

## A Comparative Analysis Of “Zama Mahal” By Ghani Khan And “Kubla Khan” By Samuel Taylor Coleridge

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### Abstract

This research study aims to compare the poems “Zama Mahal” By Ghani Khan and “Kubla Khan” by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The study focuses on the poems' thematic analysis and elements of nature and supernatural. The study is qualitative in nature and falls under the interpretive paradigm. The tools of data collection for this study were the original texts of the two poems which were thoroughly and closely read. To investigate the similarities and differences of the selected poems, the technique of thematic analysis was used. The study revealed similarities and differences between the themes of the poems. The poems share the themes of beauty, escapism, nature, and art whereas, the contrasting themes include mysticism and violence. In addition, the findings also revealed the existence of a blend of natural and supernatural elements in the selected poems. The central theme of the poem “Zama Mahal” revolves around the creation of a palace and its beauty. Ghani Khan has glorified the beauty of the palace and his beloved one by referring to the concrete elements of nature and he goes from natural elements to the supernatural ideas for further glorification. Similarly, Coleridge in his poem “Kubla Khan” opens up with the idea that an emperor has ordered the creation of a pleasure dome, a palace. This Palace appears as something supernatural to the reader that has no existence in reality. As a supernatural poet he has used imageries of natural elements like; river, forest, trees, hills, sinuous rills and gardens in the creation of the palace which is supernatural in nature.

**Key Words:** Ghani Khan, S.T. Coleridge, Kubla Khan, Zama Mahal, Nature and Supernatural

### Introduction

Poetry is one of the celebrated genres of literature that has always given an expression to the feelings, emotions and abstract ideas of people throughout the centuries. Poetry is an expressive and condensed form of language which is mainly associated with human imagination that fuels the creation of poetry (Black, 1998). It is an expressive and condensed form of language which is mainly associated with human imagination that fuels the creation of poetry (Lucas, 1968).

However, poetry has passed through various stages of evolution in different societies around the world. For instance, when we look at the history of English poetry, many great English poets in the past have represented the corresponding age in which they lived. They have attempted on the manifestation of their social, political, and spiritual issues in the form of poetry. Thus, English poetry has significantly evolved over time as it begins with Geoffrey Chaucer, passing through the classical phases; switches to Neo-classical poetry, then followed by Romantic poetry in 18th century. Romantic poetry flourished in response to Neo-classical poetry and favored individual emotions over reason. It also emphasized imagination, mysticism, humanism, love for nature and beauty, simplicity and individualism. The romantic

poets often used vivid imagery and explored supernatural Romantic writers are divided into two generations, the first generation included the pairs of Wordsworth and S.T Coleridge, Blake and Burns while the second generation included Shelly, Byron, and John Keats (Watson, 2014).

Similarly, Pashtuns who have a long poetic history producing poets with fine-quality Imagination and creativity. Pashto poetry, like English poetry, has evolved and progressed through several phases. Pashto literature has been broadly categorized by historians into four stages and the history dates back to the 15th century. However, prominent poets appeared later in the third phase of its evolution (1600-1900 AD). Authors such as Khushal Khan Khattak (1613-1689), recognized as the "Father of Pashto Literature," and Abdur Rahman (1653-1711), a prominent Sufi poet known as Rahman Baba, belong to this golden age. Their poetry is mainly concerned with religion and mysticism, medicine, peace and war, bravery, and patriotism. The fourth period starts in the latter part of the 20th century when literary evolution reached to its peak. Pashto famous poet Khan Abdul Ghani Khan belongs to this period. He has prominently attempted to address various facets of life in terms of his poetic themes (García & Munir, 2016).

Hence, the current study is meant to carry out a comparative study of *S.T. Coleridge* and Pashtu poet *Ghani Khan's* Poetry and aims to find the elements of similarity between Ghani Khan and St. Coleridge. Even though they come from two distinct cultures, had different origins, and lived in separate periods, these two literary titans have certain elements in common. Looking at their poetry works, it is clear and felt that both of these poets are endowed with a romantic spirit. Besides that, we will thematically compare their major works like "*Zama Mahal*" by Ghani Khan, and "*Kubla Khan*" by ST. Coleridge.

