



THE LONGEVITY OF ART GLORIFIED A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON P.B. SHELLEY'S 'OZYMANDIAS' AND JOHN KEATS' 'ODE ON GRECIAN URN'

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ABSTRACT

Art is an expression or application of human creative skill and imagination typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture or any other form of creative work that can be appreciated primarily for its beauty or emotional power. Various other branches of this creative activity are music, literature, dance etc. These creative arts of different forms have aesthetic sensibilities to draw the attention of the audience or observers. These arts have something that stimulates an individual's thoughts, emotions, beliefs or ideas through senses. When this work of art is preserved in a proper way with highest mark of perfection by the artist, it shall, definitely have its impact on human minds and senses of not only contemporary people but also of later generations. We all know certain pieces of arts are appreciated even after hundreds and thousands of years, because of the quality, perfection and expertise the artists have shown in their talented artistic pieces. This research paper tries to draw a comparison between two literary giants of Romantic period of English Literature John Keats and P.B.Shelley and how, they, through their amazing works, expose the long lasting effects of two different artistic pieces.

Keywords : Creative Work, Sensibility, Connoisseurs, Permanence, Immortalizing , Engraving.

"Art can be defined as a single minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe by bringing to light the truth manifold and one underlying its every aspect. It is an attempt to find in its forms, in its colours, in its light, in its shadows in the aspects of matter and in the fact of life what of each is fundamental, what is enduring and essential - their one illuminating and convincing quality - the very truth of their existence," says Joseph Conrad. Minding this fact, many artists of different artistic areas excelled in their efforts by being sincere and truthful in their efforts. What is original and what is beautiful in the world is truthful indeed as John Keats says.

"Beauty is truth and truth is beauty that is all Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know" (Keats, 61).

P.B. Shelley and John Keats are two renowned romantic poets and artists who illuminated the romantic period with their ever living literary works though they died at a young age of 33 and 26 years respectively. The two poets are well known for their fine blending of the emotional appeal with the beautiful objects of nature.

Both the poets as artists and connoisseurs give us an exuberant account of artistic excellence displayed by the artist in their poems "Ozymandias" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn". An efficient emotional

appeal can be found in both the poems of these two literary giants.

According to a critic P.B. Shelley exhales lyrics as a flower exhales fragrance. It is the lyrical fervour which makes him look at the beauties of nature with the eye of an artist. His "Ozymandias" is perhaps one of the most descriptive and thought provoking poems in the whole range of English poetry. It is one of the few poems which are most popular and widely read by the English - Speaking world. "Ozymandias" is a sonnet in which Shelley seems to have carefully selected words in describing the feelings of the King, Ozymandias who has been identified as the Egyptian Pharaoh Ramesses II. Shelley, in this sonnet, describes the version of the traveller whom he meets. "The traveller is from an antique land". The picturesqueness of Shelley's poetry is clearly seen in this sonnet. The reader, while reading the poem is automatically transported on the wings of the imagination to the desert land where the broken statue of Ozymandias stands. He is thrilled by the description of the broken statue by the traveller. Shelley wonderfully describes the condition of the statue as he is told by the traveller. This poem reminds us of the quotation "Art is long, life is short". Shelley glorifies the permanence and the longevity of art. Beauty is transient but when it is preserved in art its longevity is assured. Basing on the above said quotation, Shelley tries to the best of his ability in glorifying the greatness and longevity of art. The poet mocks at the human vanity. Man is mortal and this fact should be remembered by one and all. But, unfortunately, most humans ignore this. Even kings as well as common folk ignore this. Ozymandias, when alive, did not realize that death would catch him one day. All his victory, pomp and power could not save him from the clutches of time. He boasts of his success and asks his enemies or opponents to look at his victorious deeds and also feels a sense of despair:

"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings,
Look on my works, ye mighty and
despair"(P.B. Shelley, 1818).

The irony is that Ozymandias is now no more, but the statue is still there, though broken. "Kalohi Balavattaraha" is a popular saying in Sanskrit which means that time is powerful. Time destroys everything and Ozymandias is no exception. The use of alliteration by Shelley in the last line is apt in

bringing out the proper effect expected by him: 'The lone and level sands stretch far away'. Beauty, power, health, knowledge and glory, about which human beings feel proud of, are only transient. But the beauty which is preserved in art lives long. The famous Mughal King Shahjahan is now no more but his Tajmahal is still there in Agra attracting people from different corners of the world.

John Keats also gives us an excellent account of an antique artistic urn (vessel) created perhaps, by a Greek artist on which lively moments were eternalized. The urn, in "A Grecian Urn" poem is considered to be the adopted child of "Silence" and "Slow Time". The natural incidents which we see in the world are beautifully carved on the urn. They remain forever on the vessel. Like a historian, the urn makes certain moments permanent in this world which can be seen or experienced by people of different ages. So, the urn tells the same story to people of different generations. The urn is a better story teller than the poet himself. The musician in the illustration is greater than any living or dead musician in the world.

"And, happy melodist, unwearied,
Forever piping songs forever new"(Keats, 60).

The urn presents us such and such amazing pictures carved on it and made permanent by the artist who carved them. The ambiguous scene that presents a group of young men chasing beautiful lasses through forest and a band of musicians playing pipes and drums and every object in the picture are hilarious in spirits. They will never change but enjoy their eternal springs. The images of jealous and bold lover, the beautiful trees, playing musicians, people moving to alters for sacrifices, the little town by the river are beautifully carved on the urn.

Beauty preserved in the form of art lives long. The art of Leonardo Davinci "Monalisa" is still surviving in the world and perhaps considered to be the world's best painting. The beauty of the lofty trees and natures magnificence in the Borrowdale is immortalized in his poem "Yew-Trees" by William Wordsworth. Shakespeare's love expressed through verses, in sonnet -55, is more powerful and long lasting than marble structures. Toru Dutt in her poem "Our Casuarina Tree" efficiently describes the beauty of 'Bagmary Gardens' located around her

house on the outskirts of Calcutta city. She expresses her nostalgic relation with the 'tree' and immortalizes it's beauty through her verses.

Thy form O tree, as in my happy prime,
I saw thee, In my own loved native clime,
Therefore I fain, would consecrate a lay
Un to thy honour....." (Toru Dutt, 51)

Similarly, the amazing engraver who carved the statue of Ozymandias has succeeded in portraying the facial expressions of the emperor. Through these expressions the artist has succeeded in portraying the inner character of the king.

"And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command

Tell that its sculptor well those passions read" (Shelley, 1818)

As well, Shelley as an artist has succeeded in drawing a contrast between the past glory of Ramses II and the present condition of his statue lying half buried in the sand. This account gives us a contrast between longevity of art and temporary human life. The poem of John Keats also celebrates the greatness of art which eternalises the transient moment of beauty found in the world. The artist who moulded the antique urn had an excellent expertise as he made the temporary moments permanent as described by John Keats.

Both Shelley and Keats, here, are praising the splendid deeds of the unknown artists who engraved or moulded the temporary moments of beauty into everlasting artistic pieces which remain for a longer time. As Shakespeare says, nothing remains permanent in the world before the brutal hacking of the unkind 'Time'. Both Shelley and Keats not only glorified the artistic value of the 'broken statue' and the 'antique urn' but also gave them a permanent image through their vivacious verses and made their names evergreen in this world. So, art is an immortal thing which is a result of the deeds of a mortal being, which in turn makes that mortal being immortal.

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