

A CLOSE INVESTIGATION OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE SOCIETY IN *THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR* BY RALPH WALDO EMERSON

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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this paper is to investigate a close interaction between the individual and the society in *The American Scholar* by Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson is regarded as a firm individualist or transcendentalist. The critics have analyzed Emerson from different angles. But in recent years, he has been criticized from the social or political standpoint. Emerson deals with the individual and the society in his masterpiece *The American Scholar* very nicely. He mainly appeals every individual to donate towards the amendment of society. Emerson also considers and nourishes that an individual has vast prospective for the great improvement and the great harm of any country or society. For this reason, a wise man or a scholar is revealed as the main ingredient of any society. Moreover, this paper will find out a political dimension in Emerson's *The American Scholar*, which is especially valuable today.

Key words: Interaction, Individual, American Scholar, Man Thinking.

INTRODUCTION

Emerson is regarded as the highest transcendentalists in American literature. He deals with Nature in his essays and its impact on the individual. But if anyone closely examines some of his selected essays, it is found that the essays are brightened with the political themes. Recently, some famous researchers have focused on Emerson's political awareness in his essays. Among the researchers like Cary Wolfe (1994) who says "Driven in part by the growing influence of Marxist theory in American Studies and the challenging politicization of our culture by ideological critiques of all kinds, the current interest is centered less on the transcendentalist trying to make his break and his peace with the religious tradition, and more on the promise and peril of liberal individualism as it is mapped in his essays and lectures." Emerson always proclaims the power of the individual and expresses his political beliefs. He trusts that an individual person keeps the competence to change political situations of a society for the development of mankind. T. Gregory Garvey (2001) notices, "The Spirit offered Emerson a nonsectarian locus of faith that held out the possibility of reconciling belief in the divinity of the individual with the desire to facilitate social harmony in the nation as a whole." A watchful investigation of Emerson's essay, *The American Scholar* reveals the advancement to his political rumor.

The American Scholar is a speech by Emerson and he delivered it in front of the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Harvard, on August 31, 1837. According to Robert D. Richardson, Jr. (1995), Emerson had been suffering from health and financial issues for a few years. Richardson says that he became plagued for "his brother's dire financial situation and his own health issues, as he became so ill by June that he was unable to study." Despite these difficulties, his thoughts became stimulated: "Adversity often gave Emerson a strange elation. All through this spring and summer he was living on the stretch; he had frequent moments of almost visionary intensity." This "visionary intensity" assisted Emerson to deliver his renowned address, *The American Scholar*, that he gave away in front of Harvard. The crowd was huge, and his oration affected the mass and they appealed him to publish it: "Emerson's friends urged him to publish the talk, which he quickly did at his own expense. The edition of five hundred copies of *The American Scholar* was sold out in a month." Emerson believes in individual's power and it is dealt

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