Emphasis Of Nature In Shaping Rousseau’s Soul

Write an essay explaining what you think about the following statement: “Rousseau in ‘Fifth Walk’ describes using nature to help create his own type of happiness, and yet, importantly, he knows that nature cannot be used like something merely convenient, like a set of tools; nature is much more than this to create happiness for him.” This article examines the role and presence of nature in Rousseau’s solitary walks as revealed through his reveries. It talks about the emphasis of nature in shaping Rousseau’s soul and how he creates his own type of happiness from it.

The essay also investigates Rousseau’s as a person and his desires for peace and affection with Botany and natural beauty. It further discusses the circumstances which led him to find refuge at an island and then in a state of everlasting peace. The Solitude and emotional distance from other humans helped him from the outside distraction and to turn within his mind and soul. To define Rousseau’s “type of happiness”, it is prudent to first describe his personality and nature from the given reading. Rousseau mentions himself as a solitary contemplative, whose inner self is inclined to the natural world and who wants to lose himself in the wildness of nature (Rousseau, p 49.) His soul has the desire to meditate in silence, without any artificial and societal disturbing sounds and noises, other than birds crying and chirping. He further states an Italian phrase “for niente” which means doing nothing, which he prefers as the first and foremost pleasure (Rousseau, p 51). He mentions himself as a man dedicated to idleness, indicating his tiredness of worldly jobs and wish to achieve peace or happiness in a solitude life amongst natural sceneries, away from society. He has an acute enthusiasm towards Botany, and he fills his entire room with flowers and grass, which again indicates his desire of finding happiness from nature. He starts composing a “Flora petrinsularis” which is a research work of flora from the island “Ile de St Pierre”, he is living on (Rousseau, p 51). He wants to feel content, spending most of his mornings in the flora research, in which he finds great joy and ecstasy. His soul is longing for the desire of everlasting happiness and inner peace which he trying to achieve. He wants to live a solitude life within defined limits.

He is philosophically very aware and sensitive as he gives powerful statements like “the substance of the weak is always used to the advantage of the powerful” (Rousseau, p 49). His habit of morning exercise helps him spending his day in a good mood. In the afternoon, he rows his boat all alone in the middle of the river and then let the natural flow of water to take him in any direction. Later, he spends his most evenings sitting on the peak of mountains over the island and then down near the lake. His habits and daily routine clearly show his inclination towards nature and`` his attempts of achieving peace and happiness from it. Rousseau further talks about the extreme essence of peace which he tries to achieve amidst nature. What one can achieve in such a state? “Nothing external to the self, nothing but oneself and one's own existence: as long as this state lasts, one is self-sufficient like God”(Rousseau, p 55).

The act of “turning within” is one of the best ways to nourish his soul, which Rousseau discovers in these self-contemplative days. In this activity of solitary self-reflection, Rousseau is using nature to look at himself and within. He is using nature as a vehicle to connect with something larger, which a common person cannot achieve. Even though he spends some time with other people on the island, but he still keeps an emotional distance from them. In this way,

most of his time on the island is characterised by his solitariness in nature. “In many regards, Rousseau is truly sealed off from others by both his exile and the double security of the lake itself” (Lane, p 483). His solitude helps him in mediating the appreciation of natural beauty without any human distractions. This solitary isolation and lack of distraction are considered a must for continuous interaction with nature. All these factors help him in achieving incredible calm and happiness.

The sounds from the streams also play an important part in inducing relaxation with the natural rhythms. Rousseau believes one cannot get everlasting happiness from the worldly external things. However, turning within and seeking peace and pleasure from your soul can give you the peak of happiness, in a solitude life amidst nature. His heart does not desire for happiness from short-lived moments, instead, he longs for a simple and lasting state in which he can climb the highest peak of happiness. In such a state of happiness, one does not feel any regret from the past or worries of the future. Time does not mean anything in this state, only present stays forever. Such is a state, Rousseau often finds himself in the solitary reveries at the island. Only nature itself cannot create happiness for a person. There have to be several reasons along with nature, which contribute to creating an everlasting state of peace and happiness.

In Rousseau’s case, it is clear from the reading he is driven out of his house in Moteirs (Rousseau, p 51). He has to take refuge at the island of Ile de St Pierre. Eventually, this solitary refuge at the island with very few inhabitants offers him incomparable solace and contentment through an emotional connection with nature. This solitary isolation during the refuge, enables him to feel him he was in harmony with nature and in an emotional state that was tranquil and delightful. It is thus clear, many other circumstances helped Rousseau in using nature to create his own type of happiness. Concluding the essay, it is clear from the writing Rousseau was kicked out from his house and was forced to find refuge somewhere outside his hometown. Finding refuge at the island of Ile de St Pierre, he started spending most of his day time in nature’s arms. In this solitary isolation, he started finding peace and happiness. Nature plays a crucial part in finding his own type of happiness.

References

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