*Khan Abdul Ghani Khan* was a Pakistani Pashtun philosopher and poet, born in 1914 at Hashtnagar, Charsadda. His father's name was Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, also known as Bacha Khan (1890-1988) who was a political activist. Ghani Khan was renowned for his poetry both nationally and internationally (Khan, 2013). Ghani Khan believed in freedom of thought and expression and violated the traditional rules of Pashtu poetry. He has adopted a separate style and is best known for versatile themes in his poetry (Bacha, 2010). He ignores the traditional structure of Ghazal and focuses on Nazam (poem), which is much closer to the Western style of verses. Elements of romanticism and combo of natural elements with the supernatural can be seen in his works. Even though he has written a large number of poems the researchers in the current study are majorly concerned with one of his famous imaginative work "*Zama Mahal*" in English "*My Palace*".

On the other hand, *Samuel Taylor Coleridge* is an English poet, born in rural Devonshire in 1772, the son of an Anglican clergyman and the youngest of 14 children. He was a romantic poet, a critic in the age of romanticism and was the contemporary of William Wordsworth. The duration of his creative friendship with him stimulated a few of Coleridge's famous poems, from the nightmarish vision of the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and the opium-inspired "*Kubla Khan*" to the somber passion of "Dejection: An Ode" and medieval ballad "Christabel" (Coleridge, 2004). S.T. Coleridge is often known as the poet of the supernatural because his poems deal mainly with supernatural characters wrought with the color and glamour of the Middle Ages (Anderson, 1986). He is famous for his major three poems collected in 1797-98. "*Kubla Khan*" is one of the renowned poems written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It is, in fact, one of those three poems that have kept Coleridge's name in the forefront of the greatest Romantic poets—the other two poems are The Rime Ancient Mariner and Christabel.

### Objectives of the study

- To compare and contrast the themes of the two poems "*Zama Mahal*" by Ghani Khan and "*Kubla Khan*" by S.T Coleridge.
- To study the elements of nature and the supernatural in the selected poems of both poets.

### Research Questions

- What are the similarities and differences in the themes of S.T. Coleridge and Ghani Khan's poetry?
- What are the elements of nature and supernatural used by both poets in their poetry?

## Methodology

In planning a research study, researchers often need to consider the philosophical worldview assumptions they bring to the study. Philosophical worldviews (also referred to as paradigms) refer to “a basic set of beliefs that guide action/research study” (Guba, 1990).

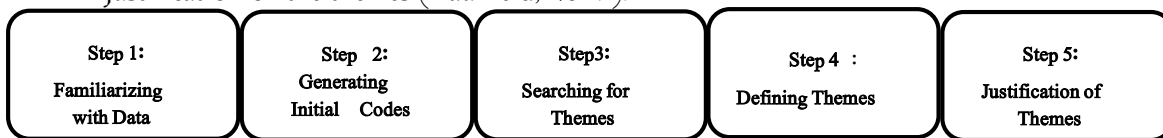
This research study falls under the interpretive paradigm and the researchers has adopted a qualitative research design such that the similarities and differences between the two poems will be discussed and analyzed within the qualitative research framework. Purposive sampling technique has been used to select the poems and to uncover the hidden themes and elements of nature and supernatural present in the poems close reading technique has been used. Close reading is also known as close textual analysis or textual analysis (Allen, 2017). According to Caulfield (2020) in his article “Textual analysis is a broad term for various research methods used to describe, interpret and understand texts. All kinds of information can be gleaned from a text – from its literal meaning to the subtext, symbolism, assumptions, and values it reveals” (Para.2). Moreover, to compare and contrast the themes of both the poems the technique of thematic analysis has been used.

## Findings and Analysis

### Thematic Analysis of the poems

Since the first research question of this study is concerned with thematic analysis of the poems to study their similarities and differences, thus the researchers have used the suggested five steps Caulfield (2019) to carry out comparative thematic analysis;

- Familiarization with the text of the selected poems
- Generating initial codes
- Search for the themes
- Define the themes.
- Justification of the themes (Caulfield, 2019).



### Illustration of Thematic analysis

The upcoming section presents the comparative analysis of similarities and differences in the themes.

