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THE PLEASURE OF ROMANTIC AESTHETICS: PLAYING WITH KEATSEAN AND SHERANIAN POEMS TO UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF MELANCHOLY AND NATURE ON THEIR (JOHN KEATS & AKHTAR SHERANI'S) LITERARY FECUNDITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to explore the relation and conjunction between/among literary art, Nature, melancholy and aspects of poetic expression of two like-minded poets: John Keats and Akhtar Sherani. Both these romantic poets' dwell in pure romantic aura and its embellishments. This paper further tries to see the impacts of these romantic aspects on literary production of their respective poetry. Keats's love failure and Sherani's nonunderstanding of life haunted them with resultant counterproductive aspects in their poetic diction and thematic demonstrations. This paper uses the 'Theory of Romantic Aesthetics' presented by S.T Coleridge and William Wordsworth in their *Lyrical Ballads* and partly in *Biographia Literaria*. The theory argues that the romantic poetics, though they had in mind the chief features of romanticism but despite these values glued to their mind they employed their own understanding and reason to modify the natural objects through the esemplastic power. The main subject matter of the paper is the implication of this power and the employment of elements from Nature and Melancholy in their selected works. The paper finds that it is not only the imagination that crafts the appearance of beauty, Nature and aesthetics in Keats and Sherani's poetry but their subjectivity

is of more essence the production of their poetry. As this is mostly a comparative study, so Keatsean and Sheranian aspects of similarity and dissimilarity have been explored alongside the aforementioned aspects. Keats seems to worship beauty, loves quintessential Nature and then eventually falls prey to melancholia while Sherani appreciates tangible beauty, worships Nature (not as Wordsworth does it) but he does not eventually allow the melancholy in his own poetry to hurt him intrinsically.

INTRODUCTION

The geographical positioning of Keats and Sherani are poles apart and so are their languages, but this is their imaginative unification that renders them unity of thought and expression. Their approaches as this paper finds are applied with rakish angles to arts by either Keats or Sherani. Nature and melancholy in these poets are the instrumental weapons through which they run narratology. Keats uses these elements to produce literature as panacea to heal his wounds and ask through apostrophes the imaginable aspects or tangible entities for help, rescue, shelter or escape. This rescue or escape is not only from the harsh critics but from the merciless death and from the merciless disease. Although Keats does have that incarnation of Nature sparkling within his poetry in 'Ode to Autumn' or 'Ode to Melancholy' but there is that shelter again he wants from the same Nature. Keats is perplexed is often ask for mercy from the metaphysical world when he enjoins death to come. Keats does not welcome death in the real sense but is rather intimidated by its approaching and imminent horror. The word 'soft names' that he uses for death does not betoken that is in love with 'easeful death', but he under the impression and terror of death succumbs to that inevitable natural force of death about which Shakespeare forewarn in *Hamlet* through the words 'mortal coil' and the enigma after death or the doubtful befalling resurrection which he says 'the country from whose born no travelers return'. Although Keats seems to be welcoming the pangs of death, he thinks, Death is richer than life at present so Keats could have imagined that his present problems were harsher and more domineering than death itself was. Now melancholy for Keats emanated from nowhere but from his internal whimsical thoughts and agonies. Many critics argued that Keats had been terribly agonized by tuberculosis, and a few attributed his miseries to Fanny Brawn's coldness in towards him, and few more imputed it his writing which were bitterly censured. But Keats's agony as this paper finds out originated from his own romantic ideals. His age was too young to appraise or feel the real pangs of life but still he sensed that Life was cruel and that it never sustained beauty and happiness to survive and that what human beings had been through and through penalized by death. This melancholy for Keats and Sherani was a due treatment to escape a world of further torment.

