

*Self-realization and Spiritual Flights in the Poetry of Wordsworth and Bullah Shah: A Comparative Intertextual Study*

# Self-realization and Spiritual Flights in the Poetry of Wordsworth and Bullah Shah: A Comparative Intertextual Study

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## Abstract

The present study is a comparative study of Bullah Shah's poetry and that of William Wordsworth. This study further attempts to establish intertextuality between the verses of the selected poets on the grounds of Self-realization, transcendence, spirituality, nature, humanity and love for God. Moreover, the study aims at finding out the degree of intertextual deviation and identity in the verse of Wordsworth from the verse of Bullah Shah. "Self-realization" is to experience the truth of inner soul in which Wordsworth and Bullah Shah infuse their poetry. The quest to know 'Self' is a both psychological and spiritual phenomenon which is interpreted by many writers and poets but in this regard Wordsworth and Bullah Shah stand supreme because of their mystic vision and elevated thoughts. The poetry of both of the poets is selected to analyze the interrelated concept of 'Self-realization' which ultimately leads them to love for God and Man. The study further investigates every dimension of spirituality which is common in the poetry of the selected two poets. Finally, it detects the intertextual deviation on the selected theme in the poetry of the selected poets who belong to different ages, continents and cultures.

**Keywords:** Self-Realization, Spirituality, Transcendence, Intertextuality, Bullah Shah's Spiritual Journey, William Wordsworth, Sublime Experiences

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The present study is a comparative study of the poetry of Bullah Shah and William Wordsworth. This study explores intertextuality in the poetry of the selected poets on the grounds of nature, pantheism, transcendence, spirituality, love of humanity and love of God and at the top of all on the ground of self-realization. Wordsworth and Bullah Shah both hold esteemed position in their respective cultures and in the world literature as well. Both of these two poets engage nearly similar themes in their poetry which is a matter of investigation in this study. In this context, it can be said that nothing in world is new. Nothing in this world is unique and one and only. No thought has ever been produced in its purity. Things and ideas are created out of the previous ones. Everything has been said by someone,

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somewhere at some time in the world. The strings of poetry in the tapestry of poetry are mosaic of many known and unknown previous strings of poetry. Would it be spiritual lines or the aesthetic lines written in the contemporary world, they are bound to find expression in other previously written lines. In this regard spirituality is universal and its bearings on world poetry too. No text is a single text rather it is a combination of many already written and existing texts. Simply speaking, intertextuality is inescapable would it be thematic intertextuality or may it be intertextuality of expressions. This study is a comparative study of the poetry of Wordsworth and Bullah Shah and it aims at locating thematic intertextuality of the religious and spiritual idea of self-realization. This study explores self-realization along with, spirituality, transcendence, love of God and love of humanity in the poetry of Wordsworth and Bullah Shah. It is quite intriguing that how comes; two poets belonging to two times, continents, religions and civilizations express spirituality so vividly and similarly. The subject of investigation of this study is the intertextual ground of the poetry of Wordsworth and that of Bullah Shah.

Self-realization is an expression which is enormously used in psychology, spirituality, and Eastern religions. It is defined as the “fulfillment” by oneself of the possibilities of one's character or personality. ‘Many philosophers, thinkers, writers and poets used their holy pen to write the experience of self-realization (Usman et.al, 2020, 2021, & 2024). Knowing the ‘Self’ is a thirst which moves from generations to generations (Schimmel, 1982 & 1971). The enigma of self-realization is one of interrelated focal points in the verse of William Wordsworth and Bullah Shah. The ‘Self-realization’ is not about to “knowing truth” but ‘experiencing’ it. It is by the God's grace; a person walks through the spiritual path and experiences the mystic and hidden layers of his ‘Self’. Both these poets celebrate the enigma of ‘Self’ in their poetry. There is intertextuality of ‘Self-realization’ in the poetry of both of the poets although they belong to different religions and cultures. In this study self-realization has been traced in the poetry of Bullah Shah and that of William Wordsworth.

