



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

**A STUDY OF THE ELEMENTS OF PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT AND LIFE SKILLS  
PRESENT IN THE POETRY OF ROMANTIC AGE OF ENGLISH LITERATURE**

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*(Lecturer in English and Scholar)*doi: <https://doi.org/10.33329/joell.64.19.29>**ABSTRACT**

Personality development and life skills are the two phrases which reverberate in the classrooms and workshops across the academia whether it is through the management gurus or professional trainers. The stream of imparting training and instruction in the field of personality development largely focuses on motivational stories of the successful entrepreneurs or scientists. Many instructors and trainers are trapped in the mindset that the paradigm of personality development is only present in the realms of successful business stories or extraordinary achievements of a few who are involved in the money making process or in the process of inventing something extraordinary. Personality development does not mean only to look at the life as a mere mechanism of achieving something which would become a commercial success. The volume of the money we earn does not signify the magnanimity of our personality or life skills we possess. Life is beyond than what we just ascribe it with prosperity in terms of material gains. Romantic age in English literature is resplendent with the thought provoking poetry of great masters who involved in the life process to the fullest extent and showcased the wonders of poetic temper that can shape and reshape one's personality which is utmost important in living one's life to the fullest extent. It deals with the contemplation of life, it invokes a sense of truth that is prevalent throughout the life. Poetry is the criticism of life. If we cannot put up the life for the litmus test of the poetry, we will miss what life is, in its actuality, meant to be.

My paper would deal with the elements of teaching that are present in Romantic age poetry which can augment our experience of life culminating in the development of an individual's personality

**Keywords:** Romanticism, Pain and pleasure, Success and Failure, Belonging, Souls of lonely places, Depression and anxiety.



Literature mirrors life. With the publication of Lyrical Ballads by William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1837), the Literature of England heralded into a new era. The time was one of the epoch making instances in the world's literary history. William Wordsworth, S T Coleridge, P B Shelly, John Keats, Lord Byron, Robert Southey etc., enlightened the minds of the literate as well as illiterate towards the brilliance of literature in showing a path to lead the life to its fullest extent. With the feelings of a common man, with the language of a common man they have created magnificent forms of literary creations. The poetry of this era is enriched by the deepest thoughts ever conceived by a sensitive mind; the poetry of Romantic age is like a man speaking to men. The poet possesses the Secondary imagination which is creative and possessed by genius which works as a creative process favoring the creation of poem.

William Wordsworth was considered as a man at helm in Romantic age. He was a nature poet, his nature poetry reveals inner most feelings of heart. One of his fabulous poems 'The Prelude contains following lines in which human psychology is encapsulated in a nut shell.

*"The mind of Man is fram'd even like the breath  
And harmony of music. There is a dark  
Invisible workmanship that reconciles  
Discordant elements, and makes them move  
In one society"*

The harmony is needed to live life happily; the breath and the music indentify the grandeur of rhythm present in nature. The word 'workmanship' reveals the truth that human mind and body is created with utmost care and delicacy of attention. The above stanza teaches the point of life skill that the very live we are enjoying as embodied physical beings is very precious and we have the responsibility of preserving and nourishing it in right direction.

The life is not a limited phenomenon of animated beings only, but it pervades inanimate beings too. When we understand this truth we give

respect to the nature with total reverence and will hold the responsibility of protecting it. For Wordsworth the hills, the dales, and even empty spaces are the reflections of emanating soul in it.

*"Ye Presences of Nature, in the sky  
And on the earth! Ye Visions of the hills!  
And Souls of lonely places"*

Man thinks he is the superior being and he only posses the soul which is indestructible but for a poet every aspect of nature is resplendent with ever emanating soul.

Ode to Duty is a poem in which the right path of performing one's responsibilities within one's efficacy is explained with abundant attention towards the element of confidence.

*"Oh! if through confidence misplaced  
They fail, thy saving arms, dread Power! around  
them cast"*

The confidence shall be weighed on par with pros and cons of the situation. Under estimation or over confidence both are to be purged off in order to get success in life. Misplaced confidence is dangerous and self annihilating. We need clarity always but not misplaced confidence. We teach out students and children to have confidence but without having clarity if we have confidence it becomes disastrous.

Micheal is a poem about a father who was waiting for a son to come. The son was his hope and his reason to be alive, the poem singles out the importance of parent and progeny relationship which is more valuable than the life itself. The poem would teach the importance of aging parents and it seeks the children to have concern on their parents.

