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Major Themes in The Poetry of Emily Dickinson

The majority of Emily Dickinson Love poems handle the effects of passion upon a human soul. Three principle motifs can be discerned in these poems; the anticipation of the lovers future visit and possible marriage; the climatic meeting of the lovers, and their resulting separations; and finally the sublimation of human passion in a celestial marriage as she becomes the bride of Christ. Her more artistic love poems are dealing with brides and marriages. In the words of Charles Anderson : "The struggle between earthly and heavenly love, remains central to the most successful poems in the marriage group. More accurately it is the source of the tension she sets up by embodying the heavenly theme in earthly terms, then making these into images with celestial reference....Two strategies of language are responsible for this success, the language of status and the signs which denote the elevation from one level to another."

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Among outstanding American writers, few had to wait for critical and scholarly acceptance as did Emily Dickinson with just seven poems published in her life time, it was not until 1950s that she was placed with Poe and Whitman as a major poet. Such posthumous fitted the anonymity of her life and echoed her own prophecy to Higginson : ' If fame be-longed to me I could not escape her if she did not, the longest day would pass me on the chase'. Critics consider her not only a great man women poet but also a great American poet. Yvor Winters observes, She is surpassed by no writer that this country has produced; she is one of the greatest lyric poets of all times.

Though seldom touched by contemporary, philosophical or social problems, her poems do deal with topics of general concern to the times in which she lived, even if she didn't see fit to publish them.

Through her vision, Emily Dickinson was able to change here negatives, into great affirmatives triumphantly reaching a sense of the fullness of the experience which she had outwardly rejected. Undoubtedly, she associated privation with being a poet, a probably more or less consciously chosen privation in order to become one.

*"To comprehend a nectar
Requires sorest need"* ⁽¹⁾

She never set herself consciously, to learn from the practice of others. She was one of those poets, who while dedicated to their art , do not think themselves as creators of literature. Writing for her, was not a matter of implementing tradition or experimenting with form or moulding words into finished products, but of listening to and reproducing her inner voice, "The bells whose jingling

cooled her tramp."

Almost all her poems are written in short measures in which the effect of curt brevity is increased by her verbal penuriousness, comprehension and epigrammatical ambush are her aids. She proceeds without preparations or apology by sudden sharp zig-zags. Some of the poem however seen destitute of any matter whatever. The lines do not seem the rhymes arbitrarily thrown in or left out, in accordance with no fix system, a grammar and even good test sometimes only conspicuous by their absence but in some of her roughest poems, there is still an idea which forces the reader to attend to its meaning and impress him in spite of his irritation he may feel at the form. This poem on 'Mystery on pain'

*The pain has an element of blank;
It cannot recollect / When it began or if there were
A day when it was not. / It has no future but itself,
Its infinite realms contain / Its past, enlited to
perceive / Now periods of pain.* ⁽²⁾

Death is a major theme in Emily Dickinson's poetry. It tends to be an obsession, at times becoming an almost morbid interest. Death helped her to understand and clarify the meaning of life. Death is as near, as familiar as common place , even as love affairs are in the poem's of less self sufficient poems. Richard chess has rightly noted that " at the heart of Dickinson's vision of death is the cessation of motion and rest."⁽³⁾

"Because I could not stop for death" is remarkable of the restraint which gives poignancy to last ride of this mortal life. Death has been very polite to her incoming to stop at her doors to take her out and in response to his 'civility' she

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puts aside her work and leisure to be with him.

***Because I could not stop for death
He kindly stopped for me
The carriage held but visit ourselves
And immortality.*** (4)

The chief qualities of death as revealed in her poems, his elusiveness, silence, quite laughter, rapidity of gait, the grace and lightness of his movements. Death for her is the 'Discount' of the grave. She considers death as a dialogue, between the spirit and the dust.

