

5

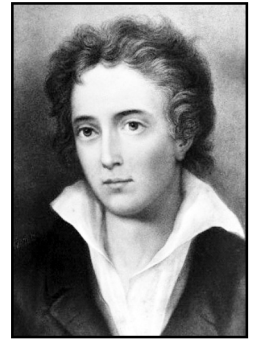
CHAPTER

A Lament

P. B. Shelley (1792-1822)

➡ About the Poet

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) a great English romantic poet is noted for his spirit of revolt, this lyrical genius and his powerful imagination. Inspired by the French Revolution, he opposed all forms of cruelty and oppression. He was expelled from Oxford for preaching atheism. His fight against social and political wrongs earned for him the hostility of the conservative sections of society. Strained relations with his father, the dissolution of his first marriage and financial troubles added to his unhappiness. He left England in disgust and despair, and settled in Italy. He presented his grand vision of a new world ruled by love in his great work *Prometheus Unbound*. His health broke down under the pressure of his cares and anxieties, and while still young in years, he felt old and weak in spirit. Like Keats, his contemporary, he had fears of a premature death, and they came true, though in an unexpected and tragic manner, when in 1822, at the age of 29, he was drowned while sailing in a storm, in the Gulf of Spezzia, in Italy.



➡ About the Poem

The poem, *A Lament*, written in 1821, shows that Shelley, though only 28 at the time, realized that he would not live long. His youth had deserted him, and he was now incapable of enjoying the pleasures offered by life and Nature. The awareness of old age having come before its time leads to a cry of despair. But the music of the poem represents the triumphs of Shelley's lyrical powers.

*O world ! O Life ! O Time !
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before;
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more-Oh, never more !*

*Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight :
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more – Oh, never more !*

—P.B. Shelley

➡ Appreciation of the Poem

This is the last poem which Shelley wrote before his premature death. It was produced out of his disappointments and failures in life. It is one of his most pathetic poems. Every word of it is charged with an indescribable feeling of regret and disappointment. He imagines that he is standing on the last steps of Time. He looks on his past life with a faint heart and feels that his future days are numbered in this world. He regrets that his youthful vigour and joys of life will not return to him any more. Now his day and nights are dull and joyless. He is incapable of enjoying the beauties of nature. Instead of sending a thrill of delight into his hearth, they only intensify his grief.

||Glossary||

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| O World ! O Life ! O Time! | : | These words come out of the bitter disappointment of the poet's heart. They are full of pathos because the poet feels that he has come to an end of his life and time in this world. |
| on whose last steps I climb | : | Here life has been compared to a ladder and the poet imagines himself to be standing on its last rung. He feels that the period allotted to him is coming to a close. It appears that he had a premonition of his approaching death because he died only a year after he wrote this poem. |
| Trembling at that where I had stood before | : | shuddering at the thought of the troubles and difficulties against which the poet had fought so bravely in the past. |
| the glory of your prime | : | the freshness of joy in life and its varied experience as he had in the past. (जीवन के बीते हिस्से में अनुभव की गयी खुशी की ताजगी) |
| no more-Oh, never more | : | Shelley is in utter despair. (शैली द्वारा पूर्ण निराशा का प्रकटीकरण)
He very well knows that he can never regain the power of appreciation of the beauties of nature. |

out of the day...has taken flight	:	day and night have become cheerless to him. (उसके लिए रात-दिन आनन्द रहित हो गए थे)
hoar	:	while frost. (तुषार)
move my faint heart with grief	:	The beauties of nature which used to fill him with joy in the past now only add to his sorrow and disappointment. (प्रकृति की सुन्दरता जो पहले उसे प्रसन्नता से भर देती थीं अब केवल दुःख और निराशा पैदा करती हैं)

||Exercise||

➡ Answer the following questions :

1. When was this poem written, and what light does it throw on the life of the poet?
2. What figures of speech has the poet used?
3. Give an appreciation of this poem.
4. Why does the poet tremble?
5. What question does the poet ask regarding his day of youth?
6. How does the spring, summer and winter affect the poet?
7. Give the central idea of the poem 'A Lament'.

➡ Explain the following lines with reference to the context :

1. On whose last steps stood before.
2. Fresh springs never more.
3. O World! O Life! Oh, never more.
4. Out of the day.....more.