Sherani's problematics with the world have actually sprung from the initial idealism he had held and from the studies he had made throughout his course of writing. His understanding was more deeply gone into the very recess and fathom of the world he was living. Keats's own understanding to life was cut short by the problems he had been facing, and that his outlook in that objectivity never filtered down to the fathomless depth of ontological essence. Sherani, there, went down to the fathomless depth, uncluttered and uninhibited to the purity of that understanding. There is that melancholy in Sherani which was a little extraneous not as one described by Keats which was incompatibly

intrinsic. Therefore, in Keats we see that originality of thought process and that Wordsworthian spontaneity while Sherani though was fluent in his representation of Nature and melancholy but lacked a little vigour in his narrative and expression.

Melancholy, both in Keats and Sherani, finds perfect expression but the sources of melancholy which their minds and pen engender have been strangely different. Nature on the other is different for both. Keats appreciated the more abstract power of Nature while Sherani is keenly interested and rather impressed by the non-metaphysical power process of Nature. Keats is intimidated by the decay and decomposition of Nature more than its beauty that he demonstrates on the surface while Sherani's outlook stretches forward to the general world and speaks more universally.

Statement of the Problem

The problem discussed here is the natural flow of art and aesthetics which go from the minds of John Keats and Akhtar Sherani through to their artistic expression. The issues of how to writers who belong to different cultures and geographies and not very contemporary produce nearly same production of poetry. It is work that presents how internal conflicts of writers impact the production of literary aesthetics and how this literary aesthetics mould the world through a literary cathosis and panacea. The problem under discussion is the demonstration of Nature and melancholy that expedite the writing process of two poets.

Significance of the Study

This study is an ongoing intervention into the bulk of research academia produced on romanticism and particularly related to the young poet: John Keats. This paper doesn't get circumscribed to only the representation of Nature and melancholy and Keats and Sherani's poetry but perhaps looks for the causes and agency behind origination of these production. This is a great research contribution to the field of romantic aesthetics and the literary production under the impression of an amalgamation of subjective approach and objective elements and their concoction.

Objectives of the Study

The research paper expects the following objectives as the outcome of this study.

1. To explore the connection between thoughts and literary production of John Keats and Akhtar Sherani
2. To find out how two different cultures can have an impact on different writers living within a contemporary world and producing singular tasted literature
3. To see that there is a connection between originality of thought process and natural aspects of romanticism: Nature and Melancholy in the selected poems of John Keats & Akhtar Sherani

Research Questions

1. What are the aspects of thought processes in John Keats and Akhtar Sherani's poems and their literary production?
2. What is that agency which causes the unification of romantic aspects of divergently different poetry?
3. What are the implications of the romantic aesthetics on John Keats and Akhtar Sherani's poetry in relation to romantic aspects of melancholy and Nature?

Delimitation of the Study

This paper presents many aspects of romantic features produced exorbitantly by both the romantic poets under study. Although there are many expansive themes explicated and discussed in the paper but the study is chiefly delimited to the perspectives of romantic aesthetics such the deep genesis of both Keats and Sherani's mind and their thought process the fecundity of producing a literary bulk. So other themes are not extensively discussed. The paper is confined to a few poems of John Keats and Akhtar Sherani such 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', 'Ode on Melancholy', 'Ode to Autumn' and Sherani's 'Everyday', 'To Her', 'Seen it Again and Again' and 'Barkha Rut or Rainy Season'. But here and there, there's a minor discussion of some of other poems of John Keats and Akhtar Sherani.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper is written under qualitative method and as the qualitative method relates itself to the deductive reasoning so it befitted to the themes studied in the paper. Subjectivity of these writers was properly found to have been incorporated in their works and as this subjectivity is the main tenet of 'Romantic Aesthetics', therefore the main points have been researched using the aesthetic foundation of both poets. Embedded in the textual analysis is the method used to properly research ideas related to the theoretical framework and initially the theory has been properly explained and later on the questions along with the objectives have been juxtaposed with properly compatibility. All the primary and secondary books have been researched and read to use a properly way to draw conclusion through a deductive reasoning while using the theory in question.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Nature & Melancholy

