

Elizabethan period is the richest period in the history of English literature. England was known as the golden nest of the singing birds for almost all the literary genius tried in songs and lyrics. The early Elizabethan lyric writers were shrouded in the heavy atmosphere of the fifteenth century. But, with the passage of time, the tone and temper of lyrics were progressively changed and it caught the public eye and received applause. In fact it was during Elizabethan period that lyrical forms and rhythms were given a proper shape. Form and expression were joined together and the lyric became an expression of the soul. Songs were sung in the halls, parlours and trotted along the roads. Songs translated from the foreign songs were adapted and new ones were composed with dexterity and skill. Love songs, religious songs and the fantastic songs were composed in varied mood. Let us see it in a brief.

M.A. HAQUE

The lyric poetry got its thematic as well as structural perfection at the hands of the Elizabethan poets, who exhibited their profound love for lyrics in their composition. Generally, the theme of this poetic genre were praises of gods, patriotism, war, revelry and rejoicing. But, love was the dominating theme of all the lyric poets. In fact, love was the first subject of the Elizabethan poets. In the sonnet, it was refined, elaborate and romantic as with Spenser and Sidney, or deep, passionate and perplexed as with Shakespeare. But the lyric, as it developed in accordance with the musical art of the time, was too light an instrument to utter the deeper notes of passions. Hence, its themes were joyful love, the love that laughs, entreats and sighs for every blitheness of soul. It is Pagan love and Renaissance Love that sounds through the Elizabethan

lyrics, nothing deeply sentimental or medieval. However, subject is of little account in lyric poetry. The feeling, the music and the mood is everything.

As a matter of fact, the Elizabethan age was the most propitious time for the flowering of the lyrical genius. Every poet had a natural turn for expressing himself in a lyrical mood. The lyrical poems of Philip Sidney are bold and passionate and are also characterised by the exquisite beauty and charms. His 'Only Joy' 'Now here you are' and 'Ring out your bell' are marked by a note of fancifulness. Spenser and Marlowe also demonstrated their lyrical genius by including songs in their plays. Several collections of beautiful lyrics were published in that period. Shakespeare stands first among the Elizabethan dramatists as well as poets. His lyrics are original and spontaneous. A fresh and rustic realism runs through all of his poems. His songs are so appropriately implanted in his dramatic scenes that they cannot be removed without injury to the main play. Other dramatists of the age did not possess Shakespeare's realism, yet they decorated their plays with songs. Dekker, Beaumont and Fletcher can be named here. John Lyly and Greene also composed lyrics of high order which are replete with the English feeling and the Renaissance fancies.

The Elizabethan lyric is not heavy. It is an expression of the holiday mood. It refreshes the audience even if it says nothing in particular. Its rhythmic grace and music are unparalleled. Assonance, alliteration and other verbal effects are nicely blended. Actually, the Elizabethan lyric is a form of pure art, poetic emotion stirred by the sense of beauty

M.A. HAQUE

(6)

and of musical delight, with the slightest possible admixture of the temporal and the adventitious. These haunting measures of the lyrics are never over weighted with meaning or over charged with convention or ornaments.

Thus, we see that lyric poetry of the Elizabethan age is unparalleled in its thematic ^{ly} decay and structural grace beauty. The Elizabethan lyricists established new tradition that was blindly followed for a long time to conclude. The Elizabethan lyrics are the precious treasure of the English literature.

M.A. HAQUE