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Stimulating the Imaginative Heights:Of Love and Creative writing (with special reference to Percy Bysshe Shelley and John Keats)

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Abstract

The research paper under consideration attempts to establish the stirring impressions of love in the process of creative writings. The argument of the paper encompasses how love that occupies the central position amongst human emotions becomes a creative vigor and gives origin to literatures of universal prominence. Analyzing the theoretical grounds of creative progression itself the paper looks forward to discussing the impact of the feeling of love on creativity at various levels with special reference to the universal literatures of two pioneers of the Romantic movement of England, namely, Percy Bysshe Shelley and John Keats whose personal frustrations /gratifications in love resulted in outstanding literary output that created a landmark in the history of British literature.

Key words

Social animal, *Kamadeva*, Psychoanalytical dimension, Realized soul.

*“Yam chintyami satatam maisa virakta
 Saapyanyamichchati janam sajanoanyasaktah
 Asmatkrute cha partusyati kachidanya
 Dhiktaam cha tam cha madanam cha imam
 cha maam cha.”*

(She of whom I always think is indifferent to me, but, on the contrary, she likes another man, who, in his turn, is attached to a different woman. Again, there is someone else who takes much delight in me. With these facts before us, we cannot help calling shame and censure upon her (the woman who loves me), him (my love’s paramour), my love, myself, and Cupid (the real author of all these evils)” (Bhartrihari, *Neetishatakam* 60).

*“Othello. “It gives me wonder great as my content
 To see you here before me. O my soul’s joy!
 If after every tempest come such calms,
 May the winds blow till they have waken’d death!
 And let the labouring bark climb hills of seas
 Olympus-high and duck again as low
 As Hell’s from Heaven! If it were now to die,
 Twere now to be most happy;”*

(William Shakespeare’s *Othello* II.1)

Of all the emotions that a living soul realizes, love occupies the place of pride for its being associated with human heart and mind in unswerving mode. The bearer of the Soul, be it a man or an animal, cannot escape love as it happens to be one of the basic ingredients of creation itself. Without the blessings of *Kamadeva*, no creativity is possible. The four considered *Purusharthas* according to the great Indian tradition are *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama*, and *Moksha*. With a view to attaining these *Purushartha chatustaya* (4 *Purusharthas*) every sincere human being initiates his actions throughout life.

Love that proves to be the very medium of accomplishment of *Kama* is very imperative for creative writing without any doubt whatsoever. Before we set off into the debate on the relationship between love and creative writing, it would be pertinent to have the brief conception of the creative process. It is a well known fact that some hard-hitting personal experience is essential for the purpose. A common man living his life with his relations in a very happy to go lucky manner is not going to give too much to creative writing for it requires a person to be a little different from the common lot in life style, thoughts, ideas, behaviour, attitude , et cetera. Merely jotting down words and framing the same as a literary work will not serve the real purpose of literary composition as it needs to relate with the emotions of the public at large. There is an ardent need to render individual emotion into global emotion.

Although there had been many litterateurs who led the normal life, yet the men of letters that we admire even in our own times have had a very uncommon sort of life. The inspiration that forms the fountain head of creative writing comes from something immense and having high forms. When we take into account the literatures from various languages down the ages we come to the conclusion that the writers of those literatures had an experience of unusual sort. Sometimes there is a Firaq Gorakhpuri with his personal idiosyncrasies, sometimes a Tulsidas being emotionally snubbed by his better half Ratnavali for having been so much in fondness for the substantial gratification. A Valmiki can be viewed sometimes who stands a realized spectator to the terrible slaughter of a masculine *Krauncha* bird at the hand of a hunter. At times there is a Premchand who stands so much empathetic to the problems of peasants and the poor, and now and again an exasperated universal Lover who has no other way to relieve his pains and pressures other than by way of composing loving lyrics in the remembrance of his

sweetheart. According to David Daichess, “Various schools of modern psychology have each had something to say about the psychological conditions out of which art arises. The Freudians have their view of the relation between art and neurosis, the Jungians have found in work of literary art archetypal images and echoes of basic and recurring myths, and there have been any number of modifications and additions to both kinds of theory. The notion that artist is neurotic, sick, maladjusted, has become immensely popular during the last hundred and fifty years, and modern psychology seems to have justified it” (David Daichess 332). About its psychoanalytical dimension Peter Barry further argues, “All of Freud’s work depends upon the notion of the unconscious, which is the part of the mind beyond consciousness which nevertheless has a strong influence upon our actions. Freud was not the discoverer of the unconscious: his uniqueness lies in his attributing to it such a decisive role in our lives. Linked with this is the idea of *repression*, which is the ‘forgetting’ or ignoring of unresolved conflicts, unadmitted desires, or traumatic past events, so that they are forced out of conscious awareness and into the realm of the unconsciousness. A similar process is that of *sublimation*, whereby the repressed material is ‘promoted’ into something grander or is disguised as something ‘noble’. For instance sexual urges may be given sublimated expression in the form of intense religious experiences or longings” (Peter Barry 92-93). The famous Shakespeare scholar G. Wilson Knight in his appendix on ‘Spiritualism and Poetry’ writes, “Literature, though itself a temporal art, may yet be felt as a blending of the arts of space and time. Painting, sculpture, and architecture exist in space; music and poetry in time. But each kind always aspires towards the other. The spatial arts either suggest narrative, or at the least are alive with a significance on the brink of motion; and the temporal arts achieve ‘form’, or ‘structure’. But poetry, though itself temporal, appears to

