

An analytical study on the concept of Romanticism in Shakespeare's "As You Like It".

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Abstract :

Romanticism is a movement or style of art in literature, has also led to the writers and poets to create masterpieces having romantic elements, as well as a time period that was very focused on passion and love. Our study to examines the concept or the theory approach to romanticism in William Shakespeare's comedy "As You Like It". There are several features of the play which justify the concept of it as romanticism, like influence of nature, interest to the rustic or pastoral life, celebration of simple life, use of common subjects, first sight love, imaginations, individuality or personal freedom etc. In this play we can see the first sight love between Orlando and Rosalind, Celia and Oliver and also the romantic relation of Celia and Rosalind, there are other romantic relation between the characters like, Touchstone and Audrey, Silvius and Phebe in this play. The major theme of this play is love and marriage. At the end of the play all lovers are transformed into married couples. The romantic elements in this kind of play transport us to a new world which is more pleasing than the actual world in which we live, and the comic elements make us laugh and forget our cares and anxieties.

Keywords : romanticism, love, nature, romance, romantic, comedy

❖ Introduction

William Shakespeare was born on 23rd April 1564 in startford upon Avon. He was an English poet , playwright and actor , widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's greatest dramatist. He is an often called England's national poet and the " Bard of Avon ". Shakespeare wrote 37 plays including great tragedies Hamlet , Kinglear , Macbeth and Othello ,comedies like As You Like It ,The Tempest , A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Comedy Of Errors etc and many histories . He also wrote 154 sonnets and two long narrative poems Venus and Adonis and Lucrece . He died on 23rd April 1616.

❖ What is Romanticism ?

Romanticism is a movement or style of art in literature , has also led the writers and poets to create masterpieces having romantic elements .Romanticism as theme celebrates freedom and breaking conventional rules. Romanticism is also considered as active power with functions to present our imagination. Some of the main features of romantic literature include a focus on the writer or narrator's emotions and inner world ; celebration of nature beauty and imagination ; rejection of industrialization, organized religion, rationalism and social convention ; idealization of women ' children or rural life ; inclusion of supernatural or mythological elements ; interest in the past ; frequent use of personification ; experimental use of language and verse forms , and emphasis on individual experience of the "sublime".

❖ Characteristics of the romanticism or romantic literature :

- Individuality , democracy and personal freedom
- Spiritual and supernatural elements
- Nature as a teacher
- Interest in past history, ancient Greek and roman elements
- Celebration of the simple life

- Interest in the rustic and pastoral life
- Interest in folk tradition
- Use of common language
- Use of common subjects
- One sided or opinionated
- Idealized women
- Frequent use of personification
- Examinations of the poet's inner feelings

❖ Difference between romance and romanticism :

It is pretty hard to explain the difference between romance and romanticism but as simply as possible,

“romance is what happens when two things or people have an attraction or deep relationship of some sort.”

While “romanticism is a style of art in literature , as well as a time period that was very focused on passion and love”.

❖ Romanticism in As You Like It :

As You Like It is one the best romantic comedies of William Shakespeare. It is believed to have been written in 1599 and first published in first Folio , 1623. In a romantic comedy, romantic and comic elements are mingled. The romantic elements delight and thrill us while the comic elements make us laugh and forget our anxieties. Emotions, imaginations and fancy are common phenomenon of romantic comedy. As You Like It keeps us laughing most of the time, despite some sad incidents in it. The laughter is aroused in us by Rosalind , Celia , by Touchstone , by Jaques.

There are some criteria of romantic comedy. They are first sight love , influence if nature , supernatural elements , role of forest , the romantic setting, happy ending and so on. In As You Like It ,we see the first sight love between Rosalind and Orlando. The central theme of this play is love and marriage. This is the youthful love of Rosalind and Orlando. In romantic play nature plays a vital role. Nature dominates the human life. In As You Like It we can see the scene of forest of Arden. Gradually all the characters come to the forest . Romantic comedy starts with love. There is a obstacle in the middle and a happy ending. According to Shakespeare ,the course of true lover never did run smooth. This disguised shape of Rosalind and Celia is humorous and comical. In romantic comedy we see a blend of romantic and comic elements . AS You Like It fulfilment main criteria of romanticism.

❖ Love at first sight :

Love is the central theme of As You Like It , like other romantic comedies of Shakespeare.

“Whoever loved that not at first sight ?”

In this play ,we can see ,there are so many characters who fall in love at first sight. Orlando falls in love of Rosalind at the wrestling match. The love between Celia and Oliver is also comic and first sight love. There is also described first sight love between two female characters Ganymede and Phebe. Rosalind disguised as Ganymede. Thus, we can see the blend of comic and romantic scenes by these characters in this play. Thus the first sight love action is carried towards romanticism .

❖ Influence of nature :

As You Like It is considered as a pastoral comedy. In this play we can see ,the influence of nature in the forest of Arden. In the forest of Arden Duke senior and his followers are living in the lap of nature. The description of shepherds and goat -herd in this forest is directly suggested the influence of natural elements. Thus naturalism is one of the essential feature of romanticism.

