

THE IMPACT OF JOHN KEATS ON POETRY

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ABSTRACT

Literature plays a key role in providing us with valuable information and insight into the changes and development in the society. Poetry is the mouthpiece of literature and acts as a modifier. It gives an unending (everlasting) expression to inexpressible words otherwise our words are like corpses. It has got a beautiful art of resurrection. Every word which casts a spell bounds to some eternal attraction of superpower, changes myself into selflessness, mine to our. Poetry is altogether a stream of consciousness flowing from every divine mind which turns our illusions, imaginations and dreams into reality. It is music of soul which is always echoing and a bitter confrontation to our reality of existence. Poetry is all hidden in eternity and eternity best describes poetry. It gives wings to our soul to take-off from earthly to some divine existence and poet is a person who had quenched his thirst from potion of supernatural divinity. Dew drops on flower petals and each petal dancing in cadence of breeze is enough to create poetry in atmosphere and make it specular. Pain, joy and anger all emotions give rise to fountain of poetry. Emotions of human are bigger source of poetry. Poetry is secret to hold the magnificence of universe in itself, it beholds our being and we behold it. Escaping into the world of thoughts is an easy way to forget the present pains of life. John Keats, the most idealistic among romantics wants to get free from the present troubles of life and searches attractiveness in the world of thoughts. To Keats, beauty lies in truth and something true is beautiful. He loves nature and his touch transforms all into beauty.

Keywords: Literature, Corpses, Resurrection, Divine, Emotions, Cadence, Romantic.

INTRODUCTION

The history of English literature is marked with many kinds of movements which have certainly influenced the poets, writers and other men of letters. Among such movements there is Renaissance in which we find new ideas very confidently bent to discover new things and newer world. Renaissance has gone very deep in the hearts of writers and we see that men of knowledge and erudition have started taking interest in the things which certainly are unimaginable. The definition of everything has been meeting modifications and a tendency of the distancing of relationship was also found. There is the birth of individualism which is of greater importance due to the fact that an individual has some worth. Besides this, there comes Humanism, which has been effectively used by poets and writers of Romanticism. These poets attach deeper importance to the things which are present in a mysterious world and also they have great love for nature and other objects living in her lap. The poets like John Keats, P. B. Shelley, S. T. Coleridge and William Wordsworth are the poets of Romanticism who have soared

high in the outer realms to describe something in a new way. The poetical corpus of Keats enables us to feel and establish him as a great poet of humanism.

Although Keats never systematized his literary theory and the thoughts about the nature of human existence that we find scattered and evolving in his letters, much of this theory and speculation possess a remarkable harmony or unity that derives directly from certain basic qualities of his character (Lovell and John Clubbe 1982: 3).

John Keats was one of the most dominant romantic poets in English literature. He was born in Moorgate London, England on October 31, 1795 and died on February 23, 1821 in Rome, Papal States. Keats dedicated his short life to the rightness of poetry marked by vivid imagery, great sensuous appeal and an effort to express a philosophy through classical legend. His father's death had a deep effect on the young boy (John Keats). In a more conceptual sense, it shaped Keats' understanding for the human situation, both its pain and its loss. This catastrophe and others helped ground Keats' later poetry—one that found its beauty and grandeur from the human experience. As we all know myths, symbols and imagery are indispensable for communicating higher truths because these images, myths and symbols are always present in human thoughts and human expression and without taking help from these devices any direct description of a poetic experience is near not possible to man. Poetry normally suggests or hints and always tells the truth indirectly. When the symbols which are used in poetry have greater suggestive quality, they evoke in readers more answering emotions and convey truths quite easily. They also add to the curiosity of readers to know more and more. Effective symbolism, for that reason, is more than mere diagram or mere allegory. It is vibrant, vigorous and lively. Good symbolism brings with it hints of mystery and wonder. It enchants with its magic the mind to which it is addressed. Its appeal is not to the clever brain, but to the yearning and longing heart and to the intuitive sense of man. In the rich and varied history of English literature it is the Romantic Movement which contributed significantly to the field of myths and symbols because almost all the romantic poets had a great fondness for them. Romantic poetry by and large works its magic with the help of myths and symbols. The most obvious and significant function of myths and symbols are that they help in explaining abstract facts, both natural and cultural, which otherwise are very complicated to explain. They also help in making comprehensible supernatural phenomena which pervade the whole universe. Though poets in all ages have employed myths and symbols in order to express their insightful thoughts but the case of John Keats is extraordinary and astonishing in certain ways. He invented his own mythology and his symbols are equally innovative, fresh and original. They are a landmark in the history of English poetry.

Keats was one of the best romantic poets, who was a clean artist and worshipper of beauty—beauty in body, woman and art. He worshipped strongly the goddess called Imagination. But it would be unwise to call him only the worshipper of beauty and imagination. He was also a truly spiritual man with a holy mind and a pure heart. He worshipped many mythological gods of various countries especially Greek mythology and his worship of Apollo is significant indeed. Like the senior Romantics, John Keats also evinced his engaging interest in India and was inclined to see India— a desire which ultimately remained unfulfilled. In his letter to Miss

Jeffrey of Teignmouth, Devon, which the poet wrote from Wentworth palace, Hampstead, on 31st May, 1819, Keats proclaims his desire:

I have the choice, as it were, of two poisons yet I ought not to call this a poison— the one is voyaging to and from India for a few years; the other is leading a feverous life along with Poetry— this latter will suit me best, for I cannot resolve to give up my studies

(Maurice Buxton Forman 1952: 343-44).