be peculiarly adapted to include, and blend together, the other arts, fusing the visual with the aural, space with time, at every instant" (*The Starlit Dome* 318).

Ronald Barthes makes the following observation in his essay "From Work to Text", "It is not that the author cannot 'come back' into the text, however he can only do so as a guest so to speak. If the author is a novelist, he inscribes himself in the text as one of the characters, as another figure sewn into the rug: his significance is no longer privileged and paternal, the locus of genuine truth but rather ludic. He becomes 'a paper author' [...]" (78). Here Barthes tries to put forward the fact that the writer of a text becomes an inescapable entity whose position is very crucial. He/she can put forth his/her ideas without having spoken his/her words in the position of an author. Therein the persona/spokesperson becomes the central ideologue not the real author of the ideas. Another critic Rajnath holds the view, "The text gives us a glimpse into the life of the author and a kind of biography can be constructed from it. The author becomes a 'paper author' no doubt but he is all the same an author not different from the implied author" (Rajnath 38). T. S. Eliot, the epoch making critic and poet from the Modernist literature, further stresses for an "objective correlative". He says, "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative', in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked" (Eliot 145).

After having perused various dimensions of the procedure of creative writing, the idea becomes prominent that some inspiration of higher form is a must. Man/woman is a social animal and he/she desperately needs a vehicle for

his/her ideas. He/she cannot live in isolation. His/her life needs some brainwave for personal existence and definitely love provides the same without an iota of doubt. Love as a stimulating drive can be of binary temperament. Sometimes it is negative motivation; occasionally it becomes positive and fruitful. It is a well thought-out estimation that music accelerates the disposition of love. William Shakespeare too feels the importance of music and art in the making of a socially sound and morally upright citizen. He makes his protagonist Lorenzo utter the following point of view in *The Merchant of Venice*,

“The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not mov’d with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus:
Let no such man be trusted”

(*The Merchant of Venice* 214).

Literature at large is full of examples where a poet because of personal reasons in life became able to compose high class poems. For the paper under composition the author takes delight in discussing further point of view with special reference to P.B. Shelley and John Keats, the two pillars of the Romantic movement of England.

Shelley, born in a noble family, viewed life in the radiance of his revolutionary ideas that was full of romance. His maiden love with Harriet Grove, unhappy marriage with Harriet Westbrook, and the affair cum marriage with Mary Godwin speak volumes to the turning points that his short life witnessed. There is no denying the fact that Shelley had a very open idea about love and marriage. He was not the sort of person who simply stood satisfied with a wife with all her goodness and shortcomings. It seems that

he always sought a fresh image as his sweetheart with a view to deriving bountiful inspirations and suitable symbols for the composition of his literatures. As a point of fact it gave him a way to pour down his recurring emotions on paper. In the poem “The Indian Serenade” written in June 1819, probably addressed to Jane Mary Williams, the poet sings,

“The wandering airs they faint
 On the dark, the silent stream—
 The Champak odours fail
 Like sweet thoughts in a dream;
 The nightingale’s complaint,
 It dies upon her heart; —
 As I must on thine,
 Oh, beloved as thou art!”

(Shelley, *The Indian Serenade* 580)

The famous scholar K. G. Srivastava argues, “The use of ‘Champak’ here, I am sure, should be taken as the measure of Shelley’s knowledge of Indian culture and of the literary traditions of India....The relevant information is that the flower is so strong in smell that bees refuse to extract pollen from it with the result that it remains sadly mortified. In the absence of this very valuable information the thought of the verse of Shelley’s poem, where the word ‘Champak’ has been used, will be hard to grasp” (286). The information just quoted from K.G. Srivastava’s magnum opus makes the point clear that Shelley through the metaphor of ‘Champak’ wants to suggest that even his own condition is like the ‘Champak’ flower whose love was not positively reciprocated owing to its being very intense and strong. As the bees decline to take pollen from Champak, similarly sweet ladies sometimes are afraid of his company thanks to his deep and sensible personality. This ought to borne in mind that by projecting an Indian serenade the poet intends to put himself as a true lover as India was known for being a country where people

had good faith in real love and that they could go to any extent to save their relation of love whatsoever be the cost.

