

John Keats and Shiv Kumar Batalvi: A Hair-Thickness Difference in Their Poetic Thoughts

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ABSTRACT

Keats's poetry was more sensuous than Batalvi's. Batalvi longed for an early 'Death', though he would not want to die an 'Easy Death' while Keats was passionate about life and wanted to live more, though sadly, it was not to be. His death was so painful that his last sentence was "Thank God, it has come". Keats did talk philosophically both about the mortal and the immortal deaths, but wished an easy death for himself; perhaps he had already consumed his quota of pains and miseries from the then incurable disease tuberculosis. Keats was a poet of his age, his own social, cultural, and medical milieu. He was also, more than ever, perhaps, a poet of ours, a poet of frustration, fear, and even of hope, but Batalvi was hell-bent on pain and frustration and always waiting for death; forget about hope. Yes, Keats stands an inch taller than Batalvi as he went through dreadful agonies with threatening symptoms of the disease, and it looked as if the whole universe had conspired to give him pains. However, Keats had borne it with such fortitude and determination as if he had nothing to do with the pain. If Keats had more share of pain in life, Batalvi kept sorrows alive and took them to the last limit in his heart. Batalvi sent a cordial invitation to death, which loved him and kissed him passionately.

KEYWORDS: Sant Singh Sekhon, Fanny Brawne Luna, Ode to Nightingale, Romanticism.

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WHY THIS STUDY?

Their poetry shares many similarities in terms of poetic style, technique, and thematic concerns, but they differ in the intensity of their feelings and thoughts. The discussion of this hair-thickness difference is a part of this study.

INTRODUCTION

Punjabi laureate, Sant Singh Sekhon, has described Shiv Kumar Batalvi as the 'John Keats of Punjab', as many of their poetic thoughts resonate in a large number of stanzas written in different poems. Both speak of death, agony, pain, sorrow, and despair in human lives, a strong relationship between love, beauty, which is transient; and truth. Both faced sufferings, the intense pains, drowning sorrows, miserable failures in their love-lives, and, above all, both did not enjoy long lives, with Batalvi dying at 36 and Keats breathing his last in his twenty-sixth year of age.

To appreciate their poetry, the reader may kindly keep in mind that the two poets belong to different societies and cultures, lived in different periods and countries, with Keats (1795-1821) born in the eighteenth century and Batalvi (1936-1973) lived in the twentieth century. Again, let the reader appreciate that their poetry shares many similarities in terms of poetic style, technique, and thematic concerns, but they differ in the intensity of their feelings and thoughts.

Keats' poetry is one of the most studied and finds a large space in English literature, which runs almost parallel to Wordsworth, Shelly, and Byron. He rubs his shoulders with these three great poets of the First and the Second Period of Romanticism, where, except for Wordsworth, the other three were contemporaries in the Second Period of Romanticism of English Literature.

Much more research has been done on Keats' poetry than on Batalvi's, obviously due to the language barrier. Any honest comparison needs an in-depth study of parallels and variances between the two genius poets. No doubt, a few studies have been made which talk only an insight in the parallelism in poetic thoughts of Keats with Batalvi; perhaps after getting from getting a cue, the most befitting one, 'Birrah Da Sultan' or "Shehzada-e-Dard" in Punjabi which translates to "Prince of Lovers" or "Prince of Pain" or "Prince of Suffering" for Batalvi from none other than Ms. Amrita Pritam, a renowned poetess of Punjab who is known as a pioneer in conveying the wiles of pains of Punjabis during the time of Indian Partition of India (1947) in her masterpiece poem entitled "Ajj Akhan Waris Shaw Nu (Today I invoke Waris Shah)". These three words have their own significance as they, by and large, summarize Batalvi's poetry [1].

But if one reads between the lines of some of the couplets of Keats and Batalvi, one will see some fine, serene, but subtle differences in the intensities of feeling and passion of the two poets.

