



RESEARCH ARTICLE



“DEJECTION : AN ODE”--- COLERIDGE’S UNCONVENTIONAL TREATMENT OF THEME

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<https://doi.org/10.54513/JOELL.2023.10403>

ABSTRACT



Coleridge is influenced by the poetic ideas of Wordsworth. He has a firm faith in Pantheism. He is fascinated by the healing power of nature. He keenly observes nature in his own way. For, his Romanticism is a philosophy, a way of life and garret of optimism. But in Dejection: An Ode, Coleridge's treatment of theme is unconventional. The poem is personal in tone. Coleridge's internal conflict makes him unaware to feel nature. He argues the he has lost his power, poetic creativity, he has lost his sources of secondary imagination. He wants an escape to abstract world. He wants to observe the harsh reality. Such transition of theme provides this particular poetry an extra poetic charm. The word 'dejection' symbolize here the poet's own psyche. The poetry has its own unique appeal. Coleridge is quite successful in his purpose because he treats this unconventional theme with safe hands.

Article history:

Received on : 24- 09--2023

Accepted on : 22-10-2023

Available online:25- 10--2023

Keywords: *Pantheism, Secondary imagination, Dejection, Internal turmoil, Pessimism, Optimism etc.*

**INTRODUCTION**

'Dejection: An Ode' is the swan song of Coleridge poetic career. It is quite evident that without secondary imagination, he can't produce this type of poetic gem. Though he wants an escape in philosophy and metaphysics or in an abstract world but he is unable to do that because of his sense of imagination. His poems are poems of hope, full entertainment and instruction. He promotes supernaturalism and that is his passion. Optimism is his trademark, he can't escape from it. His poetry shows the beauty lies in human hearts. His poems are philosophy of life for both laymen as well as learned. As Sir Philip Sidney argues in his Magnum opus "An Apology for Poetry" that poets are 'Vates' or they are messengers of God, Coleridge is apt and justified for this title. He praises Mother Nature, glorified beauty, divinity and supernaturalism as like God directs him. His poetry has universal appeal, mild in tone and language is as common as common men.

"The greatest and most terrible of his poems is the 'Ode on Dejection' written in 1802: almost the swan song of Coleridge's poetic career." (Graham Hough *The Romantic Poets*: Pg-67)

The poem is far away from Coleridge's conventionalism

1. Here Coleridge rejects the Wordsworthian idea of nature that nature is his guide and philosopher and every minor objects of nature is a living being.
2. In "Biographia Literaria" Coleridge introduces the concept of secondary imagination. In some instances I think he has lost all his idea of secondary imagination.

3. The storm scene signifies his internal conflict and psychological turmoil because he is away from his secondary imagination.

Now he wants an escape in the world of philosophy and metaphysics but he is unable to do that.

THE WORD 'DEJECTION'

The word Dejection signifies a contradictory or complex state of mind, down spirit. The poet lost his genuine spirit. This dejection suggests poet's emotional imbalance. Perhaps the cause of this dejection is his domestic turmoil and dreadful passion for Sara and degenerated health. In this poem the poet is unable to feel the charm of nature and supernaturalism. He is now emotionally imbalance to achieve the power of tranquil imagination. The poem is poets' personal mourning over the loss of his genuine passion. He wants an escape but there is a question of to be or not to be. The internal squabble add a fantastic poetic beauty in this poetic piece.

HOW THE POET EXPRESSES HIS SENSE OF DEJECTION:

"A grief without pang, void, dark and drear, a stifled, drowsy, unimpassioned grief Which finds no natural outlet, no relief.....(DEJECTION: AN ODE : Stanza- II)

It is a cry, the cry of a poet who is unable to recognize the pure nature. Earlier, he is an admirer of calmness of nature, now he has internal turmoil, he emphasizes that the dejection of his mind which he cannot express with words and tears. In this saddest turn, he address Sara (his listener, the silent lady) and says that he is able to observe every incident, which is occurring in his internal world. He



is even able to see the sunset, the twinkling stars, and the cloud in the sky playing hide and seek but at the same time he feels that his poetic creativity is vanishing. –

“ I see them all so excellently fair, I see not feel, how beautiful the are.....”

