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Soft Skills Through English Literature - A Study

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ABSTRACT

Soft skills are to be inculcated among the students in higher education. Students learn good habits and good manners at a young age from their parents and teachers in schools and at home. When they come to a higher level of education they have to learn soft skills to get themselves ready to work in a place where there are many people. They must also get ready to get along with their family members. This paper focuses on teaching soft skills through poetry. Two poems – Ode to the West Wind, written by Percy Bysshe Shelley, and If written by Rudyard Kipling are taken into consideration. The authors also compare the poems to the extracts from Thiruvalluvar, the Tamil poet who wrote great lines in his Thirukural.

Keywords: *Soft skills, literature, personality traits, poems, teaching language.*

INTRODUCTION

Since literature encompasses all human experiences—of which skills are only one—it is said to be a mirror of society. Therefore, a creative way to impart soft skills in classroom settings is to use literary works as the foundation for defining and explaining the skills.

Literature has primarily two purposes: first, it is a source of enjoyment; second, it educates readers and propagates the notion that art should be created for the benefit of both society and the artist. Any language's goal is to give its students a lifetime of communication skills through spoken and written expressions. Reading English literature aloud can be a popular method of imparting some modern soft skills. It has been

said that teaching soft skills through literature is a fascinating and varied way to learn languages, and it makes the process possible.

ABOUT PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Both the joyful rapture and the gloomy melancholy that characterize English Romanticism are perfectly captured in the life and works of Percy Bysshe Shelley. The main themes of romanticism—restlessness and brooding, rebellion against authority, interaction with nature, the power of poetry and visionary imagination, the pursuit of ideal love, and the untamed spirit always seeking freedom—are all things that Shelley personified and which continue to be found in the extensive body of work he left behind after his infamous drowning at the age of 29.

The very name of Shelley has elicited either the strongest fervor or the warmest adulation, verging on worship, from the start of his writing career at the age of 17, throughout his life, and even up to the present.

ABOUT RUDYARD KIPLING

Among the most well-known of the late Victorian poets and storytellers is Rudyard Kipling. In 1907, he received the Nobel Prize in Literature. One of the most well-known poets of the late British Empire, he included "If—" in his book *Rewards and Fairies*, which was published in 1910. The speaker of the poem counsels his son to lead a calm, moderate, and restrained life. The speaker advises the son to always be calm and not overreact; he should also learn how to be self-assured without becoming conceited, to accept setbacks without getting too worked up about them, and to act with dignity. The speaker implies that if the boy lives in this manner, he will become a real man.

This poem about an idealized form of self-sufficient human goodness is not simply advice from a father to a son, but advice from fathers to sons as well. Its worldview is greatly influenced by stoicism, an Ancient Greek philosophy that urges individuals to live without regard to pleasure or sorrow. English writers like Kipling found this perspective appealing, and it also contributed to the stereotype of the British.

ODE TO THE WEST WIND – A STUDY

Invoking the "wild West Wind" of autumn, which disperses seeds and dead leaves for the spring to nourish, Shelley begs the wind—a "destroyer and preserver"—to hear him. The speaker begs the wind to hear him once more, referring to it as the "dirge / Of the dying year" and describing how it causes severe storms. The speaker begs the wind to hear him a third time, claiming that it splits the Atlantic into choppy chasms and stirs the Mediterranean from "his summer dreams." The wind also causes the ocean's "sapless foliage" to tremble.

The speaker claims that he would not have needed to pray to the wind or call upon its powers if he had been a dead leaf, a cloud, a wave, or even if, as a little kid, he had been "the comrade" of the wind's "wandering over heaven." Even though he is inherently uncontrollable and arrogant, he begs the wind to raise him "as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!" since he is now bound and bent over from his time spent on the planet.

To be his own Spirit and to propel his thoughts around the cosmos "like withered leaves, to quicken a new birth," the speaker asks the wind to "make me thy lyre." Through the incantation of this poem, he requests that the wind disperse his words among people, serving as the "trumpet of a prophecy." The speaker poses the question, "If winter comes, can spring be far behind?" about both the season and the impact he believes his words will have on humanity. The concluding paragraphs describe the optimistic outlook.

FORM

"Ode to the West Wind" is divided into seven parts, each with five stanzas measured in iambic pentameter: four three-line stanzas and a two-line couplet. Every section has a rhyme scheme that is based on the three-line Dantean rhyme scheme known as *terzarima*. The first, third, and middle lines of the three-line *terzarima* stanza rhyme, while the middle line does not; the first and third lines of the following stanza use the middle line's last note as their rhyme. The last three-line stanza's middle line rhymes with the last couplet. This is how "Ode to the West Wind" is divided into its seven parts: The ABA CDC DED EE BCB.

