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UNDERSTANDING POETRY

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**Sample Preview
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QUESTION PAPER

June – 2023

(Solved)

UNDERSTANDING POETRY

B.E.G.E.-143

Time: 3 Hours]

[Maximum Marks: 100

Note: Answer all questions.

SECTION-A

Q. 1. Write short notes on the following:

(a) Tropes employed by Nirmala Putul in her poetry.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-14, Page No. 134, Q. No. 2.

(b) Irony in ‘Ajamil and the Tigers’.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-11, Page No. 107, Q. No. 2.

(c) Browning as the poet of Dramatic Monologue.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-4, Page No. 32, ‘Browning as the Poet of Dramatic Monologue’.

(d) Significance of nature in Robert Frost’s poetry.

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-5, Page No. 49, Q. No. 1.

SECTION-B

Q. 2. Explain with reference to the context of the following:

**(a) The tables have turned now
Protests spark
Now here
Now there**

Context: These lines are taken from poem ‘The Caves’ by Jtok Lanjewar’.

Explanation. This poem serves as an illustration of protest poetry and should be studied in the context of Dalit oppression from a Dalit feminist perspective. It is a Dalit woman’s voice standing out against the numerous layers of exploitation and enslavement. The poem raises concerns about the injustices meted out to Dalits by a society controlled by wealthy individuals. This poetry also conveys a great deal of grief. Their inhuman atrocities have carved caves in the rock of my heart.

The poet mentions “inhuman atrocities” that have created caves in his heart in the first few lines. The brutality against the Dalits and their marginalisation are referred to as the atrocities. The word “their” alludes to

the ruling caste, society, or, to put it another way, the oppressive forces. Similarly, “Inhuman” refers to the inhumane way Dalits are treated; under normal circumstances, such treatment would not be meted out to a person. It also reveals a great deal about those who use violence. Their callousness and barbarism came to the fore. They are surprisingly regarded as cultured.

**(b) Once I promised you an epic
And now you have robbed me
You reduced me to rubble
This concerto ends**

Context: These lines are taken from poem ‘Ode to Bombay’ by Dilip Chitre’.

Explanation. The poet begins to disintegrate, as if he were formed of falling fragments, replacing the image of glitz and surprise. It is an expression of how the city has destroyed him, broken him, and robbed him of his identity. The poem’s final lines use a phrase that sounds similar: “You have robbed me/You reduced me to rubble.” It is repeatedly said that the poet has been eaten by the city and reduced to what he refers to as debris. Despite taking away his most fundamental human quality, the poet maintains that this is still an epic since “Once I promised you an epic.”

This poem deserves to be sung as an ode. The concerto of the poet’s own ruin and death comes to an end with the final stroke, which completely destroys the poem. In the meantime, the poet continues to interact with the city since it seems to predominate in the poem, as if the poet were a lover and the city were a cherished. The poet feels trapped in the city’s snares and longs to escape. He says, “I free your railway lines from my bloody veins/I unfasten your bridges from my insistent bones.” There’s also the idea that the city has seeped into his bones and veins, and that he can hardly escape its hold.

- (c) **Hurry up! any minute
they will be bringing it
from the hospital –
a white model of our lives**

Ans. Context: These lines are taken from the poem *The Dead Baby* by William Carlos Williams.

Explanation: The speaker's tone has remained urgent throughout this stanza. Time hangs over everything with a crushing feeling. Williams maintains the logic of time and allows it to shape the speaker's sentiment, in contrast to most modernist literature that would completely reject it. Before the dead baby is brought home, the house must be prepared for ceremonies. "A white model of our lives, a wonder," is how the author describes the infant. A model is a focal point that serves as the foundation for anything else. The infant is the centre of attention in the family. However, the word "curiosity" brings back the feeling that there was something peculiar about the circumstances surrounding the baby's death. It would be surrounded by fresh flowers, as per the ritual, when it is brought home.

- (d) **My vegetable love should grow
Vaster than Empires, and more slow
An hundred years should go to praise
Thine Eyes, and on thy forehead gaze.**

Ans. Context: These lines are taken from poem 'To His Coy Mistress' by Andrew Marvell.

