

Groping For The Shared And Unique Elements Through Juxtaposing Samuel Taylor Coleridge's And Ghani Khan's Poems: 'Kubla Khan And Zama Mahal (My Palace) Under The Lenses Of Intertextuality

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Abstract

This paper aims at the readings of two across the border veteran poets' poems: Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' and Ghani Khan's 'Zama Mahal' respectively. The main focus of the paper is to find out the similarities and dissimilarities between the thoughts, themes, and linguistic approaches of both the poets in the two poems 'Kubla Khan' and 'Zama Mahal' (My Palace). The paper's other focus remains on the semantic subtlety on how semantic correlation endorsed by the linguistic style and cultural approaches of the both the writers make a universal implication on both the cultures. Intertextuality is used to analyze both the poems and explore the connection between these poets' thoughts and content/expression. It's further found out that although both poets are poles apart by culture and geography, they share many aspects which share uniform and similar linguistic, cultural and natural bonds. This paper, through Intertextuality, will analyze both these imaginative palaces. Intertextuality, which was first coined by Julia Kristeva in 1966 is a multidisciplinary theory that does not limit itself to the connection of two literary texts, but also presents a larger network of artistic expressions and its interconnectedness in a historical and cultural; domain (Zengin, 2016).

Introduction

A text in isolation is generally meaningless. We can only understand it better if we study it in the perspective of its context and the culture in which it is produced. Allen. G (2011) states that the meaning in a text cannot be fully understood unless it is related to some other text(s). Comparative Literature focuses on the analysis and study of the universal patterns of human nature beyond cultural territorial and linguistic boundaries. According to Merriam Webster 'Comparative

literature is the study of the interrelationship of the literatures of two or more cultures, usually of differing languages and especially, independent of the influences of one upon another’.

This paper explores and analyzes the similarities and dissimilarities between the two great Romantic poets who are related to each other by thoughts but are drawn apart by inter-linguistic difference, that is Samuel Taylor Coleridge, an English poet and critic, with Abdul Ghani Khan, a Pashto poet and philosopher. The former lit the candle of Romanticism in 1798 with the publication of Lyrical Ballads which is a collection of his poems, whereas the later continued his legacy of romantic poetry and became a pioneer Romantic poet of Pashto Literature. This paper analyses the universal elements of their poetries by finding out the similarities and differences in their representative poems: ‘Kubla Khan’ by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and ‘Zama Mahal’ (My Palace) by Abdul Ghani Khan. A lot has been written about Coleridge and ‘Kubla Khan’ in the past two centuries but, very little amount of information and exploration is available to the international readers about Ghani Khan. Although Ghani Khan has been compared with few other great poets like Keats, Shelly and Wordsworth yet no comparison has been made between him and Coleridge which will be the main focus of this paper and by comparing him to one of the most admired and celebrated English poets, Coleridge, we may be in a position to showcase his genius to the world.

Comparative literature is inclusive in nature and offers a wide range of knowledge. It means the knowledge of more than one national literature. It offers a broad application of literature that belongs to different times, places and cultures in history (Zepetnek, 1998). Intertextuality is one of the main tools that are used for the conduction of comparative study. It is the relationship between two texts, particularly in literary texts (Oxford Dictionary). By using Intertextuality, this paper will aim to compare the two texts qualitatively.

Statement of the problem

Cross-cultural poetry has of late been introduced and compared by many authors. This paper unlocks the linguistic and idea wise patterns of the poets who belong to remarkably varying and different cultures. The paper as it focuses on the similarities and dissimilarities between the poets’ approaches to their respective poets, will resolve a few issues concerning the problems related to the readers’ approach to literary texts and English and Pashto literature respectively. The main problem this paper attempt to study is to disambiguate issues related to the studying of cross-cultural poetry.

