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RESEARCH ARTICLE

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE POEM BY JOHAN KEATS "ODE ON A GRECIAN URN"

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ABSTRACT

John Keats, one of the representative poets of romantic age, has reached its climax in its love of art and nature, worship of beauty and his expertise in philosophy of life in his famous ode "ode on a Grecian urn". This specific ode is authentic proof of oft quoted remark about Keats that he was more Greek than Greeks. He has philosophized the concepts of love, beauty and art. According to Keats, in love, there is no consummation. The in-satiated love is the real love; He perceives. Keats states that unsaid things are more emphatic than said ones. He interprets beauty as an art which is the only truth in life and that truth (reality) is the only beauty in life. This paper aims to discuss the poem "ode on a Grecian urn" "from the perspective of critical analysis. This research is helpful to analyze the philosophical, aesthetical and romantic aspects of Keats poetry.

INTRODUCTION

A critical evaluation is a systematic assessment of an idea, text or a piece of literature that focuses upon its arguments and assesses its value. In a critical evaluation we keep two things under consideration: what a text is about and how it is delivered. A critical evaluation in literature might examine the style, tone or rhetorical appeals of a text. A good critique always keeps in mind the name and qualification of author, nature and significance of his work, his underlying assumptions, his methodology, his ideas, and type of his rhetorical strategy and validity of his judgment and conclusions. "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is a poem written by the English romantic poet, John Keats in May 1820, November 15 issued in the magazine Annals of the fine arts. Keats found earlier forms of poetry unsatisfactory for his purpose and he got satisfaction in Ode form. An Ode is type of lyrical stanza. A classical ode is structured in three major parts; the strophe, the anti strophe and the epode. It is a poem which appreciates an individual or signifies the importance of an object. Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" offers a complex and new concept of beauty.

He declares boldly that whatever is beautiful must be true. To him art represents beauty and the beauty represented in art is the only truth in the world. It is said so because an event once captured, an object once delineated, or a person once portrayed in an art, it remains in that position forever. Neither time nor any calamity can wither their freshness or purity. In that sense, Keats pronounces the supremacy of art upon man's life. Though unsatisfied love is teasing to the greater extent but Keats finds satisfaction in the permanence of intensity of love. Keats sought musicality in the silence. To him, utterance is always limited in its expression whereas silent language makes the expression infinite and Unlimited.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is Keats's major concept in his description of "Ode on a Grecian urn"?
- How does Keats relate beauty and truth to each other? What is historical significance of urn in "Ode on a Grecian urn"?

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

This research paper aims

- To clarify Keats's belief in supremacy of art and transience of human life.
- To interpret Keats's idea that beauty represents art and truth represents harsh realities of life.

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- To signify the historical importance of an urn. Actually the Ancient Greeks used to deposit the ashes of dead bodies in the urns.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is qualitative in its perspective. It is descriptive in nature. It is preceded on account of critical evaluation of the poem.

DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

According to Keats, art preaches human knowledge and insights better than any other medium. The things remain important until they remain beyond our access. The moment they come in our grasp, they lose their importance.. Every passion no doubt demands expression and expression needs language. But sometimes unuttered words are more expressive than uttered ones as Keats talks of language of silence which is more emphatic and more impressive. This poem is no doubt a hallmark of Keats's love of art and love of beauty, his sensuousness and his love for Greek. The researcher has tried to focus upon philosophy in general and his hidden ideas in specific in "Ode on a Grecian urn"

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Stephen Hebron:" the ending of "Ode on a Grecian Urn" may be ambiguous, but this is in keeping with the ambiguity that pervades the whole poem; and, like Keats's other odes, it is a poem notable not for the answers which it may or may not present, but for the skill and intensity with which it asks the questions. 'It is a wonderful picture, said Keats of Benjamin West's painting 'Death on the Pale Horse', which he saw in December 1817. 'But there is nothing to be intense upon; no women one feels mad to kiss; no face swelling into reality. The excellence of every Art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeable evaporate, from their being in close relationship with Beauty & Truth (22 December, 1817)"

M.H Abram responded to Brooks' view in 1957: "I entirely agree, then, with Professor Brooks in his explication of the Ode, that 'Beauty is truth' ... is to be considered as a speech 'in character' and 'dramatically appropriate' to the Urn. I am uneasy, however, about his final reference to 'the world-view ...' for the poem as a whole is equally an utterance by a dramatically presented speaker, and none of its statements is proffered for our endorsement as a philosophical generalization of unlimited scope. They are all, therefore, to be apprehended as histrionic elements which are 'in character' and 'dramatically appropriate,' for their inherent interest as stages in the evolution of an artistically ordered ... experience of a credible human being".

Mrs. N. Subhadra Chari argued that:" John Keats, rep representative poet of romantic age, abstractly defined the truth as beauty in his ode and these phenomenal lines aroused curiosity to know in-depth analysis of beauty defined by philosophers in English literature. The word beauty strikes several connotations regarding its perception and this assortment reflect in assimilation with nature of art, & beauty in the world of literature. Keats poetry is known for its sensuousness and spontaneous presentation of nature. In his

poems symbolism figures out presentation of human euphoria of mind, body and soul seeking in the laps of eternal beauty of nature.

His poetry enlivens the source and origin of beauty and inspires to explore the background of the philosophy behind it. Reading texts of Aesthetic theory cultivates a deeper understanding of the theories and applying them to study Keats philosophy of beauty in broader context of his poetry."

