

Love as the Root & Basis of Shelley's Nature

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Abstract: Shelley's friend Hogg tells us that love was the root and basis of Shelley's nature. The love first developed as domestic affection next as friendship, then as a youth's passion, and then it began to shine with steady luster as an all embracing devotion to his fellowmen. He had an intense and glowing passion of unselfishness, which throughout his life led him to find his strongest interests in the joys and sorrows of his fellow creatures, which inflamed his imagination with visions of his fellow creatures, which inflamed his imagination with visions of humanity made perfect and which filled his days with sweet deeds of unremembered charities.

He ran after women, every time thinking that he had come across a perfect model of love. but as soon as the cold finger of reality touched them, they were reduced to the most ordinary women of flesh and blood, not dream-brides of his heart. As his love of intellectual pursuits was vehement, and the vigor of his genius almost celestial, so were the purity and sanctity of his life most conspicuous. I never know any one so prone to admire as he was, in whom the principle of veneration was so strong. I could never discern in him any more than two fixed principles. The first was a strong irresponsible love of liberty and the second was an equally ardent love of toleration of all opinions. Like Plato, Shelley believed in cosmic love. In 'Epipsychidion' we have Shelley fullest expression of Platonic theory of love.

Although Shelley belongs to the class of aristocracy but he doesn't inherit the defiant waywardness of his class. He doesn't possess in him the seeds of empty pride and defiant high-headedness along with an utter lack of human sympathy and general goodwill as we generally find in the children of aristocratic families whereas Keats belongs to the middle class family.

Keywords: Passion, toleration, imagination, penetration, incarnation and Eternal Love etc.

I. Introduction

In Introduction I would like to analyze about P.B. Shelley who belongs to the younger generation of Romantic Revival. He escaped from the hard realities of life. In reference of the topic I, hereby, would like to make a humble attempt to find out how he was lover of nature. He was one of the major English romantic poets and is considered as one of the finest lyric poets. He is famous for his association with Keats and Byron. Although he belongs to the class of aristocracy but he doesn't inherit the defiant waywardness of his class. He doesn't possess in him the seeds of empty pride and defiant high-headedness along with an utter lack of human sympathy and general goodwill as we generally find in the children of aristocratic families whereas Keats belongs to the middle class family.

He had two principles. The first was a strong irresponsible love of liberty; of liberty in the abstract and somewhat after the pattern of the ancient republics, without reference to the English constitution, respecting which he know little and cared nothing, heading it not at all. The second was an equally ardent love of toleration of all opinions, put move especially of religious opinions; of toleration, complete, entire, universal, unlimited; and, as deduction and corollary from which, latter principle, he felt and intense abhorrence of persecution of every kind public or private." The following lines give us a glimpse of his love for liberty.

.....Obedience
Base of all genius, virtue, freedom, truth
Makes slaves of men, and, of the human frame
A mechanized automation.

He ran after women, every time thinking that he had come across a perfect model of love but as soon as the cold finger of reality touched them, they were reduced to the most ordinary women of flesh and blood, not dream-brides of his heart. This miserable condition of Shelley's own heart finds an eloquent expression in *Hymn to Pan*.

He pursued a maiden and clasped a reed Gods and men we are deluded thus It breaks in our bosom and them we bleed. But this frustration in human love did not embitter Shelley's ideas about the spirit of the ideal love, which, according to him was sole productive source of goodness, the supreme agency for the regeneration of mankind, and which interpenetrated 'even earth's granite mass.' Shelley believed that love and beauty haunted

his imagination and he pursued it everywhere in his verses. He describes this in *Epipsychidion*, he follows it in *Alastor*, and he sings of it in the Hymn to Intellectual Beauty.

Like Plato, Shelley believed in cosmic love. In *Epipsychidion* we have Shelley's fullest expression of Platonic theory of love. He lends his lyrical melody to the Greek Philosopher when he describes the complete union of the souls of lovers:

The fountains of our deepest life, shall be
Confused in Passions' golden purity,
As mountain-springs under morning sun.
.....
One hope within two wills, one will beneath
Two overshadowing minds, one life, one death
One Heaven, one Hell, one immortality,
And one annihilation.