❖ Significance of the songs :

The play *As You Like It* has more songs than any other play written by Shakespeare. Many of them are sung by Amiens, who is not an anonymous singing boy brought in for the sole purpose of singing the songs, as some critics would want us to believe. He is a real person in the play. *As You Like It* is a play which requires the need to create a mood of time being passed and of life being lived carelessly. In the song "Under the greenwood tree", Amiens describes the pleasures of simple rustic life. He suggests life in the open and in sunshine for anyone who wants to escape from the worries of existence :

"Under the greenwood tree
Who loves to live with me,
And turns his mercy note
Unto the sweet birds throat,
come hither, come hither, come hither.
Here shall he see
No enemy
But winter and rough weather " .

This opinion has already been stated by Duke senior and is repeated in the next song also sung by Amiens.

"Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude".

The songs are also there in such abundance because they add to the romantic comedy. Since "*As You Like It*" is happiest comedy, the surfeit of songs is fully justified. It is add to the gladness, fun and the romantic rhythm of the play. It is also add to the quaintness of the atmosphere of the forest of Arden. The rustics dance at the first available opportunity and even the refined characters lose their inhibitions in the forest of Arden. They dance with gay abandon to the various songs in the play.

❖ Violation of three unities :

In the classical drama, there was existed three unities time, place and action, and these three unities controlled the writing of drama. The entire story of the play had to be confined to a single day, the scene of the entire play remained the same place and the plot was to be one and no subplots or minor episodes were permitted. Romantic comedies flouted this rule as well. This ancient classical dramatist unities are not observed by romantic dramatist. Shakespeare's comedies are romantic in the sense that he does not follow the classical rules of comedy writing. "*As You Like It*" is also free from the classical rules regarding time, place and action. Its action is not limited to one single day but it spread over many years, the sense of action shifts partly from the court to the forest, again besides the main action of the love story of Rosalind and Orlando. There are also other love stories. This gives variety and interest to the play.

❖ Humour :

" There are only three industries in Shakespeare's comedy, loving, singing and laughing".

Besides loving and singing there is a lot of laughing in *As You Like It*. The wit of Rosalind, the foolery of Touchstone, the fanciful melancholy of Jaques, the commonsense of Celia, the mock courtship of Orlando and Rosalind provide a rich feast of comedy.

❖ True Love Between Orlando and Rosalind :

True love pervades the souls of Orlando and Rosalind. The very presence of Rosalind radiates soul- enkindling light, and its interpenetrating rays have thrilled the encircling gloom of Orlando's heart.

In act 1, they meet when Orlando is in a wrestling match against a much bigger opponent and wins. Rosalind is infatuated and speaks to him. He is struck with love at first sight as well. Then Rosalind is banished to the forest of Arden along with her father. Instead of joining the duke, she dresses as a boy, and the fool Touchstone, goes in to the forest and lives at a Shepherd's home. Orlando and Rosalind meet under such strange circumstances that their relationship could not really be called love, but more a serious infatuation. She engages him in conversation while she is dressed as the boy Ganymede, telling Orlando how ought to court Rosalind and offering to pretend to be her. It is never stated outright that he knows who she is, but there are hints that he does and is playing along. Their love through it may develop and mature, is puppy love; they are not serious. They are playing and getting to know each other. It is difficult to say this kind of love will last after they are back in the real world, but, as in Shakespeare comedies, they marry at the end of the play.

❖ The Love Of Oliver And Celia :

Celia's sudden fancy for Oliver, like Rosalind's for Orlando also being in pity: she has seen his distress and self-reproach his past misdeeds. And pity, as a step towards love. Oliver and Celia also fall in love at first sight. Through Celia's love for Oliver is also romantic, its distinctly on a lower plan. It has not the colour, the poetry, romance that we find in the love of Orlando and Rosalind.

There are other romantic relations between the characters like ... Touchstone and Audrey, Silvius and Phebe in this play.

❖ Romantic Relation Of Celia And Rosalind :

There is also something romantic in the relationship between Celia and Rosalind. The bond between them is stronger and more fascinating than it can be between the two sisters. Celia can not stay without Rosalind and Rosalind finds incomplete without her. The two cousins sit and prattle, rail at gods and goddess, makes plans to run away in disguise, fall in love at first sight, these all things are comic and romantic. Thus, this relation between the two sisters deals with romance.

❖ Other Romantic Elements :

At the end of the play, the romantic love touches the eternity when Orlando deeply in love proclaims to love Rosalind 'forever' and a day more thus the romance continues to strike throughout the play.

❖ Happy Ending Of The Play :

Happy resolution at the end of the play which directly suggests 'AS YOU LIKE IT' as a romantic comedy. At the end of the play, all lovers are transformed into married couples. Orlando married Rosalind, Celia married Oliver, Phebe married Silvius and at the last fool Touchstone married

Audrey. Thus , we can see that happy ending of a play is an essential feature of Romantic comedy or romanticism.

❖ Conclusion

As a part of conclusion we can say undoubtedly As You Like It is a romantic comedy. We can find out the features of romanticism in this play like nature as a teacher, interest in the rustic or pastoral life, celebration of simple life ,use of common subjects, first sight love, imaginations, individuality or personal freedom etc. In this entire play we can see or feel the comic as well as romantic elements which are presented by different kind of characters of the play. Thus the very fact is that the theme of the play is a reaction against urban life makes it comedy as well as a romance.

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