



ISSN 2349-638X

REVIEWED INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

**AAYUSHI
INTERNATIONAL
INTERDISCIPLINARY
RESEARCH JOURNAL
(AIIRJ)**

MONTHLY PUBLISH JOURNAL

VOL-II

ISSUE-IV

APRIL

2015

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Detail study of the S.T.Coleridge poem 'The Rime of Ancient Mariner' with reference to supernatural elements.

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Solapur.

SAMUAL TAYLOR COLERIDGE : [1772-1834]

Coleridge was one of the romantic movement. His famous poems are 'The Rime of Ancient Mariner', 'Christable', 'Kubla Khan', 'Dejection: An ode' and 'Frost at Night'. Coleridge's great poems are like music, in that they have to be taken on their own terms or not at all, of the three poems written in 1797, already referred to, only 'The Ancient Mariner' is a completed whole. It is undoubtedly one of the greatest poems of the romantic period.....

In the 14th chapter of his Biographic Literaria Coleridge tells about a discussion between Wordsworth and himself. According to it he was to write about persons and characters supernatural or at least romantic. 'The Rime of Ancient Mariner' is a poem written in that spirit. It is a ballad, that is, a poem telling a story. Here we read the strange and mysterious experience of a mariner during a voyage. He narrated the story to a wedding guest and we read it spellbound. The creation of the atmosphere changed with the supernatural is the strongest point of the tale. The experiences of the mariner are his punishment, we are told for killing an albatross, a huge sea bird of good omen. Danger and difficulties on a voyage are normal. Many a story of storm have been narrated by many a writer. But the experience of the ancient mariner is unique in many ways. The poem has moral too.

There are three different motifs which enter into the theme of the poem:

- 1) The voyage with its miraculous and memorable history
- 2) The evil, supernatural persecution (harassment)
- 3) Change of the mariner's attitude toward life

The Supernatural Elements In 'The Rime Of Ancient Mariner'

This poem is a masterpiece of the supernatural kind of poetry. Though this poem contains several impossible incidents, the total effect is very realistic. There is a willing 'suspension of disbelief' on the part of the reader. [It means the reader believes what he is reading by suspending disbelief] there are many supernatural incidents in the poem. Such as the mariner's hypnotic look, the sudden and mysterious arrival of a skeleton ship.

According to W. H. Harding, it is expressed through the frustration and the sense of isolation. The sense of isolation, helplessness and terror is expressed in the following line:

“Alone, alone, all, all alone

Alone on a wide wide sea.”

This psychological element is presented along with suffering and helplessness of man in the universe. The sea –adventure and the supernatural experience play an important role in the Mariner’s experience.

The spectre- woman and her death- mate, the coming back of life of the crew, the polar spirits talking to one another. These are scattered in the poem. With these supernatural incidents, the poet has aesthetically interlinked very realistic and convincing picture of nature like the shining sun, the mist and snow surrounding the ship, the extreme freezing cold of the Arctic region, the slimy creature creeping upon the surface of the sea; the shining stars, the moon going up the sky, the shining water –snakes. The poet has skilfully and artistically blended the realistic and the supernatural, the possible and the impossible.

The depression and loss of energy is expressed through the tired body movements in the following line:

‘I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat; for the sky
And the sea, and the sea and the sky,

✿ Lay like a load on my weary eye, and the dead were at my feet. ✿

There is realistic expression of the thoughts and feelings of mariner. The real voyage of the Ancient Mariner is through the unknown sea of the unconscious and conscious mind.

The Mariner kills the bird and feels very proud of his power. He revolts against the natural spirit of love which is present in all things. It is personified in the following lines:

“The spirit, who dwelt by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow”.

The killing of Albatross bird is not an ordinary act. The bird is given a human personality. It is related to a Christian soul, therefore, it demands proper attention and respect

due to human personality. The MARINER commits a horrible crime of killing the Albatross bird. It is a violation of the divine supernatural charity. Here, the bird becomes a person. It is Mariner's violent act of guilt. The murder of the bird is followed by punishment. There is a cause behind the punishment, the torture and the voyage over strange sea. The mariner killed the God's creature, therefore, he must be punished for it. Thus, and there is logic of cause and effect.

To conclude, it is quite obvious that Coleridge uses this tension between the two worlds one is the supernatural world and another is natural world, but preference is for the supernatural world in which he is the lord. There are certain limitations of Coleridge's poetry may now be noted. First, his poetic output is extremely limited. Secondly, the period during which his creative genius was at his best was brief, and, therefore much that he has written is flat, gross and dull. Thirdly, his poetry is dream poetry and as such it does not deal with the realities of life. Human passions do not find an adequate expression in it. Fourthly, even the little that he could compose is fragmentary in spite of all its limitation, Coleridge's poetry ranks among the rarest treasures of English literature.

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ISSN 2349-638X

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