

## POSTHUMANISM IN THE WORKS OF KATHLEEN RAINE

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### **Abstract**

Human origin, advancement and growth has been central to the literary themes of various authors, poets and writers belonging to a wide range of eras and periods. This brings the concepts of humanism and posthumanism central to the eyes of the researchers and scholars humanism undertakes and scholars. Humanism undertakes major areas of human achievements, potential and values whereas posthumanism on the other hand being considered different from humanism, questions the boundaries of human existence and contemplates the integration of technology with humanity. It looks towards critical examination of the ethical and social implications of these advancements various poets and authors have often taken up this theme to examine it from several other perspectives as well. Kathleen Raine is one among those eager for such quest and deals with it by adjudging it on the spiritual and mystical parameters. Some of her works have been discussed in the paper which reflects her point of view in the light of the theme of posthumanism. Kathleen Raine's inclination towards philosophical and traditional aspects of human existence led her to become the founder of Temenos Academy in Britain. The Academy reflects her ideology to a great extent and the same has been elaborated upon in this paper. The paper also talks about several authors related to posthumanism. Raine was also highly influenced by Romantic poets like William Blake, W. B. Yeats, and P.B. Shelley etc. which also finds a mention here. The Jungian psychology was also something that Raine agreed upon and many of her works show up the same. Carl Jung's impactful set of ideas moulded Raine's thoughts. The paper also further discusses the eastern spiritual culture of monotheism that called for Raine's attention. Thus, through this paper the concept of posthumanism has been given a wider angle and it has been seen through a diverse range of disciplines.

**Key words;** evolution, advancement, achievement, mysticism, spirituality, posthumanism, humanism, natural world, mythology, eastern monotheism.

### **Introduction:**

Human beings are the most beautiful yet most complex creatures existing on the planet, having evolved over several million years and taking up a lot intricate finesse and peculiar modulation undergoing evolution to become one of the most premier beings. Anthropes have been a central figure to researcher and eminent scholars as a major source of all the thriving activities and thus leading the reviewers manifest them as an integral part of the ever evolving ecosystem. The constant supporters of humanism as a concept, consider human beings central to all the worldly

development and advancement. Since its initiation during Renaissance, humanism has been closely related to human as an independent entity who have intellectual faculties which controls the body and mind. They carry a certain notion of being guided by speech and logical reasoning, therefore consider the most superior and exceptional species over all the other creature of the planet.

Humanism as rational philosophy although won attention of many scholars and literary craft man dealing with human development along with the surroundings. However, was in several terms non-identical to notion of post humanism which undertakes the assumption of human beings as participants in the dynamic forces and not completely controlling it. It is philosophy the emerged in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century in the west. When seen through the eyes of the post humanist the several aspects of sexuality, gender and social communities are put to reconfiguration on the arrival of technological advancement. It favours the argument of co-evolution of technology and humans holding a completely a new perception stressing on intersection of material and non-material as well as human and non-human factors. Post humanism basically studies the changes that have come over due to potential enhancement to the human nature generated through applied science and technology developments.

### **Posthumanism:**

Post humanism has not been just a part of particular branch or concerned with only one discipline of studies. However, its studies range to a wide variety of disciplines concerning sociology, law, animal studies, gender studies, literary studies , education and many more such cutting across the contemporary boundaries. Its presence can be notice in largely variant areas of research and its addressal being felt almost everywhere. Furthermore, it's much more than abstract academic affair and exploring narratives that encounter feeding away of humanism and consequently reimagining knowledge, body, mind and desires in ways they certainly don't count the traditional and anthropocentrism. Post humanism is also concerned with giving voice to inhuman, those who are considered to be humans now but were not always considered to be such. This central idea being that human bodies are continuous with the rest of material world suggesting that there is no essential divide between the human and non-human, which further supports the perspective that humans do influence the surrounding as subjects, but the world also influences us in a lot of ways, and that materialism has its own agency. Many well know scholars, philosophers and literary figures have tried to understand this lately emerged concept of post humanism and have presented their views through their literary writings. Some of the prominent figures in this field are Ihab Hassan, Nancy Kathrine Hayles, Donna haraway, Rosi Braidotti, Michal Foucault, Bruno Latour, etc.