Explanation: The following ten lines have extreme sensuality. The tone of humour has made way for loving as a serious endeavour. From the eyes to the forehead and then on to "each breast," the woman's physical components are listed. In terms of each part, the

remainder of the body is highlighted. Life expectancy is measured in "hundred years," "two hundred years," and then "thirty thousand years." These are going to be "adored" by the woman's body. It is important to point out that the first half of the poem has an impressive blend of humour, overemphasis, and roguishness.

Witness can serve as a serious indicator for understanding the poem's meaning. The poet's persona vehemently defends a belief that cannot be realised: love is not accessible to mankind despite their desire for it. Contrarily, this is real. When love appears, it vanishes quickly. Marvell has discreetly emphasised this point to imply that while desire is insatiable in the limited time one has, the essence of existence is loss, scarcity and defeat.

SECTION-C

Q. 3. Answer the following questions:

(a) **"Donne represents love in both worldly and mystical terms." Comment with reference to the poem "The Canonisation".**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-2, Page No. 14, Q. No. 3.

(b) **Discuss Wordsworth as a poet of nature.**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-3, Page No. 25, Q. No. 2.

(c) **Critically analyse the poem "The Negro Speaks of Rivers".**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-8, Page No. 75, ' "The Negro Speaks of Rivers": Thematic Analysis' and Page No. 78, Q. No. 1.

(d) **Discuss the urban surrounding and broader social concerns in the poem "Ode to Bombay".**

Ans. Ref.: See Chapter-12, Page No. 116, Q. No. 2.



Sample Preview of The Chapter

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UNDERSTANDING POETRY

BLOCK-1 : BRITISH POETRY

Poetry: An Introduction



INTRODUCTION

Poetry has been discussed by scholars and has been defined differently. Sydney wrote *An Apology for Poetry, or The Defence of Poetry* in 1580. The title suggests that poetry had come under attack at the time and “an apology” or a “defence” was needed to underpin the veracity of it. Later Dryden wrote *Dramatic Poesy* and Wordsworth wrote *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*. Coleridge and Matthew Arnold also discussed on poetry. T.S. Eliot wrote about this art form in “Individual Talent”. Philip Sydney said poetry was “almost the highest estimation of learning”. It means human learning realizes itself at a truly supreme level through the poetic act. It is assumed that wisdom is crystallized in poetry and enlighten those areas of life that generally remained shrouded in darkness. Sydney compares poetry with rational and thoughtful prose which belongs to philosophy where mind is active to understand the phenomena of the world surrounding us. Philosophy defines and explains even as poetry shares and communicates. Poetry aims at learning whereas philosophy aims at distinct and precise finding. The terms of poetry and prose are laid out through deployment of specific vocabulary. In this chapter, we shall define poetry and distinguish poetry from prose and understand in which sense the word poetry is used.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

POETRY IN ITS LINKAGE WITH SOCIETY

On the social significance of poetry, Jose Marti (1853-1895) refers to the poetry of American poet Walt Whitman (1819-1892). Marti says: Poetry expresses the hubbub of throngs of people settling down, of cities at work, and of oceans and rivers harnessed and put to man’s use. He asks Whitman to pair consonants and combine in tame couplets the mountains of merchandise, these forest of mast, these cities of ships, these battles where millions are felled to preserve man’s rights, and let the sun, whose limpid fire spreads over the vast landscape, rule over all. Marti suggests that the change in conditions of life should be depicted in literary writing so that it may prepare itself for holding the range and intensity of contemporary happenings. Literature in general and poetry in particular should take cognizance of the happenings around them. Also, the happenings would

link to occupations and workings of people that keep them in proper shape.

Inspiration for enhancing already-existing production techniques can be found in life’s motivations as well as via actual experiments. Poetry thus portrays individuals in both happy and sad moods. These states have a vast area of human existence and struggle inside their structure. People’s emotional states serve as a record of how they dealt with their circumstances. Additionally, they establish the quality standards that people have achieved via discipline and hard work. The reader is made aware of the afore-mentioned situations and the hardships faced by those who are working together in a spirit of mutuality and togetherness via good poetry. We thus have people and groups existing inside a social ethos. People and groups build ideas as they go through life to meet their needs.

