

RESEARCH ARTICLE



INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print); 2321-3108 (online)

## AN ILLUMINATING STUDY OF JOHN KEATS' SENSIBILITIES: AN INTENSE AFFINITY WITH AESTHETICISM AMIDST A DISTASTE LIFE

MD. SHAHINUR ALAM SARKER<sup>1</sup> & MUNSHI TAUHIDUZZAMAN<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Asstt. Professor in English, Dept. of Humanities, Khulna University of Engineering & Technology,  
Khulna, Bangladesh. Email: [shahins84@gmail.com](mailto:shahins84@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Asstt. Professor in English, Dept. of Humanities, Khulna University of Engineering & Technology,  
Khulna, Bangladesh. Email: [mtzaman@hum.kuet.ac.bd](mailto:mtzaman@hum.kuet.ac.bd)



### ABSTRACT

John Keats (1795-1821), one of the most sensitive poets not only in English literature but also in world literature, emerges as a romantic poet bearing nosology of intense sensibilities in psyche. Keats' sensibilities have too often been treated as loveliness on ugliness. His sensibilities metamorphose him fully in a life of beauty amidst a perverse culture and thereby they act upon in a distaste life. But far from being a poet of loneliness physically he lives psychically the life of melancholy. This young poetic genius gives his sensibilities pride of place for his philosophy of love for beauty and truth wherein he deepens, tends to emphasize an aesthetic appreciation of life in art and meditates crucially for a rebirth of life isolated from common human beings.

**Key Words:** Sensibilities, Aesthetic Appreciation, A Distaste Life.

### I. Introduction

John Keats (1795-1821), one of the most beloved poets in appreciating beauty among the English poets, receives more attention so than any other English poets in sensibilities. He, we seem to think, looks at subjects of life which with their rapid movement of correspondence call him into a play of deep feelings. This understanding resultantly succeeds in bringing spontaneously wonder and pains, and then love and deepness of love to him. These deep smells of perception, the tragic poetic talent creates aesthetically for his love of beauty in life, look so arenas of life that matter in the range of vulgar surroundings. So we recognize in this romantic poet so intense type of feelings esp. in his art. Cox so includes him in a circle of a poet with deep perception in distaste of life for beauty: 'He has in many ways become the model of the poet, or

at least the 'Romantic' Poet: Tragically young, intensely introspective, brooding on love and death, writing snatches of verse, as he listens alone, to the song of the nightingale' (Introduction). While Keats' sensibilities reflect in his text, the text so obviously can become the clues of survey and finally analysis. De Man, a distinguished scholar and critic, presents Keats' sensibilities on a distaste life, that seem to hope the opportunity to experience Keats for a beautiful life: 'The poetic effectiveness of the odes ['Ode on a Grecian Urn' and 'Ode to a Nightingale'] depends entirely on the positive temptation that emanates from the symbolic entities: The world to which they [the odes] give access is a world of happiness and beauty, and it is by the suggestive evocation of this world that beauty enters the poems' (544). This critical study so seeks to search Keats in his culture tracing his sensibilities and his

emergence in a beautiful life out of a crude life experiencing his deepness as a romantic poet.

## **II. The Nature of John Keats' Sensibilities**

This critical article as centered on the sensibilities of Keats introduces firstly in principle to the view of sensibilities in theory and practice and the trend of Keats' thoughts in this regard. They refer to feelings of a human being esp. when he is easily offended or influenced by something. And the human being should have the ability to experience and understand deep feelings born from the thing, he or she comes into contact. It reveals that these sensibilities sketch feelings not thoughts of a human being' psyche. First of all the human being belongs to a set of beliefs and then intensity echoes from the implication of beliefs with feelings. Different senses manage to create these emotions in the depth of psyche. The perception, they attract others' appeal, seems to be concerned with hatred and love, estrangement and sympathy in a romantic way. The moment of the implication maintains its everlasting relation to the proto-moment. The obsessive image of soul's feelings appears undying and so it seems that he bears so image in mind that it calls forth silently and unknowingly a transformed state of heart. Keats as he calls the fleeing moment of beauty up in the vulgar realities of life, strips of all his reasons to move freely and intensely in the ambience of beauty: 'She dwells with beauty, Beauty that must die / And joy, whose joy is ever at his lips' ('Ode on Melancholy' 21 - 22). He, psychically alienated from other peoples in a society, thrives in having a psychic compassion with a life of beauty he feels in his self passionately imprisoned. Keats may have met this life resulted from his sensibilities contrasted to those of common human beings. Sensibilities evaluate psyche most and beyond all physical versions their contact looks with the access of psychic aspects of life. As the aberrations in life load their every rife in their psyche to move them to the association of beauty, they under the impact are regarded poets feeling in morbidity of life. Their success as a romantic poet animates here that they reverse their previous states of life and enters into metamorphosis. This intense transformation of psyche in pains of life doesn't reach common human beings: 'They [the romantics] believe that when it

