

USE OF HELLENISM (GREEK NOTES) BY JOHN KEATS

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ABSTRACT

History narrates that Greek was very advance in all aspects of Civilization. Then they were the icon of all kinds of cultural activities for the whole people of the world. As a result in the field of literature, the feature of their Civilization was a potential influence. Many poets, especially in English literature were inspired from them, but John Keats was the most important among them. His literary achievements were a tremendous notable Side of English poetry. It was the query of the critics of all time that under what kind of influence Keats was so successful in dealing with Greek customs in his literature.

Along with this his technique of writing in this discussable point should be mentioned briefly, So the essence and main subject of this paper was depended upon the experiment on the "HELLENISM" or Greekness of Keats in his literature works.

Key Words: - Civilization , Essence, Hellenism, Query, Tremendous.

I. INTRODUCTION

The word "Hellenism" is derived from the word "Hellene" which means Greek. So, Hellenism means Greek temperature quality, culture, manner, Greek spirit and Greek idioms.

English literature sustained its greatest loss due to the premature death of John Keats. He was not only the last but also the most perfect of the Romantics. Keats among the Romantics was different in many ways, especially in mood, temperature, spirit and love of Greek art, culture and mythology.

Keats "Hellenism" on his love for Greek arts, Sculpture and mythology has made him distinct in the gallery of Romantics. It was Shelly who first expressed his opinion that "Keats was a Greek" though, Keats was not an English man or not an English poet. His passion of Greek ideas and idols was very great which vividly expressed his poems.

The Greek influence came to him through his reading of translation of Greek classics, Lempriere's classical dictionary and through Greek Sculpture.

One of his friends lent him a copy of chapman's translation of Homer. He was fascinated by the new word of wonder and delight, which Homer revealed to him. He felt as he had discovered a new planet.

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies, when a new planet swims into his ken.

Secondly, his study of Lemprier's Classical dictionary fully acquainted him with the Greek mythology; he loved every bit of it and freely used it in his poetry.

The third source is Greek sculpture. This sonnet, on seeing the English Marbles indicates is emotion reaction to the sculpture, "wonders" of ancient Greece.

But the most important factor in Keats's Hellenism was his own Greek temper- the inborn temperamental Greekness of his mind.

The Greek were lovers of beauty, and so is Keats to him, as to the Greeks, the expression of beauty is the aim of all art, and beauty for Keats and Greeks is not exclusively physical or spiritual but represents the fullest development of all that makes for human perfection. His passion for beauty finds a concrete expression in his ode to psych:

Yes, I will be the priest and build a fane

In some Untrodden region of my grown with pleasant pain

Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind.

II. KEATS INBORN, TEMPERAMENTAL "GREEKNESS"

The inborn, temperamental "Greekness" of Keats mind is to be seen in his love of beauty. To him, as to the Greeks, the expression of beauty is the idea of all art. And for him, as for them, beauty is not exclusively material nor spiritual, nor intellectual, but is the fullest development of all that goes to make up human perfection.

III. HIS INTEREST IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY

Towards the creations of Greek mythology, Keats was attracted by an overmastering delight her beauty, and a natural sympathy with the phase of imagination that created them. "He possessed the Greek instinct for personifying the powers of nature in clearly defined imaginary shapes endowed with human beauty and half-human faculties. Especially he shows himself possessed and fancy-bound by the mythology, as well as by the physical enchantment, of the moon. Never was bard in youth/ so literally moon-struck. Not only had the charm of the myth of the love of the moon goddess for Endymion interwoven itself in his being with his natural sensibility to the physical and spiritual spell of moonlight, but deeper and more abstract meaning than its own had gathered about the story is his mind. The divine vision which haunts Endymion in dreams is for Keats symbolical of beauty itself, and it is the passion of the human soul for beauty which he attempts, more or less consciously, to shadow forth in the quest of the sphered-prince after his love."

IV. KEATS HELLENISM IN HIS ODES.

Keats, as is well known, was not a classical scholar, yet he has been famous for his Hellenism, a term which may be defined as a love of Greek art, literature, culture and way of life. Keats had an inborn love for the Greek-spirit, their religion of joy and their religion of beauty. In fact, he was driven to the world of Greek beauty

because he wanted to escape imaginatively from the harsh realities of his present. It should, however, be noted that Keats was a Greek because he could enter lovingly and imaginatively into the world of the ancients, and not because his knowledge of it was accurate and scholarly. His presentation of Hallas is romantic and not realistic.

Keats mind was saturated with Greek literature and mythology. He habitually chooses Greek stories for his poetry. Endymion, Hyperion, lamia, Grecian urn, psyche etc., - all have the themes barrowed from the Greeks. The Grecian urn is a moment of the poets' power of entering imaginatively into another world. We as readers feel that we have been transported entirely to the Hellenic world of beauty, love, festivity and ritual. It is presented through and through with the Greek spirit. It may also be noted that the 'ode' form, which he made particularly his own and in which he excels all other English poets, is typically Greek verse form.

The Greek temper of Keats is also revealed particularly in his joy in the beauty of nature and his Zest for an out of door life lived in her midst. Like the Greeks, Keats also takes a sensuous, child life pleasure in the forms, colors, scents and sounds of nature and sees a god or goddess behind every object and phenomena of the external world. The following lines can be cited in this regard-

And happily the queen – moon is on her throne,

Clustered around by all her starry lays;

The Greeks had a Zest for life in nature and loved the activities of such life; but they also loved the serenity and quiet of pastoral life. But these aspects are combined vividly in the ode on a Grecian urn. In fact, in his worship of beauty, Keats justifies the remark of shelly that he was a Greek.

V. NO FIRST HAND KNOWLEDGE OF GREEK LITERATURE

Keats had no first – hand knowledge of Greek literature. He derived his knowledge of the Greek classics from translation and books of reference like champions translation of homer, and Lamprieres classical dictionary. His sonnet on seeing the Elgin marbles reveals the important influence exerted on his by Greek sculpture. According to critics, Hyperion is in poetry what the Elgin marbles are in sculpture. The calm grandeur of Greek art, its majesty and symmetry and simplicity parts to the whole, came to Keats through his knowledge of these marbles. This influence is most obvious in the odes, on indolence and on a Grecian urn.

VI. HIS LIMITATIONS AS A “GREEK”

John Keats has his limitations as a Greek. He does not write of Greek things in a Greek manner. Something indeed in Hyperion – at least in its first two books – he caught from “paradise lost” of the high restraint and calm which was common to the Greeks and Milton. But his palace of Hyperion, with its vague far – dazzling pumps and phantom – terrors of coming doom, shows how far he is in workmanship from the Greek purity and precision of outline, and firm definition of individual images. Similarly one of the most characteristic images of nature from this poem shows not the simplicity of the Greek, but the complexity of the modern, sentiment of nature, with its concourse of metaphors and epithets Keats produces here every effect which a forest scene by starlight can have upon the other

trees, there aspect of human venerableness, their verdure unseen in the darkness, the sense of their stillness and suspended life etc.

VII. CONCLUSION

In the conclusion I may say that though many influences effected Keats, but the most important and ultimate cause of his Hellenism is the inborn sensitive. Greekness of his heart. Here Keats becomes the supreme icon on this field in literature. However the fertile and beautiful fact is that by this temperament of Keats, the English literature for all time is enriched and fulfilled by some marvelous literary achievements from him. It is the best and immortal result of his Hellenism.

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