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Dejection, Desolation and Note of Aspiration with the Helm of Sorrow: A Critical Study of the Selected Poetry of John Clare

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Abstract:

The present paper entitled “Dejection, desolation and Note of Aspiration with the Helm of Sorrow: A Critical Study of the selected poetry of John Clare” is nonetheless a difficult task for me to produce. In dealing this issue with the most serious notions of John Clare I don’t rather couldn’t locate the stand point in terms of the poetical works of Clare. Clare, a villager of Soke of Peterborough in Northampton shire and a son of a firm labourer, sees the life from the core of the society from the true sense of the system. His poetry touches a major span of 20th century literature and is treated as one of the greatest contributions of the poetry of the 19th century English literature. He in his child was became an agricultural labourer also. His formal education was brief and wrote in Northampton shire dialect to regulate the local words of the literary canon. His bold and willful struggle helps him to find a place for his poetry and from this point of view he seeks to perpetuate the note of dejection, desolation and despondency for his subject of poetry and furthermore recapitulates his high aspiration to be united with the Ultimate with the helm of sorrow. The focal point of my present paper is to expose the doctrine and the notion of the thematic movement of dejection and lamentation that has highly been alluded with the poetical sketches of Clare with the very philosophy of his personal life. Tone and sense of dejection and growing but consistent desolation are very related with the life and works of poet.

Keywords: *Dejection, desolation, aspiration, helm of sorrow, thematic movement of lamentation, philosophy of life.*

1. Introduction

John Clare was no doubt a poet of peasant and rustic originality. Every work belonging to him is no doubt a matter of sensibility of natural but enthusiastic thoughts that have been greatly appreciated by the poetic world of modern literature. His moods and temperaments are deeply associated with the very nature of rustic and the surroundings of peasant lives in which he locally lived since his birth. Born towards the dawn of the Romantic Period (13th July 1793), he has a strong sense of natural subjectivism that is strongly assimilated with the very tone of melancholic undertone. Personal dissatisfaction with social life, love life and the misfortunes of hopes and aspiration led him to pen with the thoughts of desolation and dejection.

He talks about the changing role of the society that is veiled to the very essence of systematic development of the thoughts and moods of the 18th society of England. His personal life was very much disturbed with the pangs of money and was constantly torn between the two genres of literary London and most often with his illiterate neighbours. His last work, the Rural Muse (1835) was much noticed and appreciated by Christopher North and few others reviewers but was unable to rapport his whole family well. His behavior even more became erratic after his excessive clinked with alcohol. He is known as the peasant poet of Northhamptomshire. Born a year after Shelley and two years before Keats, Clare belonged to the legendary generation which is the magnitude of greatest poetic sensibility of literary world. If we penetrate his personal life we will, being a citizen of post modernism, be ashamed with the notion and view of his entire life. Although he was the son of illiterate parents, Clare received little knowledge of schooling. While earning money by doing some laborious works such as ploughing and threshing in the field, he has reached the culminating point of supreme value by procreating major and the ever youth greatest poems such as “Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery. After having been suffered from delusions, Clare was pathetically admitted to the mental asylum where he spent the final 20 years of his life. Besides that having two wives in his personal and conjugal life didn’t lead him to the path of merriment and joy.

His poetical sketches and outcomes of his thoughts clearly corroborate the extreme truth of the exigencies of his life. During his life, Clare observed a period of massive changes in between town and countryside. The Agriculture Revolution, The Enclosures saw the pastures ploughed up, trees and hedges uprooted, tract of wet lands drained and the common land used for plough enclosed. These kind of massive destruction affected and distressed Clare deeply. Large numbers of farmers and agricultural labourers, during his time, went to the new industrial factories in search of foods and clothing in order to escape themselves from the tyranny of landlords. Social hierarchy and misjudgments are the deepest core of his poetry.

In his early life he struggled to find a place for his poetry and encountered so much lamentations which he depicted in his personal thoughts. His early work heightens both in nature and the duration of the rural year. poems such as “Haymaking”, “Wood Pictures in Summer”, “Winter Making” are of the celebration of the beauty of the world and the certainties of the rural life associated with the

domestic activities of feeding of cattle and the process of the gathering of crops. Poems such as “Little Trotty Wagtail” depicts his sharp observation of wild life. His later poetry is more meditative and reflective related to the ballad and the folk form of his youthful days. Poem such as “I Am” is highly metaphysical and has a tone of psychological aspect of bonding. His view of life, attitudes of his fellowmen and neighbours towards him are resulting his writings more abjectly.

2. Discussion

John Clare, a poet of the sentiment and distinct thought on the changing role of human natures, prominently arouses some reflexive thoughts that are closely pregnant with the very notion of human dejection, decadence, demoralization and overall untimely desolation of their fortunate world of surroundings. He, in spite of his little school knowledge, knows the strings of how human heart is connected and how it is effected and affected with the untimely changing of the social surroundings and conditions. And in each and every of his work there is a note of undercurrent of sentiment and moods- moods of human behaviors and their willing and unwilling believes with the assimilation of their predicament conditions.

