

Poetry

'Poetry' is an emotional outburst. A man passes through different kinds of experiences, the impressions are collected in the inner recesses of heart and they go on piling up. Then a moment comes when it becomes impossible to hold them any longer and one more ~~or~~ experience of the same type works as a stimulant and poetry rushes out of the mouth as fresh stream of water gushed forth from the bottom of the earth. In case of oral expression of thoughts, feeling and emotions, the man feels impelled and poetry starts pouring out of his mouth. Poetry may flow out of the poet's pen also. It is like the flow of water from a small hole of a dam punctured by inner aquatic pressure. In one sentence we may say that poetry is an oral or written expression of a man's irresistible emotions and thoughts done on impulsion without any outside pressure. It spreads on

paper like the released water of a dam flowing freely on the surface of the earth.

Wordsworth said the same thing in different language and held poetry to be a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and emotions recollected in tranquillity." In Wordsworth's definition, recollection becomes the impelling force which causes poetry to flow out of the poet's lips or pen.

John Keats pointed towards the same spontaneity and naturalness with regard to poetry when he said that poetry should flow as naturally as leaves come on the trees. If it fails to come in a natural manner it should not come at all. He goes on to say -

"First, I think, poetry should surprise by a fine excess and not by singularity - it should strike the reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a remembrance."

Second it's touched of Beauty should never be half-way, thereby making the reader breathless instead of content the rise, the progress, the setting of imagery should, like the sun, come natural to him - shines over him and sets soberly although in magnificence, leaving in the journey of twilight!"

Shelley says :-

"Poetry is indeed something divine. Poetry is not like reasoning, a power to be exerted according to the determination of the will, this poetry arises from within, like the colour of a flower which fades and changes ~~as~~ as it is developed, poetry is the record of the best and the happiest moments and the happiest and the best minds."

Coleridge in his 'Biographia Literaria' has opined that - "A poem is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by promising for its immediate object pleasure, not

truth, and from all other species is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the 'Whole' as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component 'part'.

An analysis of the definitions given reveals five things about poetry (i) Spontaneity (ii) naturalness (iii) negation of intellectual activity (iv) something that gives pleasure and (v) extraordinariness.

The Romantics' definitions of poetry correspond to the Elizabethan concept too as spontaneity, imagination and pleasure played a dominant role in Elizabethan poetry. The coming of seventeenth century heralded the role of intellect in poetry. The metaphysicals paid scant regard to the understanding of the people. Poetry, in their hands, became more or less an intellectual activity though imagination was not totally banished. The 'metaphysicals' gave place to the verse satirists of the eighteenth century.

When poetry took a shift from Nature to the Court of the Kings and got mixed up with the politics of the day, the main purpose of the poet being to please the King. The eighteenth century poetry became 'Court' poetry or poetry of politics.

There was a revival of subjective poetry during the Romantic age but then once again poetry took a different turn and concerned itself with society where there was only 'sick hurry' and 'divided aims'. Social purpose of poetry became more dominant. Then once again poetry became imaginative when the Pre-Raphaelites tried to mix poetry and painting and the Georgians tried to revive the Romantic tradition though their attempt failed and after a decade the Georgians went into oblivion. The coming of modern age made poetry more technical and intellectual. Too much of insistence on the technical aspect and too much stress

on intellectual activity have produced greater poems but the very spirit of the poem has vanished. 'The Waste Land' is a great poem, no doubt, but too much of allusions involving a lot of mental activity on the part of the reader rob the poem of that charm which used to keep the readers of old poetry spell-bound.

According to Eliot, poetry is not an expression of personality but an escape from it. The meaning is that the personality of the poet must never interfere with the poetry produced. It must be a detached activity. Here we find poetry becoming completely objective. But detachment and objectivity should be the attributes of a critic and not of a poet. Eliot propounds this theory simply because he is, first and foremost, a critic. His poetry is critical in nature and give enjoyment to intellectually sensitive people. For common lovers of poetry it has very little.