

Toru Dutt's 'the Lotus'-Cultural hybridity and reply to William Cowper's 'The lily and the rose'

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Abstract

Toru was a translator, poet and a novelist from the Indian subcontinent. Dutt is seen as one of the founding figures of Anglo-Indian literature and she is considered as a pioneer of Indian poets to write in French and English. This research paper deals with analyzing reading of Toru Dutt's remarkable open 'The Lotus' from the collection-'Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan' which compiles her translations and adaptations from the Sanskrit literature. Several types of research have been done on Toru Dutt's 'The Lotus' with ecocritical reading and studies which have been celebrated superiority of culture and traditions of her motherland India. This paper will attempt the analyzing the poem with an alternative perspective which is the hybridity of cultures instead of establishing one's superiority over others. The paper will end with the discussion that how Dutt's poem 'The Lotus' can be the ideal reply to William Cowper's 'The Lily and The Rose' which comes in the collection entitled poems by William Cowper, of the inner Temple, Esq, 1782.

Keywords: Toru Dutt, William Cowper, mythology, culture

Introduction

Toru Dutt was born in an aristocratic Bengali family of Calcutta on 4 march 1856. Dutt's family had converted to Christianity (1862) when Toru was six years old. She was educated at home by Indian Christian tutor Babu Chunder Banerjea. Later

,she attended the higher lectures for women at university, while living in Cambridge between 1871 to 1873 and learning French and English and eventually Sanskrit furthermore to her first language Bengali. Dutt spent several upcoming years of her life in France and England and become the multilingual person. British and French literature influenced her and it has been demonstrated in various translation works by Toru i.e.

A sheaf gleaned in French fields consisting her translation into English of French poetry, her two novels Blanca or the young Spanish Maiden wrote in English and Le journal de Mademoiselle Drivers, written in French remained unfinished caused by her unexpected demise. However, her true home India and Indian culture had been an inspirational source for her. This paper analyzes the Toru Dutt's perspectives of the hybridity of cultures or a link between European and Asian culture and describing an aspect of vividly through the poem-"The Lotus"; which has been taken from her collection of Sanskrit translations Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan (published posthumously in 1882). To give her an appreciation Edmund Gosse wrote an introductory memoir. In this, he wrote of Toru Dutt:

"She brought with her from Europe a store of knowledge that would have sufficed to make an English or French girl seem learned, but which in her case was simply miraculous".

With the ending present paper illustrates Toru's "The Lotus" as a considerable reply to William Cowper's "The Lily and The Rose" published in the collection entitled poems by William Cowper, of the inner temple, Esq, 1782 as his poem portrays a similar conflict between Rose and

Lily to win the crown of the undisputed Queen of the flower.

Discussion

"The lotus" is a sonnet of fourteen lines, written in Petrarchan style. The sonnet splits into two groups: The "Octave" and "Sestet". The octave (first eight lines) introduces the backstory of a longstanding feud between rose and lily flower for the high honour of being called the undisputed Queen of flowers with the Rhyme scheme of abba abba. The sestet (next and last six lines) designated the solution to the problem of finding the highly honorable flower of all, with using the rhyme scheme of cdcdcc. Toru begins her sonnet with fantastical dialogues between mythic figures. The Goddess of love Aphrodite approached Flora, the Goddess of flower to create a flower who would undisputedly be the queenliest of all flowers.

"Love come to Flora asking for a flower
That would of flowers be undisputed queen"

Rose and Lily had been fought a long battle in literature for the high honour of superiority. Both Rose and Lily used their "Brads of Power" in their battle to attempt to win the title of the queenliest flower. Each flower with its support from poets claimed for the title. Some poets believed that rose has exceptional excellence and some considered Lily is precious like Juno, the Roman goddess of the moon and Rose could never attain the level of the Lily flower because the lily has a dominant impression.

"The Rose can never tower like
The pale lily with her Juno mien"

To resolve the situation of crowing an undisputed queen, all the flower and Goddesses gathered in the bower of Psyche, the goddess of the soul. By the end of the poem, Flora

chooses to merge the colours of both flowers, red as rose and white as a lily and declares Lotus, as the queenliest of all flowers. The Lotus, a flower that has the elements of both -deliciousness of rose and stateliness of lily.