In another poem the poet assigns her beloved the status of the paragon of beauty. The romantic temperament of his reaches its zenith while composing the following verse,

“Thou art fair, and few are fairer,
Of the nymphs of earth or ocean,
They are robes that fit the wearer —
Those soft limbs of thine whose motion,
Ever falls and shifts and glances
As the life within them dances”.

(Shelley, *To Sophia [Miss Stacey]* 580)

The next poem that enunciates his ideas of love is quite aesthetic and sensuous. He wants to imply his lady-love that her charms would be worth nothing if she does not establish lovely relations with him. Citing the very relation between sky and mountain, sunlight and the earth, et cetera, he demands the same from his sweetheart. It seems that Shelley was well convinced by the thought that physical enjoyment ultimately leads to spiritual elevation. He does not simply believe in thoughts and imaginings of the beloved, rather he demands love in action. Shelley writes,

“See the mountains kiss high Heaven
And the waves clasp one another;
No sister-flower would be forgiven
If it disdained its brother;
And the sunlight clasps the earth
And the moonbeams kiss the sea:
What is all this sweet work worth
If thou kiss not me?”

(Shelley, *Love's Philosophy* 583)

And see again the extract addressed to his wife that clearly reveals the feelings of the poet for her ,

“My dearest Mary, wherefore hast thou gone,
 And left me in this dreary world alone?
 Thy form is here indeed—a lovely one—
 But thou art fled, gone down the dreary road,”
 (Shelley, *To Mary Shelley* 582)

Thus was Shelley’s high level genius which supplied the world with excellent lyrics that circulated the message of love in the society. Mrs Shelley well wrote in Preface to the first collected edition, 1839, “It is our best consolation to know that such a pure- minded and exalted being was once among us, and now exists where we hope one day to join him;—although the intolerant, in their blindness, poured down anathemas, the Spirit of Good, who can judge the heart, never rejected him” (*The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* xi).

John Keats, one of the most sensitive of the Romantic poets, was competent to write universal verses about ‘charm’d magic casements, opening on the foam/ of perilous seas, in faery land forlorn’ thanks to the deeper emotional crisis he felt within. The very conflict between his frenzied fascination for his beloved’s beauty and his fatal disease that would not allow him a long life stood him into an intricate phase of self appraisal followed by self revelation through poetic medium. What actually Keats writes, he writes with the drops of his own blood as ink. Driving the hearty emotions on paper, the way Keats writes to his ladylove becomes a benchmark in the arena of love-letter writing. He very passionately writes, “Will you confess this in the Letter you must write immediately, and do all you can to console me in it—make it rich as a draught of poppies to intoxicate me—write the softest words and kiss them that I may at least touch my lips where yours have been. For myself I know not how to express my devotion to so fair a form: I want a brighter word than bright, a fairer word than fair. I almost wish we were

butterflies and liv'd but three summer days—three such days with you I could fill with more delight than fifty common years could ever contain” (<http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/text/selected-love-letters-fanny-brawne>). The emotional Keats writes at another place illustrating the very theory of Metempsychosis, therefore giving his love's paramour Fanny Brawne a saintly altitude, “The thought of leaving Miss Brawne is beyond everything horrible— the sense of darkness coming over me— I eternally see her figure eternally vanishing. Some of the phrases she was in the habit of using during my last nursing at Wentworth Place ring in my years— Is there another Life? Shall I awake and find all this dream? There must be; we cannot be created for this sort of suffering” (John Keats's 'Letters' Quoted in K. G. Srivastava 332). Keats, who had the pleasure of having the first ever rendezvous with the pretty Fanny Brawne in September 1818, was so much enamoured of her beauty that he had perceived life without her as something terrible and lacking in joy altogether. However as he happens to be a believer in *Punarjanma* or theory of Rebirth, he is all sanguine about the good days that he would follow as life could not have been so tough. To him Miss Brawne had become a symbol of life itself that supplied him with plentiful gusto to survive with delight even during moments of utter emotional crisis. In fact the beauty of Fanny was something equivalent to supreme reality for Keats. Had it not been so, he would never have asserted as follows, “Beauty is truth, truth beauty,— that is all/ Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.”(Keats, *Ode on a Grecian Urn* 210). It would be right to quote Leavis, “To show from the Letters that ‘Beauty’ became for Keats a very subtle and embracing concept, and that in his use the term takes on meanings that it could not possibly have for the uninitiated, is gratuitous and irrelevant. However his use of the term may have developed as he matured, ‘beauty’ is the term he used; and in calling what seemed to him the

supreme thing in life 'beauty', he expressed a given bent — the bent everywhere manifested in the quality of his verse, in its loveliness. 'His concern for beauty meant, at any rate in the first place, a concentration upon the purely delightful in experience to the exclusion of 'disagreeable.' And the 'beauty' in the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* expresses this bent is plain—that it should be the essence of the poem, and there is nothing in the poem to suggest otherwise" (F.R. Leavis, *Keats* 322) . Again, Keats believes in the ever delighting nature of beautiful things. He deems it as a perpetual source of endless pleasure; pleasure that initiates a person towards union with the Divine. See the following extract from "Endymion" that stands witness to Keats, s philosophy,