Description of Nature in the poetry of John Keats and Akhtar Sherani

Keats breathed the beauty of Nature. He loves Nature and its varied charms. His sense of color is very vivid, he touches everything with the hands of beauty and transfigures them. In his greatest sources of inspiration, Nature cannot be neglected. He saw Nature as another form of beauty which he put on paper through his pen by using his imagination and without using his memory. Like

Wordsworth, Nature was his religion and rituals but unlike Wordsworth, he didn't see the dwelling God in it. For Keats the beauty which is imagined is superior to the beauty which is perceived as he says; "*Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter*". He can't be compared with Wordsworth because he grew up in a city (Middlesex, London); he couldn't find an opportunity to see Nature as much as Wordsworth did in his life in the Lake district. Keats looks at Nature with the approach of love, beauty and peace. He found that this beautiful world is the source of joy, recreation, delight and felicity (Janiswara, 2012).

Keats used imageries in order to portray his imaginative side of Nature. He, for some critics, found his trait of negative capability in Nature. As he wants to escape from the harsh realities of life into the world of ecstasy. For him life, is not too much to be devoted to facts, uncertainties, doubts, miseries, and philosophical thoughts. This sort of mentality can be taken as the activity in which mind is seeking for truth in the object of Nature and it was the reason that Keats found truth in the beauty of Nature.

He enters fully into the life of Nature and imputes his own feelings to Nature. He is wholly embedded with the fleeting joy and movements of entities in Nature. Keats enters into the very soul of autumn;

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind.
(Ode to Autumn, 11-14)

Keats's observation of Nature is marked by tininess and clarity. His eye observes the minute descriptions and portrays them a ripe touch. Keats captures the most essential elements of beauty and compels our attention. His descriptions of Nature and natural sceneries are thus highlighted by an elegant graphic quality. With all these, we also find that the beauty of Nature gives him a fugitive vision of profound reality with all its sensuous appeal. These mystic experiences are indicated in his 'Ode to a Nightingale'. By hearing the song of the nightingale, the barriers of time and space seem to vanish away from the aesthetic life of Keats. The bird and its song can't be separated at all. The bird becomes pure song, and acquire permanence with the charm of beauty (Sharma, 2019).

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down.
(Ode to Nightingale, 61-62)

Keats loves Nature for console. He also loves Nature for the sake of Nature. We can easily find several pictures painted by Keats which show Keats's delight in the beauties of Nature. Another beautiful picture painted by Keats is of shining moon in his 'Ode to a Nightingale' where there is darkness on the grassy floor of the forest:

"And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,

Cluster'd around by her starry fays."
(Line 36-37)

Akhtar Sherani's description is also like that of Keats. He uses imageries to produce pictures and convey his imaginative power to us. In the construction of his paradise, the beauty of Nature is a very important factor. Through his romantic poetry, Akhtar has also invited people to find shade in the sunshine of life. There is sincerity in this song of Nature. Akhtar seems honest and truthful when he talks of natural landscapes. That is why he considers natural scenes as his comfort. The feeling of love for Nature is the strongest and certainly the most dominant feeling of Akhtar's heart. That is why Akhtar's romantic view considers the beauty of his beloved and natural solace as a combination of his heart's desire. In the same way, he is happy and satisfied in the embrace of beauty of Nature. This is the reason why his poetry is a mirror of the beauty of the beloved and also a mirror of the beauty of Nature. And in this mirror, both the states of the senses show their full splendor. The curling blue-black clouds, the damp breezes of morning, the perfumed winds, the soft sounds of birds, the chirping of sparrows, the smell of buds and flowers, the colors of the dawn on the horizon, the green grass, the springs in the gardens, the twinkling stars, the shining moon, the flowing water. In short, Akhtar is attached to Nature and this naturalism is so important in his poetry that it is impossible to read his poetry separately from it. This aesthetic taste of Nature draws his heart step by step and their eyes automatically go towards it. And sometimes Akhtar gets so lost in the colors of Nature that they don't feel their surroundings at all.

