse o'er its accustomed prey;  
Till from its station in the Heaven of fame  
The Spirit's whirlwind rapped it, and the ray  
Of the remotest sphere of living flame  
Which paves the void was from behind it flung,  
As foam from a ship's swiftness, when there came  
A voice out of the deep: I will record the same.”

Here, Shelley realizes that liberty requires an internal shift. Only to change the government is not sufficient for revolution. For Shelley freedom is not incredibly fragile, so our honest effort and struggle must be continued to keep it alive

### **Individuality and Nature in the poem Ode to the West Wind**

In the poem Ode to the West Wind the poet believes that the West Wind is destroyer and preserver both. He is praying to the West Wind to lift him as a leaf, as a cloud and as a wave. P.B. Shelley uses the West Wind for his own creative power. He is wishing to be wind's "Lyre" for his "dead thoughts" to be scattered across the universe to quicken a new birth of thoughts in society. The poem explores his personal experience of morality through his words.

#### **He says-**

"If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;  
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;  
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free  
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even  
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,  
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed  
Scarce seem'd a vision; I would ne'er have striven.  
As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.  
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!  
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bow'd  
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud."

**Further he says-**

"Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:  
What if my leaves are falling like its own!  
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies  
Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,  
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,  
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!  
Drive my dead thoughts over the universe  
Like wither'd leaves to quicken a new birth!  
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth  
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!  
Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth  
The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,  
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"

**-Ode to the West Wind**

Here, we can see that there is much synthesis of Individuality and Nature both. The poet depicts the use of destructive and creative forces of natural world as a metaphor for personal and social regeneration. The poem Ode to the West Wind represents a shift in Romantic ideals, where Nature is not a tranquil escape but a tameless and violent force which inspires the individual's desire for transformative change. The wind is a chaotic and uncontrollable entity that sweeps away the "dead leaves". The Nature is much energetic and moving through the landscapes, the sky and the ocean. The poem is full of hope and aspiration.

**Freedom and Identity in Shelley's To a Skylark**

In the poem To a Skylark Shelley's individuality is seen by its spontaneous and intermediated art. He depicts the Skylark as a "Blithe Spirit". It is not a mortal bird. The skylark is recercing continuously. But human beings are suffering from human miseries like sorrow, fear and death.

Shelley expresses his individuality also as The Skylark is soaring higher and higher in the sky. If individuality lies in the freedom from earthly boundaries and societal conditioning. The skylark is teaching its unique joy and wisdom.

**P.B. Shelley says-**

"Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!  
Bird thou never wert,  
That from Heaven, or near it,  
Pourest thy full heart  
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher  
From the earth thou springest  
Like a cloud of fire!  
The blue deep thou wingest,  
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest."

**- To A Skylark**

Here, Shelley explores the song of skylark is full of spontaneity. It is full of dignity. The poet says that if he himself could learn the 'half of the gladness' from the skylark, the world would listen to his poetry in the same spellbound way it listens to the bird's divine melody. The poet compares the skylark as - 'high- born maiden', 'a glow- warm' and a 'rose'.

**The Theme of Individuality and Nature in The Cloud**

P.B Shelley explores in the poem " The Cloud" that the cloud is almighty like God. He personified that cloud is the daughter of earth and water. The cloud also interacts with the sun, moon and stars. The cloud's individuality is highly tied to its endless transformations.

In Percy Bysshe Shelley's poem The Cloud nature is elaborated as an immortal and dynamic force. The cloud acts as a bridge between the physical ground and the earth. The several forms of cloud are snow, hail, rain and mist. Nature works in harmony and conflict. The cloud interacts with sea, man, mountains and oceans. It nourishes flower with rain.

**P.B. Shelley says-**

" I am the daughter of Earth and Water,  
And the nursling of the Sky;  
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;  
I change, but I cannot die.  
For after the rain when with never a stain  
The pavilion of Heaven is bare,  
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams  
Build up the blue dome of air,  
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,  
And out of the caverns of rain,  
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,

I arise and unbuild it again."

**-The Cloud**

## CONCLUSION

Shelley uses nature as his primary source of inspiration for his literary works. He believes that the natural world holds a sublime power over his imagination. He imagines nature as a creative power. The power of human mind becomes equal to the power of nature. Shelley uses the west wind, is active, dynamic, messenger, mighty, living, most powerful, in poems such as Ode to Liberty, Ode to the West Wind, To a Skylark, and The Cloud. The wind encourages new life on the earth and social progress among humanity throughout futurity. He is an innovative and revolutionary poet by mind and soul. He has a deep quest for freedom, liberty and identity. So he is always emphasizing for identity, individuality, power, help and support to the nature.

"Yet, Freedom, yet, thy banner, torn but flying,  
Streams like a thunder-storm against the wind."

**—Byron**

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