



Government College

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➤ ' Salient Features of Keats Romantic Poetry '

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John Keats' Romanticism

Romanticism is a well known term in English literature it is a peculiar period between 1798 to 1832. In spite of limitless exertion made by the concerned literary cult there is no pin point definition of the romanticism till now. It is a term with the cross references and undoubtedly can be confirmed as the heartbeat of the English Literary cult. Basically it means different activities with the powerful enhancement in the sense of common objects with a sharp imagination, feelings and emotions on a remote occasion. So the romanticism is, of course, the transition of the senses. It was a period which was an absolute revolt against the tradition and literary and social authority of the classical period. John Keats Made his debut in the same period as he had the common characteristics of the romantic period Having hellenism, medievalism, return to nature, melancholy and supernaturalism blended in his poems. The degree of romanticism in Keats' poetry was more than the rest of his contemporaries. He was a man of reality which he found in truth and truth and beauty where the simultaneous aspects to Keats. There is an individualism in Keats' poetry as he was not a vehicle of any prophesy any message. His poetry is for his own sake with the absence of didacticism. Before romantic period poets were no more interested in the description of nature. They had their own social issues but later, In the romantic period Poets started taking interest in the nature which could be called return to nature.

John Keats was no more an exception and conceived a concern between man and nature. He loved nature and its varied charms and enjoyed a lot because of his powerful sensuousness. He could not find like Wordsworth the didacticism or moral lesson in nature but he found a beauty in nature and life. He was captivated by the sight, smell and sound of natural objects. Ode to Autumn is an ultimate description of nature. The poet had a desire to cooperate actively with the sun in bringing about the maturity of the fruits. For a little while, he became sad by not finding any sweet song in the autumn season but very soon he found that autumn has its own peculiar music.

Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn

Among the river shallows, borne aloft".

Keats found nature a consoler as well. He forgets his sorrows in the company of nature, whenever he found himself rejected from the world he thought Nightingale the symbol of joy and beauty which is permanent.

The song to the Nightingale is used to console the people who had been suffered in the past. My heart aches and a drowsy numbness pains my sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk".

The sense of Hellenism in Keats was in a bounding which made him Greek, he was great

instinctively Although he did not know Greek language and could not have opportunity of reading Greek literature but he was the Greek in his temper and spirit. He was much influenced by the copy of Chapman's translation of Homer and composed a poem on first looking into Chapman's Homer. It was a new discovery for him. Apart from it Greek sculpture as in Ode on Grecian Urn and in Ode on Indolence proves him the Greek. But the most important factor in Keat's Hellenism was his own Greek temper which was the inborn temperamental Greekness of his mind. He vividly expressed the picture of the farmer who was sitting by the greenery floor.

" Sitting careless on granary floor

Thy hair soft lifted by the winnowing wind".

Medievalism is also a notable characteristics of romanticism. Of course Keats was a medieval poet. There is a superb blending of spirit and atmosphere of the middle ages. Churchyard castles were the ultimate objects of the romantic poets. On the same tone Keats laid stress upon the romance of chivalry and love on one hand and supernaturalism on the other.

La Belle Dame Sans Merci is a poem full of supernatural elements and medievalism. There is a flashback in Ode to a Nightingale about the song heard in the past by the people.

Melancholy is one of the inevitable products of the typical romantic temper. It is the outcome of the reflects of the prevailed societal issues. Apart from it he was a patient of tuberculosis which ultimately cut him down in the flower of youth. He was extremely touched by the fear of death, consequently he composes on it when I have fear that i may cease to be. In which he desired to depart from this world with easeful death and wanted to die when he was in sleep.

To cease upon the midnight with no pain".

In the Ode to the Nightingale he compares his life with the life of the Nightingale and wished to enjoy the same. He describes the sadness and the pitiable condition of man .