Percy Bushy Shelley's poem "An Ode to the West Wind" demonstrates the poet's inner and outer world relationship. It's one of his well-known poems. The poet's desire to become a force that may transform and revitalize mankind's existence is the poem's central theme. The revitalization of nature as a result of the west wind acting as an agent metaphorically illustrates this notion. He does a great job of describing things with visuals. The way the imagery is used from the beginning to the end allows one to assess how well it is done. The poem opens with imagery of the ground, then moves to the air, water, and fire as its final focal point. As a result, wind has an impact on the earth, air, fire, and ocean—the four components of the cosmos. Here, I want to point out how these four conceptual ideas gradually evolve, which sets off the ode's extraordinary artistic quality, and how these images come together to form the poet-prophet figure.

It is important to talk about the west wind sign itself before moving on to these four images. The west wind represents a force that might subdue even the most formidable elements—earth, air, fire, and water—or it could represent a godlike or Christ-like character. The speaker aspires to be both the west wind and the things it disperses.

In summary, the poet aspires to embody the west wind, a force that transforms the natural world, to instigate a revolution among humanity.

Poet says:

"Be thou ferocious, Spirit, my spirit! "Be me, impulsive one!"

Additionally, he wants his thoughts and himself to be dispersed in the same way as the west wind does with leaves, seeds, ashes, and sparks.

If I were a dead leaf that you might carry, if I were a quick cloud that flew with you, if I were a wave that would faint under your force and share your strength's drive, but less free than you, O uncontrollable!

The poem is a masterwork by Shelley because of the inventive way in which the imagery is structured.

Initially, images of the earth appear. The soil is mostly connected to femininity, specifically reproduction, rebirth, and stability. The speaker's wish to replicate and disperse his words is symbolized by the contrast of the west wind blowing over the entire planet. The "dead leaves" and the "winged seeds" are the main metaphors associated with this theme. The winged seeds and the dead leaves together demonstrate the cyclical nature of life on Earth. The earth is first stirred by the force of the west wind, which blows leaves. They are seen dispersing in a manner that suggests they are running away from a sorcerer, "like ghosts." This represents the speaker's capacity to restrain his emotions while conveying his call for revolution and change.

Furthermore, the leaves are not ordinary; rather, they are "dead leaves," appearing in a variety of hues, including "yellow, black, pale, and hectic red." This is a visual representation meant to evoke in the reader a sensual expression of these feelings. Poets have diverse philosophies, views, and ideas, much like leaves. The dead leaves symbolize the poet's thoughts, which have also grown stale with age. By using this picture, the poet is attempting to convey the idea that, like the leaves, his ideas have also become lifeless and colorless.

Subsequently, this visual representation of leaves transforms into an image of seeds, or "winged seeds." Growing older has turned his thoughts a pale and frantic crimson, and he longs for his emotions to reappear like flying seeds. In autumn, the west wind plants seeds in the ground, from which buds emerge in the spring. They are interred in the grave like a corpse. The corpse had taken over his thoughts. They are now in a fertile period. Consequently, we can appreciate Shelley's ability to depict the emergence, growth, and decay of his ideas like leaves that eventually require rebirth like seeds.

The second element, air, is then depicted in imagery later in the poem. Communication originates from the air because it transmits thoughts to distant places. The wind also exhibits its power over the atmosphere. The air gets stronger due to the west wind, which causes the clouds to tremble. Consequently, lightning and rain are produced. They stand for creativity and inspiration. They inspire optimism and fresh life even as they destroy. As a result, the poet is inspired to create a sensory experience through all of these details and descriptions of the images of air, which may inspire poetry that transcends his limitations and spreads change and revolution far.

The poet then goes on to explain the imagery of the third element, fire. Usually, fire conjures up images of death, destruction, and misery. For this reason, the majority of listeners read the poem as the speaker bemoaning his inability to communicate with people directly. But it also functions as a preserver. Since fire acts instantly, it stands for action orientation. The soil, ashes, and sparks are the only three pictures that are associated with fire. It's possible that the poet intended West Wind or his emotions to be under control rather than running away "like ghosts," as a hearth is a controlled fire. The poet likens the sparks and ashes of a fireplace to his ideas.

The imagery eventually progresses to the water, the fourth element. Water is linked to feeling and knowing through intuition. He also desires a deep connection to the strength of the west wind over water. The sea is extremely violent and is awakened by the West Wind. The sea's strength has destroyed numerous great civilizations. However, the west wind continues to rule it as well. It affects the water deep within the sea as well as at the surface. Similar to the power of the west wind across the deep sea, the speaker asks for his ideas to be found deeply, rather than just briefly, within people's hearts. Shelley thus draws most of his inspiration for his poetry from water.

There is a fifth element that describes something that exists outside of the material world in the majority of cultures. This fifth ingredient is also used by Shelley in his ode. The soul or the spirit of a poet-prophet figure here symbolically referred to as the "West Wind," is Shelley's fifth element. The element that rules over the other four—earth, air, fire, and water—is the west wind. These five components are comparable to the Tamil literary concept of "PanchaButhangal."

