



A Review Study on Lyrical & Reflective Poetry

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Abstract:

There is a blur differentiating line between reflective and lyrical poetry. It is quite amusing in fact to make a contemplative study of such types of poetry. The whole efforts of this article are geared towards focusing on this very aspect of peeping in to poetry.

The type of poetry that we call lyrics, are basically short and simple. They are direct expressions of the poet's sentiments, thoughts and feelings. Going back to the ancient Greece, the lyrics were sung to the tune of a musical instrument known as "lyre". Recently, lyrics are sung with the guitar.

Via this study the researcher wants to convey the mechanism of Lyrical & Reflective Poetry

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1. Lyric –Its characteristics

It is difficult to define any form of literature and so is Lyric. According to the Oxford Dictionary Lyric is the name of short poem usually divided in to stanzas and directly expressing the poet's own thoughts or sentiments. The word lyric actually came from the musical instrument-the lyre. It is something like a modern guitar. Hence the word lyric meant a poem which can be sung. The lyric poetry is differentiated from reflective poetry. The reflective poetry is more thoughtful while the lyric is more emotional and imaginative. Let us discuss the essential characteristics of the lyric.

1.1 Expression of Emotion

The lyric poem expresses a single emotion or feeling. It describes a powerful feeling. For example, Wordsworth's poem on 'the rainbow' expresses poet's single emotion when he saw a rainbow in the sky. Leigh Hunt's poem 'Jenny Kissed me when we met' also expresses a feeling of youthful happiness and the sadness of growing old. Thus, a lyric is a short poem which expresses a powerful emotion or a single idea.

1.2 Musical Quality

The musical quality is the heart of a lyric. A poem can't be called lyrical if is not musical. Even in Greek literature, there were beautiful poems which were sung. This quality of music and sing ability is very necessary in a lyric.

1.3 The Theme of Love

The theme of love is a great source of all lyrics in the world. Love has been favorite theme of all lyric poets. For thousands of years the feeling of love provides the subject matter for lyric. It may be love between man and Woman, man and nature, man and other creatures and man and God. That is why sometimes devotional poem reaches the height of a lyric. In India, the Bhajans of Mirabai and songs of Sufi poets certainly express highly intense feeling of love. In addition to love, hatred, fear, grief and death are other favorite subjects of poets.

1.4 Short

The lyric should be short and direct. Lyric poems are easy to read and understand but they are difficult to write. They come directly from the heart of the writer and go straight to the heart of the reader. Its appeal is always to the heart, not to the intellect.

1.5 Sadness

The emotion of grief or sorrow has given birth to many great poems in the world. Shelley said in his 'Ode to a Skylark' "Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought." It is true that sorrow or grief is the feeling which has inspired thousands of poets. In a great lyric, personal sorrow of the poet becomes the universal sorrow. For example, Hardy's *Are you diggng on my grave* expresses a deep melancholic mood. In the climax of the poem, he says, "My lover, my friend, my relations all have forgotten me. Even my evenings have forgotten me. But at least my little dog has remembered me."

1.6 Spontaneous Overflow of Powerful feelings

Wordsworth defined poetry as spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. This is fully applicable to a lyric. A lyric is a poem which should not be elaborated or laboured but it should be simple, direct and spontaneous. Spontaneity is the most essential characteristic of a lyric. It does not mean that it is loose and formless. A lyric must also be a well-knit and well-expressed poem.

2. Metaphysical poetry

The term 'Metaphysical' was used for the poetry of John Donne and some other poets. This kind of poetry differs from lyrical poetry in the sense that it describes some serious thought. Their poetry was written in a different style. The metaphysical movement of poetry arose as a reaction against romantic excesses of the Elizabethans. The founder of this school of poetry was John Donne. His poetry is remarkable for concentrated passion, intellectual agility and dramatic power. His poetry is introspective and self-analytical. The word metaphysical means beyond physical nature. It was Dryden who first used the word Metaphysical. Dr. Johnson later used this term regarding the poetry of John Donne and other poets like Richard Crashaw, George Herbert, Henry Vaughan and Abraham Cowley. Donne's poetry is not metaphysical in the sense that it expresses any philosophical system. In fact, his poetry expresses emotion in intellectual manner. The poetry of John Donne and other is called metaphysical only for its technique and style. It is overloaded with 'conceits. Let us discuss the chief characteristics of metaphysical poetry.

