

Sohra College, Bihar Sharif

B.A. Part I English Hons Paper II

CLASSMATE

Coleridge as a lover of nature.

What is best in Coleridge's poetry is very small in amount, but that little is of rare excellence. His personal poems, like *Desolation: an Ode* and the poem *Work without Hope* have a pathetic interest in connection with the tragedy of ineffectiveness which made up so much of his life. But his historical importance is due mainly to such poems as *The Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel*, which represent the triumph of romanticism and naturalism as fully as Wordsworth's narrative poems represent the triumph of naturalism.

Like other romantic poets, Coleridge also is a great lover and close observer of nature. He gives a minute description of the landscape, the skyscape the colours, the elements and beauties of nature. The moon is his most favorite friend and occurs almost in all his poems. He has painter's sense. But besides observing the beauties of nature, he also observes its wrath and fierceness too. He looks at nature with mystery and wonder. In his hands, even the familiar aspects of nature wear a quaint weird look. The following pen picture of the moon in the "Ode to Desolation" reveals

the brush of the painter behind the
pencil of the poet. The picture is
remarkable for its minuteness and
accuracy of observation and vividness
of presentation

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"And those thin clouds above, in flake and barbs
That give away their motion to the stars;
Those stars, that glide behind them or between
Now sparkling now bedimmed, but always seen;
Joy crescent moon, as fixed as if it grew
In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue.

In the Ancient Mariner, we
have pictures of the sun shining
brightly at the outset, the mist
of the fog surrounding the ship,
the icebergs green as emeralds,
the white moon shining through
the white fog, the broad bright sun
resting upon the western ~~waves~~
the stars rushing out immediately
after sun set etc. Some of his other
nature poems are ~~immediately~~
Reflections on Having left a place of
Retirement. The Eolian Harp, Frost
at Midnight. This lime-tree Bower
My Prison, Fears in Solitude etc.

The nature descriptions of the Rime of the Ancient Mariner are at once accurate, imaginative, and of wide range. Their range extends from the quiet scenery of a country wood to the fierce scenery of the tropics, and to that of a polar zone.

Coleridge is a predecessor of Keats in sensuousness. His senses of smell and sights are sharper than others. He records very minutely and particularly the colours of various objects of nature. It is liquid colour, the dew on flower, or a mist of rain in bright sunshine. His images are derived from water, sky, the changes of weather, shadows of things rather than things themselves, and usually mental reflections of them.

"And the bay was white with silent light
Till rising from the same
full many shapes, ~~that~~ shadows were
In crimson colours came."

Coleridge's landscapes are always humanized. "The landscape," says S. G. Dunn, "is always seen through the human atmosphere. First he found a pantheistic note in nature, like words worth but later on under the influence of the German idealists or transcendentalists his attitude towards nature changed

under the pantheistic influences he believed, like Shelley that there is no one spirit, immanent through man and nature, and it is this spirit which is the controller of universe. But under the influence of German idealism, he defined a separate life to nature and made her a mere idealism, he denied a separate life to nature and made her a mere ~~idea-~~ ~~lion~~ reflection of human thought and mood. Nature is what we think her to be.

Like Shelley, Coleridge searches in nature for symbols of his thoughts and emotions. Moon in his poetry is the ever occurring symbol of imagination, and breeze symbolizes the act of creation. The killing of the albatross represents the violation of nature's sanctity, and it becomes the Christian emblem when it is hung round the Mariner's neck like a cross. The smooth sailing of the ship

in the beginning of the Ancient Mariner symbolizes progress and success and its motionless complete paralysis of the will. The albatross stand for the power of nature, blessing the voyage, and this blessing is withdrawn when it is killed. The misery and sterility of the mariner is symbolized by draught and the rain which follows represents nature blessings which are showered on the Mariner after he has blessed the water snakes. In the An Ode to Dejection, Coleridge makes natural objects symbol of his own feelings and emotions. In Christabel, Christabel stands for the good forces of nature and Geraldine for the evil ones. Nature in his poetry takes a colour from his moods: and only such scenes of nature appeal to his weird imagination as are in tune with his restless spirit. These moods which are reflected in nature are sometimes those of sadness and dejection and sometimes languid and dreamy though never altogether without a touch of melancholy. But even in his profoundest fits of melancholy he was never without a passionate love of beauty, particularly in its strange and romantic haunts. He delight in earth and earth-born. Nature man and beast was boundless.

and it found beautiful in many a noble passages of his The Ancient Mariner

But his philosophy of nature passed through several stages. In his earliest period his nature poems were no better than catalogues of the sights that he saw and the sounds that he heard. In his second period there came a profound sense of calm, a mood of quiet contemplation and a quicker responsiveness to the colour, perfume and melody of nature. This new group of nature-poems was introduced by the Eolian Harp and shows an increased power in the delineation of the calm and peaceful aspects of nature of landscapes.

In his third and greatest period that his genius reached the heights and he was capable of describing like the following.

"The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags green
To and fro they were hurried about,
And to and fro, and in and out,

In this world the poet's imagination rises to its highest and commands humanity and nature and the most delicate music of both.