

### What is Poetry? How I Relate myself to it?

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We have found that philosophers like Plato and Aristotle considered poetry as art of imitation. They did not pay much value to poet and poetry in practical life. All classical criticisms of poetry were about dramas in the form of poetry. Even Shakespeare was a dramatist mainly but a poet of one of the highest value. Here is some opinion about their consideration of poet and poetry: "Plato asserts that the worth of poetry should be judged by the truth to life achieved by the imitation, not by the pleasure it gives, Aristotle argues that correct imitation is in itself a source of pleasure; and where Plato asserts that the object imitated must be beautiful, Aristotle argues that the imitation of ugly things is capable of possessing beauty." (Dorsch 70)

The idea of truth is echoed even in the thought of a later poet, Coleridge,

"The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity that blends, and (as it were) fuses, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which I would exclusively appropriate the name of imagination." 1 (Garrod 157)

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty," ("Ode on a Grecian Urn") we have delightedly found in Keats.

Emphasis is given on imagination by William Blake, "This world of Imagination is the world of Eternity; it is the divine bosom into which we shall all go after the

death of vegetated body. This world of Imagination is Infinite and Eternal, whereas the world of Generation, or Vegetation, is Finite and Temporal." 2 (Bowra 3)

And emotion must be there behind the creation of any poem, "emotion recollected in tranquility", said William Wordsworth. He must have added his imagination when recollecting his past experience in tranquility to create.

There is no doubt that in making poetry emotion and imagination will have their essential parts with a synthetic view of life and events. Even away from any idea of God when a poet is very practical and materialistic he creates good poetry with a synthetic change of all materials collected in any way. Even when T. S. Eliot creates *Wasteland* it is the synthetic image of a world as viewed by him. Even scattered images create a whole giving a total view point of life as viewed by the poet.

In Sri Aurobindo we find poetry reaching a different scale and height. He brings Mantra as its aim; it was already in such poetry as the Veda and the Upanishad. Yes, poetry in nutshell is sublime in its nature. It is realization of a poet expressed in the form of art. Here we may view what Sri Aurobindo has said in his *Future Poetry*:

"The Kavi was in the idea of the ancients the seer and revealer of truth, and though we have wandered far enough from that ideal . . . all great poetry preserves something of that higher truth . . . . Poetry, in fact, being Art, must attempt to make us see, and since it is to the inner senses that it has to address

itself,- for the ear is its only physical gate of entry and even there its real appeal is to an inner hearing . . . .

“Therefore the greatest poets have been always those who have had a large and powerful interpretative and intuitive vision of Nature and life and man and whose poetry has arisen out of that in a supreme revelatory utterance of it. Homer, Shakespeare, Dante, Valmiki, Kalidasa . . . are at one in having this as the fundamental character of their greatness . . . .

“The tendency of the modern mind at the present day seems to be towards laying a predominant value on the thought in poetry.” (Sri Aurobindo 29-30)

Sri Aurobindo asserts that a poet is neither a philosopher nor a prophet nor preacher nor a teacher. “The prophet announces the Truth as the word of God or his command, he is the giver of the message; the poet shows us Truth in its power of beauty, in its symbol or image, or reveals it to us in the workings of Nature or in the workings of life, and when he has done that, his whole work is done; he need not be its explicit spokesman. The philosopher’s business is to discriminate Truth and put its parts and aspects into intellectual relation with each other. (Sri Aurobindo 31)

“The poetic vision of life is not a critical or intellectual or philosophic view of it, but a soul-view, a seizing by the inner sense; and the Mantra is not in its substance or form poetic enunciation of a philosophic truth, but the rhythmic revelation of intuition arising out of the soul’s sight of God and Nature and the world and the inner truth . . . . for the poet creates out of himself and not out of

what he sees outwardly: that outward seeing only serves to excite the inner vision to its work.” (Sri Aurobindo 34)

After hearing the views of great poets and critics, I, an insignificant Indian English Poet, who stands neither on solid ground of English world nor on purely Indian earth, finds little scope to address the scanty audience, finds support neither here nor there, finds himself really alone. In reality all poets are alone, for among other reasons, the poetry is drowned in the din of large number of rival contenders who usually entertain whereas pure poetry does not wish to entertain in the sense that the other rivals do. “The poet is lonely, because he has the task of being sincere in a community in which the cinema, the popular Press and all too many schools do their best to dilute, cheapen or repress emotion.” (Marjorie 175).

We have advanced much beyond the world of Marjorie Boulton, even in India. Think of a poet’s vulnerable position against the great politicians, models and the cricketers. The remaining greats are taken care of by the big media. They pronounce the last word. Finish. We the Indian English poets remain alone unless favoured by some big media or establishment or community. We are struggling.

I do not think that efforts to write poetry to make propaganda of any sort, to make publicity in favour of religious belief or arguing for anything else through gross words make any poetry. Any sentiment may be expressed through poetry but that must be free from the crude utterance. Prose poems are acceptable but in my view poetry must

have rhythm, even an inner rhythm and there is no wrong in rhyming though it is not compulsory. Poems rhymed are the natural products in their usual form. And poetry must contain pithy sayings in any form. Ideas vague or without carrying any clear meaning are examples of inappropriate poetry. Good poetry must be a synthetic product of thoughts, ideas, dreams and visions grasped intuitively. Imagery, symbolism, subtle ornaments make the poetry enjoyable; pleasant to hear, beautiful to see. Whatever the force that dominates a poem a unique creation gives ananda.

I have reviewed and analysed large numbers of Indian English poets to find that none is same to any other in thoughts, ideas or in framing of their poems. Each has some distinctive quality or drawback. Some are very eager to rhyme thereby spoiling the poem by forced pattern. A magazine of the establishment publishes only unrhymed poems.

With these observations I wish to witness my own creative process. While writing a poem I do not remember any poem by any poet though some indirect influence of some poets may remain in the background without my direct knowledge of it. When I write it I

find that words come, known and sometimes unknown, to fill up the space to express a particular idea or depict a scene. When in the process of creation many imaginations and formations which usually precede any such work, vanish or give birth to alternative links to help me complete the work. Rhyming may come automatically, sometimes I may try but do not exert too much in it. Really, it is a feeling that something is getting done, that I am pushed. Certainly I remain in the forefront as a social being or a Nature lover or lover of the unknown. After the work is done I may or may not change words or punctuations as if it is attached to my consciousness for sometime or some days. My spiritual or philosophic ideas are formed not out of any specific school or with reference to any specific personality but in such matters, may be Sri Aurobindo remains as a guide without any specific reference to any of his creations, my intimacy with Nature is the result of my day-to-day relationship with it and as a social organ I am helped by news and views from multiple sources, pouring in as a matter of course. All are created out of myself. Sri Aurobindo's utterance that "The poet really creates out of himself" seems to be true.

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3. Boulton Marjorie. *The Anatomy of Poetry*. Delhi: Kalyani Publishers. 1991. Paperback.