Akhtar finds great peace in the embrace of Nature. Akhtar not only takes natural sceneries to compare them with his beloved beauty metaphorically, but also the mystery of Nature and its golden beauty has a place in his poetry. We see the pictures of the scenes of clouds, spring, mountains and valleys, landscapes and horizons, rain and moonlight.

"جب وقت پہ سب رنگینیاں اس وادی میں یکجا ہوتی ہیں
تب کلیوں کے رنگیں پہلو سے کچھ حوریں پیدا ہوتی ہیں"

Translation

*When ornatenesses, in time, come together in this valley
Then some maidens/virgins are born from the glaring blossoms.*

Akhtar Sherani not only describes Nature, but he is also a great naturalist who is always in love with Nature. For him, Nature is sincerity, love, and passion. The reason for his attachment is that Nature is not the name of a motionless state, but the name of an interesting combination of Nature, beauty, and sweetness; in which the waves of life are always present. That's why there are immense powers of attraction in Nature. And because of this attraction and attractiveness, Akhtar has great affection and love for Nature.

The paintings of ideas make Akhtar a beautiful idol in which the mixture of romance and imagination is molded into the matrix of words.

"روپہلی چاندنی نے رات کو کھلی چہت پر
ادا سے سوئے ہوئے بار بار دیکھا ہے
سنہری دھوپ کی کرنوں نے بام پر تم کو
بکھیرے گیسوئے مشکیں بہار دیکھا ہے
سنہرے پانی میں چاندی سے پاؤں لٹکائے
شفق نے تم کو سر جوئے بار دیکھا ہے"
(بار بار دیکھا ہے)

Translation:

*On the open roof at night, moonlight
Has seen you oft sleeping with conceit,
The rays of the golden sun, on the balm,
Have seen you with the scattered hairs dipped in scent,
In golden water, Hanging its feet from moonlight,
Gloaming has stared at you beyond the limit.*

The aesthetic taste of Nature touches his heart at every moment. And his eyes unintentionally go up to her (Nature) and sometimes he is lost in the swindling of Nature in such a manner that he absolutely has no sense of his surroundings. In rainy seasons, when there are whitish blue clouds on the sky and vibes are full of heart touching melodies, when gardens speak loudly of their beauty, when flowers dancing and gangling. When greenery is waving in the air. Tiny raindrops are falling on the grounds like stars. And looks like it's raining white pearls. Springs dance in the valleys. And lightning strikes mountains. Akhtar wobbles as he sees this scene and chants choiceless;

"گھٹاؤں کی نیل فام پریاں، افق پہ دھومیں مچا رہی ہیں
ہواؤں میں تھرتھرا رہی ہیں، فضاؤں کو گنگندا رہی ہیں
چمن شگفتہ، دمن شگفتہ، گلاب خنداں، سمن شگفتہ
بنفشہ ونسترن شگفتہ ہیں، پتیاں مسکرا رہی ہیں
یہ مینہ کے قطرے مچل رہے ہیں، کہ ننھے سیارے ڈھل رہے ہیں
افق سے موتی ابل رہے ہیں، گھٹائیں موتی لٹا رہی ہیں
بہار ہندوستان یہی ہیں، ہماری فصلوں کی جا یہی ہیں
بہشت کوثر نشاں یہی ہیں، جو بدلیاں دل لبھاری ہیں
نہیں ہے کچھ فرق بحر و بر میں، کہنچا ہے نقشہ یہی نظر میں
کہ ساری دنیا ہے اک سمندر، بہاریں جس میں نہا رہی ہیں
چمن ہے رنگیں، بہار رنگیں، مناظر سبزہ زار رنگیں
ہیں وادی و کوہسار رنگیں، کہ بجلیاں رنگ لاری ہیں"
(برکھا رت)