### Theme of Beauty

The theme of beauty can be observed in both of the selected poems. The images of the palaces created in both poems reflect the theme of beauty. For instance, In Ghani Khan’s “Zama Mahal” the theme of beauty can be observed in the following lines;

#### Poem Lines;

تالین، پچہ خور کا دوسرے پادشاہ اور کلاب اوچتے دیو الوند و سازوند درباب  
 بیارہ، می و رہ و رکہ و درخونہ و دشتاب ہر لہ می و رہ راوستہ مالباری کا بلبل

#### Translation;

“And spread in it a carpet  
 Made of petals of the rose,  
 Its walls were made of melodies  
 Poured forth by the rabab,  
 Of the dreams of youth, galore;  
 Each flower I then invited,  
 To occupy its space,  
 And asked the bulbul over,  
 As a gardener for its care-

In the above lines, the imagery of a carpet made up of petals of rose makes the theme of beauty obvious. The next lines mention "Rabab" which is a Pashtun culture musical instrument. The melody of the rabab gives pleasure to the senses where in the poem, the walls of the palace are made up of melodies which contribute to the theme of beauty.

Similarly, this theme of beauty can also be seen in the first stanza of *Kubla Khan* where Coleridge took the real palace of Xanadu and glorified its beauty through various imageries.

*"In Xanadu did Kubla Khan A stately pleasure  
dome decree:*

*Where Alph, the sacred river, ran*

*Through caverns measureless to man" (lines: 1-4)*

In the above lines, Coleridge refers to the "pleasure dome" which also symbolizes beauty. For its further decoration, Coleridge has used gothic elements of nature where forests are as ancient as hills. There are gardens with bright sinuous rills and trees around. The beauty of the pleasure dome is depicted further in these lines;

*"And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,*

*Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;*

*And here were forests ancient as the hills," (lines: 8-10)*

### Escapism

Escapism is one of the common features of romantic poetry. The escapist tendencies can also be seen in the poetry of both S.T Coleridge and Ghani Khan. Thus, the theme of escapism is also found in the poems by the researchers of the current study.

Since escapism is moving away from the physical world through imagination. In escapism, a poet creates his own imaginary world in search of seeking solace. Similarly, the poem "*Zama Mahal*" gives a sense of escapism as a whole as the poet has created an imaginary palace that does not exist in reality. The theme of escapism is prominent in the following lines where the poet is lamenting his loneliness as a king of the palace he creates in the poem;

"یوں کہ زہ بادشاہ وہ پہ سری تاج و غم"

### Translation;

*I alone was then the emperor,*

*Upon my head a crown,*

*Of dismal grief, despair.*

In the same way, such escape from reality also appears in Coleridge's "*Kubla Khan*" where the poet has created an imaginary palace which is beyond existence in reality. Coleridge is known as a metaphysical escapist and he could not reconcile his subjective vision with the objective world around him. In fact, escapism seems to be the only satisfactory solution to his never peaceful mind. In "*Kubla Khan*" he transforms his reader into the supernatural world and thus, Coleridge as an escapist has gone to the extreme. This tendency to escape from the actual to the imaginary world can be seen in the following lines of the poem "*Kubla Khan*"; *His flashing eyes, his floating hair!*

*Weave a circle round him thrice,*

*And close your eyes with holy dread,*

*For he on honeydew hath fed,*

*And drunk the milk of Paradise. (lines: 50-54)*

Coleridge in the above lines is talking about the rebuilding of the pleasure dome in the air when he could revive the song of the Abyssinian girl. He says his creation of the dome will be as perfect that would make the hearer amazed, and with

closed eyes, he would feel as if he has been taken into an another existence where he tasted honeydew and milk of paradise.

### Nature and Art

In this research study, the poems selected gives an impression of a complete picture of art and creativity. For instance, Ghani Khan in his poem “*Zama Mahal*” has created a portrayal of a beautiful and attractive palace. It appears a great work of poetic art to the reader where he has utilized various natural elements through the faculty of his creative imagination. The poet makes use of imageries that are all constructed out of natural elements which shape his palace into a

perfect work of art. The imageries used in this creative work of perfect art are obvious in the following lines of the poem;

#### Translation;

*An armful of the narcissus, And many eglantine,  
I brought to give it scent, Invited I the jasmine  
flowers,  
To lend it their perfume;  
From branches of the evening dew, a necklace I  
entwined;  
The morning breeze, the laughter brought,  
The yellow Jasminoides  
I sprayed it then with sparkling wine, from bulbul's  
tears distilled-*

