

S. T. COLERIDGE'S USE OF SUPERNATURAL ELEMENTS**Dr. S. S. Patil**

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Abstract:

The paper presents Samuel Taylor Coleridge's use of supernatural elements in his important three poems namely, "Rime of the Ancient Mariner", "Kublakhan" and "Christabel." The poems are full of his fantastic and mysterious imagination including realistic supernaturalism in the haunting scenes and the visionary surrealistic world. To understand different use of supernatural elements, the article gives introduction, explains story in brief, theme and conclusion of each poem. The theme is analysed in the summary of the poems exclusively. Later in the conclusion, the paper assesses the unique contribution of Coleridge while using supernatural elements in the above mentioned poems.

Key-words: Supernatural, prophesy, imagination, haunted castle, Ghosts and spirits, mythological and mysterious creatures, medievalism, omens, dreams, visions, magic, sorcery and enchanted forest.

Introduction:

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's seven fruitful years with his friend whom we adore as a nature poet William Wordsworth established the former's reputation as the first among the equals to use supernatural elements in his the most popular poems- "Rime of the Ancient Mariner", "Kublakhan" and "Christabel"- in the English literature. The Romantic Age was heralded with the collaborative publication of "The Lyrical Ballads" by Wordsworth and Coleridge in 1798. The **supernatural elements** are the part of the nature's mysterious powers, spirituality, supernatural landscapes like enchanted forests, haunted castles etc. Ghosts and spirits, mythological creatures like fairies and demons etc., omens and prophecies, dreams, visions, magic and sorcery.

After the discussion with Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge decided to use the characters and incidents which "were to be, in part at least, supernatural," yet possessing such "human interest and a semblance of truth" as "to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for moments which constitutes poetic faith."

From this perspective, let's look into the following poems.

"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (1798)**Introduction:**

Coleridge's poem "**The Rime of the Ancient Mariner**" (1798), has seven parts, 143 stanzas in 627 lines, full of marvel and mystery with moral tone, is according to Wordsworth, based on the dream of his friend Mr. Cruikshank. The poem is narrated by the Ancient Mariner

(sailor) the theme in moral tone that convinces a reckless and ruthless act can have lasting repercussions and with regret and remorseful suffering, one can be liberated from this sin.

The ancient mariner has long grey hair and glittering eyes. He stopped one of the three wedding guests to narrate his story. The Ship sailed in good weather till the Equator. Because of massive storm, the ship turned to the South Pole where he found huge ice-bbergs on the water and no living creature anywhere.

As a good omen a bird Albatross came out through the 'mast-high' fog. Soon the favourable south wind begins and the ship sailed towards the north. The crew considers the bird as good omen and that is fed by the mariner with joy and hospitality but on one day he killed it with his crossbow. In spite of this, the weather is improved, they started to like the killing of Albatross and thus they become partner with the mariner in killing the bird. Soon the ship finds standstill as, "painted ship upon a painted ocean," and since there is neither wind nor water, shouts as, "Water, water, everywhere, / Nor any drop to drink." Now the crew accuses the Mariner of this dire plight and tie the killed bird to his neck.

The mariner saw a boat full of skeleton, Death and Life-in- Death. The Mariner's ship sank suddenly but he was saved with Pilot boat. He started to praise heartily the beauty of the snakes in the water and God's all creatures; and soon the atmosphere started to change. The dead bird falls from his neck. The ancient Mariner is refreshed with rain and the angelic spirits came out of the bodies becoming light. He says to the Wedding-guest that, "He prayeth well, who loveth well/ Both man and bird and beast. He prayeth best, who loveth best/ All things both great and small;/ For the dear God who loveth us, He made and loveth all. " Thus he goes on preaching this moral truth.