Shelley was obsessed with a passion, which no man has ever felt more strongly than him – the desire to penetrate the mysteries of existence. He was forever probing beneath the hard outer crust of life, with a view to finding out 'the one spirit's plastic stress behind external variation of forms.' Love is the governing principle of Shelley's life and poetry. And is the basis of his philosophical thoughts. It is, according to him, 'the bond and the sanction which connects, not only man with man, but with everything which exists'¹. It is the governing force and the cementing power in the universe. Shelley feels its presence everywhere:

Great Spirit, deepest love
Which rulest and dost more
All things which live and are²

What is love? – Shelley asks and gives us the reply: "It is that powerful attraction towards all that we conceive, of fear or hope of an insufficient void and seek to awaken in all things that are a community with what we experience within ourselves. If we reason, we would be understood; if we imagine, we would that the airy children of our brain were born anew within another's; if we feel, we would that another's nerves should vibrate to our own, that the beams of their eyes should kindle at once and mix and melt into our own, that lips of motionless ice should not reply to lips quivering and burning with the heart's best blood. This is love." Yes, this is love experienced on the physical plane of life. Many of the blunders in Shelley's own life were the incarnations of ideal Beauty and Love. But every time he was disappointed. They were women of flesh and blood, full of human weaknesses and feminine frailties. The reason for this 'Platonic' dilution was known to Shelley. It consisted 'in seeking in a mortal image the likeness of what is perhaps eternal.' But Shelley wanted to remain under the hypnotic charms of that elusive love. He could easily transfigure the women he loved into:

A mortal shape endured
With love and life and light and deity
And motion which may change but cannot die;
An image of some bright Eternity
A shadow of some golden dream;³

For Shelley, true love means ideal love. He does not reveal in its sensuous aspects. Most of his love poems are spiritual and abstract in idea. In fact, he loves 'love' far more than he loves a woman. He is aware of love's 'sad satiety', but he gives us the fullest expression of his Platonic theory of love. For him, Love is the realized perfection of all that is good and beautiful in the world. The spirit of love is the sustaining force of the universe. In the absence of this Spirit the glorious world would be reduced to a formless chaos. Love 'interpenetrates Earth's granite mass.' Every object of nature is aglow with sparkling blaze of love. Love is the power.

This through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea.

Its presence is felt everywhere. All things are subject to Fate, Time, Occasion and Change, except Eternal Love. True love exists where there is complete union of the souls of lovers:

One hope within two wills, one will beneath
Two overshadowing minds, one life one death
One Heaven, one Hell, one immortality,
And one annihilation.

He emphasizes this principle of union in Love's Philosophy also:

The fountains mingle with the river
And the rivers with the ocean
The winds of Heaven mix for ever
With a sweet emotion;

Nothing in this world is single
All things by a law divine
In one spirit meet and mingle
Why not I with thine?

Although Shelley did not care much for any of Keats' poetry except *Hyperion*, yet he was deeply moved, through his imagination rather than his affections. By the story of Keats's death. He paid homage to his memory in the elegy of *Adonais*, which takes its place in the literature beside the lament of Moschus for Bion and of Milton for *Lycidas*. His love for Keats is expressed in the following lines of *Adonais* which may be quoted in this reference:

I weep for Adonais – he is dead!
O, weep for Adonais, though our tears
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!
And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
And teach them thine own sorrow! Say, 'With me
Died Adonais; till the Future dares
Forget the Past his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity.'

II. Conclusion:

Shelley wanted to reform the whole society, the whole world. He loved mankind intensely and wanted that it should get rid of priests, kings and religion that turn this garden of love into a graveyard. He wanted liberty and equality for every individual. He was deadly against private property or monarch. He was so daring in his attitude towards orthodox Christianity that he was considered an atheist for quite a long time. He wanted that love and sympathy, not power, should rule the world. He wanted to improve the social relationships and lessen the exploitation of the poor. With so much of the milk of human kindness, we wonder how he came to be called an atheist. He was a revolutionary. He lacked human interest, if Marx lacked it a poet who can so pertinently read each woe of the suffering human race, cannot beat his wings in the void in vain.

In fact, Shelley must be recognized not only as an artist who conjures up before our imagination a visionary realm of beauty but also an independent thinker who can create, out of materials derived from contemporary movements, a world of ideas with a value and significance all its own.⁴

References:

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