Research Objectives

The main objective of the study is to find out elements which are similar by pattern of thoughts and how a linguistic approach is maintained throughout these poems by the writers. This other main aim is to unlock semantic meanings, as both cultures are different in religion, social customs, norms and values. The study at the end will help us organize semantic meaning and structural linguistic paradigm. By finding either similarity or difference, it will also help us understand how a writer’s varying style, embedding of meaning and other composition of words and thoughts can

locate universal themes in different poems across the border. This study has another objective of how readers will understand poetry and read distinct ethics, customs, and norms which otherwise seem distant and unfamiliar.

Research Questions

1. What are the similarities of thought and theme in the poems: 'Kubla Khan' and 'Zama Mahal'?
2. To what extent aspects of similarities and dissimilarities help readers understand various elements and universal themes and meanings which are shared by Eastern and Western cultures?

Rationale of the Study

A little amount of research has been conducted on the comparison of English and Pashto poems. Many English Literature researchers have conducted their research on Coleridge and his 'Kubla Khan' while only a few Pashto researchers have worked on Ghani Khan and his 'Zama Mahal' (My Palace). Although there are many differences between English and Pashto like cultural, linguistic and geographical yet, there are similarities of the expression of thoughts, themes and emotions described in their subsequent poetries. There is a gap in establishing the relationship between these two poets left in the research which needs to be filled. This research attempts to explore and fill that gap.

Significance of the Study

This study is important in its attempt to explore the universality of human behavior and the similarity of thoughts of the two poets in two different literatures by conducting a comparative study of 'Kubla Khan' and 'Zama Mahal' Firstly, this study will highlight the Pashto Literature to both national and international audience alike and will bring it to the spotlight from the corner. Secondly, it will show that the themes of idealism, supernaturalism and the flight of imagination are found in both Pashto and English literatures. Thirdly, it will motivate other students to contribute more to the field of comparative study by comparing our native local literature with English and other foreign literatures which will provide an opportunity to the Pashto Language to be explored and explained from different perspectives.

Delimitation of the Study

Many works of these English Romantic poets have similarities and dissimilarities which share common themes and other research area in Pashto Literature. Works from these romantic poets, if closely analyzed, seem to share aspects that are related to integrated to this study but the scope of this paper cannot accommodate under its limited space. Therefore, this paper is delimited to the two poems: Kubla Khan and Zama Maham. So, this study should be considered and extrapolated to the general works of the contemporary age.

Literature Review

'Kubla Khan' is one of the main poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. He was born in England in 1772. He is considered to be the pioneer of Romanticism. He is said to have lit the candle of Romantic Movement in 1798 with the publication of his poetical works named Lyrical Ballads. He has paved the way for other Romantic poets. His world famous poetical works include Rime of the ancient mariner, Kubla Khan, Christabel, Dejection; An ode and many other poems. This paper will analyze and focus on his poem 'Kubla Khan'. It is known for its imagination, supernaturalism, spontaneity and the thoughts of escapism. It is an established fact that Coleridge wrote it under the effect of opium. He was in an excited state when he slept but was interrupted by a person who came to speak to him. When he aroused from his sleep he sat down and noted down what he remembered which he claims to be just a fraction of the whole poem. (Newlyn L, 1985) in his introduction to "Coleridge's Imagination" states that "Coleridge's greatest poem of and about imagination must be Kubla Khan. It is a poem about imaginations. The poet has fancied such imaginations that are very interesting to read or listen. By contemplating over this sort of high imaginations one can easily presume about the imaginative power of the poet". Similar thoughts were expressed by (Abbasi 2011) by stating that "Coleridge adds the flavor of imagination to the existing realities to shape the reality of his own mind and the orient".

Elizabeth Barrett Browning versifies Coleridge in his 'A vision of Poets' as;

And visionary Coleridge, who

Did sweep his thoughts as angels do

Their wings with cadence up the blue;

-A vision of poets. (1844).

