

Quest for Hope in Alfred Tennyson's Selected Poems

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Abstract

Literature is the reflection of society. Every work of art is always woven around the human and human life. Human life consists of more than one state of mind. The circumstances of every human must be different from one another. No one can live his life without the ray of hope in life. Everybody needs someone's motivation and encouragement to live life in a very good way. Literature represents the various colors of human life in it. Tennyson is one of the literary figures who have contributed to the Victorian age. He was the major literary figure of the Victorian age. His poems are mostly based on some themes such as death, depiction of myth and legends, realistic depiction of society, lost memory, repentance of the past etc. Apart from this major description, he has pointed the attention towards the quest for the hope for the best in life. Hope and despair are part of human life. Human history still exists because of the hope in human life. Men survive with some hope and expectation in life. This research paper is an attempt to study "Quest for Hope in Alfred Tennyson's Selected Poems". The selected poems are "Crossing the Bar", "Flower in the Crannied Wall", "The Larger Hope" and "Early Spring". Tennyson's artistic endeavours to depict the quest for hope is the remarkable matter of his style of writing. He has overlooked the reality of life in his poems. He has portrait nostalgia as the basic element of his writing.

Keywords: Quest for hope, Alfred Tennyson, human mind, poems, nature.

Introduction:

Alfred Tennyson was an eminent poet and writer. He was the poet laureate during queen Victoria's reign in 1850 to 1892. He has written excellent short poems, narrative poems, ballads and elegies in Victorian age. He is known as one of the major poets of the Victorian era. His poems consist of a pathetic tone of nostalgia. His style of writing poems is very unique because he wrote every poem in an artistic manner. There are various kinds of subject matter presented by him but the depiction of mythological elements in poems is remarkable. The artistic value to portrait the natural scenery is the fundamental feature of his poems. He has presented nature with a positive and negative tone. Philosophy and wisdom are the inseparable elements of his poems. Tennyson has created the impression of a major poet in the Victorian age. He has depicted the realistic ideologies of the Victorian age in his works. He has portrayed many mythological characters to express his isolation and lostness of the past.

Delineation of Quest for Hope in Poems:

Nature plays an effective role in Tennyson's poems. He exemplified natural elements to show human hope. He aids to portray the panic of the human situation and its consolation with the depiction of nature. The description of nature has proved a healing aspect for him. He has deliberately written about nature for the description of separation, pain and nostalgia of the past. Pankel says that "Tennyson has a special vocabulary for dealing with the theme of quest." (P-124) In "Crossing the Bar", he expresses his desire and hope to meet God. He has symbolized God as Pilot. Although, whatever difficulties faced by him did not matter, now he went to meet God after the voyage of life. In the whole poem, many words are metaphorically used by Tennyson. The word sea symbolizes human life and tide as the difficulties of life. Tennyson describes the combination of human spirit and nature spirit. This poem consists of a total of four stanzas with four lines in each. Tennyson denotes his emotion towards death. He says that one clear call for the death came to him now the tide was moving very fast and full of sound. He expressed that after twilight and evening, there will be darkness, which connotes loss of hope but in the last stanza of the poem, he denotes that after suffering in flood he will meet God. As he writes:

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

This depiction by him clearly mentioned his quest for hope in life. "Flower in the Crannied Wall" is one of the smallest poems written by Tennyson. He depicts natural aspects to explain human nature. The title of the poem itself suggests the hope for the germination of flowers on the wall. It depicts the hardness of human life. Tennyson describes that after plucking the flower, the root and all in his hand. He denotes that without the root of human culture, there will be no existence of human society. He says,

Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
I hold you here, root and all. In my hand,
Little flower – but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is.

Tennyson depicts the hope to understand man and God. The whole poem was metaphorically presented by him. His willingness to observe and understand God and men refer to him as a very passionate person. The poem itself metaphorically describes the ray of hope in very hard circumstances of human life. Tennyson has personified human attributes to natural elements. How a little flower germinated on the crannied wall. To understand life, one can understand nature and its process. The depiction of "Flower in the crannied wall" remarkably denotes Tennyson's quest for hope.

In “The Larger Hope”, Tennyson has intentionally voiced paradoxical aspects of nature. He describes nature as painful in the beginning and then in the same poem, he describes nature as a healing aspect. Every act of nature is the healing aspect. Every act of nature is meaningful and worthy which never occurs without any particular aim. He expresses hope for goodness, as he says,

Oh yet we trust that somehow good
 Will be the final goal of ill,
 To pangs of nature, sins of wall,
 Defects of doubt, and taints of blood
 That nothing walks with aimless feet;
 Or cast as rubbish to the void,
 When God hath made the pile complete;

Mariam Thomas says, “He tried his level best and with great success to portray in his poems the Victorian England as it is with all its peculiar characteristics.” (2) Further, in this same poem, he denotes that God shall come for healing the pain of nature and humans. After every winter spring comes. This quest for hope makes his poem a positive representation of optimism. His hope for the best is in the center, as he says,

Behold, we know not anything;
 I can but trust that good shall fall
 At last – far off – at last to all,
 And every winter change to spring.

The title of the poem “The Larger Hope ” is aptly given by him. “Early Spring” is one of the significant poems by Tennyson. He delineates the importance of hope and spring in the earth and its effect upon birds and vegetation. Tennyson depicts various natural elements with the situation of human life. His quest for hope has never ended. There are two tones mixed in his poem such as optimistic and pessimistic. He expresses pessimistic view as, “Past, Future glimpse and fade/ Through some slight spell,/ A gleam from yonder vale, Some far blue fell; And sympathies, now frail, /In sound and smell!”. Further he mentioned hope for the spring in the forest and in the world. He expects to have spring again to birds and poetical progress in the Victorian era. He says that heavenly power makes all things new. He states,

For now the Heavenly power
 Makes all things new, And thaws the cold, and fills
 The flower with dew;
 The blackbirds have their wills,

The poets too.

Tennyson's poetic technique is very remarkable as he propounds various natural elements to describe desire and pain of human beings. He has presented the new scenario of human beings. He has presented the new scenario of the Victorian era which exemplifies natural aspects and a quest for the hope that something good will happen in everybody's life.

Conclusion:

In a nutshell, Alfred Tennyson has depicted optimistic and pessimistic ideas of Victorian era and along with this he has delineated the quest for hope in life in some poem such as "Crossing the Bar", "Flower in the Crannied Wall", "The Larger Hope" and "Early Spring". He has represented the scenario of the Victorian era and its various situations.

References

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