#### Poem Lines;

نرگس مي په غير راور هم ميله مي کر رامپيل  
د خانگو د شبنم نه مي بنیسته جور کر اميل  
نسیم په خندا راورل زیر گلونه د چامپيل  
شراب مي ورله ورکړل بيا د اوبنکو د بلبل

In the above lines from the poem, the poet gives the description of the palace to the reader where various varieties of flowers have been used in fortifying his art of poetic creation. He mentions the Narcissus, the Jasmine flower (Jasminoides), and the Eglantine which is a Eurasian rose with bright pink flowers and fragrant leaves. He also decorates the flowers with a necklace made of evening dew drops. Besides this all, the poet has mentioned the light of the fair crescent, the soft couplets of stars and some natural birds like Chakor bird Partridge.

So in Ghani Khan's “*Zama Mahal*” we see the poet is under the influence of nature. Nature has an impact on his creativity of art. It is nature that takes his poetic art to its perfection. The creation of the Palace in this poem merely appears a perfect creative art when the importance of nature is taken into consideration by the reader.

Similarly, S.T. Coleridge's Poem “*Kubla Khan*” also is an artistic expression of natural images and supernatural creations. Likewise, “*Zama Mahal*” poem, the poet in “*Kubla Khan*” also transforms his reader into a supernatural creation of a Palace where everything is made up of natural elements through imagination. The first part of the poem is concerned with the creation of a palace where the poet gives the descriptive images of nature that contribute to the creativity of the art of the poet. In this poem, the poet makes use of imageries of natural elements in the given lines taken from the poem;

*“And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,  
Where blossomed many and incense-bearing tree;  
And here were forests ancient as the hills, Enfolding Sunny spots of  
greenery” (lines: 8-11).*

The poet in these lines has used the imageries in describing the stately pleasure dome. There is the imagery of sacred river, sinuous rills, trees, hills, gardens and forests which are the elements of nature.

Moreover, Coleridge in this poem has presented the violent aspect of nature. The dancing rock, the breathing of earth and the appearance of a chasm in the green hill is posing a destructive threat to the pleasure dome of the palace in the given lines of the poem;

*“And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,  
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing, And 'mid these  
dancing rocks at once and ever”*

Coleridge in the above lines has described the violent aspect of nature with the help of the two literary devices; breathing earth and dancing rocks.

Besides the similarities, the researcher also observed some contrastive themes in the poems that are analyzed in this section.

### Theme of violence

Violence is the contrastive theme observed by the researchers in Coleridge's poem “Kubla

Khan”. In this poem, the poet has given a wild setting of the natural landscape which itself is given the name “Savage place” by the poet. There is a historical allusion to the ancestral voices of *Kubla Khan* that is prophesying war. War is violence as is something associated with destruction. The theme of violence can be seen in the given lines of the poem;

*“And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far Ancestral voices  
prophesying war!” (line 30)*

So in *Kubla Khan*, we see that beauty and violence go side by side. Where there is pleasure and beauty, there is violence. “Pleasure dome” in the poem is symbolizing beauty while at the same time “Dancing rock and Breathing of earth” is posing terror and destruction of the palace.

The theme of violence is observed as a contrastive theme because, in the other poem, violence cannot be seen prominently in the lines of the poem “*Zama Mahal*”.

### Mysticism

Mysticism is another contrastive theme observed in Ghani Khan's Poem “*Zama Mahal*”. The creativity of the Palace appears elusive to the people who are filled with amazement and disbelief. Ghani Khan has created a Palace in this poem that has some religious and mystical interpretations. According to Buneri (2021), the palace is symbolized with the love of God for humans. This study further proposed that the love of God is equal to the whole of humanity. It further says that God invites all humans towards himself but human beings deny the closeness with God through their ignorant actions. In the Poem Ghani Khan reveals his sorrow and loneliness when he wishes all the humans to be in his palace which is closeness to God and the love of God.

یواخے زہ بادشاہ ومہ پہ سر می تاج د غم  
پخوا کینی می دلبرہ مسکئی سترگے پر نم

### Translation;

*I alone was then the Emperor,  
Upon my head a crown,  
Of dismal grief, despair,  
And by my side the loved ones,  
With tantalizing air,  
And eyes brimful of tears,*

Here, in the above lines, Ghani Khan is showing the love of God to humans who are away from God. He considers God his beloved and says that he is alone in this Palace and God is sad about those ignorant people.