Starting as an escapist, Batalvi's poetry showed a continuous progression from the early pangs of 'Birrah' (Separation from loved ones) to increasingly complex emotions and to different reactions to his 'Peeran Da Paraga' (A Handful of Pains, 1960), to, 'Mein Te Mein' (Me and Myself, 1970). In between, he published Luna, Lajwanti (Touch Me Not; 1961), 'Atte Dian Chirian' (The Sparrows of Flour, 1962), 'Menu Vida Karo' (Bide Me Farewell, 1963).

Luna (1965), considered a cornerstone of Punjabi literature, a dramatic poem of epic dimensions where he gave it a shape to a

“new short-play to centuries –old ‘Kissa’ of Puran Bhagat” which won him the ‘Sahit Academy Award’[2] to become the youngest writer of that time (1967) to bag this honors, he ‘re-interprets’ the most popular legend of ‘Puran’ by making Luna and not Puran, as the moral center of the poem, making a severe indictment of a male-centered Indian society based on the subjugation of women by men.[3,4]

Of course, he wrote more poems on love, beauty, and nature. In many of such poems, he expresses his desire to die, of sorrow, of separation, and the feeling of pain, hinting at his unfinished love story. Though no reader of Shiv would deny that the ‘longing and pain’ is intense in his poems, Batalvi never admitted it.

Many of the over 220 poems of Batalvi were published after he had left this mortal world. Below are some collections of Batalvi’s poems published after his death: ‘Me and Me’, ‘Prayer’, ‘Flowers of Albizia Lebec’, ‘Aching Sighs’, ‘Sorrow’, ‘Farewell’, ‘Sultan of Birrah(Separation)’, ‘Choicest Poems of Batalvi by Amrita Pritam’, and ‘A complete Set of Batalvi’s Poems’; all being lyrical.

In a brief span of 36 years (23 July 1936- 6 May 1973), life continued to play a strange truant with him.

John Keats, the eldest among the four siblings of Thomson Keats, a stable keeper, and Francis Jennings, was born on 31 December 1795 at Moorgate, London, England. After Keats’s father died, his mother remarried soon thereafter, leaving the four kids to be brought up by their grandmother. He befriended Charles Cowden Clarke, a son of his headmaster, who remained his pal and a mentor throughout his life.

Though he was awarded the duly certified license to practice as a medical assistant in December 1916, he decided to become a poet. In 1816, Keats published two poems, both as Sonnets, entitled ‘O Solitude and ‘On First Looking into Chapman’s Home’. In 1817, he published his first Poetic Volume entitled: ‘Poems’, including one of his famous poems: ‘Sleep and Poetry’, which, sadly, turned out to be a ‘critical failure’. In 1918, he published ‘The Three Young Poets’: Shelley, Reynolds, and Keats.

Keats was attracted to ‘Isabella Jones’(1817), who inspired Keats and suggested some themes, enabling him to write three classic poems: ‘Eve of St Agnes’, ‘The Eve of St Mark’, and ‘Bright Star.’

In November 1818, Keats met Ms. Frances Fanny Brawne and fell madly in love with her, and all his desires remained concentrated on her till his death, though the darkness, disease, and depression had surrounded him.

Frustrated, Keats wrote his master -piece ‘La Belle Dame sans Merci’, which reflects his failure in love; though this poem made Keats immortal.

Thereafter, he wrote one of his important poems: ‘Endymion’ and described it as a ‘trial of my powers of imagination’ [5] and dedicated it to Thomas Chatterton. It is tragic that the ‘Endymion’ was severely criticized, especially by John Wilson Croker in a literary magazine, ‘The Quarterly Review’, while John Gibson Lockhart of ‘The Blackwood’s Magazine’ [6] described it as “imperturbable driveling idiocy”. Not stopping here, Lockhart coined the term Cockney School, [6] a derogatory remark for the three poets: Hunt, Hazlitt, and Keats, as none among them was highly educated, nor did they have any academic degree, and were also not elitists.

