



MUSIC IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

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Aristotle very aptly remarks that music is the very food of soul. It is undoubtedly true when all pervasive effect of music is taken into account in all realms of life and of nature as well. Without music, we cannot imagine the very existence of Nature. In each and every aspect of nature, there is the invisible and invincible impact of music. In almost all cultures of the world, where music is an integral part of life, music has always held its dominant niche and imparted multiple dimensions and meanings to almost all aspects of life. Literature as one of the arts of expressions too cannot remain away from music as one of the elemental components.

Looking into English Literature, one may easily trace the use of musical elements in it. Even Aristotle in his Poetics considers music as one of six key elements of poetry. The paper purports to highlight as to how English Literature, written especially after Elizabethan Era, has made music as one of its key elements and in turn one of the sources of insatiable pleasure and how it galvanized the literary world.

In the Elizabethan Era, which followed Renaissance enjoyed its heyday in literature, and other forms of fine arts, William Shakespeare in many of his plays used music as a backdrop. In his well known play Hamlet, Shakespeare devotes one scene to describe the strolling players who discuss among themselves as to how they have to make use of music during the enactment of their play in order to make the mouse trap scene most effective. They do so and the effect is so overwhelming that Claudius the king of Denmark and uncle of Hamlet screams in horror and his conscience is caught by Hamlet. It was not possible without the help of music as a backdrop to that particular scene. His play, 'Mid Summer Night's Dream', is another good example of an effective use of music. His play '**The Tempest**' is replete with music. In the play, an artificial storm is created by the usurp king with the assistance of his aide Prospero who does it effectively by the use of various types of music. Prospero is presented in the play as the one who can create music as per the requirement and the direction of his master with a view to bring the blood relations close to one another as per the benevolent wishes of his master. In fact, the whole atmosphere of the Adren forest is imbued with varied music. Shakespeare in this regard is said to have some functional inklings of music.

In Romantic Era, William Wordsworth sensed music very closely looked at Nature with a humanitarian eye. Majority of his poems especially Preface to 'The Lyrical Ballads' and 'Tintern Abbey', one can easily find his insightful immeasurable sense of hearing and observing Nature. In his poem 'Tintern Abbey', he grows into a mature and sensible man who has a wonderful sense of hearing the 'still sad music of mankind':

“For I have learned



To look on nature, not as in the hour
 Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes
 The still sad music of humanity.”

P.B.Shelley and John Keats made their poetry more sonorous and appealing. Their poems are impregnated with the elements which impart sweetness and spontaneity to the contents of their poems. One can never forget John Keats's' Ode on A Grecian Urn 'especially his following lines:

‘Heard melodies are sweet but those unheard
 Are sweeter therefore ye soft pipes, play on:
 Not to the sensual ear, but more endeared,
 Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone.
 (John Keats: Ode on A Grecian Urn stz 2 LL 1-4)

In the Victorian Era, Alfred Tennyson reigned supreme on English literature especially in his matchless use of the elements of music in his alluring poetry. It is because of his flawless use of assonance and consonance and at the same time of alliterative phrases. His poem ‘**The Lotos Eaters**’ is full of examples where Tennyson has meticulously used lines and phrases which have an inevitable musical effect on the readers:

There is sweet music here that softer falls,
 Than petals from blown roses on the grass
 Of night-dews on still waters between walls
 Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass:
 Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
 Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes?
 Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.
 (Alfred Tennyson: The Lotos Eaters: Choric song srz I LL 1-7)

In the twentieth century, G.M.Hopkins one of the pioneering experimentalists of his own times in the arena of poetry, devised for the first time certain poetic methods like the use of inscape to produce the melodious effect of poetry on his readers. His poems give his readers a new melodious sensation and aesthetic pleasure which is rarely found in the poetry of any other English poet of past or present:

‘‘The frown of his face
 Before me. T he hurtle of hell
 Behind, where where was a where was a place?
 I whirled out wings that spell.’’
 (Hopkins G.M., The Wreck of Deutchland, stanza 3, Ll 17-20)

One feels while reading his poems that these are not his poems but lyrics which are profusely inundated with melody and sonority. Hopkins makes his readers at ease. The rhythm and the rhyme the choice of words and appropriateness in the placing of words in phrases and lines of



poems are beyond delineation. It seems that the very soul of music has ascended on his mature poetry.

These are some of selective instances from English poems which testify the very essence of music in literature. Like other fine arts, English poetry has enriched the very texture and content by incorporating the musical components in various forms and modes like alliteration, middle and end rhymes, oxymoron, and liquid letters. Poetry and music seems to be inseparable from each other and are in reality, the two facets of the same coin. Romantic poetry contributes much more to this aspect as the Romantic poets wrote their poems with spontaneity and subjectivity which ask for more sonority and fluidity. However we cannot ignore poems written in diverse Eras. This area needs more exploration and it is desirable to see poetry in totality with regard to the use of the multiple aspects of musicality.

REFERENCES -

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