### **1.1. Bullah Shah, the mystic:**

Our first poet is a Muslim mystic- Syed Abdullah Qadri (1680 - 1757) famously known as Bulleh Shah. The verse of Bullah Shah represents his mystical spiritual journey through the four stages of Sufism: *Shariat* (Path), *Tariqat* (Observance), *Haqiqat* (Truth) and *Marfat* (Union). The beauty and glory of Bulleh Shah's verse is that it is simple yet very beautiful, it is full of intellect and enriched with feelings at the same time.

### **1.2 Wordsworth, the Romantic**

The second poet discussed in this study is William Wordsworth (1770-1850). Wordsworth is not a traditional kind of mystic rather he touches the heights of spirituality through humanity. In addition, he is more a poet of man than of the world. Wordsworth's ideas are oriental in spirit. Wordsworth follows the religion of nature and he has little concern with organizational religious life. He was in touch with something more primary, more immediate as the source of an inner faith. The natural world invokes in him a much deeper world where he touches the divine reality. His mystic world comes from the heart of man.

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### **1.3 Intertextuality:**

This study attempts to trace the overarching idea of self-realization in the poetry of Bullah Shah and that of William Wordsworth. This study attempts to locate intertextuality in the verse of these two poets who belong to different religions and continents is a mark of. In this regard the idea of intertextuality is taken as given and propounded by Kristeva. Kristeva first coined the term in the 1960s, intertextuality has been a dominant idea within literary and cultural studies, taken up by practically every theoretical movement (Worton and Still, 1990). Yet intertextuality remains the subject of such a diversity of interpretations. Shift of the style and sense being presented in the native context of the English language is of a universal level (Ramzan et al., 2023). The verse of Wordsworth is mystic in nature which is rather oriental in expression. The leading poet whose mystic underpinnings are floating in the poetry of Wordsworth is Bullah Shah of the Punjab Pakistan. The present study is conducted to assess the intertextuality between the poetry of Bullah Shah and that of Wordsworth. To be able to collect the important information and data, the researcher used the descriptive method using the qualitative approach. Descriptive method is primarily subjective in approach as it seeks to understand human behavior, texts and reasons that govern such a behavior and texts. Descriptive method is a systematic subjective approach used to describe life experiences and situations to give them meaning. This method is a form of social enquiry that focuses on the way people interpret their experience and the world in which they live. The purpose of using descriptive method is to describe spiritual flights of the Bullah Shah and Wordsworth as depicted by them in their poetry.

This study carries the approach of comparative analysis. The selected poetry of Wordsworth was compared with the poetry of Bullah Shah to find out thematic intertextuality. The selected verse of both these poets was compared to find out mystical elements similar. The objective of this study was to bring out mystical element such as self-realization in particular and spirituality, transcendence, love of man and love of humanity in general. Intertextuality claims that there is no single text rather every texts is a combination of many other texts. On this line it was inferred that the poetry of Bullah Shah is mystical without any doubt but how it is so that the poetry of Wordsworth thousands of miles away in a different continent and in a different language could bear such oriental elements as found in the poetry of Bullah Shah. For this purpose the best suitable approach to search the question of comparison was intertextuality.

### **2. DISCOSSION**

No matter, if it is East or West poetry has always been the voice of the heart. It has its universal appeal. Among the ancient civilizations, the Greeks called the poets the “Makers” because it is a poet who is an instrument of creation. He creates the ideal. The poets reflect human passions which have no cross-cultural or cross-continental boundaries. Fundamentally, all the great poets represent human passions and thoughts and make a line of action for the followers of poetry irrespective of their age, culture, language and religion even sometime two poets of different cultures seem having same ideas. Brain is the great assembling source which makes, models and forms the crude material accessible to it and produces thoughts, perspectives and considerations that get everlasting status through the pens of the poets. Based on this extraordinary creation, the poets of various languages or

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societies sharing same characteristics are in agreement when dissected in relative examinations. They are on the same page when analyzed in comparative studies. As Bullah Shah says:

*"There is only one thread of all cotton  
The warp, the woof, the quill of the weaver's shuttle  
The shuttle, the texture of cloths, the cotton shoes and hanks of yarn  
All are known by their respective names.  
They all belong to their respective places.  
There is only one thread of yarn."* (Bullah, 2014)

This can be connected and applied on the poets of universal distinction. Definitely there are poets who have given much to the world poetry. They are not limited to their respective nations. They have certainly worldwide fame and glory. Among such poets are Bullah Shah and Wordsworth. Such poets have universal appeal. In this regard in the Middle Ages and beyond the poets used to be compared with seers.