In the beginning this supernatural appeared as natural in all aspects and used later as suggestive, psychological and sophisticated means. The Mariner's ship stands still "like a painted ship on the ocean," as if the ship is being driven by a supernatural power while keeping the crews as ghostly characters. The Mariner's mind is presented as the appearance of Life-in-Death in the lines, "Her lips were red, her looks were free, / Her looks were yellow as gold/ Her skin was as white as leprosy."

The Mariner's terrifying experience includes "The dead men gave groan/ they groaned, they stirred, they all uprood their limbs like lifeless tools/ We were a ghastly crew." The act of killing the guiding spirit the bird Albatross separates man from nature. After torturous experience for seven days like "a hell alive," he is able to praise God's all creatures in nature. Soon he reaches the stage of awareness beginning from ignorance on the individual journey. Angels appear over the sailors' corpses to take the oars and row the ship."

Conclusion:

Though there are some fantastic and improbable, incredible and unbelievable and even impossible awful scenes like mysterious skeleton ship, the spectre woman with her mate, the dead crew getting back to life, the sudden sinking of the ship and the Polar spirit influencing the course of the events and so on, yet they 'live and breath before our eyes.' Coleridge blended the exotic beauty of the supernatural phenomena with the Mariner and his crew, the

sea, the wind, the sea creatures, the bird Albatross of the natural phenomena so skilfully and romantically that appears very realistic narration of the sea journey of the ancient Mariner in this poem.

“Kubla Khan, or A Vision in A Dream: A Fragment” (1816)

Introduction:

The poem, a fifty-four lined poetic fragment, is said to have been composed in a dream in the intoxicated state of mind under the influence of laudanum, a kind of opium, is a magnificent blend of creativity, imagination and nature soaked in the supernatural elements on the life of a Chinese fifth emperor of the (Mongol-led) Yuan dynasty, Kublakhan (1260-1294). After reading travel book ‘Purchas his Pilgrimage’ by Purchas, Coleridge wrote the poem but left it incomplete as a person from Porlock interrupted him. The poem is based on fancy, dream, magic including wonderful landscape. There is creativity and imagination in art that presents man with nature. The poem features the sacred river and mysterious chasm for its eerie atmosphere. Both the poet as well as the speaker is found in confusion to consider whether their creation is either the poem itself or ‘pleasure dome’ ‘Xanadu’ a summer palace- a place of beauty, pleasure and violence -respectively. Coleridge is curious to know how the powers of human creativity and imagination of artists like him produce works of art in this world.

The poem starts with the description of a powerful ruler Kublakhan’s summer palace Xanadu with his imagination includes bright gardens, various trees and lush green places. Coleridge presents the combination of the concrete world with the abstract in the opening **nightmarish** lines of the poem as, “caverns measureless to men” and sunless sea.” The miraculous pleasure dome includes icy caves in the sun as, “That with music loud and long,/I would build that dome in air,/ That sunny dome! Those caves of ice!” Giving references to **faraway places** like, “A savage place! As holy and enchanted/ As e’er beneath a waning moon was haunted by woman wailing for her demon-lover!...As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing.”

The river Alph runs with ebbs and flows through the palace like“ Five miles meandering with a mazy motion/Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,/Then reached the caverns measureless to man,/And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean.... The prophesy of war disturbs the imagery of the beautiful nature, as artists are interrupted by human problems as “And mid this tumult Kubla heard from far / **Ancestral** voices **prophesising** war!”.

In the last stanza, the damsel’s playing the dulcimer in a vision and hope to create a melody is seen by the speaker as “A damsel with dulcimer/ In a **vision** once I saw:/It was an Abyssinian maid,/ And on her dulcimer she played/ Singing of Mount Abora.”. For haunting music and shadowy **vision**, the poem is appreciated. Listening to the music of that stringed instrument in a vision, he would create Kubla’s Pleasure (sun-filled) dome with icy caves in the air above him. Whoever listen to this song would look up to see what he had built and certainly they would cry as, “And close your eyes with holy dread,/For he on honey dew hath fed,/ And drunk the milk of Paradise.”

