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AN INCARNATION OF PERCEPTIBLE NATURE IN SELECT POEMS OF JOHN KEATS AND ROBERT FROST

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ABSTRACT

Eco-literature illustrates the concept of relationship between the human and the environment in the literature. With the arise of major ecological problems around the world, there is a need and huge sense of awareness to be created around the earth. Thus, the word 'Eco' plays a wide role as a prominent voice. Eco-literature includes fiction, poetry and criticism which focus on ecological issues. It has found stronger proponents in the area of poetry and fiction. This paper mainly aims to trace the representation of nature in select poems in John Keats and Robert Frost. It also disseminates on the passion for nature by the two poets. Ecological studies through literature provides a great number of interest and awareness with provoking thought and science of environment.

Keywords:Eco-literature, nature, beauty, seasons, awareness, environment

Representation of Nature in Select Works

John Keats (1785-1821) and Robert Frost (1874-1963) were highly regarded as the English nature poets. Keats had become one of the most beloved of all the nature poets. *Ode to Nightingale* and *To Autumn* signifies about the beauty in nature. Though nature was the main theme Keats turned natural objects into the poetic image. Of Keats' six major Odes of 1819, *Ode to Nightingale* was written between 26 April to 18 May 1819 based on weather conditions. In this poem, nightingale and he become one and his soul sings in the bird which is the symbol of joy and brings out the sense of relief. The poet was inspired by the song of nightingale where he heard in the garden of his friend Brown. The sweet music of the nightingale made the poet to compose the poem. It brings out the expression of Keats' feeling rising in his heart on hearing the melodious song of the bird. When he heard the song, he is entrenched by its sweetness and joy moves in depth to poet's heart and

creates a heartache and numbness as is created by drinking of Hemlock. The poem also presents the picture of personal problems of Keats. With heart full of sorrow, he is filled with desire to escape from the world of reality to world of Nightingale. The complex emotion about his brothers and suspense agony about his lady love Fanny Browne was the reason behind his sorrow which moves the poem into unique charm. In the beginning the poet seems to be immature and urges to forget the reality. On catching the sight, he assumes to be immortal voice of happiness and he feels his body to be numbed. He contrasts the mortality and suffering of human being with the immortality and happiness of the nightingale. Though imaginative minds can wander a momentary flight into fanciful world no one can escape into the ideal world. The song of bird symbolizes the song of the poet. The melodious song, the loveliness of dark spring's night expresses the succession of moods. In reference to Flora, Dryad,

etc. related with Greek mythology his love towards nature was described. The starlit skies, flower scented darkened spring night, Hampstead garden renders the picture of beauty towards nature. "Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways" (Keats).

To Autumn is considered to be the final works of 1816 Odes. It was composed after a walk near Winchester on autumnal evening. It describes about the various three seasons and its fruitfulness. It describes about the progression from early autumn to mid-autumn and then to cold winter. Parallel to this season the poem also depicts the day turning from day to noon and to the dusk. The season autumn represents in the poem metamorphically describes the flourishing nature and makes music. The first stanza involved with the promotion of natural processes, growth and ultimate maturation. In the second stanza the weather is personified as the harvester. The progression throughout the day is revealed and the drowsiness of afternoon was pictured. In the third stanza the contrasts between autumn and spring was revealed as well as the sounds of evening. As the night approaches it is considered to be the final moment of the song as well as death is slowly approaching the end of the year. The poet illustrates life and death was in harmony. Keats describes the extreme greatness of the spring and the harmonious end as,

Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;

And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;

Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft

The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;

And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

(Keats)

Robert Frost (1874-1963) was an American poet. Frost was honored frequently for receiving the Pulitzer Prize for poetry. *The Road Not Taken* by Frost was considered to be the first and finest poem published in 1916 in the collection of Mountain Interval. The poem is about making choices. The speaker in the poem is travelling through diverged yellow woods. One way seems as if it is having been travelled many times and it was frequently used. The

other road was not frequently used and risky one to travel on. He ends up selecting the less-path travelled by to continue his journey. The poem is indeed about the choosing of choices between two possible routes.

I shall be telling this with a sigh

Somewhere ages and ages hence:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference. (Frost)

It pictures the beauty of yellow woods, autumn season and the bush covered less travelled path symbolizes the beauty of nature in the poem. Similarly, Rachel Carson compares this poem with almost the most travelled roads which contemplates despair "We stand now where two roads diverge. But unlike the roads in Robert Frost's familiar poem, they are not equally fair. The road we have long been traveling is deceptively easy, a smooth superhighway on which we progress with great speed, but at its end lies disaster. The other fork of the road -- the one less traveled by -- offers our last, our only chance to reach a destination that assures the preservation of the earth." (Carson 240) Robert frost is very keen on the paths of new visions selectively with nature.

In the poem *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* the speaker is travelling at night through the snow falling woods and pauses with his horse to watch the snow-covered woods. He is attracted by the deep, dark silence of his surroundings. He feels compelled to move further into the snowy woods but that he has more responsibilities before his death. The snow falling in the dark deep wood, the cold winter season soothe his mind and contemplate the element of nature. The season has been the witness of man's mood and his thoughts. Season on right swing carries every mirth and miseries of human thoughts. The woods and the dense forests are always the beacons of promising care to the entire human life. Thus, he articulates, "The woods are lovely, dark and deep, But I have promises to keep" (Frost)

Thus, on the whole the select poems of John Keats and Robert Frost had widely providing a good visionary mission in the embracement of nature.

These works embody the readers to go with the nature and the natural settings that never allows them to degrade and deteriorate the nature and its environment. This kind of creative approaches are the right navigation to the young readers to take an account of conservation of nature. This biotic sense will guide provide awareness to the readers and the literati to achieve a greener world.

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