Shelley depicts the opposition between human and natural forces, as well as the contrasts between human and natural mortality, freedom and transformation, and natural and natural strength. The objective of the poet's description of such imagery, according to Eliot, is to demonstrate the "objective equivalency" or "objective correlative" of his feelings. He can express his feelings more vividly because of the abilities of the west wind.

THE POEM IS – A STUDY

Rudyard Kipling's poem "If" is a collection of advice from a parent to his kid. The poet teaches his son in the poem how to handle various circumstances that may arise in the future. There are four stanzas in the poem, each with eight lines. The poem has an ABAB rhyme system. The poet advises his kid in the opening verse to be composed and patient when others fail and place the blame on him. When others doubt him, he should have faith in himself. He should, however, also allow for their skepticism and make an effort to comprehend the reasons behind it.

The poet states in the fifth line that one should never become weary of waiting for achievement since those who work hard and are patient will eventually succeed. The poet then warns his son that he will frequently hear falsehoods from others. He should, nevertheless, live a truthful life and never lie. He will be hated by others. But instead of spreading hate, he ought to always embrace it.

The poet tells him in the final line not to talk too smart or appear too good since if he follows all of the previous advice, he (his son) would stand out among the ordinary people for being too smart and attractive. The poet advises us to dream large but never to make our dreams our masters in the second stanza. In a similar vein, he should think positively (about his future, his objectives, etc.) but never let thoughts become his purpose because hard work is necessary for success in life.

The road to success is never paved with just ideas and dreams. Therefore, it is important to set objectives, envision a better future, and work hard to accomplish them. The poet states in the third line that one ought to face Triumph and Disaster and treat those two impostors equally. Take note that "triumph and disaster" is capitalized in the first few letters. The two extremes of existence are these. The poet refers to them as fakes or impostors. They either bring about immense happiness or misery. But since they don't endure long, one shouldn't take them seriously.

The poet states in the fifth line that one should only speak the truth and that one should have the guts to confront it when it is being abused by others to deceive others. Additionally, he must have the guts to attempt repairing the things he built with old, worn-out tools—that is, with whatever strength or abilities remain.

The poet adds that after compiling all of one's accomplishments, one should take significant risks in the third stanza. Put another way, one should never be scared to take risks that could lead to success or catastrophic failure (pitch and toss). If someone takes significant risks and fails, he should start again from scratch without reflecting on or disclosing the loss to anyone. It is best to keep trying till one succeeds.

The poet advises using one's heart, nerve, and sinew, or courage, when one is exhausted or fails, in the fifth line. Strong willpower is necessary to push through when things in life seem hopeless and to "Hold on!"

In the fourth verse, the poet states that one should never have pride or ego amid the monarchs, or large personalities, but one must maintain his qualities and never act like them. Stated differently, the poet advises against egotism when one is wealthy and to maintain one's morals when one is impoverished.

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The poet discusses the value of time in the following line. He believes that time is valuable and that it will never return. Thus, one ought to begin making the most of every moment of life. In the last two lines, the poet promises his kid that if he follows all of the guidance he provided above, he will be able to accomplish anything and will truly be a man, or a true human.

COMPARISON OF IF WITH THIRUKURAL.

In his chapter of Boon of Children, Thiruvalluvar, the renowned Tamil poet, states the following.

1. A father's responsibility to his kids is to provide them with an advantage over the most accomplished students in terms of information.
2. When their offspring surpass their intelligence, all living things experience a greater sense of pride.
3. A mother's joy in hearing her son recognized as a distinguished scholar surpasses that of the boy's birth.
4. A son owes his father the responsibility of leaving people wondering what heroic deeds the father committed to earn the right to have such a son.

Similar to what Rudyard Kipling says about the qualities a son should possess, Thiruvalluvar asserts that a son should make his father proud of him. Thiruvalluvar discusses the responsibilities of a parent and son, and Rudyard Kipling counsels all people to emulate his qualities to be considered genuine human beings.

SOFT SKILLS THROUGH THE POEMS

All vocations require a combination of social and interpersonal skills, character qualities, and professional attitudes, which are together referred to as soft skills or people skills. Among the many examples are communication, patience, teamwork, and time management.

Soft talents can be acquired through life events or as personality qualities. All occupations look for a variety of soft talents, including people, social, and communication skills, character traits, attitudes, and mindsets, as well as social and emotional attributes.

Soft skills are crucial in differentiating between suitable and excellent job applicants, particularly when hiring managers are choosing between individuals with comparable work and educational backgrounds. This is especially true for students seeking jobs.

The poems teach the kids time management skills, a positive outlook, teamwork, flexibility, and adjustment, team spirit, and leadership traits.

CONCLUSION

To inspire the trust of managers and supervisors, study or acquire the technical abilities required to complete a task, work well in a team, and comprehend and adjust to workplace cultural norms, one must possess soft skills.

Many of the contemporary and classic literary works in English language education are beneficial in fostering the following soft skills in the student body: As previously explained, literary texts and poetry can help students at the undergraduate and graduate levels develop several critical soft skills.

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