[special insight] is at work it sees things to which the ordinary intelligence is blind' (Bowra 7). They differ in the philosophy - the Keats' like human beings nurture. Keatses convene in the depth of their psyche so sensibilities that alternate them from the common human beings. These credos are based in a series of transformations from one state of being into another. The different assembles of metamorphosis between them and the common human beings approach spontaneously on the basis of understanding, perceiving and nurturing the dominance of perception that make up their smooth unknowing intensity of soul - a metamorphosis into which their artistic revelation is oriented. Here work their wonder, speculation, meditation, depth of psyche, nurturing the result of the depth of psyche and finally a metamorphic state of soul. Not far from being the real world they belong to such an activism of their soul in which they look not artificial. Instead we recognize a genuine adaptation of natural constituents of their soul.

## **III. The Survey of John Keats' Texts**

Let's survey the several traces of Keats' text where sensibilities matter most and approach him on to a world of prospective character of beauty in the midst of coldness. His sensibilities, it seems to be without further ado, makes out a momentary infatuation of Keats' psyche upon idiosyncrasies of life, but it concludes affably in an immediate aspiration of psyche for an everlasting genuine edition of life with artistic beauty. First of all let's represent his state of sensibilities on the graces of his psychic peace amidst the axis of disquiet. His unease stems from the life of love, ambition and poesy: '... because I knew three: / The first was a fair Maid, and Love her name; / The second was Ambition, pale of cheek, / ... / The last whom I love more, the more of blame / ... / I knew to be my demon Poesy.' ('Ode on Indolence' 24 - 30). They, he claims, damage the idyllic ambience of psyche: '... and to follow them I burn'd / And ached for wings' ('Ode on Indolence' 23-24). The moment posterior to this ungenial state of life evokes a lot of happiness in life: 'My idle days? Ripe was the drowsy hour; / The blissful cloud of summer - indolence / Benumb'd my eyes; My pulse grew less and less;' ('Ode on Indolence' 15-17); as a soul of sensibilities

he enjoys the wealth of the rich ease not possible to imagine in theory. Yet his sense of the beauty of the time of memory of these - love, ambition and poesy knocks his depth of psyche: 'Farewell! I yet have visions for the night, / And for the day faint visions there is store' ('Ode on Indolence' 57-58). Also Keats pays so inclusive attention to the germ of enmity in life that his eyesight identifies its delight in the trend of how he can see it moving in a human heart. Matthew, his poetical friend, seems to conceive amused in living the life of labyrinth of panic - the result of antagonism: 'She [the queen of the regions of air] tended thee ere thou couldst wander alone and cheer'd thy wild walks amidst terror and dread; - ' ('To a Poetical Friend' 33-34). The trend of so sensibility resultantly contributes to creating the ambiance of love: 'The tongue too she gave thee with which thou invitest / Each ear to thy stories of wonder and love' ('To a Poetical Friend' 39-40). The most inhumane disease of a human mind - antagonism, so looks intended to wash out: 'Oh warm thee in Fancy's enlivening rays. / And wash the dark spots of disease from thy soul' ('To a Poetical Friend' 43-44). Besides, there provokes a calm disquiet in the soul of Keats against sorrows grown from different corners of life. Keats ascribes sorrows to many sources of which war plays a big part: 'Oh peace! and dost thou with thy presence bless / the dwellings of this war surrounded isle / Soothing with placid brow our late distress' ('Peace' 1-3). Thoughts steeped in hatred or such like illness of psyche alike war unveils sorrows - the crown of his psyche: 'When by my solitary hearth I sit / And hateful thoughts enwrap my soul in gloom' ('To Hope' 1-2), 'Should Disappointment, parent of despair / Strive for her son to seize my careless heart;' ('To Hope' 13-14). In the midst of sorrows against war and aversion of psyche he thrives on dreams of pure hidden desire for love. Furthermore no sooner Keats' sensibilities search a type of peace freed of the reasons moving to unease than he discerns illness. Illness frequently takes on almost the entire space of his perception. His depth of pains on illness looks hard drawn amid delight in breeze: 'The breeze were ethereal and pure, / And crept through half lattices to cure / The languid sick' ('I Stood TipToe upon a Little Hill' 221-23). Keats feels a