In his article 'The languages of Kubla Khan', John Beer regards the language of the poem as "the language of myth and symbol". In the similar article he holds the idea that Shakespeare uses many fancy words in his writings, yet I have traced in his works no pattern or cluster of usage that is particularly significant for Kubla Khan. He then himself dares to call it as "The language of genius and sensuousness". Coleridge has used such words in the carving of this great poem that induces a combine effect of excitement and fear on its reader. Coleridge takes the reader to the wonderland in the start and then makes him afraid of the war and magic at the end. It would be hard to find an eighteenth-century poem which ran so closely to the vocabulary of Kubla Khan (Roe N, 2006). No doubt that many words of the Poem like 'sinuous rills', 'Abyssinian maid' and 'a person from Perlock' were very rare to hear at that time which indicates the depth of his knowledge that he had about words. Harold Bloom who is a sterling Professor of the Humanities at the Yale University introduces him as a volatile, dependent and addictive person and calls him a "brilliant ruin" due to his excessive use of opium which ruined his brilliant intellectual life. Ralph Waldo Emerson, the American critic and philosopher, in his book "Literature" (1856) expresses unbridled praise for the poet by saying "with eyes looking before and after to the highest bards and sages, Coleridge

actually rescued English Literature from the accusation that the English no longer recognize the true brilliance in one of their countrymen.” While talking about the exquisiteness of his poem Kubla Khan, George H Calvert (1880) states, “These lines could have been written only by a poet with the finest ear, an internal ear. It implies almost something spectral, super earthly or something uncanny and what an exquisitely rhythm the thought weaves about itself for its poetic incarnation”.

Ghani Khan on the other hand, who is also known as “Lewaney Falsafi” or mad philosopher is one of the most prominent romantic poet of Pashto Language. He was born in 1914 in Charsadda, Pakistan. Beyond a poet, he was a politician, sculptor, researcher and a good painter as well. His first collection of poetry was published in 1956 by the title ‘Da panjrey chaghar or Chirping of the cage, ‘Fanoos’ or Chandelier (1978) and Kuliyaat or collected works in 1985. Dr. Bacha (2011) in his paper has talked about the beautiful and mesmerizing imaginative skills of Ghani Khan in such words “Ghani Khan, by his poetic imaginative wings, flies to the world of ecstasy. He talks of the romantic lands of pleasure, and happiness in palaces, music, beloved, masti (wantonness). But he is also aware of the harsh realities of life. Amidst his adoration of love, beauty, life, and poetry, he is also known to be a Crazy Philosopher”. Ghani Khan has also got a deep hand in supernaturalism just as Coleridge. Professor Tasbihullah (2015) states that making a supernatural material from a natural thing is not the job of a common man because a common man is not Ghani Khan. Ghani Khan was a sculptor. He made things with clay but he also has made some imaginative things which are far more beautiful, strong and everlasting as compared to his physical things. This includes his Palace which he has made from the white sands of the sea and carpeted it with the petals of flower. He has built its walls from the melodies of Rabab and then painted it with the youthful dreams. Once he was working in a sugar mill somewhere in Bengal province of India when he wrote a letter about his marriage to his father-in-law. His father-in-law replied him with a letter in which he was asked to at least build a house for his daughter. Ghani Khan then wrote this poem (Zama Mahal) on a page and sent it to his father-in-law. By reading this he replied him with a letter saying “Ghani, you are flying in the skies. Come down to earth”. And it is said that his father-in-law then allowed him to marry his daughter.

Research Methodology

This paper through Intertextuality will analyze both these state of the art imaginative palaces. Intertextuality; which was first coined by Julia Kristeva in 1966 is a multidisciplinary theory that does not limit itself to the connection of two literary texts, but also presents a large network of artistic expressions and its interconnectedness in a historical and cultural; domain (Zengin, 2016).

This is a comparative study of qualitative nature through intertextual analysis. Albay (2017) in his “Intertextuality in Literature” states that Literature mirrors life. It is not confined to one culture or society and nation but keeps the record of all nations. In the modern technological world, literature reflects the interconnections among cultures, societies, religions and their histories. Thus in literary works and scholars, Intertextuality finds the resemblance and connection between different works of literature.