So, he concludes that, his mind and heart are in deep sense of melancholia, a sense of hopelessness is there. He now lost his all faith on Wordsworth's ‘ Pantheism’. Though he had firm faith on it. He feels that nature has no living spirit. It depends on the eyes and the minds of beholders , if his mind is in a state of joy , he can feel the living spirit in nature-

“ O lady! We receive but what we give, and in our life alone does nature live.....”

THE STORM SCENE

In a state of intense emotional collapse , the poet return to the storm scene , which is a deep study of poets' collapsing psyche- the horrible sound of the storm take his mind in deep sense of gloom. He compares the sound with the pathetic sound of crying. He also resembles the storm with a tragic actor, who act perfectly in a tragic scene. He compares the storm with the small kid who himself in dark forest in Thomas Otway's drama- ‘Orphan’.

A Drastic Shift of Theme: From ‘Kubla Khan to Dejection: An Ode’

The Romantics are the high priests of nature. They inherited their prophetic vision from Blake. They find solace in nature, they obtain the magical beauty in supernatural stuffs, . They are philosophers of life. They worship nature in return nature shows them paths and teaches them art of living. Stones, twigs,

daffodils, lambs, laymen are there prime themes of poetry. S.T. Coleridge's vision of nature is extraordinary. His golden poetic piece –‘Kubla Khan’ is really one of the typical romantic poetry. Though it was a dream vision but his power of secondary imagination makes Xanadu a real place, gives it a cinematic view. The optimism and joy in his heart is the creative principle. His possessiveness in fancy and imagination is his making power. His poetry is the voice of nature, he is able to see the connection between heaven and earth where poetry is his meditating force.

But ‘Dejection: An Ode ‘ is poetry where Coleridge breaks his convention, now he is advocating sheer pessimism. He abandons his magical optimism. Here his secondary imagination is ruined. When he composed ‘ Kubla Khan’ he possesses joy within him in abundance. He is the victim of poor health, his personal sorrow is in peak, his passion for Sara. Thus he lost his poetic creativity. The stars are same, the clouds are playing , night is beautiful, the moon is shining but his psychological imbalance makes him unable the optimistic sights of nature. He is observing the beauty of nature, he cannot feel it. He can produce nothing but a sense of displeasure. Romanticism is sweet. Imagination is the only discourse where we wants to live too merrily. We escape there to avoid the nasty reality but romanticism has a healing power, it is just like a painkiller or sleeping pills and this is the essence of Romanticism that it is not a complete cure. God is pioneer of Romanticism but at the same time He established the very idea of Realism. Therefore realism is a harsh disease, romanticism is its transitory cure. A regular dose of romanticism can



give us a complete cure but overdose of it can also harm us nastily.

FINDINGS

1. Coleridge is the champion of secondary imagination, though he is pessimist in tone in this particular poetry , but he still fulfils his purpose of poetic theory..
2. He treats this poem with an unconventional theme, but I think it is the first and foremost duty of a poet to use poetic liberty, the poem is autobiographical so it is quite natural in using such kind of theme.
3. I think Coleridge is a born poet, therefore it is quite natural to experiment such kind of unconventional subject,
4. He is an optimist, though he wants an escape to metaphysics but this poetry is just a confession about his internal conflict.
5. Though Coleridge is unable to observe or feel the inner beauty of nature but he is quite decent when he paints the outer view of nature (e.g.- sky, clouds, shining moon, stars, the storm scene)
6. Moreover the topic of this poetic piece is nature, though pessimistic. The question is if he really want an escape to abstract world of philosophy than why he has not chosen an abstract subject?

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