



## ROLE OF WILLIAM BLAKE IN THE PROGRESS OF ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

**SURENDER KUMAR**

Assistant Professor

Department of English

JLN Govt College Haripur, Manali, Distt Kullu, H.P.

Email : [skthakur764@gmail.com](mailto:skthakur764@gmail.com)



### Article information

Received:20/07/2023

Accepted:27/08/2023

Published online:06/09/2023

doi: [10.33329/ijelr.10.3.119](https://doi.org/10.33329/ijelr.10.3.119)

### ABSTRACT

This research article explores the significant role played by William Blake in shaping and enriching the landscape of Romantic poetry. William Blake's poetry was an embodiment of the Romantic 'vision'. His profound belief in the ideals of imagination & the sensations of the heart as the sole guides to truth marks a departure from the restraints of the cold & logical classical spirit of the previous age. He boldly denounced the strict codes of convention in favour of freedom of human thoughts & ways of expression. He exemplified the romantic spirit through his passion for liberty & love for nature & childhood. His passion for the mystic & supernatural through his interest in the medieval & gothic reflects the true ideals of romanticism. His unique & original style of engraving made him a perfect artist lending a celestial charm to his poetry. His visions of childhood shaped his life as a visionary poet. His 'Songs of Innocence' is a lyrical work that embodies Blake's view on the original state of human society, symbolized in the pure & radical innocence realized in the joy & happiness of childhood. His 'Songs of Experience' provides the conflicting aspects of nature, which is lovely as well as cruel. The spontaneous love, joy & happiness of childhood are replaced by the harshness & brutal nature of experience. Better known for his unique visionary and symbolic style, William Blake's works have made a profound & firm impact on the Romantic Movement, influencing the following generations of poets and artists in the Romantic Age. This paper explores the themes, artistic techniques, and philosophical ideas that Blake introduced, which have left an indelible mark on the evolution & expansion of Romantic poetry.

Keywords: William Blake, romantic, symbolism, individualism, imagination, revolutionary

### Introduction

William Blake is often regarded as the precursor of romanticism. The Romantic era marked a profound shift in the literary and artistic domain, emphasizing emotion, individualism, and a return to nature. He stands out as one of the most influential figures of this movement: due to his distinctive, unique, humanist & revolutionary approach to poetry. His wonderful & unique style of illustration through the art of engraving made his poetry more popular. His contributions to poetry not only challenged contemporary neo-classical views but

---

also provided new avenues for exploring the complexities of human experience. This article investigates the key aspects of Blake's work that contributed to the development of Romantic poetry.

### **'William Blake' an Embodiment of the Romantic Vision**

Blake's impact on Romantic poetry is his visionary themes which emphasized that imagination & sensations of the heart were the true & solitary guides to truth. Thus his romantic visions transcend the boundaries of reality to reach the eternal through the physical world. Most of his poems and illustrations time and again portray mystical realms and supernatural experiences, discovering the relationship between the spiritual and material, the concrete & the abstract. His blatant rejection of rigid dualities and acceptance of uncertainty is a clear mark of the Romantic view of celebrating the complexity of human existence. In "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," he presents a series of contradictions & maxims that blur the lines between good and evil instead of highlighting them, thus throwing an open challenge to conventional religious principles.

### **Allegory and Symbolism in Blake's Poetry**

Blake's use of symbolism and allegory played a crucial role in shaping Romantic poetry. His most famous poems such as "*The Tyger*" and "*The Lamb*" use animal imagery to explore existential questions about God's diverse creation as the master craftsman & creator of such widely varied creations of a fierce tiger & a meek lamb. These metaphors become allegorical vehicles for addressing profound philosophical inquiries into the complex existence of human life & God's grace. His symbolic language enabled Romantic poets to probe into abstract concepts of existence & creation through a concrete connection with the real world, thus enriching the profundity and span of their poetic expression.

### **Emphasis on Individualism and Imagination**

Blake's works also embodied individualism & imagination as two of the most important ideals of romanticism. His collection of poems titled "*Songs of Innocence and Experience*" contrasts the simplicity & purity of innocence with the harsh & bitter realities of experience. This study of the dualities of human nature aligns with the Romantic impulse of the times with its emphasis on the complexities of individual existence in this world. Blake's impenitent celebration of imagination as a powerful tool for understanding the world inspired subsequent poets to tap into their imaginative faculties.

### **A Critique of Contemporary Political and Social Scenario**

Blake used his art and poetry as a medium for analyzing the contemporary political and social scenario thereby making a great contribution to Romantic poetry by extending art beyond aesthetic innovation into the realm of social & political critique. His poem "London" displays a derisive condemnation of the dehumanizing effects of urbanization and industrialization in England during the late 18th century. Thus his portrayal of contemporary British society marked by suffering and oppression was in sync with the Romantic concern for social justice and showed the way for other poets to engage with critical public issues through their creative works.

### **Influence on Successive Generations**

The impact of William Blake's contribution to Romantic poetry is easily discernible in the subsequent generations of romantic poets. Poets like Percy Bysshe Shelley and William Wordsworth, who sought to push the boundaries of poetic expression were truly inspired by Blake's unconventional approach to form and content. Blake's fusion of visual and literary arts also influenced the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood later in the mid-19th century, thus reaffirming his ever-lasting legacy in the world of poetry & art.

### **Conclusion**

William Blake had a great influence on Romantic poetry. His simple yet highly innovative symbolism, emphasis on individualism and imagination, and commitment to social issues expressed in simple & beautiful style, his variety of themes & spontaneity of feelings is a genuine & great mark of romanticism. Thus his profound influence on Romantic poetry is undeniable. Through his works, Blake not only contributed to the Romantic

Movement breaking away from the classical restraint of neo-classical poetry but also paved the way for future generations of poets to discover the unexplored domains of artistic creativity and philosophical inquiry.

**Works Cited**

Blake, William. *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. 1789.

Blake, William. "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell." *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, edited by David V. Erdman, Anchor Books, 1988.

Albert Edward "*History of English Literature*", edited by Stone J.A. Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 251-254.