In the above lines, Keats has confessed his oscillation between two poisons - visiting India to and fro and the other, leading a pleasant life in the lap of poetry. His desire for a pleasant life, for an ideal world and for everlasting bliss is pronounced time and again in his works. Such as *Endymion*, *Ode to a Nightingale*, *Hyperion* and the letter addressed to John Hamilton Reynolds, dated 19th February 1818. An analysis of these Keatsian texts would reveal that Keats was deeply worried by the transitoriness of all earthly things with three poisons he had had— death of his two brothers Edward and Tom by tuberculosis and disappointment in love with Fanny Brawn. The very word poison further points to Keats's indebtedness to Buddhist philosophy. Buddhism entails the fact that life is essentially full of suffering and desire is the root of all sufferings and the end of suffering lies in the eradication of passions and desires and the culture of disinterested action. Salvation (Nirvana) consists in illumination. Keats intensely realizes like a Buddhist that life is full of sufferings and this becomes evident from his bitter awareness of suffering in life which is poignantly presented in *Ode to a Nightingale*. It is considered as one of the greatest ode of English literature. It was written either in the garden of the Spaniards Inn, Homestead, London or, according to Keats' friend Charles Armitage Brown, under a plum tree in the garden of Keats' house at Wentworth Place, also in Homestead. *Ode to a Nightingale* is a complicated lyrical poem in which the poet seeks relief from a humdrum existence and the suffering of life by escaping to the imaginary world of a nightingale. The poem is an expression of exalted emotions that the poet feels about the transience of the nature of reality. It is regarded as the greatest of the poet's odes. But the '*Ode on a Grecian Urn*' is also referred to very frequently. It is at the end of the poem that we come across the immortal lines—

Beauty is truth, truth beauty, —that is all.

Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know (Keats, 1849).

These beautiful lines have been discussed on innumerable occasions as being the keynote of the poetry of Keats, and often as the surest maxim for those who are devoted to literature and art. It may be noted that it has been remarked that Keats is regarded as a predominately sensuous poet, but there is an instantly recognizable intellectual side of his poetry. The intellectual element may be traced in his '*Ode on a Grecian Urn*' here Keats discusses a principle relating to art and its relationship to life. Appraisal of beauty is the most significant ingredient of his poetry. All his life, he haunted beauty, praised it and put it in front of his readers. He tried to prove its dominance over other material things of life. '*Ode on a Grecian Urn*' is extraordinary example of it in which he does critical analysis of Grecian Urn and talks about power of art. He keenly observes sculpture. It fascinates him. As a result he writes '*Ode on a Grecian Urn*'. The central theme of '*Ode on a Grecian Urn*' is the complex nature of art.

John Keats visits British Museum. He sees an antique piece of Grecian Urn there. Urn is the name of a vase, which is generally used to put ashes of the deceased ones. The poet does not talk about significance or attractiveness of the urn but the beauty of art in shape of sculpture which is carved on it. Hence, the poem is not on the urn but on sculpture. Poet sees figure on the urn and feels its quietness. Though it is silent yet it tells a story. Beauty lies in the eyes of beholder; therefore, story of the sculpture depends on visitor. John Keats feels that sculpture is telling a story. In fact, it is Keats who with his imaginative powers creates a story and tells it to his readers. Pipers, lovers confuse him yet he is sure that the sculpture is depicting a pastoral lifestyle. Keats asserts that imagination is better than reality. He realizes superiority of imagination. It is unstressed. Life, on the opposite is harsh. Mostly, people become victim of circumstances. Their actions actually are reaction to the circumstances. Hence, they do not act but react. In imagination, one can do anything, whether he is capable or not. For instance, blind can see, deaf can hear and handicap can live normal life in imagination. It is, therefore, imagination is superior to reality.

Nature was one of the best sources of motivation for Keats. Like William Wordsworth he had a cult of nature, though, unlike him, he did not see an immanent God in it. He simply saw another shape of beauty, which he could transform into poetry without the aid of memory; he only enriched it with his imagination. While Wordsworth thought that “sweet melodies are made sweeter by distance in time”, Keats believed that “heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter”, i.e. beauty imagined is superior to beauty perceived, since the senses are more limited than the imagination and its creative power. Although imaginative during his short profession, and now quite possibly the most considered and enjoyed British poets, his status lays on a small body of work, centered on the odes, and just in the innovative outpouring of the last years of his short life was he ready to express the inner intensity for which he has been lauded since his demise.

A wistful longing for and natural inclination towards humanism is probably one of the characteristic features of the romantic sensibility. The whole of English Romantic poetry of the nineteenth century bears testimony to this fact. John Keats is no exception to this generalization. In this paper we have seen how John Keats has been influenced by the external objects and the things taking place in different countries beside England. He takes into account the beauty of mind of human beings which certainly has a power to think and feel something glorious. He further treats the changing notions of human minds in the time of terrible situations. His primary relations have also been towards the attachment of human beings, towards divine qualities. Keats thoughts of children, animals and birds are in his deep concern because these are of greater importance on this earth. One may draw out the positive approach hidden in his poetry. His intensity of vision compensates the narrowness of his themes. The present study is a humble attempt to study Keats’ poetic vision from a different point of view. Along with scholars, this study will also help the students of literature to understand Keats’ poetry. This research paper will help and encourage similar kind of study on poets and their visions.

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