Every text contains a particular feature. So, analysts use Intertextuality as a tool to analyze different texts together, to look for similar ideals that are dealt by different texts. It allows us to re-interpret texts and ideas or views the values and issues that are explored in different texts. It enables us to textually analyze texts for comparative analysis, (Dang). Thus, keeping in view these aspects of Intertextuality, this study will analyze text for comparative textual analysis.

Along with this, Reader Response Theory is taken as a supportive theory as it draws upon textual analysis. Reader response Theory allows readers to create multiple interpretations of the text as the text has no inherent meaning but depends upon individual interpretations (Mart, 2019).

In addition, thematic analysis has also been applied to compare their themes simultaneously.

The primary source of the data collection for this study is the text of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem, Kubla Khan, a Bloom Classic edition 2009, compiled by Harold Bloom and the text along with its translation of Ghani Khan's poem Zama Mahal from 'The Pilgrim of Beauty' (2014) by Imtiaz Ahmad Sahibzada. Other secondary sources are drawn from the articles and websites, related to the subject of the study.

Analysis and Discussion

Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings that are recollected in tranquility (Wordsworth). Poetry is the language of poets. Only poets can talk in it. It is probably the hard form of expressing one's feelings and ideas. And when imaginations are included in it then it takes the poet as well as its reader to a new world. A world which is beyond the practical world where the buildings are not built of bricks or clay and the floors are not made of ordinary tiles. Such is the power of imagination which can transform the entire world for the poet and the reader.

Now if we talk about the imaginative worlds of the two great romantic poets, we can find a lot of similar things in them. Coleridge designed his dream world in his poem Kubla Khan in 1798 while Ghani Khan who was born more than a century later in 1914, built his empire of imaginations in his poem Zama Mahal probably around 1970s. Despite the time gap of more than a century both have some striking similarities. Ghani Khan was a great admirer of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. He did not have very good opinion about Coleridge's contemporary and companion poet, William Wordsworth while, he was greatly inspired of Coleridge's imaginative poetry (Tasbihullah). Coleridge paved the way for the romantic poetry while Ghani Khan followed his footprints and extended the path to many other breathtaking destinations. In this chapter we will analyze the selected poems i.e Kubla Khan and Zama Mahal (My Palace) simultaneously and will figure out the striking similarities with some differences as well.

The first and foremost similarity in both these poems is the idea of escapism. Escapism is the idea of providing a psychological escape from the depressing and grave realities of life by taking the reader in a fantastical or imaginative situation or world (Merriam Webster). Escapism is a tool used by the poets to divert the mind of the readers from the harsh realities of life and provide an

escape route to them towards a better world. Often times, it is the ideal world that a poet builds in his or her imaginations and it contains all the dream objects that the poet has thought of. In short, it is the utopia or dystopia depending upon the mental level of the poet. In Kubla Khan, Coleridge tired of the criticism of the fellow poets and under the effect of drugs draws a palace with a stately dome of iron passing by the sacred river of Alph along with a fertile garden of 20 miles. He considers himself to be the powerful and great emperor of China, Kublai Khan who has got the power and resources to build a majestic and breathtaking palace for himself as he states;

“In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.”

Lines (1 – 4)

Similarly, Ghani Khan in his Zama Mahal (My Palace) is seeking escapism by building a palace for himself from the white sand of a river. He designs a Palace for himself which is so much fascinating that the world is looking at it like a wonder. Practically it is impossible to build a whole palace with the white sand of river only as it needs bricks, cement and timber etc. to do so but he only needs the white sand to do so.

د سيند د سپينو شگو نه مي جوړ ڪړو يو محل

From the white sands of the river, I made a palace

دي ٽول خرگي جهان ورته حبران حبران ڪتل

The world in great amazement saw, looked on in disbelief

Another similarity that this paper has found in both these two poems is the “Flight of imagination”. Imagination according to Oxford dictionary is “The faculty or action of forming a mental image of new ideas or objects that are not present to the senses or never before wholly perceived in reality”. Both the poets construct palaces for themselves in their imaginations respectively. We can see Coleridge’s height of imagination in his Kubla Khan easily. His imaginative palace is so vast and magical that it has a green garden of more than 10 miles girdled by flowers and trees of sweet smell.