While nursing his younger brother Tom, who was already suffering from tuberculosis, he also got afflicted with this disease. His doctor advised him to move to a place with a warm climate. He shifted to a relatively warmer place, Rome (Italy), on the advice of his doctor and started living with his friend Joseph Severn, who dutifully nursed him. But alas! John Keats also fell victim to his family disease, tuberculosis, and tragically died on 23 February 1821 in the lap of his dear friend Severn. He was buried in a ‘Protestant Cemetery in Rome’ where his epitaph was engraved: “Here lies one whose name is writ in water”- 23 February 1821.

A product of the second generation of Romanticism-the period he shared with the ‘Literary Greats of the calibre of Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron, he had four years of a productive literary period, as he continued to suffer from tuberculosis and died at 26th. Yet, he is counted among the ‘Greats’ of ‘the Romantic Poets’, rubbing his shoulders with all-time Greats, Romantic Poet William Wordsworth of the ‘First Period with all-time Greats Romantic Poet William Wordsworth of the ‘First Period of Romanticism’, and ‘P.B. Shelly’, his friend and contemporary, and Lord Byron,

Keats is also known for his letters, notes, and chapters which he wrote to his friends, contemporaries, brother, and a sister. [7] These letters were highly appreciated by one and all of his friends and contemporaries for the richness of their literary content.[8]

Keats’s recognition as a sensory poet rose rapidly after his death.[9]By the end of the century, he was placed on the Canon of English Literature, [10] strongly influencing many writers; he was mentioned in the Encyclopedia Britannica of 1888, and one of his Odes was selected as ‘one of the final masterpieces’. His Ode on the ‘Nightingale’, ‘Ode on Grecian Urn’, and the Sonnet ‘Sleep and Poetry’ also found a mention. [11-12] ‘To Autumn’, composed by Keats in 1819, called ‘the most perfect ode’, is the most highly rated poem in the English Language written by the poet.[13,14]

Seven weeks after the funeral of Keats, the Great P.B. Shelley had memorialized Keats in his poem ‘Adonis’s despairing elegy’, stating that Keats’s early death was a personal and public tragedy: ‘The loveliest and the last bloom, whose petals nipped before they blew, died on the promise of fruit’.[15,16]

He became famous for his poetry as an important figure of English Literature only after his death and is considered a 'great revealing poet of his time, in some ways, many-sided.

His poetry, consisting of 54 poem, is a combination of sensuous love, passion, lyricism, beauty in varied charms, benison nature, his longing for death which brought agony, melancholy, sorrow, fear and despair, yet is always aesthetic, philosophical and humanitarian which talks about morality, the mutability of life and the pleasure with beauty being synonymous with Truth and Love; nonetheless, is temporary and transient. He also talked about poetry itself.

His poems are unique, which appeal to our five senses: eyes, ears, touch, smell, and taste. Like all romantic poets, Keats, though an escapist, later became a realist. But the cult of love and beauty transfigured everything into beauty that he would touch with the magic hand of choice. His love-drenched, sensuous poetry continues to ring the love-cords of young lovers of the last three centuries.

DISSUSION

There are also some very fine, i.e., 'skin-thick' differences between the thoughts exhibited in the poetry of Keats and Batalvi

Not only is the poetry of Keats more sensuous than that of Batalvi's, but he conveys it more boldly and in a louder voice.

Keats could afford to have more sensuous content in his poetry as he would speak to the well-read readers of the elite, educated, liberal, and emancipated English Society. Contrarily, Batalvi's readership was among the semi-literate ruralists and even educated, but not so liberal urbanites. The following two stanzas, one from Keats and the other from Batalvi, though conveying the same thought of sensuousness, are cited below to prove this point.

The sensuousness in the poetry of Keats was more than that in Batalvi's. Keats could afford to have more sensuousness in his poetry as he is 'speaking' to the well-read readers of the elite, educated, liberal, and emancipated English Society. Contrarily, Batalvi's readership consisted of the 'semi-literate ruralists, no doubt educated, but not so liberal urbanites. The following two stanzas, one from Keats and the other from Batalvi, though conveying a thought of sensuousness, are cited below to prove this point.