The basis for poetry’s projection of its meaning, aspirations, life lessons, and specific morals to pursue is the overall nature of the activity we have been discussing. Marti has addressed the subject of portraying life in the following way in light of Whitman: After giving Walt Whitman’s verses some time to sink in, one begins to hear music that sounds like the earth resonating to beautiful, barefoot armies galloping across it. His writing has the effect of hanging beef sides from a butcher shop window at times, and at other times, it sounds like patriarchs chanting in unison at that hour when the smoke disappears into the skies.

The earth’s resonance with the march of soldiers is striking to us here. It represents the ability of poetry to have a dialogue with how the earth functions. The armies are made up of young, active guys who are focused on a specific goal and moving in that direction. Make sure the soldiers are focused on achieving a shared ideal rather than on fulfilling individual needs. The level of the account is raised to a completely new level by the mention of patriarchs and clouds. The comment refers to a period of intense passion, glory, and significant victories. In its purest form, poetry casts a wide net over all facets of society, the natural world, and life in general. Poetry is at its most basic and just touches on that.

POETRY IN THE PROCESS OF HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Poems were frequently used as literary works during the Post-Elizabethan era of the 17th century. First, there

was the metaphysical poetry, which tried forth a different kind of emphasis. Basically, it went by wit. The emotion was sought to be held in check most of the time. Poetic language was distinctive and self-aware. It flouted expectations and presented a challenge to the reader's creativity. The format was similar to a game played by poets. The poets appreciated the use of dialogue because theatre had been prevalent for a while.

At the poem's core, tension pre-dominated more in the way of a device than a naturally occurring flow. The poets also addressed philosophical issues like dying, falling in love, passing of time, and the importance of ideas in life. We might as well claim that Milton's lyrical writings, particularly *Paradise Lost*, represent a sort of culmination of all these things. Milton's expression was characterised by ideological conflict. *Paradise Lost* was initially intended to be written as a drama by Milton. His goal was to expand the range of discussion to include topics like the fall, Satan's role, God and the Son, as well as other significant people. Significantly, Adam and Eve were to explain the perspective of sin in ways that would humanise them for the reader and cause him to identify with their struggles. Milton saw poetry as the priceless lifeblood of a master spirit in terms of its meaning.

Poetry in the Augustan Age

The Augustan age in the 18th century has seen significant changes to its principles. It allied itself with consistency, good manners, morality, harmonies, and a new notion of art, which had the heroic couplet at its core. Satire as a form was seen to be a corrector of departures from the rules in that system, where reason and intelligence held a superior place.

The poetry of the 18th century excelled at exposing the hypocrisy, deceit, and lie that were on display in people's day-to-day interactions in metropolitan centres. The influential sector of trade and business that had wealth but lacked dignity played a significant role in the times. Success alone mattered to them; the depth of feelings and emotions was never a problem. Humbug and folly were in charge. Those were the brand-new truths. The country's common people gained influence during the century. The common people who were engaged with production in small towns and villages on their way to the cities gave rise to the merchants who eventually came to control the roost. Since it was intended to be made available to a larger segment of consumers distant from the location where producers lived, their produce was evolving into goods. The outcome was an increase in the wealth held by this group. This sector also demanded good manners and morality that matched their social influence. Planning, using the right words to speak with other tradespeople, managing the class of artisans and labour skillfully, to name a few, were at the heart of their work and goal.

On the other hand, skillfulness would introduce cunning approaches to bring about difference and dispute. In conclusion, thinking and reason were necessary. These characteristics, while practical, fit the new mentality more than intrepid exploration of the surroundings. Put them side by side with the harshly caustic verse that served as literature's depiction of the time to see how similar the two were. Poetry from the 18th century, like that of Alexander Pope, was like this.