And flora gave lotus," rose-red" dyed,
And "lily-white,"-the queenliest flower that blows

Toru Dutt's mastery over the sonnet form is clarified in this poem. The poem reflects one paradigm of Toru Dutt's endeavor to enact the hybridity between the European culture and Asian culture. The Rose is partially native to Asia, while the Lily is partially native to Europe and West in general. Considering the fact that Rose (red) is the National flower England symbolizing passion and the lily (white) is the national flower of Italy symbolizing purity, chastity and sweetness. While The Lotus has redness of a rose and whiteness of the lily, is the national flower of India, symbolizing the harmonious vision of life and essence and Hindu faith. The Bhagavad Gita considered Lotus a metaphor of Detachment: just as the lotus grew in dirty water but never get dirty itself, even though it is in the dirt. Just as a human being should rise above worldly attachments.

Toru has very skillfully used the Greek, Roman and Indian faith to establish her stand of fusion of cultures by choosing the lotus as undisputed Queen of flowers the most celebrated Indian flower which has a significant presence in ancient traditions, scriptures and mythology. Flora, Juno and Psyche-celebrated figures of Greek mythology and Aphrodite a well-known figure, in Roman mythology. Considering facts that she experienced the life of colonial India and all around Europe, Dutt unfolds not only her idea fascination of the beauty of the culture exchange but also unfolds her great knowledge in Indian, Greek and Roman mythology.

Toru Dutt's "The Lotus" can be considered as an absolute reply to William Cowper's poem "The Lily and The Rose", is Lyric poem which alternates between iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter.

"But where will fierce contention end
If flow'rs can disagree?"

The poem depicts the literary terms like Allegory, Alliteration, Metaphor, Metonymy. The title of the work itself elucidates the theme which is focusing on the rivalry between two flowers, the lily and the rose. The poem has been set in

An Ornamental garden, where similar conflict happen between the lily and the rose. Here similarly poet approaches to Flora, the Goddess of flower in Roman mythology, for the sake of peace in the garden. As both of the flowers squabble with each other for obtaining the title of queen of the garden.

"Within the garden's peaceful scene
Appear'd two lovely foes,
Aspiring to the rank of queen
The Lily and the Rose"

While both rivalry flowers about to destroy each other for the title undisputed Queen, Flora says; The Rose has the more regal colour and the lily has more regal bearing. Thus,

both shall share the title of queen of the garden until a third surpasses.

"She said, the nobler hue,
And yours the statelier mien,
And, till a third surpasses you,
Let each be deen'd a queen."

Conclusion

To be concluded that "The Lotus" has been written during Toru Dutt's short life period which in 1856 to 1877 and published posthumously in 1882. so it is not the first juncture in Dutt's poem were two flowers the Lily and rose are portrayed as a revival who has been combated to attain the high honour of being a prominent flower for a long time in literature. William Cowper's The Lily and The Rose published in 1782 also depicts the identical conflict between two flowers. Both of, Dutt and Cowper develops the synonymous backstory where they approaching Flora to solve the rivalry issues between the lily and the rose. Where William

Cowper ended his poem by announcing that both would be the Queen until the third flower comes to surpass them. While Toru Dutt concludes with the Flora has created that third flowers and gave the title of undisputed Queen of flowers to the Lotus, which has been elements and qualities of lily and rose. However, throughout the poem, Toru Dutt examined her pen on intermixing with the mythology of both the worlds by addressing the Roman mythology and Greek mythology and establishing her stand with the noteworthiness of culture of her motherland. The depth of the poem can be glimpsed where Flora crowned the title of Queen of flowers to the Lotus, epitome of passion, purity and detachment. Toru Dutt illustrates the deeper idea of cultural Hybridity and cultural exchange of beauty and divinity instead of portraying supremacy of one's culture over others between European cultural and Asian or Indian culture.

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