Hofmann, Klaus stated that:" Indeed, Keats's poem is an ode not "on" but "to" a Grecian urn, most conspicuously so as it opens with a threefold apostrophe (1) and thereby fulfills the requirements of the genre more faithfully than most odes. This faithfulness exposes the poem to the question whether the apostrophe addresses a being worth the effort. Is the addressee an at least potentially responsive partner in the communicative situation of the ode, which is essentially a dialogic one though the utterance may be one-sided in the manner of the dramatic monologue? From its origins in the cult hymn, (2) the genuine partner of an ode address is a divine being, a god, goddess, or a godlike authority, capable of hearing, of understanding, of fulfilling a request. The invocation may not be received, the god may not listen, may not care, may not be willing or able to help--the precariousness of prayer--yet there must be a confidence in, and a possibility of, a gracious reception. The gesture of avoidance in the poem's title which after all announces what it refrains from announcing, namely an ode, which is generally an "ode to," may on the other hand not be a sign of embarrassment by the addressee's lowness, but a symptom of awe in the face of the silent work of art, even fear of the unmediated impact of beauty."

RESULTS

The researcher has tried to focus on all the philosophical and romantic elements of the poem" Ode on a Grecian Urn". As it is stated in the lines: Thou still unravished bride of quietness Thou foster child of silence and slow time Here Keats interprets the Urn as an "unravished bride" of quietness. In a case groom (quietness) touches his wife, a sound is likely to produce which is the death of groom. The researcher has sought out that art is in fact son of the time. Time, as it is obvious, is the killer. But it has spared the Urn due to its intimate relation with it.

The climax of Keats's romantic and philosophical nature is evident in these lines: Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard Are sweeter... Here Keats contradicts the famous quotation of Jim Beggs: "what we say is important.....for in most cases the mouth speaks what the heart is full of". But Keats finds musicality and sweetness in "unheard melodies". Actually Keats believes that words which are uttered lose their value whereas unuttered and unsaid words remain precious and valuable because they are beyond the approach of anyone's comprehension. No one can reach at the inner recesses of human mind. No one can guess about what a person is likely to speak. So everyone remains in curiosity and suspense till the delivery of words. Thus the whole fascination lies in unsaid, unknown and unfamiliar aspects of life. The last lines of the poem are ample proof of Keats's aphorism and his love of art and beauty. "Beauty is truth, truth beauty... that is all Ye know on earth, and all ye needed to know". To Keats, beauty lies only in art which is the only truth of the world. The

Urn fascinates mankind to find solace in the permanence of art. But, according to Keats, two things are necessary to be known, nothing more is needed to know: what is truth and what is beauty. Truth is simple to understand but it is quite tough to define. Keats's aphorism is that no truth can be ugly; every truth is beautiful or pleasant. Keats interprets that truth is in fact reality which is always harsh to bear but beauty always lies in the acceptance of that truth. To Keats, this is the message which urn wants to prophecies. Though art is an imitation of real life, but it is superior to life as it preserves reflections of human life forever. And life on the other hand is transient and temporary in nature. Life needs art for searching out truth and beauty in the world.

Keats was more Geek than Greeks. The way he expressed his love of beauty and of truth is an ample proof of his love of Greeks. His passionate pursuit of beauty is obvious representation of instinctive Greeks. The Greeks did not use their poetry as vehicle of conveying any specific message or any specific philosophy so did Keats in his poetry. His "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is not imbued with any moral message or philosophy rather the whole poem is an incarnation of beauty. The use of concrete imagery was specialty of all Greek writers. The same did Keats in his poetry.

The ode on a Grecian urn expresses vividly Keats's objective and impersonal approach and his powerful use of imagination. Here an Urn is represented as as an object or piece of art Critical Evaluation of the Poem "Ode on a Grecian Urn" by John Keats which is free from the concept of time. It is a child which is pampered and loved through the ages but does not belong to any specific epoch. The real specialty of poem is the forceful use of interrogations. These interrogations are, in fact, an address to an urn which is an inanimate object through a rhetorical device. These interrogations are not questions. They are the reflections of most striking philosophies of life. They are responses to the permanence of art. They are outspoken exposure of rich imagination of poet. Keats's sensuousness in his poem "Ode on a Grecian urn" is, in fact, a path to knowledge of reality. He listens what is silent, he sees which is invisible and he feels what is abstract. He always keeps in touch with beauty that appeals to senses. His poem is an expression of series of word paintings of scenes of sensuous beauty.

The "ode on a Grecian Urn" is manifestation of images which are delineated and meditated upon. The Grecian urn symbolizes paradox for Keats. The art is presented here as silent, motionless and dead object, but at the same time, it has been given vitality, passion and sacrifice. It symbolizes beauty and eternity, but at the same time, it reminds all the human beings of their transience and impermanence.

Conclusion

The researcher has concluded that "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is in fact a poem based on appreciation, acknowledgments, and acceptance of beauty of art and nature. Keats's excellence lies in his minute description of love of art and nature. His philosophy is nothing and everything at the same time. Apparently Keats deals with trivial objects of life but actually his poem is extremely philosophical in its approach. The researcher has tried to focus upon all the philosophical elements of this poem.

Recommendations

The topic under consideration is extremely wide. Though, the poetic career of Keats is short, but his work is multidimensional. The new researchers can work upon Keats's aphoristic style, world of imagination as a source of escape for Keats, and Keats's concern with metaphysics.

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