An Essay on Man and *An Essay on Criticism*, for example, were among Pope's many works using the term "essay" in the title. The word was indicative of the altered situation even if it had a somewhat negative connotation at the time. These turned into illustrations of Augustan poetry that helped to promote and authenticate the society that was developing at the time. Then, two things – closeness to language and emphasising reason over emotion – came up specifically. Pope claims that in today's poets, we do not see true genius. The same may be said of critics, who lack all discernment. Both poets and critics derive their knowledge from celestial powers; the former are responsible for determining what is proper or wrong, while the latter are those who write. Pope wants to distinguish between the two based on what each group is expected to contribute to society.

The sole word in dispute here is "heavenly powers," which refers to the two people's natural tendencies rather than any particular God or Gods.

Additionally, writing and evaluation are done in the context of the quality of the work. The poetry passage starts to resemble a statement made by a shopkeeper in terms of the trade when work and merit are reduced to labour and value.

Pope, however, is no less a poet than his contemporaries from the 17th or 19th centuries since he raises fundamental issues such as what is good for society and what literature can teach us about how to assess an individual's creative work. He does lament the declining quality of poetry and critical writing. The irony in these remarks is that individuals who don't take their work seriously and let laziness and mediocrity intrude on creativity are criticising literary literature. Additionally, mediocrity would operate through the ordinary and banal, rather than through creative engagement with reality and intellectual depth. Pope's poetry depicts the decay taking hold in modern sensibility and is grounded in the reality of his period.

The Romantic Trend

In contrast to Augustan poetry, which lacked imagination, the 18th century laid the groundwork for a new kind of literature. The lofty took a back seat during this time as the ordinary ruled. The Romantic movement recognized the place of high ideals in life and evoked the hidden areas of human interest. Additionally, the Romantic movement was closely associated with nature, rural simplicity, and the joy of daydreaming about societal change and human fulfilment. The French Revolution which was much in common with the American War of Independence started in 1789. This was the struggle against monarchy at its centre. These two movements would not make political sense to bourgeois consolidation in England.

One of the main adopters of the new style was William Wordsworth. Wordsworth's goal was to select instances and situations from everyday life and to relate or describe them in as much of the language actually used by men as possible while also adding an imaginative touch to give them an unusual appearance. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, he wanted to make these instances and situations interesting by revealing in them truthfully but without being pretentious. It was generally preferred to live a simple, rural life because it provided a better environment for the heart's

POETRY: AN INTRODUCTION / 3

fundamental desires to mature, was less restrained, and allowed them to express themselves in a clearer, more emphatic manner. It also allowed for more accurate contemplation and more forceful communication of our basic emotions. Finally, it allowed for the germination of rural manners. Wordsworth makes two significant statements in his argument: “language truly employed by men” and “a particular colouring of imagination.” In this setting, the men represent regular villagers who communicate their intentions to neighbours immediately and plainly. By using imagination, the intent’s range is increased. Simplicity and authenticity are clearly prioritised. This wasn’t present in 18th century poetry, which placed a strong emphasis on humour, insight, critique, and the re-definition of social norms. Wordsworth’s deviation from the norm does, in fact, make clear the essential characteristic of Romanticism. Wordsworth enters the rustic scene and crosses the cultural divide all at once. The village is the well selected decision for Romanticism. Poetry from a Romantic perspective favours innocence as a quality. This takes on a sharper form at a deeper level, exposing the hollowness of ostentation and riches. The prevailing emotion that the French Revolution sparked has a connection to romanticism. Poetry according to the Romantic definition deals with emotions that have not yet reached their full potential. Poetry’s future lies in the hands of those who see a different kind of creativity. Wordsworth discussed the poetic process, which is the act in which the poet is conscious of the work he does, in order to advance the cause of poetry. That marks the start of a brand-new issue that all aspiring poets will have to address. Wordsworth asserts that poetry is the uncontrolled outpouring of strong emotions in this regard. It derives from an emotion that has been recalled in a state of calmness. The emotion is thought about until, through a type of reaction, the calmness gradually vanishes and another emotion, similar to the one that had been the subject of contemplation before, is gradually produced and does in fact exist in the mind. Wordsworth wants to convey an emotion that the poet experienced in its unprocessed form. But that wasn’t the right time to write; instead, he should have waited for a calm period when he could reflect on the emotion again and confirm its genuine character. The emotion was now suitable for recording after assuming a solid form in the intervening time. It transports the poet back to the first time he experienced the emotion. As a result, serenity serves a purpose and “the tranquilly eventually vanishes.” We have seen that Wordsworth, a Romantic poet, is deliberate in his poetic act and motivated by the need to awaken and declare one’s self.

