


<i>Satyam Shivam Sundaram:</i> Mysticism of Beauty and the Mind of John Keats			Literature Keywords: Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram, beauty, truth, beneficial, Keats, Bhagvadgita, imagination, delight, spiritual consciousness, holistic, transcendental.
Vijay Kumar Roy	Shri Venkateshwara University, Gajraula, Amroha, UP (INDIA)		
Abstract			
<p>Beauty is the manifestation of God. It develops an impulse of love, and to love beauty is to love God, the Creator of the universe. Beauty is comprehended through senses, and sensuous values develop spiritual consciousness. The awareness of Beauty is acquisition of Truth that is Beneficial or the cause for Welfare. Keats was a worshipper of beauty. "He loved the principle of beauty in all things." Primarily he was considered a poet of sensuous beauty but a thorough study of his poetry and letters reveals that his conception of beauty was holistic and transcendental, being closer to the Indian concept summed up in the expression- Satyam Shivam Sundaram. The present paper is a critical study of Keats' mysticism of beauty in the lines of Indian views. The attempt has been made to go through some of the relevant Indian religious texts to prop up Keats' belief and present the veracity of Keats which has remained dormant in the oblivion of time.</p>			

Introduction

Physical beauty leads to spiritual beauty and then to beatitude because this is chaste. Beauty leads to the origin of healthy and higher imagination naturally and brings expression of truth to our tongue. The natural beauty of human beings, birds, beasts, flowers, trees, rivers, mountains, cascades, valleys, the rising sun, the setting sun, the sea shore, the moonlit sky, desert, simplicity of rural areas creates exquisite emotions and sends our imagination in search of the ultimate Truth. This thought provoking beauty teaches us moral lessons and gives us inner delight. Such beauty makes us believe that there is divine presence in the manifestations of Nature. Taittiriya Upanishad mentions: "Raso vai sah", the presence of God is in everything in the form of taste. In the Bhagavadgita Lord Krishna says: "Sarva bhootsthitam ye maam" (6/31), I am present in everything. Bhagavadgita is considered as a philosophical scripture and the eternal messages of Lord Krishna. Among all incarnations of God, according to Hindu belief, Lord Krishna is considered as having all qualities, sixteen arts (solkan in colloquial Hindi). Lord Rama is considered as having twelve arts (badkan in colloquial Hindi). These ideologies make our heart beautiful; and Beauty brings us closer to the Truth. When there is confluence of Beauty and Truth that is Auspicious (Satyam Shivam Sundaram).

Keats and Indian Philosophy

Keats' works reveal that he was influenced by the Indian philosophy of Beauty and Truth. He had learnt the Bhagavadgita translated into English by Charles Wilkins in prose form, in the year 1785. In his circle the discussion on Indian's glory was very common. It is believed that his conception and apprehension of beauty was holistic and it contained transcendental dynamics. It was closer to a composite experience of beauty to the Indian concept summed up in the expression- Satyam Shivam Sundaram.

“Beauty is not the exact translation of Sundaram. Sundaram consists of the elements of Satyam and Shivam (Manglam). Eastern aestheticians believed in what has come to be known as ‘Rasa theory’. It was believed that Satyam cannot be experienced directly but by its residual psychic effect in the form of pain, sorrow, distress, anger, etc.” (Roy ix) There are literary devices to translate these feelings (of Rasa) into verbal structure. Keats’ statement is: “Beauty is truth, truth beauty”- that is all/Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know. (Ode on a Grecian Urn 49-50) Keats believed that the real beauty can provide pleasure, happiness and joy simultaneously- pleasure to the senses, happiness to the mind and joy to the spirit.

Keats’ concept of beauty was Oriental in its multi-chromatic grandeur, an expression of the rare mental quality known as synaesthesia. He was aware of the true realm of beauty. Beauty was his religion. He expressed it through his pure heart, but unfortunately he could not live longer and could not express it fully, therefore he is misunderstood. His later works reveal his true concept of beauty and that is the source to perceive his hidden ideal that “Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty.” George Santayana supports this view and illustrates that, “We know on excellent authority that beauty is truth, that it is the expression of the ideal, the symbol of divine perfection, and the sensible manifestation of the good.” (www.gutenberg.org)

Keats had passionate love for beauty therefore he wrote, “A thing of beauty is a joy forever.” (Endymion 1) He had no religion except the religion of beauty. Religion for him took a definite shape at an early age in the adoration of the beautiful. It became his doctrine. Beauty is the supreme truth; it is imagination that discovers beauty. This idealism easily assumes a note of mysticism. In the words of William Blake:

This world of Imagination is the world of Eternity; it is a divine bosom into which we shall all go after the death of the Vegetated body. This World of Imagination is infinite and Eternal, whereas the world of Generation, or Vegetation, is Finite and Temporal. There Exist in that Eternal World the Permanent Realities of Every Thing which we see reflected in this Vegetable Glass of Nature. All Things are comprehended in their Eternal Forms in the divine body of the Saviour, the True Vine of Eternity, The Human Imagination. (A Vision of the Last Judgement in Poetry and Prose of William Blake 639)

