

Interpretation of a Chinese Poem “Sunset” by Tu Fu

Posted on August 27, 2021

Introduction

Spinning the wheel of history, it can be seen that Chinese people had splendid literary backgrounds. Pieces of literature they created have their own place in the literary world. One of the marvellous Chinese poems is “Sunset” by Tu Fu, which is mostly described as a poet-historian, and his works convey a strong emotional impact. This poem is translated by “Kenneth Rexroth” and is about the change in nature that registers a range of features. This poem is regarded as one of the most remarkable poems for both its content and mood. The poetic imagination seems to be at work and there could be found elements of romanticism throughout the poem. (Owen, 1996)

Discussion

It has been witnessed that nature is one of the most important themes for the poets, and in most of the poems they used to add more beauty in nature by inculcating magical words and their emotions along. In “Sunset”, the central theme is based on the beauty of sunset. In this poem, Tu Fu is spotting a light on the natural phenomenon of the sun setting. He has used poetic lines and a perfect expression to describe this process in which every day, the sun rises at a particular time and also sets in a specific manner. The most appealing and grabbing aspect of this natural process is that it is a mesmerizing moment or time that attracts everyone towards it. The aim of the writer in this poem is to paint a beautiful picture of the sunset, along with praising nature. This poem provides a glimpse of important features that mainly hold the attention of the readers.

This poem portrays the imagery of sunset and claims that during the sunset, there are different moments. During the description, he adds different features of this natural process. Elements that he had added in this poem include natural elements such as valleys, insects, the natural scent of the gardens, birds and flowers etc. Sunset points towards the last element of the day by pointing to a charming picture of nature. Tu Fu has depicted the sunset as changing, as after it (sunset), day changes into night. The time when the sun sets in the west, the day ends, and the night arrives. The main purpose of Tu Fu’s depiction of this scene of sunset is to show his audience his interest in the natural processes and his admiration of the nature. Another important thing that could be noticed in this poem is the rural and bucolic aspects that are targeted by Tu Fu. Moreover, he has added some of the features of natural beauty to link it with his own representation of the sunset.

Tu Fu has linked small things, such as birds, with nature for praising it. Sunset has been portrayed as

an alarm for the bird that reminds them to move back towards their homes and nests so that they could have rest and enjoy sleep at night as birds lack the ability to see at night. In this poem, the poet claims that sunset helps some species to return to their home and beforehand gives them a sign that darkness is about to spread, so they must return to their homes. The poet states that “Smoke of cooking/ Fires drift over the slow barges” which refers towards human activities. Sunset is also the time when people start making their dinner on the fire; people work all day to have their supper at night.

In this poem, the poet has stated “Sparrows hop and tumble” and “Whirling insects/Swarm...” which shows that both birds and insects perform their daily routine duties and activities. In the air, the insects buzz and hum, and at sunset each bird and insects start its journey to reach its home or family. Making dinner after sunset and taking a rest after it in case of insects points towards the patterns of sunset. He has used simple and catchy language that makes it clear to the readers which things he wants to refer to. Direct language has been used, which any reader could understand without any hassle. The flow of his emotions is presented well with the words he chose to express. This poem shows that the poet is straightforward in expressing his views of nature. Even the small things are worthy of him as they all depict the nature around him. The blooming of the flowers is also reflected as one of the important aspects of nature. The blooming of flowers points their journey towards sleep, and flowers, gardens, and birds all are essential parts of nature. Another important message of the poem is that it shows the last thing of the day and sends a message that the day has ended. It is the time for the night now.

Throughout the poem, it can be seen that the poet is so obsessed with nature that he mentions all the details of the natural patterns. He claims that the ending of the day with the sunset pattern is filled with sensation. In the lines, he claimed, “Spring flowers/Bloom in the valley,” and by this description, he has pointed towards the smell of perfume that he could feel in the garden. The way Tu Fu has described the beauty of nature, it seems that he has been a keen observer of nature and used to sense the surrounding beauty.

This poem shows the difference in the way of seeing the surroundings between a poet and a normal human being. For a poet like Tu Fu, nature is a thing of joy that must be enjoyed, but not all humans find it as beautiful as it seems to the poet. Imagination and choice of words have intensified the beauty of the poem. Sunset shows normal patterns and processes of nature that have been the same for centuries and still follow the same patterns. It is interesting to note that through this simple poem, the poet has given its readers a deep message that nature follows a set pattern. There comes a night after the day when sunsets, but this set of the sun is also a message for the people to stay hopeful for a brighter day, so nature is also a sign of hope for those who want to see the brighter side.

Conclusion

Taking a look at the above discussion, it could be concluded that Tu Fu has beautifully depicted the

natural scene of sunset that reminds the poet of the excellence of the Creator. It won't be wrong to say that this poem is a complete reflection of the nature and time of sunset at which people start making their meal and birds return home. There is an underline message of hope given by the poem as well that after every sunset, there is a new day that comes with new hopes, and this is how the world and life go on. Through this poem, the poet in pointing towards things that are constant in life. Sunset serves the purpose of an alarm for creation. So, as a whole, it could be concluded that this poem is reflecting nature and beautifies it by spotting a light on its impressive and breathtaking natural scene. Tu Fu has spread the love for nature and optimistic views through this poem. (Du Fu, 1989)

References

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