"A Thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quite for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quite
breathing."

(Keats, *Endymion: A Poetic Romance Book I*, 55)

Here Keats brings to the fore the bounty of beautiful things. He believes it to be a life giving source of all the blessings that we desire in our lives like happy dreams, good health and fortunes and that its joys would remain ever afresh in our hearts and minds. However he is well known to the nature of life with its dual character. He is quite conscious of the fact that even beauty is subject to decay with the passage of time and that happiness carries as its shadow the despondent feelings. He writes,

"She dwells with Beauty— Beauty that must die;
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
Turning to Poison while the bee-mouth sips:
Ay, in the very temple of delight,

Veil'd Melancholy has her Sovran shrine,"
(Keats, *Ode on Melancholy* 220)

In his brilliant poem "Ode to a Nightingale" Keats after comparing his life with that of the nightingale comes to the resolution that the life of the later is far better than his very own. The poetic saga is the delineation of a disheartened lover for whom the haven of death was preferable to the pangs and frets of life. The lines from the poem are given below for ready reference,

"Darkling I listen; and, for many a time
I have been half in love with easeful Death,
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
To take into the air my quiet breath;
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!"

(Keats, *Ode to a Nightingale* 208)

G. Wilson Knight observes, "Moreover, the poet is 'embalmed': it is a kind of death. So next death itself is invoked as the final hope, called 'easeful', 'soft', and 'rich' at this supreme moment. Though he himself become a 'sod', that which makes him desire death is immortal. The bird is itself no death-symbol. Its voice persists, like that of the Grecian Urn, from generation to generation, expressing the undying life and darkly-sweet mystery of our universe: even if it, as a bird, dies, its instinctive music lives on" (*The Starlit Dome* 299).

"La Belle Dame sans Merci", a poem marked with high simplicity and slanting melody, is Keats's gleaming response to infidelity in love. The knight- at -arms in this ballad meets a beautiful lady, who displayed her genuine feelings for him with all the courtesies and made promises of love to the hilt,

“She found me roots of relish sweet,
 And honey wild, and manna dew,
 And sure in language strange she said—
 I love thee true’

(Keats, *La Belle Dame sans Merci* 351).

However, the knight- at –arms afterwards comes to know the real character of the pretty girl from the mouth of those who had already been seduced by her *mayavi* charms. Keats writes,

“I saw pale kings and princes too,
 Pale warriors, death –pale were they all;
 They cried—‘La Belle Dame sans Merci
 Hath thee in thrall!’

(Keats, *La Belle Dame sans Merci* 351).

The poem seems to be Keats’s reaction to the disloyal nature of the sweet ladies who first make positive gestures and later on show their real countenance in the form of perfidy. The fanciful world may look amiable to young hearts for the time being, yet when the reverie is shattered they find themselves in a whacked world of broken images; a planet of longings and unpleasant feelings. Keats might have witnessed such type of experience in real life that made him write down the poem of this type.

In fine, it can be safely concluded that love as a fundamental human emotion proves to be very momentous in the creative writing of excellent nature. It may not be the single reason behind literary compositions, but can be affirmed as the most considerable one. The perusal of the literatures of Shelley and Keats further justifies the thesis that the emotional transformation that a heart witnesses after falling in love prepares high ground for creative writings and a large number of readers feel a sort of surrogate experience and derive therapeutic effect after reading the same. The

following couplet of Firaq Gorakhpuri seems worthy of note herein where he tells the impressions of true love in life,

*“Shokhiyaan husne-haya-parvar mein ye kab thi ‘Firaq’
Rang layee rafta-rafta ishq ki ruswaiyaan”*

(Firaq Gorakhpuri 23).

*(When did she own prettiness and coyness like this,
O Firaq!*

That separation in love brought the blush steadily.)

It is a fact that love is a divine blessing and it ought to reign supreme in the soul-selves of all and sundry. By way of spreading and utilizing its aura a *sahridaya* (Realized soul) can give birth to literatures of classic status that will leave ineradicable mark on the head and hearts of the humanity.

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