Translation

*The blue fairies of the clouds, fluttering on the horizon
Trembling in the winds, tingling the skies
Spirited garden, mountain vivacious, joyous flowers, sparkling lily,
Hermit flower and dog-rose blooming, leaves simper
Raindrops; falling like stars on the ground,
Pearls, sizzling from the horizon, clouds swirling pearls
This is the spring of our meadows, vigor of our yields
Intimations of the Kawthar paradise; allure and hypnotized
The whole world is charming, my eyes see a world;*

*Of an ocean where springs getting immersion
The garden is harlequin, glaring is spring, garish is green vista
Valleys and mountains are jazzy, lightning embroidered with colors.
(Barkha Rut or The Rainy Season)*

For Akhtar, like Keats, Nature acts as a sage and console. That is why there is an abandoned variety of the horizons and landscapes of natural sceneries, clouds, mountains and pinewoods, greenery and water falls. The stars, the full moon, the drunken flowers, the golden sunshine, the singing birds, the twilight, the candles, the mirrors, the bridesmaids, everything in this universe looks at him in an amazement because beauty is the strangest creature in the universe.

"آسمان پر چھا رہا ہے ابر پاروں کا ہجوم نوبہاروں کا ہجوم
آہ یہ رنگین آوارہ نظاروں کا ہجوم کوبساروں کا ہجوم
ننھی ننھی بوندیں گرتی ہیں حجاب ابر سے یانقاب ابر سے
چھن رہا ہے قطرے بن بن کرسٹاروں کا ہجوم نور پاروں کا ہجوم
آہ یہ مخمور آنکھیں مست سی بے خواب سی نیند میں بے تاب سی
"جن سے چھلکا پڑ رہا ہے حشر پاروں کا ہجوم فتنہ زاروں کا ہجوم
(برکھا رت)

Translation

*On the sky, overshadowing, crowd of clouds,
And throng of fresh spring's morning
Ah, this crowd of colorful wacky landscapes
A crowd of mountains
Tiny droplets fall from the pudency of clouds
Which become a throng of crusts,
A throng of light jots
Ah, these drunken aroused unsleeping eyes
Agitated and restless eyes, form which
Falls the husk of doomsday and a crowd of ordeal
(Barkha Rut or Rainy Season)*

When the month of summer comes, the gentle breeze of cool air makes Akhtar's body tickle. The soaked air in fragrances awakens harmony in the hearts. The branches washed in the rain are swirling and swinging in the air. And rain drops sing the melodious songs of freshen. Akhtar loves this enchanting scene and he wants to be immersed in this beautiful scene forever. One of his poems, "Barkha Rut" or Rainy Season reflects this scene;

"نیلگوں پریاں اُفق میں پرہیں پھیلائے ہوئے ، بال بکھرائے ہوئے
یأمنڈایا ہے ساون کی بہاروں کا ہجوم، ابر پاروں کا ہجوم"

Translation

*Blue fairies spread their wings on the horizon,
Their hair scattered
Or urged a crowd of summer springs, a crowd of clouds*

Melancholy in the poetry of John Keats and Akhtar Sherani

Keats believed this world as full of miseries, pains, heartbreaks and oppressions. He laughs very rare in contrast to other romantics. Keats, who is a naturalist romantic, is now under the oppression and harsh realities of life. He is not able to see, feel and enjoy the beauty of the flowers at his feet. He is under an acute sensibility and feel melancholy everywhere in this world (Yuksel, 1990). Beauty and depression both exist in a same way for Keats. Wherever there is delight and elation there will be a cloak melancholy;

Aye, in the very temple of delight
Veiled melancholy has her sovran shrine
(Ode on Melancholy, Line 25-26)

In the poetry of Keats, the melancholy pours down like a “weeping cloud”, it fosters “the droop headed” flowers, but once the flowers “hide the green hill”, Keats still broods over melancholic thoughts and calls the flowers “April Shroud”.