Louth (2007) declares that in our honorific or brash dispositions, we get a kick out of the chance to feel that poets are prophets. At any rate that specific extraordinary writers have something of the dauntlessness and force—the solid discourse—of Old Testament prophets who asserted that the expression of God came to them. "The expressions of Jeremiah, the child of Hilkiah... To whom the expression of the Lord came in the times of Josiah..." It is difficult to see even this initial entry, for the word for "words" *divre* in Hebrew, shows something closer to "acts" or "word occasions," while what the King James rendition makes an interpretation of as "to whom the expression of the Lord came," which hypostatizes the Word, as though it had its very own being, or were consubstantial with what we are aware of God, is in the first just *hajahdevar-adonai elav*, "the God-word was to him." We don't have the foggiest idea, to put it plainly, what is happening; yet through a long convention of interpretation and understanding we believe we know. Correspondingly, when Wordsworth discloses to us that around his twenty-third year he "got" certain "feelings," which incorporated the prospect that in spite of his humbler topic he could remain next to the "men of old," we look for gropingly to comprehend that conviction. "Poets, even as Prophets," Wordsworth composes,

*"Each with each  
Connected in a mighty scheme of truth,  
Have each his own peculiar faculty,  
Heaven's gift, a sense that fits him to perceive  
Objects unseen before...  
An insight that in some sort he possesses,  
A privilege whereby a work of his,  
Proceeding from a source of untaught things  
Creative and enduring, may become  
A power like one of Nature's..."* (Wordsworth et al., 1850)

The poetry of Wordsworth has many dimensions. It is simple and prophetic. It has childlike innocence. It has humanity in its core and nature on its crust. It has spirituality in its heart and mysticism in its bosom. It is wrapped in transcendence and spirituality. It reflects God

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and His love for His creation. Likewise, it uncovers the relationship between man and God. Eagle (1970) characterizes it as 'the tenet that God and the universe are indistinguishable' thus as indicated by him 'God is everything, and everything is God' (suggesting a disavowal of the identity and amazing quality of God).

*"The idea started to spread all the more generally in the later eighteenth and mid nineteenth centuries, in Germany with Goethe and Hegel, and in Britain with the sentimental writers - Wordsworth, Keats, and Shelley, and the visionaries in the USA - over all Emerson and Thoreau. Amid the nineteenth century it turned into the overwhelming abstract craftsmanship in lauding nature. The idea of pantheism is nearly everywhere. Some of them are summed up beneath. (p. 435)"*

The greatest known hurdle on the path of self-realization is the 'World'. This mortal world in which man is born is an obstacle to reach nirvana or self-realization. A person who is obsessed with the worldly pleasures cannot see himself in the mirror of divine light. The world is just like dust and it blurs the mirror of heart. The true being cannot be seen with the mortal eyes but with the eyes of heart. It is so because heart is the house of soul. It dwells there. But a worldly man entangles himself too much in this world which is nothing but a 'Sordid Boon'. Wordsworth vehemently suggests that in order to reach the sublime stairs of life one should get rid of mundane desires and the materialistic world. The lamentation of Wordsworth is quite clear in the sonnet. He believes that to be an active participant in the world and its unending affairs is to lose one's self. To him it is a loss without reparation to be a worldly man. It is synonymous to laying waste of power. Power here signifies the aesthetic and spiritual faculty of man. Whereas, Bullah Shah says that the world is not a place to be indulged in. This world is just like a jungle of thorns and it is very difficult for a seeker to pass through it with his linen intact. Every now and then there are hurdles which impede the safe passageway. The more the individual is absorbed into it the farther he moves from the Ultimate Reality. The union of the seeker with the Sought requires renunciation. Moreover, worldly desires grow stronger and stronger on the journey of self-realization and become a constant source of temptation. Drenched in love, the lover moves around the world- in the mountains and the fields, in the forests and the deserts and he does not find the Beloved because the beloved is in the heart of the lover. The heart of the lover is the home and it can contain what the heavens and the earth cannot contain.