The majority of Emily Dickinson Love poems handle the effects of passion upon a human soul. Three principle motifs can be discerned in these poems; the anticipation of the lovers future visit and possible marriage; the climatic meeting of the lovers, and their resulting separations; and finally the sublimation of human passion in a celestial marriage as she becomes the bride of Christ. Her more artistic love poems are dealing with brides and marriages. In the words of Charles Anderson : "The struggle between earthly and heavenly love, remains central to the most successful poems in the marriage group. More accurately it is the source of the tension she sets up by embodying the heavenly theme in earthly terms, then making these into images with celestial reference....Two strategies of language are responsible for this success, the language of status and the signs which denote the elevation from one level to another."(5)

Nature plays an important role in the poetry of Emily Dickinson. Since the closing decade of the eighteen century nature has been one of the most recurrent themes of English and American poetry.

Nature in the Emily's poetry is radically different than it is in the poetry of the nineteenth century. C.R. Anderson comments ; "unlike them (the romantic poets of the nineteenth century) she did not seek its wild aspects, secluded sports for nursing a mood of melancholy or sublime ones for exalting the soul."(6)

The poetry of Emily Dickinson courts criticism and evades it. Occasional essays such as Allen Tate's is one 'The limits of poetry' and F.O. Matthiessen's "The problem of the private poet," emphasized both her extraordinary diction and her unconscious but omnipresent discipline. That her verses were sometimes erratic, half-done, and thrown off in the heat of creation itself is evident. But in the majority of her poems the leap of thought is so daring , the idea so provocative, that passages which , in a smaller spirit , would be poetry or audacious conceits become snatches of revelation. It is a flippancy or an anguished cry when robbed by life, she stands "a beggar before the door of God ", and confronts Him with "Surglar , banker, father !" "It is anything less than Olympian satire when, asking God to accept "the supreme iniquity", she declares :

***We apologize to thee
For thine own duplicity.*** (7)

Beauty, love, justice - these were no abstractions to her but entities, weights and measures , which the architect

had failed to use perfectly. She sought the builder not to commend but to question Him. Emily argued, upbraided, accused creation ; she recognized an angel only when she wrestled with him . Paradox was her native element.

Gnomic = aphoristic (Maxims or general principles expressed in few words)

Her gnomic imagery was tremendous in implication, and her range is far greater than a first reading reveals. Although the poet often indulged herself by retreating into a style cryptic and wayward, her tiny quatrains are lavish with huge ideas and almost overpowering figures . She speaks of music as 'The silver strife' ; she sees the railway train "lap the miles" and lick the valleys up" ; she speaks ironically of splitting the lark to find the music "bulb after bulb in silver round" ; she pictures the thunder crumbling "like a staff" while the lightening "skipped like mice", she glimpses evening as "The house wife in the west" sweeping the sunset "with many coloured brooms" ; she asks "who laid the rainbow piers" pondering on the power of words, she meditates :

***Could mortal lip divine/ The undeveloped freight
Of a delivered syllable,
'T' would crumble with the weight.*** (8)

John wain observes 'Miss Emily 's subject is her our identity, her self, innermost essence, her spirit, her soul'

She is deep, rather than wide. Her concern is with ultimates, bedrock realities

'Her aim is always to explore those supreme experiences that test the self and force it towards definition

Presentiment is that long shadow on the Lawn - Indicative that suns go down

***The notice to the startled Grass
The Darkness is about to pass***

(Jay Leyda 'The years and Hours of Emily Dickinson,' Vol. II, Page 151.

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Treatment of Folk Themes in the Poems of Sarojini Naidu

The poetic talent of Sarojini Naidu has presented, in her poems the portrait gallery of Indian folk characters living their lives and carrying on other different vocations against a rural background, which is a faithful representation of the Indian rural landscape with its vividly realized flora and fauna. There are poems of Sarojini Naidu such as 'Indian Weavers', 'The Corn Grinders', 'The Bangle Sellers', 'The Coromandal Fishers', 'The Palanquin Bearers', which not only deal with folk characters and their vocations, but also invest the folk theme with richness of allegory and symbolism.