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
And hides the green hill in an April shroud;
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave.
(Ode on Melancholy, Line 11-16)

The concept of Keats’ melancholy may be called as an old skepticism about the senses, which is finding for itself a new way out of that grandeur and luxury of sensation, which is his true efficacy. Keats runs from the sense to thought from thought to metaphysical reflection in order to find a chain of melancholy and feel sadness in melancholy. Keats tries to fly from ordinary poetry to a poetry of social suffering and yet again here he feels sadness. Keats emphasis on the permeating Nature of melancholy in human life. For Keats, true melancholy does not come in sad and ugly things of life, it comes our way in joyous, elegant and beautiful objects which are inclined to our lives. The result will be non-productive if we find true melancholy in dark and somber facets of things because:

For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.
(Ode on Melancholy, 9-10)

Keats’s melancholy springs form the transience of beauty and joy, and elevated, which is not easily to be experienced by those who are touched with elegance;

Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine
(Ode on Melancholy, 27-28)

Akhtar Sherani wants to create a world free of miseries in real and practical imaginations and also wants to get relief from it, which for him, is not that hard. If romantics could do that, their world would be ruined. That is why Sherani realizes the grief of this deliberate world. So, we find that he has same sadness, the same shadows of despair that are the gift of love's grief and pursuit's love. He also sometimes laments on the despair he gets from his love;

"دل غم دیدہ کو غم سہنے کی عادت نہ رہی
چشم محزوں میں لہو رونے کی ہمت نہ رہی
کیا غضب ہے کہ غم بجر سنا بھی نہ سکیں
سینے کے زخم دکھاتے تو دکھا بھی نہ سکیں"
(اُن سے)

Translation

*My grief-afflicted heart is no longer acclimatized to grief
My grieved eyes are no longer capable to shed blood
It is so rage that we couldn't speak of the grief of detachment
If showing chest's wounds, we couldn't even show them.
(To Her)*

As mentioned earlier that Akhtar's poetry is the expression of emotional fervor by a carefree young man. As soon as it is mixed with the sorrows of life, its color becomes dull and the effect becomes low and light.

"عشق نے ظلم وہ ڈھائے ہیں کہ جی جانتا ہے
یاس نے گل وہ کھلائے ہیں کہ جی جانتا ہے
درد، دکھ، دل نے وہ پائے ہیں کہ جی جانتا ہے
ہم نے وہ رنج اٹھائے ہیں کہ جی جانتا ہے
اشک پروردہ ہیں، غم دیدہ ہیں مہجور ہیں ہم
اوپری پاس بلا لے کہ بہت دور ہیں ہم"
(اُن سے)

Translation

*My heart knows;
The oppression love has poured on me,
Flowers of pain, dandled by despair;
Pain, sorrow, heart has found,
We have suffered,
That my heart knows.
I am full tears, forlorn, and alone
Call me O' Ferry to your amity.
(To Her)*

CONCLUSION

After a detailed discussion in the analysis section and by referencing all the related stuff found in the selected poems, it is argued that both the poets are lurking under the idealism of a romantic fervor. This zeal for pure romantic enchantment fills them with inordinate love for beauty in Nature and the natural world, beauty, love for art, amalgamation of love and abhorrence, flight into imaginary world and then falling into the pitfall of sheer disillusionment, flight

into the world of nightingale, lulled by a deep sense of remorse and torn by an intoxicating love-loss. All these elements have come to them from their separate and unique understanding of the world.

Keats though seems very much accorded on many points, yet there are drastic dissimilarities that hold importance and significance while this paper was being discussed. The chief aspects of the romanticism that have been explored through this paper are the remarkable talents exist in both these poets. Nature is attractive to Keats and Keats describes Nature but does not impel natural phenomenon, and loves it as it is. Sherani is advocating a change in Nature and through lack of human idealism in human affairs, he recommends a change in Nature. He laments in the decay in Nature but Keats that impermanence and transience.

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