Spirituality, immortality, transcendence, self-realization, soul and its composition and love of humanity and love of God are the common themes present in the poetry of Bullah Shah and Wordsworth. The poetry of Bullah Shah is the reflection of the philosophy of the Unity of Being as discussed earlier. To him this world is an illusion and bound to come to an end. What remains is God and God is 'Truth'. The utmost aim of the lover is to seek the Beloved and struggle and strive for Him. First step to reach God is to reach one's self. Without self-realization, the seeker cannot reach God because God is everywhere and nowhere. In addition, the heart of the lover or the seeker is the home of God. Therefore, it is mandatory for the lover to know his self, his reality and his soul. In the process of knowing one's self one loses oneself in the Existence of God. He does not see himself and his being rather he sees only the Beloved. His individual existence becomes insignificant and in the final stages the seeker is thoughtless of himself and his existence. That is the point where self-realization takes place; the worldly and material body dissolves in the thought of God. God is everywhere

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for the seeker. The seeker frees his self from caste, color, creed and even institutionalized religion. The *Ashiq* (the radical lover) is in the presence of God. Bullah Shah says:

*"I know not who I am  
I am neither a believer going to the mosque  
Nor given to non-believing ways.  
Neither clean nor unclean.  
Neither Moses nor Pharaoh.  
I know not who I am". (Bullah, 2014)*

In the above lines from the *kafi* of Bulleh Shah it is evident that at the final stage the seeker reaches *fana*- a state of non-existence. At this stage the soul of the lover is in complete harmony in the other world and rests under the shadow of God. God is all love and embraces the soul of the seeker. The seeker leaves all his identities of the world and knows nothing that has anything to do with this world of colour and smell. This worldly world has no meaning. This *Fana* enables the lover to reach *Baqa* – the everlasting life without end; the life of the soul. All the labels of the world including religious, social and economic are meaningless and futile. This world is futile and worldly life is nothing but an optical illusion. The sense of right and wrong is also of no use. This state of *fana* is an end cutting point with the worldly life and the beginning of the spiritual life that is the actual life for the seeker. In addition, his philosophy of the unity of being is directly rooted in the verses of the holy Qur'an: "He is the First and the Last, and the Outward and the Inward; and He is Knower of all things". (The Qur'an, 57:3). God is the master and the commander of the universe, he has created everything. He is the ultimate 'Truth' and everything else is merely an illusion and meaningless, therefore, the seeker seeks God and not the world or the other than God. The centre of his attention is God himself. The seeker brings his self in the realm of spirits and his spirit talks to God. This is a state of *fana*. In this context Bulleh Shah says:

*"I was in the beginning, I'd be there in the end.  
I know not anyone other than the One.  
Who could be wiser than Bulleh Shah  
Whose Master is ever there to tend?  
I know not who I am." (Bullah, 2014)*

This Unity of Being is the highest aim of the seeker. The spiritual flight of Bulleh Shah does not know any middle height. He soars high. The unity of the existence does not mean that everything is God or pantheism of William Wordsworth. Here, the spirituality of Bulleh Shah radically but subtly differs from the pantheistic approach of Wordsworth. To him everything is not Nature/God but a reflection and creation of God. The light of God shines through heavens and earth. He is the only real being and all the other beings are merely shadows. The lover leaves his shadow or shadowy life and seeks the ultimate reality. He negates his self-his worldly self and comes closer to God. He covers this arduous journey on the horse of Love. *Ishq* (the radical love) is a force that enables the lover to see beyond. It takes to the lover to the places unknown. It brings the lover beyond time and space. It makes the impossible, possible. It exhibits wonders. It is a force that unites the lover and the Beloved. The mystics and the realized people always think big. Their ideas are complicated for the lay people although they talk in simple terms. They envision and write.