DR. KAPIL SHRIVASTAVA

Sarajini Naidu is the great name in Indian poetic cosmos. She is a versatile genius. As being an Indian lady, she has touched all corners of Indian life whether it is rural or urban. She seems to be a great lover of nature. Her love towards nature is really indescribable. Her songs are basically replete with devotion but they have natural fervor. Nature is everywhere in her poems. As we know that Mrs. Naidu belongs to the age of transition in which she has witnessed both the aspects of India; its slavery and freedom. Being herself a freedom fighter, she has evolved her own patriotic feelings in her poems. She was a great leader of Gandhian movement. Being an ardent supporter and follower of Mahatma Gandhi, She had learnt much more from him. Her devotion towards nation is result of her attachment with Gandhiji. Although she was a lady of urban back ground yet we find her indulgence with rural life. She has picked up many social problems in her poems. We find varied folk themes in them. India is the land of villages. She was aware with this fact.

Keeping this all in her mind, she kept herself busy in village life. She was very near of village women whom she found under domination of male power. We see the important scenes of folk scenario in her poetry; hence, we find folk themes in her poems in the fact that two sections of her collections of poems are entitled, "Folk Songs" and "Indian Folk Songs". It makes clear that she was highly interested in Indian folk life. In other sections, there are many lyrics. As we know that Indian poetry is replete with the depiction of custom, culture, belief, occupations of masses, superstitions, simple joys and sorrows, aspirations and directness and simplicity. So is the case with the poems

of Sarojini Naidu. She has followed the Indian track of poetic way. She has gone in to the deeper side of Indian Folk society. Her poems reveal community life, not individual life. They appeal to popular audiences. Let us see the following lines extracted from her poem 'The Village Song':

*"Full are my pitchers and far to carry,
Lone is the way and long'
Why, O why was I tempted to tarry?
Lured by the boatmen's song?
Swiftly the shadows of night are falling,
Hear O hear, is the white crane calling,
Is it the wild owl's cry?"* ⁽¹⁾

There is a peculiarity of Folk poetry in India that Indian poetry has important place of bards. The bards are the real guardians of the folk poetry and they wanted the audiences to participate in it and due to this reason, we find the frequent repetitions of lines and phrases so that the latecomers may enjoy it. This thing is enough to keep the hearers bound with the place and time. In this way, folk songs are capable to unite folk masses. Sarojini Naidu has known this all that's why she was fond of folk culture and folk songs.

Sarajini Naidu is quite capable to capture all the essential qualities of folk poetry, so she jumped in to this ocean of folk poetry. The folk poetry lends spontaneity and vitality to her poems. Her folk lyrics do not make excessive demands upon the readers and evening day scenes and sights are the sources of their simplicity, their vocabulary, and their imagery. Through her folk poetry, Naidu has portrayed the common life of Indian people. She went around and experienced those hands such as its setting, events, and

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people. On account of this virtue, she has attained for her a great fame and popularity.

Thus, she has got an artistic identity with the community life, folk culture and wisdom, which is very ancient, as it continues from father to son and from son to his further generation. For example, "Wandering Singers" is a lyric set to the very tune of the songs of buds or wandering singers of India, and the wandering singers that in folk poetry, it is the life and culture of community that matters and not individual life and character. In this poem, we find the wandering singers expressing the realities of vocational and group life around them. The eternal realities of birth, life, and death, the basic passions of love and sorrow and the rituals of courtship and worship we get a sense of folk life as it is lived from day to day and the emotional involvement of the readers is thus ensured. They wander along singing, "All men are our kindred, the world is our home."⁽²⁾

Sarojini Naidu has focused on Indian folk festivals like 'Basant panchmi', 'Nag panchmi', 'Deepawali', 'Narial purnima', 'Raksha bandhan' etc. Through such descriptions of festivals, she has proved herself a true Indian daughter. Indian folk culture is dominated by rituals and performance of collective rites, and these poems emphasize the aspect of folk life. In this concern, Tanveer writes, "Moreover the Indian festivals serve to link up the community life with the life of nature, there is rejuvenation of the life of nature and of community life and this aspect is stressed. In the festivals of serpents (Nag Panchmi), as in many other poems, on folk themes the poetess has revealed a problem understanding of the meaning of Hindu festivals, which provide not only a kind of Katharsis, but also an elevation of the individual consciousness. The principal of reality leads the folk personality to a sense of structure and continuity in life."⁽³⁾