certain amount of pains with illness and would like to have cure from so illness in the unearthly ambiance - nature anointed with purity. Nevertheless pleasant look, it looks, doesn't come out so much about the attractions of a youth as his impressive grudge roots in the experience of the disappearance of youth: 'O did ye stay to give a welcoming / To someone spirits who could probably sing / Their youth away and died' ('Sleep and Poetry' 217-19). His wonderful insight doesn't dread the scenario of youth - it exists, rather feels an exquisite attraction in his self for the ambiance of youth's disappearance. As in other states of Keats' text set on unease, enemy, sorrows, and grudge, his sensibilities on death reveal him a natural phenomenon of touching perception for death:

The spreading blue bells: It may haply mourn  
That such fair clusters should be rudely torn  
From their fresh beds, and scattered  
thoughtlessly  
By infant hands, left on the path to die ('I Stood  
TipToe upon a Little Hill' 43-46)

Keats perceives about nature thing - blue bells, which depart from life and so offer a great source of emotional tempest in the entire being of Keats about own life. But the relation between Keats' sentient and the scene of bells' demise communicates us his fascinating manner of perception though escaped into mortality. Finally Keats exposes from the depth of his insight that he experiences the pains and pleasure of beauty that comes with his look across the attractiveness of a flower and its about to lose. This view though unpleasant creates in his self the love of beauty. A lovely flower attracts his observation: 'A flower and forlorn flower, with naught of pride, / Drooping its beauty o'er the watery clearness, / To woo its own sad image into nearness.' ('I Stood TipToe upon a Little Hill' 174-76). Why does it exert its fascination over her sad image? Because the poet can envision the flower: 'But [the flower] still would seem to droop, to pine, to love' ('I Stood TipToe upon a Little Hill' 178). It discovers the pains of young Narcissus, the beautiful young man in Greek Myth.

#### **IV. The Analysis of the Texts**

In exposing the illuminating study of John Keats' sensibilities in life let's analyze them with the

view – it needs a critical study on the sensibilities. It then matters usually how and why he experiments them in trends of thoughts and poetry. He resultantly searches to take shelter his self in an aesthetic life. This cultural appreciation seizes his entire being and so any scope of aberrations becomes estranged from his self in life. Keats, a natural lover of romantic beliefs, nurtures a set of beliefs, which experiences beauty in a flash of inspiration in the chilling realities of life. So he reaches a state of life with his sensibilities as reflected in art as he reads life: 'Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold . . .' ('On First Looking into Chapman's Homer' 1). For his sensibilities he attains a number of discoveries of beauty in the macabre states of life. Because he believes in: 'I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination - what the Imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth' whether it existed before or not - ' ('Keats' Letter Benjamin Bailey, Nov. 22, 1817). Why does he has the cult of imagination? It has a special significance in realities of life and there unveils this from his insight a believed life. Finally his astonishing life is founded in art. So it observed that Keats, a romantic potential of solitude, seems to search peace devoid of tension best, as it appears to us. He asserts that love, ambition, and poesy destabilize the peace of his self in relation to what he enjoys intensely in indolence. His level of understanding about the nature of psychological tumult from love, ambition and poesy appears in: ' . . . to follow them I burn'd / And ached for wings' ('Ode on Indolence' 23 - 24). But the image of peace freed from those spheres of life as envisioned transmutes his life into a state of bliss: 'This blissful cloud of Summer - Indolence / Benumb'd my eyes; . . .' ('Ode on Indolence' 16-17). The cruder existence of the extremes of those phases of life has a great of life in art. In another context of his text even he seeks solace: 'O solitude! if I must with thee dwell;' ('O Solitude! I must with thee dwell' 1). Keats, as he responds to his keenness of observation and so nervousness to intensity of life, cultivates this wish only for his search of beauty in the anxiety of life. He suffers from the trend of his psyche - psychosomatic intensity though Wordsworth and Coleridge differentiate with him:

'In 'Goody Blake and Harry Gill' the narrative pivots on a recognition of the nature of psychosomatic disorders, a subject that Wordsworth would have become familiar with through the aegis of Coleridge, who coined the word 'psychosomatic' (Breen 7). As his acute observation introduces him to a romantic soul, he welcomes the life of the self and leaves the life of tension. So though not practically but psychically his voyage resembles to a romantic in art: 'Writers [of the Romantic Period] tended to regard themselves as the most interesting subject for literary creation, interest in urban life was replaced in nature, particularly in untamed nature and solitude' (MacEchen 6). Keats' response on these phases of life result in a tragedy of his life - his love which couldn't be successful because of his financial deficiency, his ambition in any way of his life creates no smooth achievement - poverty, disease, unjust criticism from his surroundings, etc, and his poetical experience wed to an infamous state at the outset and as to say till his death. So these practical experiences wake his sensibilities for peace in life. With reference to the song of the Nightingale in 'Ode to a Nightingale' Vendler remarks that Keats looks sick for peace and his art reflects so: 'At first Keats sees in the Nightingale song a democratic diffusion: the song is audible to all alike, whether emperor or rustic (culture, as Arnold Said, seek to do away with classes). Next the audience becomes any soul which, like Keats's own, stands in need of consolation, and the song, for a moment given purpose in a pathetic fallacy of providential intent, is said to find a path in the hearts of those, who like Ruth, are sick for home, standing in tears in alien stubble fields. I recapitulate: in the first of these reiterations of audience, art is for everyone; in the second, art, it is promised, will find a path into the being of those whose woe needs solace' (61). Besides Keats, not by no means in embryo of human's self, underpins the beauty of his self and so immerses in the self of other human beings, who in his observation, undergo deeply the plague of enmity. Matthew, his poetical friend, he opines, lives the life of so hatred from other human beings, but Keats considers that so hatred from other human beings revives love in the self of Matthew, who with the warmth of love

because of other human beings' hatred beautifies his self with healthy distinction - enlightenment, - the enter into a better life. Hatred instead of tormenting him doesn't preclude the possibility of Keats' self for love. His eyesight experiences the unpleasant hard reality of antagonism, of which trauma refreshes his soul. This beauty of self and then that of life energize Keats, who wishes in 'Sleep and Poetry:' 'Yes, I must pass them [the ecstasies from nature scenes] for a nobler life, / Where I may find the agonies, the strife of human hearts' (123 - 25). Keats combines such a desire with the natural appeal of brotherhood in the same poem later: 'I turn full hearted to the friendly aids / That smooth the path of honour; brotherhood / And Friendliness the nurse of mutual good' (316 - 18). It seems to him his intense choice of life. This beauty of life extends his self out of egoism onto the self for everyone in art. This religion of beauty in life projects our feelings of estimation with cheers for him. Art utters his awareness of this consciousness with love which responds to enmity with the view of beauty: 'Keats amplified this [his ideals of fellowship with essence] in a letter to Tailor of January 1818: 'the gradations of Happiness even like a kind of pleasure Thermometer (Letter, 59 - 60). These gradations' (780 - 815) begin with aesthetic identified with nature, move to the appreciation of various kinds of music, and lead 'to the Chief Intensity' which 'Is made of love and friendship,' love, of course, crowning all because it nourishes 'life's self . . . by its proper pith' (Stone, 22). Sorrow, Keats seems to feel it from his innermost state of soul for sensibility, but plays the part of an awareness giving birth to love. War partakes of distress. During Keats' time or before it England and her neighbors involve in many distressed wars - French and England, Spain and England, etc. and so a more painful scene reflects from the ambiance of French war with England in the idea of Muir: 'The peace lasted only eighteen months (October 1801- May 1803) when it was terminated by Napoleon's own eager impatience to strike down the power of Britain, which seemed to be - and was - the only obstacle in the way of his grandiose designs' (487). It so seems that not peace rather ostentatious purposes opposite to peace were destined to be far more interesting. Instead of