*"I made a garland of flowers for head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
'She looked at me as if she loved me,
And made a sweet moan"*

Keats: La Belle Dame sans Mercy (Stanza-II)

*"A bed of love,
I lay for him under moonlight.
A sheet of his body was stained,
That very instant when he laid his feet over it!
I was enamored!"*

Batalvi: Hawk or Skikra (Stanza-III)

Please look into two lines; one each from the two poets:

Made a sweet moan

&

A sheet of his body was stained.

Each line indicates that the couple is making love, but how subtly Batalvi conveys this relationship is a treat to read, as he had to tread carefully while speaking to a conservative Punjabi society, indicating that he had a wide variety of words in his dictionary! But Keats would not bother and dare- devilishly uses the word 'moan' to an emancipated English Society.

John Keats was passionate about life and wanted to live a longer life. On the other hand, Batalvi was hell-bent on dying young and would never want to be born as a man. He sent a cordial invitation to death. Death also loved him and kissed him passionately.

Just have a feel of Keats' mind as follows:

Keats would frequently write it in his letters to his lady-love (when he was convalescing from tuberculous in Rome) about his spending the rest of his life with her e. g .see what he had written to his beloved Ms. Fanny Brawne (who was living in England) in one of his letters from Rome just two months before his death to her:

"I wish that you (his beloved) could invent some means to make me all happy--. Every hour, I am more and more concentrated in you- -, the fact is I cannot leave you and shall never taste one minute's content until it pleases chances to let me live with you for good"(Refer to Keats's letter to Ms. Fanny Brawne, his lady-love on 31 August 1820 from Rome)

Tragically, it was not to be because of the suffering from two lung hemorrhages. His death was so painful that his last sentence was "Thank God, it has come".

Below, one finds another stanza conveying how Batalvi is giving a cordial invitation to death

*"O' Death, please take me along,
Why do you go back alone in despair?
I will not let you return empty-handed,
As you came to my door and had asked for a Favour,"*

Batalvi: Flood of Tears (Stanza -Last)

One may find still another stanza, each from Batalvi and Keats, conveying the same thought:

*"How much life has passed and how much is left;
This is what I keep counting".*

Batalvi: Your Youthfulness Has Consumed Me (Stanza-II)

Batalvi had a deep attachment to death. As long as he lived, he kept on beating death. In these two lines, he is seen saying the same thing that he does not know when death will come to him. The pain of failure in love made him the leading poet of Punjabi, but it took away his youth and life and gave his family a never-ending pain. It is also strange that God made a poet!

Look, how Keats had an evasive and dithering habit regarding death as glance:

Apart from being a poet, Keats wrote letters to his friends, contemporary poets, as well as to his brother and his sister. These letters are known for their literary content and originality. This philosophical line was written by Keats to his friend Charles Brown in England while Keats was staying in Rome (Italy) with another friend, Severn, during his convalescence from Tuberculosis. The above line is included in one of the paragraphs of a letter by Keats on 30 November 1820, just over two and a half months before his death on 23 February 1821. The paragraph goes, 'I have a habitual feeling of my real life having passed, and I am leading a posthumous existence. God knows how it would have been - but it appeared to me - however, I will speak on that- -.' (From Keats's letter to his friend Charles Brown (30 November 1820))

But no one could deter Batalvi from his firm belief that death is welcome over this wretched life. So much so, Batalvi is not ready to blame the death. He says that death should not be blamed; rather, one should blame the birth, i.e., if there were no death, there would have been 'No Death'.