Keats had once said, “I have loved the principles of beauty in all things.” He had a simple and direct passion for natural beauty just for its own sake- the beauty of forest and field, of flower and sky and the sea. Hayden speaks of him: “he was in his glory in the fields. The humming of the bee, the sight of a flower, the glitter of the sun seemed to make his nature tremble; then his eyes flashed, his cheeks glowed, his mouth quivered.” (qtd. Taylor 8) In fact, each object of Nature is beautiful for its magic of colour, sound, odour and touch. It is this intense, whole-hearted sensuous love for all forms of natural beauty that inspired Keats and became his vision in all aspects of life.

Keats “was not merely an aesthete. His conception of beauty widened and deepened. He became less an aesthete and more humanitarian coming closer to the Indian concept of beauty.” (Roy ix) His letters reflect his views more clearly than his poetry. “His poetry takes us into the imperishable realm of the Beauty he loved; but the letters are Keats himself. ... Keats’ aspects of character gleam and glance through the letters, showing how human he was, how well-balanced in practical things; how unaloof from the considerable men he counted his friends, and with what a serious humility he gradually came to recognize the gift that was his and strove by systematic application to use it worthily.” (Clark www.theosophy-nw.org) Tom Taylor also supports the unique nature of John Keats. He quotes, Keats “was the most unselfish of human creatures: unadapted to this world, he cared not for himself, and put himself to any inconvenience for the sake of his friends. (qt. Taylor 9)

Keats thinks that beauty is eternal and indestructible. Beauty and truth are the highest characteristics of the transcendental being that we all call God. Such union of beauty and truth gives us delight that is beneficial or *kalyaankarak* (Shivam). “Beauty is known by the imagination; goodness, by conscience; and truth, by reason” (Kreeft www.mrrena.com). In sum, beauty is God’s promised expression of goodness in the truth of His timeless eternity.” (What is Beauty? www.mrrena.com)

Being known as the Junior Shakespeare, Keats interwove body, mind and soul. In fact, without body there is no existence of mind, and without both of them, there is no scope of soul, imagined or understood. This truth is prevalent not only in Keats’ poetry; there are long arguments in Indian philosophy too. At first sight and in his early poems Keats enjoys the sensuous beauty but later he realizes the real beauty, the truth of beauty that gives inner delight and is auspicious. If he writes first, “She dwells with Beauty- Beauty that must die... ” (21) in the Ode to Melancholy, he also writes, “Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird! No hungry generations tread thee down,” (61-62) in his Ode to a Nightingale. This signifies his real conception of beauty in everything, in Nature as well as in life. His true love for beauty is evident in the Ode to a Nightingale when he writes: “Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes/Or new love pine at them beyond tomorrow.” (29-30) This unique imagination reminds us of the teaching of Lord Krishna in the Gita that the soul is immortal. There is no effect of water, weapons, fire on the soul. In the Ode to Autumn, Keats is under the calm influence of Nature. He intuitively knows that beauty once seen and grasped is man’s possession. This thought brings us to the teaching of the Gita where Lord Krishna says that the moral and spiritual deeds of His devotees never go in vain.

Beauty is pure and sacred; therefore, this is helpful to provide the knowledge of truth. Being pure and sacred, it gives light, the divine light. As one can see everything completely in light, so all the worldly or earthly things are recognized completely in such light and one wants to discard all bad elements from one’s heart. The knowledge of truth creates light and consciousness in the heart; then we are able to understand the perfect meaning of mundane and spiritual worlds more fully. The entrance into this spiritual world generates peace and delight. John Keats had old

head on young shoulders in this world. He writes in one of his famous letters to George and Georgiana Keats: “Nothing ever becomes real till it is experienced — Even a proverb is no proverb to you till your Life has illustrated it.” (February 14-May 3, 1819)

Truth is truth. It has no blemish or defect (Vedant). Only truth has its existence and power. In philosophy Truth means that delightful invisible power getting separated from which a human being suffers variously in the worldly anguish and returns and merges in that unknown power again. It is the Good that makes one know one’s true duty in a human form. “The Good makes things more than knowable; it makes them what they are. ... Beauty and Truth are born of the Good. ... Beauty and Truth are virtues, which descend from the Good, as Plato believes. ... The Good enables Beauty and Truth to be known by the mind.” (Martin arachnid.pepperdine.edu)

Being godly attribute, “Beauty attracts love; it charms, delights, and bewitches us. Beauty is the value found in appreciating the wonder and enchantment of God’s universe. As intelligent beings we are able also to perceive beauty in God’s creation and thus be stimulated to love and seek God. When we perceive life through the conscious of love, then we become aware of the beauty in all things.” (Beck www.san.beck.org) The element of universal welfare is Shivam. The “realization of common tears as one’s own tears and common delight as one’s own delight is perception (and acquisition) of Truth. So Keats’ concept of beauty is very close to that of Indian. In India there is no difference between Satyam, Shivam and Shivam.” (Roy 154)

The union of welfare with truth is beautiful. Beauty is the cleansed form of truth. A stone lying somewhere has no recognition. It is not adored. If it is given a shape by a craftsman, there is no harm to that stone; rather it becomes beautiful and acceptable by all that it had not been ever before. This is truth. Beauty makes truth auspicious. Truth is proud of its beauty.