being vicious he, a bliss of romantic perception, introduces sympathetically to the beauty of self with the desire - sorrow is born from malignant and scornful war. War so consumes a peaceful atmosphere with pains. Rather being touched in love the atmosphere can avoid the evils of war. It, alike, reveals the hawk eyes of Keats on the disease of human psyche - hatred. Hatred, Keats experiences with his eyes working as alive and then deepens it, corrodes the very self of marrow of the beauty of human self. It, he feels, is the very source of spiritual disappointment. It instead of budding hatred energizes Keats' sensibilities. But it, if he would be a soul of reality, could settle the allowance of desertion, rather he as romantic, craves for the attractions of life. So his sorrow born from war and hatred tunes in the attainment of love, but he, unlike an avenger, preys on own mind about the ugliness of hatred - so it results in the source of the beauty of love. Keats, a unique romantic soul, stands in troubles of life, but senses a life of excellence. Wordsworth, alike him, a romantic soul, prefers the song of the solitary reaper to the song of the nightingale, but becomes sensible of the pains the song makes out: 'Will no one tell me what she sings? - . . . And battles long ago' ('The Solitary Reaper' 17-20). Thereby he reverses to a life of grandeur to which he develops from the circumstances of distressed war - that had happened to him in the song of the solitary reaper. Almost immediately after he listens to the plaintive song, he envisages a scene of beauty - peace, love and harmony. Keats' world opposite to war and hatred, though born from them, confides in love. The touches of plaintiveness approach so sadistically from Keats' passionate heart born from his sensibility that he imagines in his insight a land of beauty with love out of the real barren world, as he then feels the escape from the clutch of war with the rivals of England with France, Spain, etc. Apart from the horror of ugliness he discovers the lustrousness of beauty of love though not elsewhere rather than in the ugly world. Alike Keats' intensity on hatred seems to be significant for his sensibility in life. This hatred born from the critics upon his self, it may be considered, looks beauty: 'This criticism of Endymion played an important part in Keats' life. It would be exaggerated, of course, to



say - with Shelley and others - that the reviews either caused or hatred the poet's death, but it is certainly true that they blighted his public literary career. Much of the bitterness of attacks on 'Endymion' in Blackwood Magazines and the Quarterly Review was politically inspired; These magazines hated Leigh Hunt and Keats was one of Hunt's declared protégés. Keats in spite of such a pains continues writing, struggles to war an artist and succeeds in being a pure romantic' (Coles 99 - 100).

## V. Conclusion

It points that the findings of John Keats' sensibilities have been able to arrest in deepening way the tainted scenes of the universe to reverse them for an aesthetic change in life. The sensibilities emerge from his beliefs on life particularly its conflict between love and hatred, sympathy and estrangement on its several aspects. They take him not physically rather psychically though temporarily on a life of loneliness, but he is absolutely fine here as if it were throughout his life. He enjoys in sensibilities an absolute peace but in intensity. These stamps of his psychic nature though rare seem enough to get him away from common ones of a society as on the rare circumstances a human being doesn't dare to reveal such sensibilities. But the psychic library of Keats has the rare collection of so sensibilities. Levinson so rightly says: 'By and large, we read the poetry [of John Keats] as a sweet solution to a bitter life as a resolution of the actual contradictions. The writing is not, we say, an escape from the real but a constructive operation performed upon it so to bring out its Truth, which is also a new and deeply human Beauty. We describe, in short, a transformation of experience by knowledge by the aesthetic practice which that Knowledge prompts' (547). The sensibilities of John Keats aim at achieving this change of life in artistic way.

## References

- Bowra, Maurice. *The Romantic Imagination*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1950. Print.
- Breen, Jennifer and Mary Noble. 'Introduction.' *Romantic Literature*. London: Arnold, 2002. Print.

- Coles Editorial Board. 'Keats' Poetry.' New Delhi: Rama Brothers, 1991. Print.
- Cox, Jeffrey N. ed. 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci.' *Keats's Poetry and Prose*. New York: Norton, 2009. Print.
- De Man, Paul. '[The Negative Path].' *Keats's Poetry and Prose*. Ed. Jeffrey N. Cox. First ed. 2009. London: Norton, n. d. Print.
- Keats, John. *Keats's Poetry and Prose*. Ed. Jeffrey N. Cox. New York: Norton, 2009. Print.
- Levinson, Marjorie. 'Keats' Life of Allegory: The Origins of a Style.' *Keats's Poetry and Prose*. Ed. Jeffrey N. Cox. First ed. 2009. London: Norton, n. d. Print.
- MachEchen, Dougald B. *Keats and Shelley*. Ed. James L. Roberts. Lincoln: Cliffs, 1971. Print.
- Muir, Ramsay. *British History. A Survey of the History of all the British Peoples*. London: George Philip & Son Ltd, 1929. Print.
- Stone, Brian. *The Poetry of John Keats*. London: Penguin, 1992. Print.
- Vendler, Helen. 'The Odes of John Keats.' *The Poems of John Keats*. Ed. John Strachan. London and New York: Routledge, 2003. Print.
- Wordsworth, William. *Selected Poems*. Ed. Dr. S. Sen. 13<sup>th</sup> ed. New Delhi: Unique Publishers, 1995. Print.