As far as the matter of folk culture is concerned, P.V. Rajyalaxmi says, "Despite the political polarization and tension between the Hindu and Islamic sides of the Indian personality there has always existed a synthesis and fusion of their religious and spiritual elements in the folk culture. In rural India, the Hindus pay homage to the Muslim saints while the Muslims exchange gifts and benedictions with the Hindus on festive occasions."⁽⁴⁾

Her poem 'The Pardah Nashin' is the true example of social picture. She has focused on the mean mentality of our male dominated society in which, there is no room for woman- liberty. Particularly, she has raised the problem of Muslim women who have to follow the traditions of Pardah. Mark these lines:

*"Her life is a revolving dream
Of languid and sequestered ease
Her girdles and her fillets gleam
Like changing fires on sunset seas
Her raiment is like morning mist,
Shot opal, gold and amethyst."*⁽⁵⁾

Now we talk of folk religion and its revelation in the poetry of Sarojini Naidu. In this respect she is great. As we know that India is a land of gods, goddesses and deities. In this concern, Sarojini Naidu has minutely observed Indian society. She invokes many gods and goddesses of common belief in a number of other poems, thus highlighting not only the religious belief of the folk, but also their fears and terrors, and urgently felt the need for the protection and guardianship of some supernatural being. 'Laxmi' the 'Lotus born', 'Kali the mother' 'Hymn to Indira' express the aspect of folk-ethos. The Hymn, addresses to Kali is itself a choric song of worship. Maidens, and brides, mothers and widows artisans and peasant, victors and vanquished and scholars, artists, and priests, poets, and patriots, all offer their devotion and invoke her glory and grace. Tanveer writes, "Sarojini Naidu captures in this poem the Hindu ideal of fusion by observing a simple and direct relationship between the folk reverence for the mother and sacramental ecstasy induced by group worship."⁽⁶⁾

Let us see how Sarojini Naidu reveals folk traditions of love. In her poems, we find love, lovers, and their enjoyment. She has portrayed the love affair of Krishna and Radha. Generally, we see that in our folk traditions, such depiction of Krishna and Radha is common thing. In the festival rites of Holi, the folk lovers tease each other and thus seek to attain a union through love-play in the folk-tradition of Krishna and the Gopis.

As a conclusion, it can be said that the poetic talent of Sarojini Naidu has presented, in her poems the portrait gallery of Indian folk characters living their lives and carrying on other different vocations against a rural background, which is a faithful representation of the Indian rural landscape with its vividly realized flora and fauna. There are poems of Sarojini Naidu such as 'Indian Weavers', 'The Corn Grinders', 'The Bangle Sellers' 'The Coromandal Fishers', 'The Palanquin Bearers', which not only deal with folk characters and their vacations, but also invest the folk theme with richness of allegory and symbolism.

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A Study of T.S Eliot and the Philosophy of Criticism

As a youngman, Eliot in his early criticism tends to miss the mark of deconstruction, but since he is aware of the dialectic of the past and present, he soon gets back to the path of equivocation. For instance, in the essay ' Tradition and the Individual Talent', he gives the impression as if tradition is prior, more significant than the individual. In fact he says: Tradition is a matter of wider significance. It cannot be inherited and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour." Similarly, he says : No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone, you must set him, for comparison and contrast among the dead." But soon, afterwards, he also says : "The necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere is not one-sided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it."

SUNIL KUMAR & PARKASHVIR

Review of Literature :

Most readers of Eliot are misled by Eliot's appraisal of the tradition to posit that Eliot is a conservative. What adds to the credence is the obvious and not what undercuts it. Eliot, thus, has been read out of context. He is a conservatist, but he is also a revolutionary, as for example, when he says: The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really now) work of art among them. The existing order before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole art readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new."

Because it is a revolutionary statement unexpected of the one who seems to cherish tradition and call it ' ideal' monument, Eliot had to say : "Whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature, will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past." And he further says, "And the poet who is aware of this order will be aware of great difficulties and responsibilities."