Just have a glance at his following couplet:

*"Who is to blame for the death?
It is the birth that dooms a man"*

Batalvi: My Dear Friend (Stanza-IV)

And the reader finds no change in Keats's desire to live and enjoy life with his Ladylove

He frequently wrote it in his letters to his Ladylove (while convalescing from tuberculosis in Rome) about spending the rest of his life with her. Just see what he wrote to his beloved Ms. Fanny Brawne, living in England, in one of his letters just two months before his death to her: "That I wish that you (his beloved) could invent some means to make me all happy--. Every hour, I am more and more concentrated in you- -, the fact is I cannot leave you and shall never taste one minute's content until it pleases chances to let me live with you for good- --" *"Tragically, it was not to be because he suffered from two lung hemorrhages. His death was so painful that his last sentence was "Thank God, it has come". [Refer to Keats' letter to his Ladylove, Ms. Fanny Browne (31 August 1820, Rome)]*

Conversely, as already stated, Batalvi sent a cordial invitation to death. Death also loved him and kissed him passionately. He is all out in Favour of early 'Death' and argues that it should befall sooner as it leads to more enjoyment by becoming either a flower or a star. He will not stop here and tempt you to die early so that his body may acquire more and more forms sooner and sooner. Please find the following two stanzas, with the same thought.

In another Stanza, the poet symbolically begs the woman sitting on the furnace to free me sooner, as he has only a handful of grains, i.e., will not take much time to be roasted, implying he is in a hurry to meet his death.

*"I have a small amount
Please finish mine first
But roast them well
And do not leave them half done on any account
Accept my plea to end the fight
Roast my pains in your pan"*

Batalvi: A Handful of Pains (Stanza-VI)

But this tug of war between the thoughts of the two poets continues as follows

*"Can death be sleep, when life is but a dream?
And scenes of bliss pass a phantom by?
The transient pleasures as a vision seem,
And yet we think the greatest pain is to die".*

Keats: 'On death' (Stanza-I)

Look how realistic Keats becomes here. But it is only an ad hoc change, though it looks as if reality does dawn upon Keats as follows:

This two-stanza poem was written by Keats to console his brother Tom and prepare him for the painful idea of death, when Keats had been taking care of his ailing brother during his convalescence period of tuberculosis. (Tom, John Keats, as well as their mother, died of Tuberculosis).

Keats asks whether death could be compared to sleep, and life to a dream. In idealism, the idea of death is not the end of life but

is simply an eternal sleepiness, and happening to us is nothing but scenes of a dream, sometimes which don't last forever. Happiness is a ghost that comes to a man for some time and disappears without being seen permanently. The poet asks ironically why human beings think that the biggest pain is to die. The poet wants to convey to humans that this is not the case because we rest in peace after death. So dying should not be considered painful at all.

Coming back to another of the stanzas, one from each poet, there are no meeting points in their thoughts:

*"Bid me goodbye, Lord
Bid me goodbye.
Give me warm tears,
Lay separation upon my palm,
And bid me goodbye". Batalvi: Bid Me Goodbye (Stanza-I)*
*'And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
Bidding adieu, and aching Pleasure nigh'*

Keats: Ode to Melancholy (Stanza- III)

Joy is always leaving, and happiness is turning into sadness.

In conclusion, Batalvi is sorrowful to the extent of leaving this world, begging for death from the Almighty; perhaps because his Ladylove has dejected him.

Keats, no doubt, is also sad and exclaims in a mood not that 'mean-spirited' that happiness (pleasure) is transient, but sadness would always stick to humans; certainly not talking of leaving the world.

A little would Batalvi bother whether it was an easy death or came with a pain, he would walk along the death without doing any queries as given below:

On the contrary, Keats talks philosophically about the mortal and the immortal deaths, yet he wants an easy death for himself; perhaps he had already undergone a lot of pains from the then incurable disease tuberculosis, i.e., Keats had already consumed his quota of pains and miseries. The following two Stanzas convey different extents of pain in their feelings as follows: Find a couplet, each from Batalvi and Keats; the former being more than ready to embrace death in his youth, but Keats is again dithering.

*"I am already late
The shadows are lengthening"*

Batalvi: A Handful of Pains (Stanza- I& III)

The poet is so sick of life that he exclaims out of despair that he can't wait for more, as he is already late. He compares himself to a tree whose shadow lengthens as the evening falls, implying that he has already consumed his life, i.e., that he has lived more than he should have and thus is already late. Pray that death befalls him.