*"Thus in his Father's sight the Boy grew up:  
And now, when he had reached his eighteenth year,  
He was his comfort and his daily hope".*

The grownup boy for Michael is the only comfort during the dusk of life. Father felt happy that the child has grown from a boy as a man at his sight. The poem reveals how tender the parental



affections is. The life skill directs us towards the life givers.

Percy Bysshe Shelly was another prominent poet of the romantic age whose poetry is revered for its revolutionary dynamism of life. He is a revolutionary romantic; he is known for his well crafted poems which are imbued with energy and marvelous ideas of life. Life's lessons are well knit throughout the fabric of his poetic craftsmanship. Poet turns towards the nature for the solace he needs. Fellow human beings may not be at our help in the times of trial but nature never leaves us alone. One can sleep under the shade of a tree when one feels tired of labor, one can take a sweet deep breath if one feels tension of angst during the course of his daily life. Poet asks the West wind to lift him from the thorns of life on which he has befallen and bled. Life's course always runs in an unexpected way, but the mother nature always would be there for us to embrace and nourish our energies to wage war against the intricacies of times.

*"Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!*

*I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!"*

But the poem never ends with the pessimistic or nihilistic note, it vehemently protests against the surrender. Life lies in hope, life lives for future, making the present a point to be reckoned with.

*"Drive my dead thoughts over the universe*

*Like wither'd leaves to quicken a new birth!*

*And, by the incantation of this verse,"*

Poet seeks new birth, the hopeless man is dead, the failure died, the new birth is at the threshold. Life becomes worthy to be lived when we encounter pain and at the same time long for bliss and change. Dead thoughts are like dried dead leaves, we have to cast them far off, as there is no place for the dead among the living. Yesterday is gone today is in our hands to shape the future. What else can teach this life's lesson in a more profound manner than this?

*"If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?"*

If difficulties, hardships, pains, tears are the companion of today, cannot brighter day, the tomorrow near? Just a leap, why feel deserted, destitute, and fall a prey depression and anxiety. Poetry has the capacity to wean us out of the habit of consuming the inconsumable. The hope on tomorrow the clarity on today will surely fetch the bright day for us.

For Shelly the joy is present everywhere, it is not in dreadful habits which can toll death sentence to that habit maker. But the pure essence of joy that enlivens every atom of the universe has the potential to energize the enervated souls. To a looking eye the beauty the joy would be oozing out at every phenomenon of the creation. Referring to a bird skylark Shelly says..

*"Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun".*

Pantheism advocates that the presence of God is felt in every cell and in every organism present in the existence. Observing the presence of that omnipresence makes us feel that we are not isolated but our belonging is very much among us. Never losing the sense of belonging is guarantor of boundless peace and perseverance. Poet asks the bird to teach him the reason of its mellifluousness, the reason for its unabated joy as for a seeker entire universe is a teacher/guru incarnation. For a searching soul every pebble is a key to the secrets the universe abides with, with true humility, if we approach a sapling, or a piece of stone, or a flying bird or a beast, there they shower something for us to brood upon and get enlightened.

*'Teach us, Sprite or Bird,*

*What sweet thoughts are thine:*

*I have never heard*

*Praise of love or wine*

*That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine'.*

Only sweet thoughts can make one beautiful in his attire or in his approach towards life. The divine is not present in wine but in the lovely thoughts of an



innocent mind which never fret or fever the sight of the life impending. For an immature nerd, the learning place may not exist anywhere but for the true seeker of knowledge every aspect of the nature is the teacher.

Hellenism is a way of finding and adoring the beauty which is present in mind's eye and manifested in the external objects of nature and existence. John Keats is the high priest of expressing the Hellenistic view of art and imagination expressed profoundly in his poems. His poem 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' is filled with the fragrance of beauty in its lines. While reading the poem we come across a line where, if we pause it can teach us, the importance of meditative mind is exemplified with due veneration.

*"Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard  
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;"*

One can hear the unheard melodies when one can in deep silence, the mind's voice shall be pacified at the very first instance, and then we can hear the melody of entire universe. The music is everywhere, every grain of creation resonates with the celestial music which soothes and empowers the bereaved souls. But to listen to it, it is not possible in the modern world of cantankerous hostilities. Man has turned against his own self; greed numbed his sensitivity towards tears of destitute. He has forgotten that in the good of others his good lies, in the protection of nature his protection lies. When one delves deep into the meditative mood, the nature pours its tastiest blessings on the seeker. To be meditative is the first step to become receptive, with receptivity only one can excel in studies or life. After all we must in possession of beautiful soul and 'beauty is truth and truth is beauty'

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