



Sub: British
Literature
19th century
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KUBLA KHAN

BY SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

- English poet, literary critic, philosopher and theologian.
- Founder of the Romantic Movement along with William Wordsworth.
- Member of Lake poets. (Group of English poets who all lived in the Lake district of England in the first half of 19th century like Robert Southey, Thomas De Quincey, Charles Lamb , Mary Lamb).
- Poems : The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, Kubla Khan , Christabel. Prose : Biographia Literaria
- Introduced German idealist philosophy to English speaking culture.
- Coined the term “ Willing suspension of disbelief” : Intentional avoidance of critical thinking or logic in examining something surreal, such as a work of speculative fiction, in order to believe it for the sake of enjoyment.
- Influenced greatly by Ralph Waldo Emerson and American Transcendentalism(1820-30).

- American transcendentalism had the core belief in the inherent goodness of people and nature, people are best when they are self-reliant and independent, emphasizes subjective intuition over objective empiricism, protest against intellectualism and spirituality of the preceding Age of Reason.
- Physically unhealthy, opium addict, anxiety, depression and assumed to have bipolar disease.
- Collaborated collection : “ Lyrical Ballads” along with Wordsworth in 1798.

POETIC STYLE

- Meticulous craftsman.
- Conversational poetry.
- Used common everyday language.
- Romantic poet, poetry of senses.
- Imaginative.
- Appeal to the mind of the readers.
- Introduced supernatural elements in poetry.

- Employed magical realism and elements of medievalism.
- Celebrates nature in poem.
- Tone : melancholic and sombre.
- Took a personal stance.
- Lyrical – songlike quality.
- Fragmented poetry : Ancient Mariner : 2 versions, Kubla khan and christabel: incomplete.
- Interest in mythology and psychology.

ORIGIN OF THE POEM.

- Kubla khan was written in 1798 but not published until 1816.
- Published in a pamphlet Christabel and The Pains of Sleep.
- It was written when Coleridge had come into an intimate relationship with Wordsworth and Dorothy.
- He describes this poem as the fragment of a dream, a vision seen perhaps in the influence of opium.
- The account of Kubla khan is actually found in an old book of travels called Purchas's Pilgrimage written by Samuel Purchas.
- Coleridge fell asleep while reading this book, and saw a very vivid dream, he woke up suddenly and jotted down but unfortunately he was called out by someone on business from Porlock. He forgot the rest of the dream and was only able to write what he remembered which were in fragments.
- Subtitle : Or a vision in a dream . A Fragment.

SUPERNATURAL ELEMENT IN KUBLA KHAN

- The poem was composed in a dream and therefore it contains some magical qualities.
- It is totally free from the intrusion of thought.
- It has a high Imaginative quality.
- The beginning lines are suggestive of supernatural elements.
- ‘caverns measureless to man’ and ‘sunless sea’ creates a feeling of mystery and fear.
- Coleridge makes use of suggestiveness to give enchantment and wider scope to supernaturalism.
- The poetic frenzy mentioned in the end leaves the reader with strangeness and a kind of terror.
- There is a gothic element in the description of people and surroundings.
- A nightmarish vision is created.
- Aim of the poet: to create “willing suspension of disbelief” in the readers which constitutes poetic faith.
- There is faithful adherence to nature.

ROMANTIC ELEMENTS

- Poem of pure Romance.
- Sensuous phrases and pictures like bright gardens, incense bearing trees laden with blossoms, sunny spots of greenery etc.
- The description of the Abyssinian maid, inspired poet.
- References to faroff places like Xanadu, Alph, Mount Abora.
- Supernaturalism is also a romantic quality.
- Transports us out of the world of everyday life into a world of wonder and Romance.

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

- Bring out the dream quality of Kubla Khan . Add suitable illustrations.
- How has Coleridge made the supernatural real and convincing?
- Write a note on treatment of supernatural elements.
- Comment on symbolism in Kubla Khan.
- Gothic Narrative.