"To cease upon the midnight with no pain",

Keats: Ode to Nightingale (Stanza-IV)

Note that Keats wants no more pain, as if he has already consumed his quota of pain, but

Batalvi is ready to bear any extent of pain

*"I will pay you with my tears
Roast my store of pains"*

Batalvi: A Handful of Pains (Stanza-I)

Please find another couplet, each from Batalvi and Keats, which lends support to their forewritten feelings:

*"Only a few are fated
To shoulder such an extent of pain"*

Batalvi: This Song of Mine (Stanza-IV)

Contrarily, Keats defines two types of death. He, out of his indecisiveness, talks about the immortal, the eternal, and an easier one, as he exclaimed in the following stanzas:

*"My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk"*

Keats: Ode to Nightingale (Stanza-I: 1-2 lines)

Or

*"Emptied some dull opiate into the drains
One minute passed, and Lethe-wards had sun"*

Keats: Ode to Nightingale (Stanza-I: 3-4 lines)

My heart feels pain, and my body feels numb, which makes me tired. I feel as if I have drunk an extract of some poisonous hemlock plant, or have just taken sleep-inducing opium, or fallen into the water of the river Lethe, flowing in the mythological Greek World, where one forgets everything.

He carries on and on:

*"That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees
In some melodious plot
Of beech-wood green, and shadows numberless,*

*Singest of summer in full-throated ease
That I die happily while singing"*

Keats: Ode to Nightingale (Stanza-I)

That I die the way that I would not know that death has come to me.

The other way is the mortal one, as we, the human experience, and is described in the following stanza:

*"Here where men sit and hear each other groan,
Where the palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and specter-thin, and dies"*

Keats: Ode to Nightingale (Stanza-III)

In this type of death, the persons see one another crying and groaning. Hair from their heads is lost, and the remaining few would turn grey. They are no longer young, but have turned pale and acquired a thin, bony structure. Keats has a liking for the previous

*"I have been half in love with easeful Death
It means that I want to die an easy death with no pain".*

Keats: Ode to Nightingale (Stanza-VI)

Keats continues:

Just have a feel of the innermost feelings of Keats: 'He wants to breathe his last peacefully while experiencing no pain and no feelings of death.

Keats's feelings regarding the relationship between death and pain are conveyed in one of his final letters from Rome during his convalescence from tuberculosis, to his friend Charles Armitage Brown, as follows:

"I used to wish for death every day and night to deliver me of these pains. But then I dropped this idea of dying away, for death would destroy even those pains which are better than nothing". [Refer to: **Keats's final letter to friend Charles Armitage Brown from Rome (Undated)**]

Keats was a poet of his age, his own social, cultural, and medical milieu. And yet, on the bicentenary of his death, he's also – more than ever, perhaps – a poet of ours -A poet of lockdown, frustration, disappointment, fears ... and even hope as explained below:

Considering pain, Keats stands an inch taller than Batalvi. He went through dreadful agonies with increasingly serious symptoms of tuberculosis. Added to it was his duality regarding marrying his Ladylove. Though the two remained engaged to each other and would correspond with each other frequently, be it when both would live in England or Keats was convalescing in Rome, they could not get married because of the serious medical issues and financial contingencies, and death continued to stare him down till his death. Above all, Keats was not a recognized poet during his lifetime. It looked as if everyone in the word has conspired to give him pain, which he had borne with such fortitude and determination as if he had nothing to do with pain at all.

*"O bright-eyed Hope, my morbid fancy cheer;
Let me awhile thy sweetest comforts borrow:
Thy heaven-born radiance around me shed,
And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head!"*

Keats: "To Hope" (Stanza- Last)

*"Oh! All the lips that snag and blench with pain!
Eternal loneliness in search of love!
I know their secret, taste their hidden tears,
And, all of them, to each one stretch my arms"*

(Keats's letter to Ms. Fanny Brawne, December 1820, Rome)

The reader may feel the magnanimity of Keats' heart, though himself withering in pain, he stretches his arms out of sympathy towards those who feel lonely and are searching for love. He, very well, understands their miserable condition.

Batalvi, on the other hand, was hell-bent on suffering pain and frustration and would always wait for death, and never talked of hope.

