

My Mistress' Eyes are Nothing Like the Sun - **William Shakespeare**

Q. Write down the critical appreciation of “My Mistress' Eyes are Nothing Like the Sun”.

William Shakespeare is regarded by the world as the greatest English dramatist and poet. He was an actor and stockholder of the drama company in London. There are 37 plays and 154 sonnets and a few different poems to his credit. Of all the English writers, Shakespeare has the highest recognition because his writings have a universal appeal. He dealt with a variety of themes and subjects in his plays as well as poems. He is entitled as the national poet of England and his literature has been translated into almost all the languages of the world.

A Shakespearean sonnet is a 14-line lyric poem which has three quatrains (a quatrain consists of four lines) and a rhyming couplet (consists of two lines). This sonnet is also presented in three quatrains and a couplet. This sonnet is known for its simplicity and frankness of expressions and it gives a message in a simple way that the beauty of his beloved cannot be compared to the beautiful objects and phenomena of nature. The tone of the sonnet is satirical as well as philosophical, which is written in iambic pentameter following the rhyme scheme abab, cdcd, efef, and gg. The ideas are developed in three quatrains and the conclusion is embedded in a couplet. The sonnet is skillfully composed by Shakespeare using the understatement of irony. Shakespeare is saying in Sonnet 130 that the Dark Lady is not exactly conventionally beautiful in any sense, but he still thinks she is just as fine as any other woman – only the Dark Lady, unlike these other women, isn't having her beauty 'talked up' by excessive and ridiculous comparisons ('you are rosy-cheeked', 'your eyes shine like suns', 'your voice is as sweet-sounding as music', and the like).

In the very first line, the lover says that his beloved's eyes are not at all like the sun. From here onwards, the speaker presents a description of the beloved in exactly opposite manner to the tradition. The reader becomes familiar with the humour in the next line. He says that the precious red gemstone (coral) is far redder than her lips; her beloved's lips are pale and not red. The breasts and skin of the beloved were usually described by the poets to be whiter than snow. Here the speaker presents a contrast by saying that her breasts are of dull brownish colour (dun). Here the speaker has cleared out the fact that his mistress is dark coloured. The hair was usually compared to golden wires (used in jewellery or embroidery); to present the opposite of this, the speaker says that his mistress' hair is like black wires. This is a further shock to the reader. Here the first quatrain ends.

The second quatrain continues in the description and comparison. Normally, the rose flower comes in three main varieties: white, red and pale red/pink; the lover cannot see such roses in the cheeks of his beloved. A traditional sonnet would describe the breath of the mistress to be a smell sweeter than all the perfumes; therefore the speaker has to make an opposite statement: some perfumes are more delightful than her breath or smell. The speech of the mistress should be the sweetest sound/music for the lover but in this sonnet, the lover says that though he loves

to hear her voice he knows that the sound of music is sweeter than her voice. In this quatrain, the speaker refers to the tradition in which a lady was often compared to a goddess. He says that he has never seen a goddess walking by. His beloved is a human being and she walks on earth (not in the sky like a goddess). Now to make the final statement, the speaker says that his beloved cannot be compared with the beauty of nature. The speaker's love for his beloved is precious (rare). Here in the final couplet, the sonneteer declares that the comparison of his beloved with heavenly objects is not important, because his beloved is beautiful though she may not look extraordinarily beautiful. Hence, she needs not to be falsely compared with other beautiful objects. The poem's final two lines cement the interpretation that the comparisons are not meant to be degrading to the speaker's mistress or to the love that they share. When the speaker claims that he finds "his love" as beautiful as any other woman "belied with false compare," he's making the point that no one's eyes are as beautiful as the sun and everyone's breath smells kind of bad, and that, therefore, such comparisons are not a useful way to think about beauty or love.

Shakespeare's view of love in this poem is, thus, very non-conventional. Usually, a lady was loved for her physical appearance and most of the time her beauty was praised in such a decorative manner that very often it appeared to be artificial. The lover in this poem is sincere enough to admit that his beloved does not possess exquisite beauty or heavenly qualities. The implicit question is whether a person should be loved for his / her physical appearance. What should be valued? Should true love give importance to the physically attractive aspect? Such a non-traditional view is presented by the poet in a very skilful manner in this sonnet. In presenting his view poetically, he mocks the traditional sonneteers. The humorous tone of the poem dominates the narration. The careful arrangement of the words and the use of poetic devices show Shakespeare's command of poetic art. Its message is simple: the dark lady's beauty cannot be compared to the beauty of a goddess or to that found in nature, for she is but a mortal human being. The rhyming scheme of the poem is similar to that of other sonnets of Shakespeare, abab, cdcd, efef and gg. It is the 130th sonnet in the sequence of Shakespeare's collection of sonnets.