1. This kind of poetry is complex and difficult. Most varied concepts are brought together. It is difficult for the ordinary readers to understand this kind of poetry.
2. Metaphysical poetry is intellectual in tone. There is an analysis of the most delicate shades of psychological experience.
3. There is a function of emotion and intellect. Emotions are analyzed in intellectual manner.
4. It is full of conceits. A conceit means juxtaposition of opposite ideas and images.
5. It is argumentative. There are logical arguments to prove some idea or thought. The poet advances his arguments like a lawyer.
6. The poet uses a new vocabulary drawn from the different fields, such as trade and commerce, the arts and sciences.
7. There are unusual rhymes, strange rhythms and compound words. There are also far-fetched similes and metaphors. The figures of speech are often excessive.

It is often dramatic in form. Such poetry presents a drama of ideas. Let us take an example John Donne's famous 'A Valediction: of Weeping'. The occasion of this poem is departure from his wife before a sea voyage. He describes his tears with different things. First of all his tears are 'coins' stamped with the portrait of his wife's face. Secondly, they are 'pregnant' bearing the portrait as the tear shaped womb bears a child. Then he calls them 'words' and finally they are salt-tides drawn up by

the moon. In the last stanza every sigh is an encouragement to the wind to blow hard and make the poet's voyage rough and dangerous. On reading this poem, we find that there is rapid succession of love but the treatment of the subject was quite different. When we read such poems, we find that such poetry is difficult and unsuitable for the subject of love. There are critics who did not agree with this kind of treatment for the subject of love. Instead of logical element, we find more intellectual element. The metaphysical poets chose quite new or revolutionary comparisons. For example, many poets have compared the lovers to a pair of love but John Donne compared them to a pair of compasses. The woman is in the center and the man always travel around the circumference. In another poem, a lover's heart has been compared to a small or grenade.

The fashion of metaphysical poetry did last long after the end of 17th century. For 200 years, it was almost forgotten. In the beginning of this century, the interest in metaphysical poetry is revived. T.S Eliot, Auden and some other poets took serious interest and re-evaluated the metaphysical poetry. Some modern poets were also influenced by the metaphysical school. D.H Lawrence and Ted Hughes can be cited as an example. 'Vampire' is a poem by Ted Hughes which resembles the metaphysical type of poetry. Here, he chooses the subject of a person who talk too much. Vampire is an evil spirit which sucks the life-blood from people. Here in this poem, the person talks too much has been compared with a vampire. The subject is ordinary but the comparison is very queer and evokes horrible images. Thus, metaphysical poetry marks an important movement in English literature. It is less entertaining meant for serious readers.

3. Sonnet

The Sonnet is a form of lyric which was borrowed from Italy in to English literature. The word 'sonnet' is derived from the Greek word 'sonnet' which means a sound. It is a short lyric of fourteen lines. This form of the lyric was practised by an Italian poet Petrarch (1304-1374). He used this form to express his love for his beloved Laura. It became very popular for the expression of love. The Petrarchan sonnet is divided in to two parts: (1) There is an octave of eight lines. The rhyme scheme of the octave is ABBA, ABBA, (2) The sestet which contained six lines. Its rhyme scheme was CDE, CDE.

The sonnet form was brought to England by Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey. Wyatt follows the Petrarchan form of the sonnet. The Earl of Surrey wrote sonnets to express his imaginative love for Geraldine. There is a sad note in his sonnet. He divided his sonnet into three structure for the sonnet but it is called Shakespearean Sonnet because he (Shakespeare) made it popular.

3.1 Shakespearean Sonnet

Shakespeare was not only a great dramatist but he was a great sonneteer also. Shakespearean Sonnet is divided into three quatrains and a couplet. Its rhyme scheme is ABAB, CDCD, EFEF, GG. During the Elizabethan age, Philip Sidney and Spenser also practiced sonnet form. Shakespeare wrote 154 Sonnets. His sonnets are full of sincerity of tone and perfect blending of sense and sound.

Next to Shakespeare, Milton is regarded as a great sonnet writer. Some of his sonnets are personal and very touching. He has expressed emotional movement of his life. For example, his sonnet 'On his blindness' expresses not only poet's misery at his blind state but also his faith in God and stoicism. Milton follows the romantic period; William Wordsworth wrote some beautiful sonnets. John Keats is regarded as one of the greatest sonnet writers in English literature. His sonnet 'On first Looking into Chapman's Homer' is a very beautiful sonnet. This sonnet describes his feeling when he read the translation of the Iliad by Chapman. This sonnet is a perfect example of technical skill. In 20th century, Rupert Brooke wrote some sonnets. Other poets in modern age also practised sonnets. Rupert Brooke, John Masefield, W.H. Auden and some other poets tried their hands at this beautiful.

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