



JOHN KEATS AND HIS HELLENISM

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ABSTRACT

The Greek literature, more or less is the forefather of all literature the Greek was very advance in all aspects of civilization. They were the role model of all kinds of cultural activities for the entire people of the world. As a result, they left an influence on the world literature. Many poets, especially in English literature were inspired from them (the Greeks) but among them John Keats` name is more radiant. It was Keats who was essentially a Greek by his spirit. Critics are continuously in search that what kind of influence made Keats so successful in dealing with Greek. Well here this article entitled as **“John Keats and his Hellenism”**, is going to deal with the **Hellenism** or Greekness of Keats in this works.

KEYWORDS: Greek literature , great romantic poet.

INTRODUCTION

The tern “Hellenism” has been derived from the word **“Hellene”**. It means Greek. So, Hellenism means Greek culture, manner, Greek spirit and Greek idioms.

John Keats was a great romantic poet. But the duration of his time was very short. He lived from 1795-1821 and died a pre-mature death. English literature sustained its greatest loss due to his pre-mature death. Among the Romantics Keats was different in and live for Greek art, temperament culture and mythology. His Hellenic spirit has made him distinct from other Romantics.

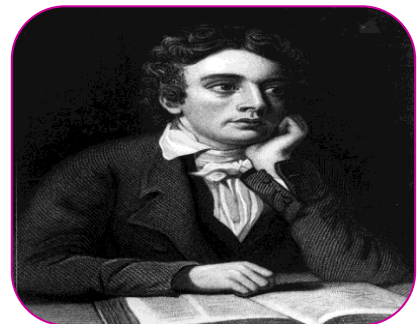
“Keats was a Greek” this esepression by P.B. Shelley about John Keats is highly accepted, though Keats was not a Greek man or a Greek Poet. It was due to his esetreme Passion for Green culture, mythologies art and sculpture.

SEVERAL FACTORS OF KEATS’ HELLENISM:

John Keats’ “Hellenism” came to him through his reading of translation of Greek classics, lempriere’s classical dictionary and through Greek sculptures.

Since his childhood John Keats was highly attracted towards Green mythology. He liked to know Green writers like - Virgil, Acneid, Homer and so on but it was their works properly as he did not know the Greek languages whereas he could understand French and he knew Latin, as he won an award at the Clarke School for translation. Again towards the end of his life he acquired Italian language by his travel through Italy. But when he came in contact with more elated as he could satisfy his thirst for knowing this great Greek man Homer. He became so esecited to read Chapman’s Homer that he could not stay away from his pen to write about it. And as a result **“On first looking into Chapman’s Homer”** was the outcome of it. It was his first literary composition, but did not attract much attention.

- Again Lemprier’s classical Dictionary helped him a lot to acquire Greek mythology. He was so much attracted to Greek mythology that he freely used it in his poetry.



- Greek sculpture also induced in him for raising his Hellenism. But Keats' own Greek temper - the inborn temperamental Greekness of his mind was the most important factors of his Hellenism.

GREEK MYTHS, ARTS AND LITERATURE IN JOHN KEATS POETRY:

When we speak about Greek mythology, we immediately get interested with the Greek myths and legends. Keats too was fascinated with the myths and legends of the Greek mythology which we come to know from his poetry. The use of Greek myths and legends in his poems are worth-passing. 'Endymion' which is a long narrative poem; is named after its hero Endymion, a figure taken from Greek myth. In Greek mythology, Endymion is referred to a beautiful young man, a shepherd who was distinguished for its eternal sleep on mount Latmus in Caria. He was the son of Calyces and was king of Elis. He was especially loved lay Selene (Moon).

Again in '**Lamia**' Keats countersigns the revival of ancient paganism of Greeks like Hermes. Keats speaks of the legend of Lamia who is both a snake and a woman.

In '**Ode to Psyche**' Keats deals with the myth of psyche and cupid. His famous poem '**Ode on & Grecian Urn**' also reflects the beauty of ancient Greek art. Keats' love for the ancient Greek Urn's beauty is conveyed as –

**"Heard melodies are sweet, but those Unheard
Are sweeter, therefore, ye soft pipe, play on.
Not to the sensual ear, but more endear'd
Pipe to the spirit dities of no tone".**

The lines reflect the passion of Keats for the ancient Greeks their art, their creativity and so on.

Again in '**Hyperion**' he describes about the wan among the Greek Gods. Keats feels delighted in the world of ancient Greeks and in the '**Vales**' where he can find hands and dancing in Joy.

In '**Ode to a Nightingale**' he uses many Greek allusions – '**Light winged Dryad**', '**Bacchus**' and so on.

KEATS' LIMITATION AS A GREEK:

But there are a few limitations with Keats as a Greek. He does not write of Greek things in a Greek manner. But whatever he has written are based on Greek themes and it distinguishes him from other Romantics.

CONCLUSION

David Ricks wrote an article on Keats titled "**A Greek poet's Tribute to Keats**" where he said that Lord Byron was given more attention than that of Keats in Greece. But "**Gianni's Keats**" a poem by Angeles Sikelianos Published in 1915, made Keats an honorary Greek. Furthermore, after reading Keats' poems and his life in relation to Greek Hellenism, it is well understood that Keats loved and adored Greek Hellenism. In truth he found beauty and in beauty he found truth. Keats can eminently be referred as a pure poet who has a passion for beauty and truth. His poetry is for the sake of poetry and nothing else. His use of Greek Hellenistic ideas in his poems is Praiseworthy. Moreover, the remark that Shelley made on his part is true and correct that '**John Keats is a Greek**' certainly, it will not be a mistake to say that "**Keats is an English Greek**".

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