“So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;”

Lines (6 – 10)

There are caves which are measureless to man that leads to a sea which never has seen a ray of sun.

“Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea” (3-4)

On the other hand, if we analyze Ghani Khan’s Zama Mahal (My Palace) poem, we can assume that it is also a poem of imaginations. The objects that he used to have built his palace are all imaginative. For example,

قالين مي پکي خور کړو د سرو پانو د گلاب

And spread in it a carpet, made of petals of the rose
اوچت يي دپوالونه د سازونه د رباب

Its walls were made of melodies, poured forth by Rabab

One can only make a carpet from the petals of the rose as well as build walls of the melodies if the Rabab in one’s imaginations only. Here the flight of imaginations of both the poets touches the highest mark. A common man cannot conceive such high imaginations. It is the rare quality with is God gifted to only people like Coleridge and Ghani Khan.

With a closer look into these two poems, the paper has found another striking similarity of “Supernaturalism” in them. Supernatural is something above the nature. Anything or idea that is impossible to be explained by the arguments of science and that broadly involve things like gods or magic is supernatural (Oxford Dictionary). Coleridge is also known as the poet of supernaturalism. When they were writing Lyrical Ballad, Wordsworth was asked to explore the nature in his verses while Coleridge chose supernaturalism as the subject matter of his poetry (Harold Bloom). Kubla Khan is known for its supernaturalism. We can abundantly see things which we can say are not natural while reading the poem. For instance, starting from the very first line “Xanadu” the place where Kublai Khan orders to build his palace is a mysterious place.

“Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea”.

Lines (3-5)

The river “Alph” can easily be identified as the Greek god of rivers and waterways, Alpheus. This is a fine example of supernaturalism in Kubla Khan. In line 36 he states;

“A sunny pleasure dome with caves of ice!”

Normally the ice gets melt in the presence of sun but it is the supernatural imagination that makes it possible for both to exist simultaneously together. Similarly, the ideas of a “sunless sea”, “caverns measureless to man”, “his flashing eyes, and his floating hair” are also supernatural.

Ghani Khan too has created a great number of verses vigorously bearing the idea of supernaturalism. Now, if we look for the same element of supernaturalism in Ghani Khan’s Zama Mahal (My Palace), we can easily sort them out. For example;

”رنا مي د سپورمي کره د زهرا پستي غزلي

The light of the fair crescent, with the sweet couplets of the Venus”

Ghani Khan interestingly has also referred to Venus, who is a Roman goddess of love, beauty, desire and fertility. These mythologies and its characters are frequently supernatural.

”اوچت يي دپوالونه د سازونه د رباب

Its walls were made of melodies, poured forth by Rabab”

Normally the walls of a building are built with bricks and cement but when one uses the sweet melodies of the tunes of a Rabab to build a wall it is undoubtedly supernatural.

د خاڅکو د شبنم نه مي بسايسته جور کرو امبل

From the dewdrops a necklace I entwined

Likewise, making a necklace from the dew drops is another strong example of supernaturalism.

Personification, which is the attribution of humanistic qualities to non-living objects, is also found in both these poems. When someone probably a writer or poet assign the qualities of living things like talking or chirping to non-living things like a rock or cage, we say that the things are personified. Coleridge has left no stone unturned to make his palace more beautiful and unique. For this purpose, he has sometimes personified things like in line 18 he states

“As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing”

He compares the mighty fountain to heavy breathing “fast thick pants”. This is a quality of human beings to breathe heavily which is assigned to the fountain. Likely, in line 23 he writes;

“And ’mid these dancing rocks at once and ever”

Dancing is a quality of living organism which he has given to the non-living rocks.

This sort of personification is also there in the Ghani Khan’s Zama Mahal (My Palace).