Conclusion:

The poem "Kubla Khan" is fraught with supernatural elements with realistic touch and there lies the essence or beauty of the poem wherein presented mythological creature, supernatural landscapes like enchanted places, haunted castles, omens and prophecies, dreams and visions, mystery and fear, and an individual power etc. are all presented in the poem as a part of Gothic elements.

"Christabel" (1798)**Introduction:**

In "Christabel" (1798), there are 339 lines in the first part, composed in 1797, at Stowey, Somerset and 340-677 in the second part were written at Keswick, Cumberland in 1800. The poem is a tale of mystery, horror, wizardry and wonders comprising all the supernatural elements and skilfully presented in realistic way.

The poem is set in the midnight of April in the forest that is a furlong away from the castle and of which the clock rang twelve along with the sounds of owls 'Tu-whit!-Tu-whoo!' that 'awakened the cowing crook.' Even in the castle, the Baron's toothless mastiff bitch (dog) too responded to the bell. The night is chilly but not so dark as 'thin grey cloud is spread on high,' exposing the moon though dull and small in the sky. In such night, Christabel, a beautiful daughter of Sir Leoline, the Baron rich, 'kneels beneath the huge oak tree,' that is not green but '**moss and rarest mistletoe**' (an ever green plant), offering prayer 'for the welfare of her own betrothed knight.' At once Christabel 'sprang up' and holds her breath offering prayer to know 'other side' of the tree. There she sees a bright and beautiful girl **in the silk white robe in the moon light**; 'her blue-veined' feet were without sandals; the gems in her hair were '**glittered wildly.**'

Christabel comes to know that her name is Geraldine and she is abducted by five warriors who left the lady alone there. Christabel, being innocent **though frightened**, took the lady to her castle chamber to comfort 'fair Geraldine' in the night. At the gate of the castle, '**the lady sank**' as if in pain but Christabel lifts the lady 'with might and main,' then she walks as if there was no pain. When they crossed the court, the fast asleep old **mastiff moans angrily**, though never yelled like that before, in the cold moonlight.

Though not a dim moon beam enters, yet the carvings in the chamber are visible clearly. The silver lamp that 'burns dead and dim' was fastened to an angel's feet with two fold silver chain. Christabel removed the flicker and the lamp burns brightly while swinging to and fro. Since Geraldine collapsed on the floor in 'wretched plight', Christabel gives the lady a wine of wild flowers made by her departed mother at her birth. It is said that her mother would listen the castle bell striking twelve in the night on her wedding day. Listening to this, the lady's voice altered with ghostly eyes, she started to address the mother's spirit strangely to go away at once.

Later Geraldine asked Christabel to undress herself and lay down in the bed. The lady too removes her dresses partly without a word or stir, and that look was unbearable to see. The

lady took the maid in her arm like a mother to her child. The spell on Christabel was broken after one hour as if her mother Lady Leoline protected her from the evil harm.

On the next day when Christabel introduced Geraldine to her father, he learnt that the lady is the daughter of his old friend Sir Roland. But the pure and innocent daughter is unable to reveal the shameful acts of the wicked Geraldine who even casts her potential charm over her father. Rejecting the request of his own daughter Christabel, the Baron Sir Leoline goes away with the lovely and fascinating sorceress Geraldine.

Conclusion:

Coleridge, being a 'subtle souled psychologist,' presented the poem as a "story from the world of spirits." It is 'witchery by moonlight,' and 'an imaginative romance pervaded throughout by the supernatural.' Readers are convinced the fact that 'while we read it, we are all the while in our real and living world.' No poet has blended so far so skilfully the human realities and the supernatural elements with a unique craftsmanship. Reader never doubts Coleridge's fantastic, unreal and improbable presentation since it is realistic supernaturalism that even includes medievalism and of which we find characters, situations and magic scenes in the above three poems.

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