According to some scholars, the combined form of Satyam Shivam Sundaram was first used by Maharshi Devendranath, father of Rabindranath Tagore. But what was the basis to use it is vague. Some scholars believe that this formula is the translation of Aristotle’s “The True, the Good, the Beautiful” and was brought to India by the Brahma Samaj. But this does not appear convincing. These three words/concepts are not new for Indian culture. It would be truer to say instead that Indian culture, religion and philosophy are basically established on this trinity. The Sanskrit word sachchidaanand is the best example of this. Here clearly, Satya expresses the form of delight. The integral relation of Shivam and Sundaram we find in the ethical texts of Kiraataarjuna: “Hitam manohaari durlabhancaa.” In the Gita Lord Krishna advises Arjuna to speak the truth, sweet (lovely) and beneficial:

Anudwegakaram vaakyam satyam priyahitam cha yat
Svaadhyayabhaasan chaiva vaangayam tapa uchhate. (17/15)

Here there is no difference between satyam, shivam and sundaram. Priya (lovely) has the complete idea of beautiful and hitam (beneficial) of Shivam. So these three terms are not new to India.

In Indian culture the number three has its own significance, be it religion or art. In religion, Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh and in philosophy Sat (truth), chit (intellect), anand (delight) and Sattva, Raja, Tama are the seed elements. Indian art accepts them in the form of Satyam Shivam Sundaram. These are the basic elements of creation. These have formed the threefold creation of Beginning, Middle and End, and visualize the three forms of Brahma- Invisible (before annihilation), Visible and then again Invisible (after annihilation). In the Gita this has been described thus:

Avyaktaani bhootaani vyaktamdhyaani bharata
Avyakta nidhanaanyaiva tatra kaa paridevanaa. (2/28)

Gyaan (learning, wisdom), Karma (action, work), Upaasanaa (adoration)- these three elements are important in devotion (worship). These three can't be divided. They are integral parts of each other. The same is with Satyam Shivam Sundaram. This union is the soul of Indian culture, literature, religion and philosophy.

In Indian perspective, Death means to meet the Invisible Truth escaping from the visible form of this earth. Therefore, Death is Shiva or Saviour. Where then is suffering in death? It is beneficial. A being suffers in this world in many ways in visible form. He becomes old. But showing mercy Death relieves him from that distress and anguish (to appear in another form). This form of Death is Shiva. This is eternal truth. But where there is no Shiva, there is no eternal truth. Keats exposes his knowledge of Shivam (Saviour) in his narrative poem Lamia by the character Apollonius who tries to save Lycius from a serpent-lady Lamia.

Death is diffused with the eternal truth. Art makes its goal to remove anguish from life and death and provide delight. World is created through delight and after annihilation too, creation will be established by delight. Then there is neither death nor suffering.

Truth is subject of philosophy. The search of Shiva is the domain of religion; and to search beauty is the goal of art.

Again, the Truth that is Shiva (beneficial) must be delightful and Delight is no other thing than the result of Beauty. It means the effective realization of beauty is delight. Thus to unite Satyam and Sundaram in Shivam is the most real and ideal aspect of religion, philosophy, devotion and common behaviour. Art also does the same and succeeds in its effort. This is the goal of art.

In the realm of duty truth becomes beneficial and their union becomes beautiful. Beauty is the cleansed form of truth. Beauty does no one any harm. It gives universal delight. It makes truth

more attractive, effective and ecstatic. Goswami Tulsidas will bow his head before Rama only when He is armed with bow and arrow. In this form Rama is complete and gives delight to Tulsi:

Kahaa kahaun chhavi aaj ki, bhale bane ho naath
Tulsi mastak tab navai, dhanush-vaana leyu haath

Here there is no harm to truth. Tulsi wishes to see the truth in its beauty. He does not avoid truth. He wants to perceive the truth being beautiful. Not only Lord Rama, Lord Krishna is also recognized in His true form when He is adorned with the crown of peacock-wing and flute. Truth is proud being beautiful. Thus in the real world what is beautiful, that is truth in thinking and beneficial in action.

Conclusion

Satyam Shivam Sundaram is a composite concept. Keats' concept of Beauty and Truth is very close to it as his Great Odes and letters reveal. In fact, there is no barrier between native and foreign in the world of rumination. In this field all stay together. Therefore Keats writes:

‘Beauty is truth, truth beauty’- that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.
(Ode to a Grecian Urn 49-50)

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