In his sonnet "Lines Written in an Early Spring", Wordsworth depicts a minuscule



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transcendental vision of the universe as he communicates his confidence that  
“...each bloom

Enjoys the air it inhales” (Wordsworth, 2000, 11-12).

Self-awareness comes in the beginning of the journey of self-realization. Knowing one’s self is knowing the Truth. This self-awareness on the part of Wordsworth comes through his correspondence with nature where he finds the sights of God. It is his consciousness of living breathing natural world which brings him close to his self and ultimately to close to God. Thus self-realization begins with self-awareness and consciousness. Whereas Wordsworth says that Self-knowledge is the first quest for the seeker. Here, Wordsworth puts:

*“The vacancy between me and those days,  
Which yet have such self-presence in my heart  
That sometimes when I think of them I seem  
Two consciousnesses - conscious of myself,  
And of some other being.”* (Wordsworth, 2000, The Prelude, (II.27-31)

From “The Prelude” Wordsworth narrates many incidents which triggered his consciousness and became factors of his mental and spiritual growth. This autobiographical long poem recollects many happenings which are directly linked to the subjective sublime lived experiences of the poet. In this process of self-realization his consciousness and correspondence with the natural world play a significant part. In this regard, every seeker finds a gap in his personality. When he looks inside he finds a hole. He finds something missing, something real or something eternal. He further seeks and his doubt is turned into conviction that his true self is missing or hidden which he needs to discover first and then live according to that. So this process of self-realization begins with doubt, struggle, and discovery and then reaches conviction. So the vacancy in the heart of Wordsworth in his early days brings him towards his consciousness. It is a dual consciousness – the first one is of himself as a mortal human being and second one is beyond himself. It is transcendental consciousness of the existence of the poet. The other being is the real ‘self’ of the poet, who was hidden first from the mortal eyes, when the poet opens the eyes of his heart he sees in the mirror of his heart his true ‘self’. This is the apex of self-realization from base to height. Further Wordsworth talks in his poem “After Thought” about transcendence: it is the visionary state of mind of the poet that he foresees future with the eyes of the soul. He puts:

*“Enough, if something from our hands have power  
To live, and act, and serve the future hour;  
And if, as toward the silent tomb we go,  
Through love, through hope, and faith's transcendent dower,  
We feel that we are greater than we know.”* (Wordsworth, 2000)

According to him, human capacity as a mortal being is short sighted and limited. The greater, more serious and sublime issues of human existence are beyond the capacity of the mortal frame. Therefore, he claims that there is something more powerful in the hands of man and it remains with man till the final blow of “Death”. To him for a meaningful life, a realized life on must live with one’s conscience and one’s spirituality. In brief he means that the potential of man is far greater than the physical existence of man. The body comes from the coarse material and dissolves in that after being perished. Therefore, the seeker must not live with

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the material but with the eternal – the soul. Although it seems quite transcendental yet it is the only solid, compact and feasible way to self-realization. Without spirituality self-realization is merely a dream – an unfulfilled dream. Whereas on the similar lines Bullah in his *kafi* says: “You read and write big heaps of books, / Spread around you numerous books; / Light is around, pitch dark within, / If truth is sought, be deaf and dumb (Bullah, 2014)”. Here is striking intertextuality with no deviation. In the world of mysticism there is no limit. It is a limitless ocean of live, of making and unmaking. It is a river of fire which is constantly flowing with the force of love. Therefore, in this limitless ocean of live there is no room for limits and books have certain limits. Books can appeal only to reason or what the senses affirm. On the contrary self-realization is transcendental in nature and cannot be captured with the hooks of knowledge obtained by books. The simple idea of Bullah Shah is that books have something to do with knowledge while self-realization is a matter of heart and lived experience. It is the will of God to reveal him on the seekers. Only those seekers who have purified their heart regardless of their worldly knowledge. Consequently, the successful person is the one who has sought and obtained union and not a person who is lost in the philosophy of life obtained by books. World knowledge in all its form and manifestations run short when it comes to seek the Ultimate Truth. The so called wise people claim that they have knowledge and they can answer the complicated questions but they fail to recognize their ‘self’ and as a result to their Creator. The biggest *gaeb* (Hidden) in the universe is God and no worldly book on the earth can assure this Ultimate *Gaeb*. Therefore, such a great transcendental Reality cannot be comprehended with the help of books. These books are useless because they fail to locate the Transcendental.