“I Am” is a poem written by Clare in late 1844 that depicts his strong grief and dejected mind for having isolated by his dear and near ones during his time spent in mental asylum(Northampton General Lunatic Asylum). The first stanza clearly delineates his excessive pain and mental suffering due to his isolation from his friends and family. He knows the dichotomy in between the known world and the unknown world gyrate around him. Mental shock is delivering by the remembrance of the misfortunes and the constant decadence from his near ones. And he believes it firmly that he himself is the paver of his own misfortune: “I am the self consumer of my woes—“. Meaning of liveliness is completely shattered and baffled to him; i.e. absolutely meaningless to him. Joy and merriment and laughter are washed from the zeal of his heart like that of “vapours tost”:

Like shadows in Love’s frenzied, stifled throes:--

And yet I am, and live--- like vapours tost. (line 5-6; “I Am”)

In the second stanza he beeches that all the relationship clinked to him are going to be meaningless and rather strange to him because they are changing untimely and unexpectedly. The poet does not know how to mingle them, associated his feelings and thoughts and even moments with that of them. He is completely hopeless. His journey of life is idealized here, seems to him absolutely purposeless. And from this point the third stanza is purely philosophical indeed. His high aspiration, through the dejection and desolation of the attitudes of the life, is to be united with the God where he wishes, would find no sorrow, no one would play the tune of desolation, everyone would have sung and listen the music of the omnipotent, the Creator, God:

There to abide with my Creator, God, (line 15; “I Am”)

In his next poem “Death” Clare idealized the death, a prolonged journey after the end of the course works of the world. And to make us realize what death is, he uses the devise of flashback. He is so obsessed with the feeling of his own despondency by others that he wholeheartedly paints the acute realism of death. Today’s beauty, merriment and earthly joys will surely be transformed into the realm of death after a certain period of time without anybody’s knowledge. The beauty of youth, the facial beauty of a young girl which is brighter than snowdrops will be the bed partner of death. Spring flowers will show their mournful desolation towards the untimely death of the young fresh couples. All the beauties of earthly origin will definitely be transformed into coal. Clare says that the body of clay, according to the very concept of The Bible and The Bhagavat Gita, will be mixed with the five elements of Supreme Brambha (of human body):

Now her face in its beauty has perished to clay. (line 16, “Death”)

Mood of decadence is prevailed here with the knowledge of supreme of Truth. Clare doesn’t forget to acclimatize the hope of aspiration of soul from the end of the desolation. Because desolation is the path of resurrection according to the supreme knowledge of The Bhagavat Gita. If resurrection is needed to be occurred desolation must be happened mandatorily according to the law of Universe. And from this point of view Clare argues that from the death bed of the youth another Aroma of Spring; i.e. the Resurrection will be come out, new life will be born, leading to the path of aspiration and hope:

And the grave whereon the bright snowdrops grow

Shall be the same soil as the beauty below. (line 23-24, “Death”)

His “A Vision” clearly corroborates the message of unification and immortality by writing enormous verse over the tone of lamentation and earthly dejection. He lost the love of earth due to his being neglected by a woman to whom he loved. He wants to be immortal by writing verse with the eternal light of God Sun continuously and wants to be free from the desolation and despondency of the earthly spirits and origins:

I snatch’d the sun’s eternal ray

And wrote till earth was but a name. (line 11-12; “A Vision”)

“First Love” is the truly based on the theme of desolation from the core of the heart of the poet. He gives her completely, surrenders his soul truly to the pursuit of love, even in spite of that he is completely shattered and disillusioned too from the behaviors of her. The condition of his heart is speechless and completely unworthy of creation. He is blind of her beauty and vanity and unable to find the reason of his blindness psychologically since his abjection of love. His high hopes and aspiration towards his lover is transformed into nothingness and mingled completely with the clay. He is bewildered the true sense of Love and the definition of what Love is. It seems to him that she is hearing the ail of his owes that are meaningless to her indeed. And it is very difficult to bring back his soul from her to rebuild his Home of Heart:

My heart has left its dwelling- place

And can return no more. (line 23-24)

In "The Dying Child" he laments for the untimely death of an infant. It pains him that helps him to project the ideal view of the world. In spite of all the earthly activities and the living things amidst in the prime time how an infant child is dead truly hit his heart. But due to the Law of Universe timely or untimely go beyond universe doesn't matter to us Clare says so and points out the coming of Winter metaphorically. By figuratively asserting the "when winter came" he means to convey the understanding of the mechanism of this world and the characteristics of It within Itself:

When winter came and blasts did sigh,
And bare were plain and tree,
As he for ease in bed did lie
His soul seemed with the free,
He died so quietly. (line 26-30)

These lines clearly provoke his view of life, view of death by default timely or untimely that means the meaning of life given by the blessing of God. His aspiration is doomed since the beginning of the decadence of his soul from his life.

3. Conclusion

Clare is concerned very well with the ups and downs of human life where one is moved much of the tone and sense of desolation, decadence and dejection of one's life span than that of the moods of enjoyment and succession and ultimate happiness. It seems to us after a fine dissection of Clare's poetry it is the universal law of God where we are sent to be dejected more than to be enjoyed. Clare was sent to the mental asylum and had spent the long 20 years of final stage of his life without any connection of living world. His hopes are demoralized and deceived by his closed persons. We are in the midst of that world where hope of yours is and will transformed into despair. Aspiration of hope in the realm of sorrow comes true in few of his narrated poems but cannot be sustained permanently. I, through this paper, just try to push back the conscience of the living beings to surrender and remove off your inner conflict and conceit to be united with the realm of the joy of our hearth. Human beings are the gift of God are the creation of HIM. Sorrow comes that makes you dejected and it's the part of our life that is the Law of God, that is true.

4. References

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