Ihab Hassan a prominent theorist and critic was among the first to delve into the concept of post humanism and has devoted a large share of his career to this area. To him, with the beginning of post humanism was to a great extent related with the necessity of understanding that the human form is undergoing change with super natural involvement in the process. Another such eminent scholar, Donna Haraway was of the view that the gradually progressing era is bringing

with it the fading away and blurring of the boundaries between Homo sapiens and the technological world. Her works usually challenged the traditional notion of the gender identity and human body. Rosi Braidotti, another influential name in the field of post humanism keeps a positive approach towards it and looks towards it as an opportunity for redefining human existence in a more inclusive and diverse way. She encourages the need to move beyond anthropocentrism and willingly accept the interconnectedness of all the existing life forms. Similarly, Nancy Katherine Hayles works have been influential in the study of posthumanism, majorly in relation to literature, science and technology. She advocates the utter need to accept and understand the growing changes concerning the contemporary society which affects the concepts of identity and consciousness. Therefore, in the due course of time the changing perspective has led the interpreters to accept the human body not just in its bodily existence, but it is something to do with much more beyond that. As through, the term posthumanism holds a connection with a variety of disciplines and several fields of study may seem related to it and so does literature. Many scholars and writers have tried to glorify spirituality that perpetuates with posthumanism. Their visions and opinions seem to be a little out of the box concept, away from the regular prevailing ideology. However, it does opens up the availability of ever larger vistas concerning the mankind. Several works in English literature have been a rich source of exploring the confluence of spirituality and posthumanism, which in turn gives its readers a wide scope to contemplate the spiritual dimensions related to post humanism.

### **Kathleen Jessie Raine and Posthumanism**

Kathleen Jessie Raine one of the most prominent writers and critics held an eminent position when it comes to discovering the various hidden concept related to spirituality through her works. She was a British poet who profoundly involved a deep sense of spirituality in her works. For Kathleen was of the belief that life form the most wonderful and miraculous thing which has ever existed. She had always largely remained inquisitive about human evolution and was also keen to know as to who we humans actually are? However, she was quite perplexed, the way this question was put up theory western terminology and how the answers to it were expected. She was moreover inclined towards the eastern way of looking at it which related humans to the rest of the world posing it as universal question rather than the western world which sought answer just for an individual. Kathleen, as a literary figure was quite keen about ways of acquiring knowledge that would expand the horizon of human existence. In this stance she considered meditation much more organised and profound than the other methods of memory training and visualization. Raine did not consider material exploration of nature to be the whole reality and took it as a partial account. She rather emphasised on the knowledge of mental things related to mind and spirit. Raine was deeply interested in poetry, spirituality and the traditional arts and wisdom of the western world. She founded the Temenos academy to promote several aspects of culture. Her works and vision had a significant influence on the academy's mission and activities. The major aim of Temenos academy is to promote and preserve the traditional arts and wisdom of the western world. The academy emphasises the importance of poetry and literature in conveying deep spiritual and

philosophical insights. It encourages the study of these artistic forms. It explores and promotes spiritual and mystical traditions within western culture. The academy engages with philosophical and ethical discussions fostering a deeper understanding of the intellectual and moral aspects of the western thought. Its mission is to provide a space for the exploration of the deeper dimensions of western culture and to encourage a meaningful dialogue between the arts, spirituality and philosophy. Moreover, it places a strong emphasis on the inner, spiritual dimensions of human experience. It further commends the importance of spiritual insights and the longing pursuit of wisdom as essential parts of human culture. Raine was actively connected with the academy as she often explored and promoted mystical traditions that were often deeply spiritual in nature, through her writings. She sought to understand and preserve the spiritual wisdom contained within these traditions. As a literary figure she was highly engaged in the study of sacred texts, mythology and spiritual symbols that contain a deeper meaning in these texts and myths. As per the vision of Kathleen Raine, the academy encourages an interdisciplinary approach with spirituality at the core. It also recognises spirituality as an essential component of the human culture encouraging dialogues and discussions on related topics thus promoting a community of individuals who consider spirituality an integral part of human culture and developmental process. Kathleen Raine was well known for her interest in mysticism, mythology and the spirituality dimensions of life. She was also highly under the influence of Carl Jung's ideas and often explored themes of unconscious mind, symbolism and the connection between conscious and unconscious human experiences which co-relate with Jungian psychology. Her writing are suggestive of deep engagement with the inner world and symbols which connect individuals to universal human experiences. The impact of Jungian psychology can be seen across a variety of fields such as literature art and religious studies. It provides a set up for delving into the depths of human psychology and understanding the symbolic and spiritual aspects of human existence. This philosophy is a process of knowing one's own self by integrating the conscious and unconscious elements which leads to self-discovery and personal development. It gives importance to the interpretation of dreams as a means of accessing the unconscious and gaining insight into one's inner world. Such themes of mysticism and spiritual demeanour can be very often seen in several works of Raine.