The second research question of the current study enquires about the elements of nature and the supernatural in the selected poems. Hence the findings in the next section provides the answer to the aforementioned research question.

### Elements of nature and Supernatural in “Zama Mahal” and “Kubla Khan”

A poet adopts several techniques to express his ideas efficiently; mixing of natural elements with the supernatural ideas and elements is one of them. In the current study, the researchers try to find out the elements of nature and supernatural in the selected poems.

The central theme of the poem “Zama Mahal” revolves around the creation of a palace and its beauty. Ghani Khan has glorified the beauty of the palace and his beloved one by referring to the concrete elements of nature and he goes from natural elements to the supernatural ideas for further glorification. Ghani Khan has started the poem with the idea that he has created a palace from the white sand of river and it is such beautiful that the whole world is amazed to see its creation and beauty.

#### Translation;

*From the white sands of the river, I a palace slowly built  
The world in great amazement saw, looked on in disbelief*

#### Poem lines;

د سيند د سپينو شگو نه مي جوړ ڪرلو  
محل  
دے ٽول خرگی جهان ورته حيران  
حيران ڪتل

In the above lines Ghani Khan, introduced the idea of his palace and in the rest of the poem, he adopts a unique style in which he combined the natural elements in an unrealistic way which combination is not possible. It has been observed that he goes from nature to the supernatural ideas. For instance, in the first stanza, he is talking about the carpet (قالين), walls, color, and various roses in the palace.

#### Translation;

*And spread in it a carpet, made of petals of the rose  
Its walls were made of the melodies poured by the Rabab.  
And painted in the colors of the dreams of youth, galore  
Each flower I then invited, and asked the Bulbul over as a garner  
for its care*

#### Poem lines;

قالين مي پکين خور ڪرو د سرو پاڻو د  
گلاب  
اوچت ئے ديوالونه وو سازونه د رباب  
بيا رنگ مي ورله ورڪرو د خوبونو د شباب  
هرگل مي ورله راوسته ماليار مي ڪر بلبل

All the elements in the above lines are real and sensible individually. But the way Ghani Khan has combined them is not possible in reality. Like, the carpet made of rose petals, walls made of the melodies of rabab, paint of the dreams, and a bird (bulbul) as a gardener is not possible in reality. Similarly, this type of unique combination of the natural elements to create a supernatural and unrealistic idea could be seen in the rest of the poem as well. For instance, in the following lines;

#### Translation;

*An armful of narcissi, and many eglantines  
Invited I the jasmine flowers, to lend it their perfume  
From branches of the dew,  
A necklace I entwined*

#### Poem lines;

نرگس مي په غير راور هم ميله مي ڪر راميل  
د خانگو د شبنم نه مي بنيسه جوړ ڪر اميل

The narcissus, branches, dew, jasmine flowers and a necklace are real and sensible objects of the nature. But, the way the poet has combined them to glorify the beauty of the palace is peerless. For example, how it is possible that a necklace could be made of drops of dew. Although, there is a connection between the drops of dew and the necklace; the necklace has dew drop' like structures.

Likewise, in the poem *Kubla Khan* S.T. Coleridge has used a blend of natural and supernatural elements. Coleridge opens up the poem with the idea that an emperor has ordered the creation of a pleasure dome, a palace. This Palace appears as something supernatural to the reader that has no existence in reality. Coleridge was a supernatural poet and thus he has used imageries of natural elements like; river, forest, trees, hills, sinuous rills and gardens in the creation of

the palace. Coleridge makes use of these elements in such a way that seems supernatural. Throughout the poem, Coleridge has given description of the landscape of the palace and the river. For instance, in his description of the sacred river that flung up from a fountain and then runs through a measureless cavern down to a deep ocean; Coleridge has made the sacred river look like supernatural in the lines;

*“And ’mid these dancing rocks at once and ever It flung up  
momently the sacred river.*

*Five miles meandering with a mazy motion*

*Through wood and dale, the sacred river ran,*

*Then reached the caverns measureless to man, And sank in tumult to  
a lifeless ocean:”*

Furthermore, supernaturalism in “*Kubla Khan*” can also be observed in the description of the landscape. The landscape is a savage place as well as holy and enchanted that further contributes to the supernaturalism.