”د ستورو مستي سترگي غلي غلي ريپډلي

The eyes inebriated of the stars, twinkled ever brightly”

This verse tells about the intoxicated eyes of the stars that are blinking slowly and sweetly. Normally, only living organisms on earth have the privilege of having eyes but, a poet like Ghani Khan can give it to stars as well which comes under the umbrella of Personification.

Along with this, Willing Suspension of Disbelief is another aspect of similarity between these two poems. When a person willingly by one’s own choice abandon one’s disbelief or intentionally avoid the critical thinking and logic while examining something unreal or an impossible phenomenon just for the sake of amusement or enjoyment is said to be the Suspension of disbelief (Wikipedia). We can only enjoy the journey to such a mysterious and mesmerizing place only if we see the palace from the Coleridge’s eyes. Coleridge has abandoned his disbelief by establishing a “palace with a pleasure dome” in “Xanadu” along a “sunless sea” with a “sacred river meandering five miles with a mazy motion” near which Kublai Khan heard his “ancestral voices prophesying war” and there is also “an Abyssinian maid who is playing on her dulcimer a song of Mount Abora”.

This Willing suspension of disbelief can also be found in Zama Mahal (My Palace) when he builds a “Palace from the white sands of the river” and “painting its wall from the colorful dreams of the youth”, “decorating it with flowers and making nightingale the gardener” as well as “making a necklace from the dewdrops”. These things can only be felt and enjoyed when one willingly suspends one’s disbelief that all of the described things are impossible.

Apart from the abundance of other such similarities, there are some dissimilarities that are recognizable in Kubla Khan and Zama Mahal. One such dissimilarity is that Coleridge finds his mysterious palace in the far away land of Xanadu while Ghani Khan builds his palace from the sand of his own nearby river. For Coleridge it is difficult to design his palace by himself. For this he assumes the might of the great Mongol Emperor, Kublai Khan.

“In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure dome decree”

On the other hand, Ghani Khan does not need anyone to build a palace for him for he has got the guts and imaginations by the power of which he can build anything he likes.

”د سيند د سپينو شگو نه مي جوړ ڪرو يو محل

From the white sands of the river, I a palace made”

Along with this Kubla Khan is an incomplete poem as claimed by many critics as well as by Coleridge himself. He was compiling these verses in his dream probably under the effect of drugs when according to him “a person from Perlock” entered the room and woke him up due to whom he lost the other part of the poem and thus it remained technically incomplete. But if we closely

observe Zama Mahal (My Palace) we can technically regard it as a complete poem. Its form and theme are coherent while there is a logical connection among the lines. These factors make this poem as a masterpiece of romantic poetry with unique and interesting imagery, and a high deal of supernatural elements.

Conclusion

Comparative literature gives us a broader perspective about the personal as well as the social life of human beings across linguistic, social, national, cultural, territorial and time boundaries. It is inclusive in nature and has the knowledge of more than one text.

Although, it is hard to compare two different pieces of literature that are emerged in different eras of time. Every poet is under the effect of his society. Similar is the case with Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Abdul Ghani Khan. There is a big difference of social and cultural norms in the societies in which they were living but it is the basic way of thinking and feeling of humans that make them similar to each other. We have seen it by studying different literatures that all the humans across the boundaries have produced. This study has explored the similarities and dissimilarities in their thought and themes, with the comparative analysis of their representative poems Kubla Khan and Zama Mahal (My Palace). Ghani Khan's imaginative palace looks more fascinating and composite as compared to the palace of Coleridge but he was born almost a century later to him. He has also visited England and studies Coleridge. He was also highly inspired of him as stated by Professor Tasbihullah. We can see the effects of Coleridge on Ghani Khan abundantly in his poetry of which his poem Zama Mahal is a fine example. This study is a primary step to bring the relevance and importance of Pashto Literature into attention by comparing a Pashto poem of Ghani Khan with a poem of Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Thus, it is significant for other researchers to carry out studies on their comparison from other perspective as well.

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