"

Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,

Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;"

Like other romantics John Keats also uses powerful imagery. Ode on the Gracian Urn contains vivid and distinct pictures because of his powerful imagery, he could revive the pictures painted on the Grecian Urn. The vivid description of the maiden who is about to kiss his lover and the melodists who were busy in piping became immortal and ultimate. In the Ode to Autumn Keats imagines about the coming healthy season and made a plan to load the trees with ripened fruits. The smooth development of his ideas in the poem was the result of his powerful imagery. He saw three pictures in his vision and developed his ideas.

" one morning before me were there threw figures seen,
with both necks and joined hands side-facted".

Although John Keats had a little time to enjoy and whatever he did in his short spell was really countable in the English literature. He covered almost sphere of characteristics of romanticism. He was really a poet of love he found that truth and beauty are the simultaneous dispositions in the world. He found that where there is a beauty there is a truth we cannot depart them from each other. For him beauty is truth and truth beauty and beauty is a joy forever.

Keats' poetry contains all the essential qualities of what is called the Romantic Movement or Romantic Revival or Romanticism in English Poetry. In fact, he is generally regarded as the greatest English romantic poet. The word 'romantic' originally meant 'like the old romances but since these works had to do improbable and adventures remote from ordinary life, romantic came to mean something unreal or far-fetched or opposed to act. During the eighteenth century, the word 'romantic' gained increasing currency in some such sense as fictions extravagant. In time, it came to be used as a descriptive term for pleasing scenes or situations described in romances. The term 'romanticism' a later development, has come to refer, generally, to the emancipation of poetry from the intellectual and formal restraints imposed on it in the eighteenth century. It is in this sense that Keats is a romantic. Romanticism is, therefore, primarily a reaction against rule and custom and seeks to assert the individuality of the writer who is guided by his own imagination and feeling. As Cazamian puts it, "The romantic spirit can be defined as an accentuated predominance of emotional life provoked or directed by the exercise of imaginative vision. All the desires, aspirations, joys and griefs of the romantic poet, sincerely expressed, have a place in his poetry." The interest in the poet's own self does not exclude the environment around him. The poet is an observer of the changing forms and moods of nature and the spirit of men. This new awareness of Nature fills him with wonder at the beauty and exquisiteness of the animate world and leads him to discover profound and new meanings in common things. While observing the known, the Romantic poet yearns for the unknown and perfect and this yearning is, as rule, conveyed by means of hints and half-spoken suggestion. In fact infinite suggestiveness and intense display of imagery are the marked features of Romantic poetry. The yearning for the ideal beauty produces in the truly Romantic poet an element of melancholy which he cannot easily shake off. He is sad when he realizes the contrast between the ideal world of strangeness and beauty and the real world of the "weariness, the fever and the fret." For such visionary poets, beauty and truth are but two sides of the same shield. The criticism of life is implicit in his profoundest poetry. Some of these romantic poets seek emotional experience in the pursuit of the remote in time and space. They feel the magic of the distance. A strong note of individuality, powerful feeling and imagination, love for nature and a deeply sensuous treatment of it, suggestiveness, wealth of imagery, passion for beauty and truth, fondness for the past particularly for the middle ages and old Greek mythology, art and literature are some of the salient Romantic elements that we find in Keats's poetry. However, as David Daiches points out "the synthesis that he made of these elements was essentially his own." While Keats essentially belongs to English

romantic tradition, his poetry also possesses the element of modernity that is why he has survived the anti-romantic crusade in modern times. It has been said that Keats dramatizes his experiences which are rooted in concrete sensations. This fact alone is not enough to explain his appeal to the modern mind. What really distinguishes the modern mind is its capacity for self analysis, a capacity for objectifying and scrutinizing all one's experiences and feelings without any dogmatic assertion. In his great poems, Keats analyses his experience without offering any simple resolution. There is a note of ambiguity and satisfaction with self knowledge. The important modern elements in Keats's poetry are thus a searching self-exploration, dramatization of experience and tolerance for ambiguity. As a critic remarks, "It is in this dramatization of the spiritual dilemma that Keats departs from the English romantic poets of early nineteenth century and comes closer to the twentieth century writers."

