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ANALYSIS OF THE POEM, "THE HARP OF INDIA"

"The Harp of India" is a well known patriotic poem by Henry Derozio. It deals with the pathetic plight of the people of India who were under the grip of cruel and callous administration of the British Rule. The poem was written at a time when the poets never expressed their patriotic views in a direct way, that is why the poem, from the beginning to the end, tacitly airs the views of patriotism through the medium of some beautiful metaphors and connotations.

The poem is in the form of Shakespearean Sonnet which has three quatrains and a couplet at the end of the poem. The poem begins with a metaphor of a withered flower on a withered bough. The poet imagines the wretched and miserable condition of India to a withered bough. Since our country has a rich past in the Vedic period and onwards, India was an evergreen flower blooming and blossoming on an every green bough.

Unfortunately, under British rule, people had to lead a life of slavery even worse than beast. Therefore, the metaphor is very apt and suggestive. It has a very fine correspondence between the major and the minor terms. However, there is one remarkable thing in this metaphor i.e. the poet mentions only one bough of the tree which is withered. By this connotation he seems to say that the people of India are only physically slave to the British rule and not spiritually. Only the bough is withered and not the root and stem. The soil beneath the root, i.e. the age old culture and civilization, is still fertile and nourishing.

The first two lines of the poem contain a very beautiful use of personification. The nation has been personified as a withered bough. The poet says:

"Why hang'st thou lonely
on you withered bough?
Unstrung for ever, must
thou there remain"

The other powerful and suggestive image of this poem is the image of music. The poet says that the music of India was once very sweet and melodious, but due to this slavery nobody dares to hear this awakening music. Silence has bound the whole country with her fatal chain. And so the people of this country are neglected, mute and desolate.

"Silence hath bound the wither fatal chain;
Neglected, mute and desolate art thou.
Like ruined monument on a desert plain."

In the said above lines silence has been personified as a lady who is chained. The words, "neglected", "mute" and 'desolate' very well show the exact picture of the miserable condition of the then society

where men have to keep mum for the fear of the British rule. The symbol of 'ruined monument' and 'desert plain' is also very interesting and worth noticing. The ruined monument symbolizes the lost glory and grandeur of the nation. The past of India was very grand and golden like a great monument. Unfortunately, it got ruined by the blows of British Rule. The phrase 'desert plain' is the imagistic variation upon the words 'ruined monument'. The sound of these phrases is also cacophonous which very aptly suggests the sense.

In the third quatrain of this sonnet, the poet says that several men before him have played the music of the harp and in return the harmonious chords of the harp have produced sweetness. He further observes that fame has also garlanded many a wreath for the nation. The flowers on the grave of the minstrels of the nation are still blooming. Here the term "minstrel" suggests the men of honour and fame who kept on playing the harp of India in order to produce harmonious music of eternal value. They no longer exist now.

The word "grave" is an example of the figure metonymy which suggests here the death of such great personalities. Though, they are no longer in existence but the flowers of their concerted efforts for improving the wretched condition of India are still blooming on their grave. So through these beautiful uses of connotation the poet is successful in infusing both feeling and form together. Here the use of extended metaphors of both the harp and the flower are very appreciating and interesting. The poet in this poem has tried his best to make a fine relation between the past and the present, between the tradition and the modernity. He wants to describe the present with the help of the past.

At the end of the poem, the poet is of the opinion that the music of the harp is eternal. It is indestructible. He asks for the permission of the harp so that he may strike the strain of the harp for creating a revolutionary music-to arouse the people in general.