

Physical Escape Metamorphoses into Spiritual Determination: A Critical Reading of William Butler Yeats Selected Poems

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Abstract: This paper makes an attempt to trace the treasure of W.B. Yeats in delineating the degradation of humanity with the passage of time. The poet envisages an imaginative world and is adamant to flee away from the material world. The paper, by using the selected poems of Yeats, illustrates how the condition of Modern world disheartens the mind of W. B Yeats and it also bestows the poet's supreme aim to rectify the society through unalloyed diction. He takes an integral part in propagating modernism in English just as much as Wordsworth does for British Romanticism or Tennyson and Browning for Victorian poetry. His Irishness in some way is different from his great contemporary in another literary genre: James Joyce (1882-1941). This development is not easy. It emphatically establishes him as a representative of new- voice in the Modern Era.

Keywords: James Joyce, Irishness, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning and Modern Era.

Introduction:

The emergence of William Butler Yeats typifies a new domain in writing poetry in which the precursor of Neo-Romanticism tries to obliterate the wrongdoings of society. His first phase of poetry reflects his deep love towards nature. The second phase of his career nurtures his revolutionary ideals and establishes his superlunary love towards his country. The third phase of his writing career embodies his physical escape from Ireland and projects his obsession with the people of materialistic mindset.

W.B. Yeats deliberately irradiates his unconquerable love towards nature in his early phase of his writing career. The portrayal of his 'nature' is calm and peaceful like that of the Romantics. "*The Lake Isle of Innisfree*" perspicuously demonstrates his spiritual migration in search of getting happiness. The place named Innisfree is not only a place but the poet's desire to explore the beauty of that purified place is deeply expressed in the poem. The poet inherently traces the ugliness or the deterioration of nature through this poem. Yeats escapes himself from the hurly-burly Ireland and intends to move Innisfree for enjoying the motionless beauty of nature.

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

Yeats reminds his bygone days who spends his boyhood in Innisfree. At the same time, the poet writes this poem while he is in England and feels intensely homesick. The notion of peace enlivens the minds of people and pushes to mull the spiritual things. It emphasizes to perceive the idea of self. The father of Liberalism, John Locke discusses that the idea of 'self' or above all, spiritualism can be acquired through autobiographical knowledge. The poet also runs after his prosperous old days to get in touch with nature and can reduce anger towards the materialistic people.

I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slowly
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings:
There midnight's all a glimmer and non purple glow.

A kind of franticness cramps the mind of Yeats in which the poet sees the devastation of the beauty of Ireland and the world. The poem entitled "*The second Coming*" reveals his plea to the Christ for awakening humanity and spirituality in the world. The poem exclaims the loss of spirituality and how the civilization process is fallen down with the passage of time. It inherently depicts the concealment of the Christ from the world due to the violent nature of human beings. The poet also attempts to hide like the Christ from this troubling world.

Mere anarchy is loosed ,upon the world

The blood – dimmed tide is loosed and everywhere

The ceremony of innocence is drowned.

The maxim of spirituality is fragmented with the footstep of time. The grasp of spirituality agitates the heart of W.B. Yeats .But the degradation of spirituality starkly wounds the mind of the poet which is galvanized in his *Byzantium poems*.He goes far away from the society to get consolation and tranquility like the Romantics. The treatment of nature joins him to the spiritual world and abates his rage towards people. The suffering of Yeats is endless which makes him pathos and hammers upon his head again and again. The predicament of Yeats or above all, the conflict of his mind is deeply portrayed in “*The Second Coming*”. He cites his mental delirium in the middle part of the poem to the readers without thinking much in which his obstacles hurt the heart and runs after to get solution.

Trouble my sight: somewhere it stands of the desert

A shape with lion like body and the head of a man

A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun.

The *Byzantium collection* also reiterates the same trouble of Yeats to spend the humdrum life in Ireland. The poet identifies himself as a foreteller in this collection on which he tries to migrate from Ireland and endeavours to move some aesthetic place where he can get freedom and happiness at the same time. The mental disorder of the poet is profusely demonstrated in his magnum opus *Sailing to Byzantium*. His conflict with the custom of society is clearly input in this poem. Yeats starts writing philosophical or spiritual poem in the third phase of his writing career through which he exposes the contaminated people in all over the world. The poet enlightens the circumstance of the society at the very beginning lines in the poem in which he compares people to dying generation due to their non conformative nature.

That is no country for old man. The young

In one another’s arms, bird in the trees

Those dying generations at their song.

The place named Byzantium rejuvenates the mind of Yeats and bestows vitality to fight with the negative energy. The acclaimed critic of W.B. Yeats , Michael Faherty appreciates Yeats for his intention to alienate himself from the society.

“ All his ideas and images of tradition and communion are predicted on the idea of spiritual loneliness. Even when he sees himself as being in some sense the inheritor of young Ireland , he envisages the crisis of his own times as one in which the individual is liberated from conformity, in which the lonely aristocratic spirit can only survive because it lives within him an organic community.

The exposure of nature in the poems of Yeats is traced as an indispensable adjunct to survive from vices..He makes a conflict between Byzantium and real place. His quest for getting peace in Byzantium makes the collection unique. He , moreover states that the world is unruly now.

An aged man is but a paltry thing,

A tattered coat upon a stick , unless

Soul clap its hands and sing , a louder song

For every tatter in its mortal dress,

Nor is there singing school but studying

It is really tough to understand Yeats properly for his skeptical nature. Yeats illuminates the two world in which one world is heavenly and very beautiful and the other one is full of pandemonium that the good people can not endure much. The critic named Marjorie Howes profoundly depicts the skeptical notion of Yeats in his eminent work called *Introduction to the Cambridge Companion of W.B. Yeats* in which he cites as-

”Yeats consistently combined an immense need for revelation, for belief, with an intense and critical skepticism; this makes it difficult to determine exactly what he believes and when Yeats beautifully expresses his views on society in a very astonishing way .He uses mild diction to critique upon the people.”

His another poem *Leda and the Swan* is fully a reflection of the end of ancient Mythological Era and the beginning of Modern history. It also exhibits the ruthlessness of the colonial masters who terribly oppress the people of Ireland. Many Post Modernists believe that human life is full of predicaments in which much is to be endured and a little to be enjoyed. The poems of Yeats sprinkle a kind of melancholia to the readers which makes him unique in the scenario of the World literature.

Conclusion-

W. B. Yeats gets a huge appreciation from the readers and critics due to his sense of moral wholeness. The different tradition sometime obligate different intention. For example, Yeats through Irish myths , tries to express the romantic and heroic ideals .Yeats gives more emphasis on the past or the supernatural world to make a dichotomy between the present times and the prosperity of old days.

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