On the other hand, one may find below a stanza by Batalvi who would prefer to distribute pain rather than some pleasure, solace, and hope, even if someone brings happiness to his life in the form of spring.

*"If you stir spring into my life,
I will become a butterfly.
The pollen of separation is more precious than wisdom,
I will distribute from door to door."*

Batalvi: Please Speak (Stanza-V)

Keats wants to be reborn as a man, but Batalvi would wish to be reborn as a flower or a star.

Please read Keats's mind from the following, which he had written to his friend:

He wonders!

"Is there another life? — - .

He replies, "There must be because we can't be created for this sort of suffering".

"Are we born for this type of wretched pain"?"

One: Keats answers with an Emphatic No. Secondly, he is sure that there must be another life because the Lord, the Merciful, is a Great Leveler and has to undo the injustice done to him during this life, and would grant him another life.[From: Keats's final

letter to friend Charles Armitage Brown from Rome (Undated)]

Now, find below a stanza where Batalvi wants to be reborn either as a flower or a star in the sky:

*“The one who dies young
Becomes a star or a flower
Only lovers die young
Or someone lucky one!”*

Batalvi: I Will Die in My Youth (Stanza-II)

Batalvi continues with the same feelings in the next stanza of the same poem as follows:

*“Day in somebody
To bloom as a flower
To rise as a star
If we die young “*

Keats went through dreadful agonies with increasingly serious symptoms of tuberculosis, and it looked as if the whole cosmos had conspired to give him pain. He had borne it with such fortitude and determination as if he had nothing to do with the pain. If Keats had a larger share of pain in life, Batalvi had kept sorrows alive in his heart and had taken it to its last limit. And the reader may well feel the limit of Batalvi's sorrow as discussed below:

Undoubtedly, pains due to tuberculosis, then considered to be incurable disease, aggravated by his lovelornness from his girl - friend Ms. Fanny, struck Keats, a young man of just 25 years of age wrote the following heart-piercing lines, exhibiting how intensely he was in love with his girlfriend, begging the Lord to let him live with my girl just for three days

“I almost wish we were butterflies and lived but three summer days-three such days with you, I could fill with more delight than fifty common years could ever attain”. Sadly, he died very young, just after completing 25 years of his life. **(Refer to Keats's letter to his Ladylove, Ms. Fanny Brawne, December 1820, Rome and a Quote of Keats)**

Oh! All the lips that snag and blench with pain!

Enter loneliness in search of love!

I know their secret, taste their hidden tears,

And, all of them, to each one stretch my arms”.

It had been a long time since Keats had last met his beloved Ms. 'Fanny Brawne' as he was convalescing from Tuberculosis in Rome, since his doctor had advised him to spend time in a warmer place. Due to this long separation from her, he was feeling lonely and in pain. So, he wrote a long poem and sent it to her via post. **(Refer to Keats's letter to Lady-love, Ms. Fanny Brawne (December 1820, Rome)**

*“When sorrow comes, bringing with it,
Loneliness and pain,
I put it close to me,
This separation from you”*

Batalvi: Pain of Separation (Stanza-V)

Batalvi continues:

*“I want to walk with the
Ache of the thorn in my foot,
Whatever the distance from
Sorrow to the grave”*

Batalvi: Today This Poor Man Begg You Again (Stanza-IV)

You may have a feel of his emotions in the following line:

I am sickened at the brute world - - irrespective of thorns- - -

Keats expresses his intense feelings for his Ladylove, Ms. Fanny Brawne, in a letter addressed to her on 31 August 1820, wherein he had quoted two lines, having the thoughts:

*“Tho I breathe death with them, it will be life,
To see them sprawled before me in graves”*

Keats: Hyperion: Canto-1

Look how helplessly and passionately Batalvi expresses his wish to walk up to the grave, whatever may be the distance of his beloved to see her for the last time, no matter that his feet are brimming with the pain of the thorns.

All in all, when one compares their pain, Batalvi holds an edge over Keats, though both are writhing in pain.

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