Matter :

Of course, a poet who understands the past and present different, and yet the same, has to be aware of difficulties and responsibilities. Eliot's poetry and criticism are difficult to understand, because as a responsible poet, he could not be otherwise. The poet's response to the existing monuments has to be dialectical, not merely Hegelian, but

also Heraclitean. One simply cannot write of his own age or of the ages gone by, but see between the two a Simultaneous order. Eliot is obviously not in favour of blind adherence to the tradition. Such an attitude, he says, should be positively discouraged. A responsible poet in responding to the tradition cannot ignore the individual talent. The same unity subsists between feeling and thought. For Eliot there is no stage of consciousness where one is present and the other is absent. In fact, in the one lies the other and vice-versa. The two—the past and the present, as feeling and thought, are measured by each other. That is what Shakespeare calls ' measure for measure'. When the past judges the present, it is not a judgement given by the canons of dead critics. It is judgement, rather a comparison in which Eliot says, "Two things are measured by each other." So, to conform merely is not to conform at all; it would not be new and therefore would not be a work of art.

Eliot's strategy even in his early criticism is not a strategy of the single motion of balancing, equilibration or overturning. Quite the contrary, "To counter this simple alternative," as Derrida puts it, "to counter the simple choices of one of the terms or one of the series against the other, we maintain that it is necessary to seek new concepts and new models, an economy, escaping this system of metaphysical oppositions." This economy he adds, would not be energetic of pure, shapeless force. The different examined simultaneously would be differences of site and differences of force.

By differences of site and differences of force, Derrida means: that the differences are and are not. The ' now'

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here is, as for example Eliot, when he says about the conformity of the past and present. "It appears to conform, and yet perhaps is individual or it appears individual and may conform; but we are hardly likely to find that it is one and not the other."

A complete deconstructive reading then, as Eliot envisages it, is the one which transforms the metaphysical oppositions into simultaneous network of reciprocal relationships. It is then that surprises emerge. It is surprising to find a text transforming metaphysical oppositions into a simultaneous network of reciprocal relationships. But it is strange that Eliot, except in a few cases, studied writers rather than texts, despite his formulation that honest criticism and sensitive appreciation is to be directed not upon the poet but upon his poetry and that in his own experience of poetry he has always found that the less he knew about the poet and his work, before he began to read it, the better. Except for Hamlet, there is no detailed analysis of any text by any poet, and here too, he, in reading the books, tends to read into the mind, the recesses, the crevices of the dramatist. This strikes as a major gap in Eliot's theory and practice. Had Eliot followed his own theoretical view of poetry to be read as poetry and not anything else, he would have given deconstruction its full-fledged formulation. Derrida in this respect scores the point. His deconstructive critique is entirely textual, though these texts happen mainly to be philosophical. In essence, Deconstruction succeeds only in a textual analysis, in searching reciprocal relationships. Eliot's failure in this respect is evident in his own misplaced appreciation of his essays, rather than his general theoretical statements. The latter are quite often exaggerated, though Eliot knows where he went wrong, and yet in the case of poets, he fumbles -- he, as Northrop Frye had to say, a broker in the literary market downgrades a poet today, as, for example, Milton and then goes again to rescue him.

The only text which Eliot, as we have seen, took up is of Hamlet he discussed this play at some length, because he perhaps did not know enough about Shakespeare's life. But his main interest in the biography of the poet continued to sway his criticism from deconstruction back to structuralism, for his bias for those poets who influenced him continues to inform his hierarchical view of poetry. He, for example, appreciates poets of the alien language Dante, Virgil, Goethe over Shakespeare or Wordsworth or Keats. About Dante, Eliot grows lyrical, regards Virgil as the greatest classic and raises Goethe to the height of a sage.

Eliot's appreciation of Dante's poetry emanates from its ease. What is surprising, he says, about the poetry of Dante is that it is, in one sense, extremely easy to read. The reason may appear jarring to anyone who has heard Eliot say that poetry, particularly modern poetry, ought to be difficult. Great poetry is indeed, both difficult and easy difficult because its statements are not unqualified statements.

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