### **Jungian Perspective:**

The poem *The Locked Gates* by Kathleen Raine from her collection *The year one* can be seen through Jungian perspective. It may represent the barriers within the psyche, symbolic of the challenges that one has to face in getting closer to the layers of the unconscious self and facing the inner conflicts. This poem explores the feeling of longing, frustration and a sense of being kept at a distance symbolised by the locked gates. It deals with the complex nature of human emotions and the difficulties that one faces in looking for meaningful connections. The poem may also be seen as reflecting the urge for a deeper connection with the divine or a better state of consciousness. It may further be seen as highlighting the obstacles and the innate desire for a connection which can be connected to the material aspects of life. Here the poetess may be seen as an allegory for

the soul's journey towards self- discovery and enlightenment. The poem through its exploration of mystical and contemplative aspects of the spiritual quest captures the essence of seeking a profound and transcendent experience beyond the restrictions of the material world.

### **Spiritual Perspective:**

Considering such similar ideology there are various other works of Kathleen Raine that can be viewed with the spiritual perspective reflecting its influence on mankind. 'Rock' by Raine is yet another influential work which invites the readers to contemplate the profound mysteries existing in the natural world and shows and urge to seek solace in the enduring strength of elements like the rock. The poem talks about the stoic presence of the rock, which remains un-affected by the passage of time or the changing seasons. The Rock is seen as symbol of stability and permanence contrasting with the transient nature of human experience. Raine reflects on the idea that the rock, though seemingly lifeless, holds a profound and ancient wisdom which surpasses the fleeting concerns of mortal beings. The Rock becomes a symbol of stability and wisdom focusing on the constancy of nature in the face of human transience. By exploring the enduring qualities of the rock, Raine reflects on the border context of the natural world where geological formations stand as silent witnesses to the eons. Through this connection to the natural world the poem prompts the readers to examine their place within the larger scope of time and the enduring beauty of the earth. It invites readers to reflect on their own mortality and the ephemeral nature of human concerns when compared to the timeless presence of natural elements. Thus, the Rock becomes a symbol of nature of human life. Therefore, to the readers Raine's poetry is a subjective reflection for the harmony and balance inherent in nature. She saw the natural world as a reflection of divine old and beauty encouraging a harmonious existence between humans and the environment. Solitude in nature was a recurring theme in Raine's poetry. She often depicts moments of quiet contemplation in natural settings suggesting that such solitude could lead to profound insights and a deeper connection with the divine. Through her poetry she expressed the idea that despite the temporal nature remains a constant and enduring presence. Nature served as a conduit for spiritual exploration in Raine' poetry. She saw the natural world as a route to transcendence, a means of connecting with something greater than the material realm. She, very often used natural elements as symbols to convey broader philosophical and spiritual ideas. Her poetry suggests that nature goes beyond its physical manifestations, holding a deeper, metaphysical significance. Raine was of the view that nature goes beyond its physical manifestations holding a deeper metaphysical significance harmony and balance were important. Themes in Raine's exploration of nature and spirituality.

### **Philosophical and Mystical Dimensions:**

Kathleen Raine was a modernist poet, mystic and critic who touched various aspects of spirituality and connected it with the enhanced form of humanity. Her innate inclination towards the natural surroundings compelled her to write an extensive range of poetry that touched the theme of nature in several ways and presented her diverse views on the surroundings. In this regard she was also

highly influenced by renowned poets such as W.B. Yeats, William Blake, Wordsworth and other such philosophical poets. In her writing, Raine often discussed how Blake's poetry served as a bridge between the earthly and divine realms. She delved into Blake's intricate use of symbolism, allegory and mysticism emphasising the transformative power of his visionary imagination. Raine's work sought to highlight the esoteric aspects of Blake's poetry interpreting his writings as a profound exploration of the spiritual journey and the human soul's evolution. Her analysis contributed to a deeper understanding of the philosophical and mystical dimensions embedded in Blake's poetic creations. She explored Blake's complex symbolism and spiritual themes in her works highlighting his unique perspective on the interconnectedness of art, spirituality and the imagination. Some of the specific works of Blake appreciated by Raine are '*Jerusalem*' '*The marriage of Heaven and Hell*' '*Songs of innocence and experience*' and many such works. Kathleen Raine interpreted William Blake's '*Songs of Innocence and experience*' as a profound exploration of the contrasting states of human existence. In '*Songs of innocence*' she saw Blake portraying the purity and joy of childhood while in '*songs of experience*' he delved into the complexities and darker aspects of human life.