Similarly, when Wordsworth says that he is wandering lonely like the way a cloud wanders he actually talks of transcendental truth. He finds himself in another world quite dissimilar to this world. It is a lived experience of the poet which transports him from this world to the other world. It is a matter of heart and soul and not of physical existence. He finds the sight of God in the colors and smells. It is the sublime experience of the soul obtained by the eyes of the heart. In his excellent ballad “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud” the poet envisions with ‘internal eye’ the image of the alive and dynamic universe by amplifying the scene of moving daffodils. Here it is properly affirmed that the scene of moving daffodils demonstrates us ‘an otherworldly world, not just ‘sensible’ one. At the point when the artist views this going on procedure of the celestial association of the things in smaller than expected type of daffodils, he doesn’t see on the earth with physical eyes yet he sees it with the internal eye as he explains that “they streak upon that internal eye/which is the happiness of isolation” (15-16). In such a lone reflection, the physical self of the artist is suspended and he coasts alone like a cloud or soul over vales and slopes. With the assistance of his inventive power, he picks up knowledge into the genuine idea of the things as he sees the entire living and dynamic arrangement of the universe. Therefore, recognizing God through his signs is the manner of the enlightened souls. Wordsworth as an enlightened being explores his self-realization through the external world. He comes to his “self” through the external whereas Bullah Shah does not seek and take such a path. His poetry does not unfold any references of the external natural world which could have ignited the spiritual spark in him. Hence, it is the intertextual deviation in the poetry of these two poets. Wordsworth and Bullah Shah slightly differ in their way of reaching self-realization. Bullah Shah corresponds with his heart without the external



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mediation whereas Wordsworth speaks to his heart through the external natural world. Even then the spiritual flights of these two poets are quite similar in nature.

## 5. CONCLUSION

There is little intertextual deviation between their poetry. Both are mystic in their own right and way. Both talk about the transcendence. Soul, immortality, eternity, seclusion and love for humanity and love for God are the common threads in the tapestry of their poetry. Nonetheless, a less considerable intertextual deviation is vivid in the data analysis which covers the areas of pantheism and the philosophy of the unity of being. On these two points it is found that the ways of Bullah Shah diverge from the ways of William Wordsworth. Apart from these, the data analysis yields quite confident conclusion of intertextuality present in the poetry of the selected poets. First the deviation detected the poetry of the selected poets is of philosophical level. The entire poetry of Bullah Shah is written on the lines of the philosophy of the Unity of the Being. While the whole sum of William Wordsworth's poetry bears strong impression of pantheism. On the contrary, William Wordsworth's imagination sticks at pantheism. Pantheism in the western world is based on single existence nearly similar to the unity of existence. But in pantheism God as "One" single, individual, Supreme Being is not acknowledged. In it everything is god. Nature is god, god is god, man is god lamb is god etc. So in regards of unity of being and pantheism, the poetry of both of the selected poets is deviant from each other. But when it comes to transcendentalism Bullah Shah and William Wordsworth share a great amount of intertextuality. Both of these two poets dip their fingers in the bowl of love and enjoy the aroma of love for humanity and love for God. Apart from this they have close intertextuality on the grounds of the ideas of death, freedom, immortality, eternity, soul and self-realization as present in their poetry. It establishes that both of the poets fly on the wings of poesy and explore the profound realms of spirituality and self-realization. Self-realization is a matter of love in terms of Wordsworth and it is a matter of *Ishq* (radical love) in terms of Bullah Shah. Finally it can be said with ease that heart of the lover watches which a living man cannot see with the mortal eyes. It not only watches the Eternal Reality, it also receives the Divine messages in return. It brings the lover closer to union.

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