*“A savage place! as holy and enchanted*

*As e’er beneath a waning moon was haunted By woman wailing  
for her demon lover!”*

Coleridge in the above lines of the poem presents the landscape as a savage place where a woman is lamenting for her lover who seems to be a demon under the waning moon. This idea of a coalition of the savage and holy places appears supernatural which is hardly possible in reality.

Similarly, Supernatural ideas can also be seen in the last stanza of the poem where the poet mentions the honeydew and milk of paradise. The concept of paradise is supernatural in the given lines;

*“For he on honeydew hath fed,*

*And drunk the milk of Paradise.”*

## Discussion

This research study comparatively analyzed the two poems “*Zama Mahal*” by Ghani Khan and “*Kubla Khan*” by S.T Coleridge. In the thematic analysis of the poems, the study revealed that both the poems carry similarities in themes of beauty, escapism, nature and art. The researchers also highlighted two contrastive themes in the poems such as mysticism in “*Zama Mahal*” and violence in “*Kubla Khan*”. The current study finds that Ghani Khan has depicted the themes of beauty and nature in his poem, also his style of writing poetry in “*Zama Mahal*” is simple and soft. He has used cultural symbols and simple words of the local language that are easily understandable. Similarly, the study by Bacha (2010) also supports the findings of the current research study and claims that Ghani Khan was a lover of beauty and nature and he used soft and straight forward language in his poetry.

The presence of “Escapism” in the themes of Coleridge poetry is a major finding of the current study and the study by (Chauhan, 2019) titled as “Tendency of Escapism in the Poetry of Keats, Wordsworth, Shelley and Coleridge: A Critical Study” also validate this findings and claims that the feeling of escapism can also be seen in the poem “Ancient Mariner” when the mariner is talking about death, repentance and resurrection.

Moreover, the comparative study by Arshad (2020) claims that the theme of beauty and nature has given a universal status to the literature of diverse cultures and languages. Similarly, the researchers of the current study observed this cross-cultural universality in the themes of beauty and nature. These two themes have played a key role in the creativity and imagination of the poets.

Similarly, Basvuru (2021) proposed that S.T Coleridge loved nature for its consistency and vastness and represents for the romantics a perfect work of art whereas the current study also finds Coleridge's use of nature for its perfection of the art of his pleasure dome. The research study by Basvuru (2021) also reveals the fact that in relation to the dualism of existence, nature provides the poet with a suitable paradisiac setting for escapism as in “*Kubla Khan*”. In the same way, the researchers in the current study observed nature as a source of escapism for Coleridge in “*Kubla Khan*”.



Elements of nature and the supernatural are one of the major findings of the current study. Both the poets have used natural elements for the expression of their supernatural thoughts and ideas. Both poets have used a blend of natural and supernatural elements however, Ghani Khan has used the soft imageries of natural elements like a “necklace made of dew’ drops”. There is a resemblance between the pearls of a necklace and the drops of the dew. On the contrary, Coleridge has focused on the wild aspects of nature like the “ancient forests, the dancing rocks and the breathing of the earth suggest wildness of nature. The study by (BISWAS, (nd)) claims the presence of supernaturalism in the poetry of Coleridge and states that Coleridge had mastery in the field of supernaturalism. He used the theme of supernaturalism in many of his poems such as; “Ancient Mariner” and “Christabel”. The findings of the current study such as the presence of the supernatural elements in the poem also validates the existence of supernaturalism in the poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

### Conclusion

Findings of the study showed that some themes of the poems were similar and some varied in nature. Beauty, escapism, nature, and art are common themes in the poems of both the poets. While themes of mysticism and war and terror throughout the poems. The combination of natural and supernatural components was also discovered in both poems. Similarly, the existence of natural and supernatural elements is the major finding of the current study. Both poets have employed natural elements to convey their supernatural ideas and expressions. However, Ghani Khan has employed the gentle imagery of natural components like a "necklace made of dew' drops". The pearls on a necklace and the dew drops have a similar appearance. Coleridge, on the other hand, has paid particular attention to nature's wilder side, noting that "ancient forests, dancing rocks, and the breathing of the earth" suggest wildness of nature.

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