### **Raine and Blake:**

Raine suggested that the poem reflected the journey from innocence to experience and the inevitable loss of that innocence. She explored how Blake's visionary perspective transcended conventional religious and societal norms, presenting a spiritual vision that challenged established perceptions. In Raine's view this poem by Blake is a poetic expression of duality inherent in the human experience with innocence representing a state of divine purity and experience representing the harsh realities and moral complexities of the world. Raine highlighted Blake's opposition to the restrictive aspects of rationalism and celebrated his poetic vision as a means to transcend conventional boundaries. Both Raine and Blake were of a similar perspective on western material world. They were quite critical of the prevailing materialistic and mechanistic views of their times. Raine, influenced by Blake's ideas, emphasised the importance of imagination and the poetic vision as ways to perceive a richer and more meaningful material world. They both rejected reductionist approaches and sought a more holistic understanding that integrated the spiritual and imaginative dimensions with the material. It can thus be seen that both Raine and Blake challenged the dominant materialistic paradigm of dominant their age, advocating for a broader spirituality infused worldview that recognised the interconnectedness of the material metaphysical realms. Raine was also of the view that intellectual landscape and terminology evolve over time and in the twentieth century was critical of certain aspects of modernity. While neither explicitly addressing on the spiritual, imaginative and holistic aspects of human existence which might be seen as a departure from some of the more materialistic and deterministic aspects of Marxist thought. Kathleen Raine was also influenced to a great extent by mystic poets and held a view about their writing. One such magnificent personality was William Butler Yeats, whose works reflected Irish culture. Out of the several iconic works written by Yeats, Raine reviewed '*The Celtic Twilight*' a collection of essays published in 1893. Raine could connect to the mystical aspects of Irish culture

particularly the belief in fairies, spirits and other worldly beings. This collection is significant for its contribution to Irish literary revival and Yeats' exploration of the spiritual dimensions. Raine drew inspiration from the folklore of the Celts, weaving elements of magic, nature and ancient wisdom which also involves a sense of otherworldliness where the boundaries between the mundane and the magical blur. These essays foster a connection to nature, spirituality and the mysteries of the Celtic heritage. Yeats infuses these essays with his own poetic and personal insight which is suggestive of parameters beyond human existence. Raine explores the enchanting world of Celtic mythology through the eyes of W. B. Yeats and thus offering the readers a glimpse into the magical realms that is beyond the regular human existence. This is suggestive of the natural world which engages various human entities in a way that denotes the presence of other world powers beyond a specific periphery.

### **Eastern Monotheism:**

Kathleen Raine was also known for her interest in eastern mysticism and philosophy. She often explored themes related to eastern spirituality and sought inspiration from eastern traditions in her poetry. She was an admirer of eastern monotheism for its profound spiritual depth and the concept of a unified divine presence. She was also attracted towards the mystical aspects of eastern monotheistic traditions, exploring themes of unity, transcendence and the interconnectedness of all things in her poetic works. She was drawn towards this idea of an all-encompassing divine reality present in eastern monotheism.

### **Conclusion:**

Post humanism has been a concept that has interested many laureates related to literature, as it deals with research in concepts beyond the boundaries of human existence and major advancements that have been achieved so far. Rather, it can be opened that this field holds a scope that is extremely diverse and deals with a vast area. Researchers have delved deep into it and have come out with several opinions regarding post humanism. The term majorly compels the onlookers to take a step ahead and try to engage their ideas into a realm that envisions out of the box rather than the regular trail that is set. This field upholds majorly vast possibilities within itself and engages the readers by its modern and rational approaches, as it is well researched and thoroughly examined at various level and valiantly questioned to which answers have been provided contently. This theme, as mentioned earlier, being diverse in nature has been referred to by Kathleen Raine as relevant to imagination. She, to a great extent relates this concept with the abstract side of human evolution. She compels the readers to plunge with her in the depth of thoughts related to mystic and spiritual side of the human evolution. She gives great importance to these themes in her works, as it is evident from many of her literary writings. The state of divinity and spirituality is what she considers beyond the mortality innate in humans. It certainly presents human souls and minds with a state that is clearly an enhanced and advanced connection to the eternal power. It lifts and enhances the reflexes of humans in a certain way which provide them a different vision altogether. Raine was also greatly concurred with the eastern mysticism and religious ideologies. In many of

her interviews, her agreement to these philosophical ideas is clearly evident. Therefore, Kathleen Raine can be rightly stated as an author with a deep insight for human advancements keeping pace with the modern ideas towards mysticism and spirituality.

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