

Ode to the West Wind (P.B. Shelley)

The Poem, Ode to the West Wind has been composed by P.B. Shelley, the most lyrical of the Romantic poets. This poem is by far the noblest lyric in English literature. The magnificent sweep of the verse, the far-reaching suggestiveness of the ideas, the sublimity of the inner symbolism, and the lyrical cry of pain that rings through each stanza have been woven into harmonies that will keep echoing through the corridors of the human world for all time to time.

The west wind, to the poet, is the symbol of the forces that creates and destroys. As it sweeps across the earth, the sea and the sky, it carries away the old and the worn out, and scatters the seeds of the new and the vital. This symbolism conveys to the reader the message of hope in the future. Who can fail to be inspired by the triumphant conclusion of the poem.

"It winter comes, can spring be far behind?"

This is the climax around which the whole poem revolves and for which the preceding stanzas have prepared the ground. This clear conception ~~of~~ gives to the poem close-knit unity of structure and symmetry of design.

The west wind is first invoked in its manifestation on the land, in the sky and the sea. In each sphere of activity the attention is fixed on its essential elements. On the land, it is the stern charioteer who leads the life of seeds imprisoned until it is released by the spring. In the sky, it is some fierce man-eater whom the dirge of the dying year precedes. On the sea, it is the spirit ~~of~~ which awakens the sea and releases the captive of life. Everywhere it destroys in order to create fresh forms of beauty - the new spirit of life. This makes the poet turn to his weary and breathe out a natural wish that he might feel the west wind and he creates

a new or rather restored to his original condition of unchartered freedom. And this leads on to a passionate prayer to the west wind to lead him to the fulfilment and make the harbinger of the new order of life that is to come.

The poem begins with an invocation to the west wind as the angel of destruction and concludes with an appeal to it as the spirit of fulfilment. But what gives the poem an abiding place in English literature is not so much its perfect workmanship as its imaginative quality. Its wonderful pictures of nature reveal imaginative splendour of the highest power as noticed in the opening three stanzas. The note of personal despondency in the fourth stanza moves us to intense sympathy with the poet who felt the greatness and limitations of his power.

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