Modernism and Poetry

The literary trend that started in the latter half of the 19th century and reigned supreme in the twentieth century can be called modernism. The word itself is troublesome, to start. The 19th century is immediately put into the background as antiquated whenever modernism is used, regardless of how appealing a body of literature it may have generated. Second, modernism does not necessarily imply a connection to the dominant modernity perspective. It’s interesting to note that modernism has maintained humanism and rationalism separate. The term refers to the present, specifically the late 19th century, when Europe’s social

systems had grown unstable. The literary watchword became “the truth of that moment.”

This understanding of modernism has a justification. The historical regimes were no longer able to enhance output. The oversupply of products on the market led to a drop in pricing and profits. In contrast, factories would close and workers would lose their employment if production were limited, which would then affect market demand for products. It looked that the *laissez-faire* or free market idea was no longer applicable in the current circumstance. This indicated a decline in human initiative and an increase in the dominance of invisible forces operating in the economic environment over it in the literary world. Consider how it relates to a writer who experienced social stifling. Success or failure lost all significance for him because he lost faith in writing. The writer was left without a perspective from which to evaluate life because literary expression had lost its central place in society. Modernism was used to represent this element of a dead end.

Over Europe, meanwhile, loomed the threat of a global conflict. Being a pessimist like Browning or an optimist like Matthew Arnold was no longer an option. Both circumstances shared a foundational element: a desired outcome. The fact that 20th century modernism had no historical context marked a significant divergence from the literary tendencies we discuss. It was a separate, autonomous thing that appeared to have exploded into the literary scene. It was an ideology of existence, aloneness, and alienation. It was carried by the modern person on his shoulders. In fact, it claimed that a person’s uniqueness was the very thing.

Due to its lack of ties to or support from institutions like the family, the workplace, society, the neighbourhood, and relationships, uniqueness floated around helplessly. T.S. Eliot’s “Love Song” comes to mind. Prufrock the figure searches in vain for a benchmark. The poem clearly displays his psychological area. Self-doubt is a problem for him. He is afflicted by a continual sense of emptiness. Pre-World War I was a time when nothing made sense, and Prufrock is a result of that time. According to Eliot, who rather powerfully expresses this opinion in his poems, people were no longer driven to the values and concerns of nationalism, humanism, social equality, and justice. Since the Renaissance, the recognised notion of modernism has continuously incorporated the values of reason, humanism, and questioning wrongs and atrocities. That was ignored by the new modernist. Eliot attempted to draw a line between art and social issues and life’s processes in order to support this perspective. He did that while talking about the purpose and value of art. No poet or other artist can express their whole meaning in isolation.

His importance and respect are based on how he relates to the poets and artists who have passed away. You must place him among the dead for contrast and comparison; you cannot respect him alone. This is an aesthetic criticism, as opposed to only historical criticism. The requirement that he conform, that he cohere, is not unilateral; when a new piece of art is produced, all earlier works of art experience the same changes at the same time. Eliot just briefly touches historical criticism and addresses the subject of art in terms of aesthetics. He believes that art is not a social good and

does not need a social foundation. Additionally, the poet must both cohere and conform on a personal level; he must do both. The piece of art is also a standalone, independent entity. "All the works of art" are on one side of the artwork. Eliot only considers contemporary poets, whilst all poets from past eras are considered to be "the dead." However, the major issue is whether there should be a clear distinction between the living, the practising, and the deceased. That might be unacceptable to a substantial portion of the poor and oppressed writers as well as the general public in the western capitalist society and the colonised peoples. The intriguing aspect is that communities that have been invaded may have different and more significant centres of existence than are available to people living in wastelands.

Poetry in Our Time

A different group of poets in the 1930s and 1940s made specific observations about what the modernist Eliot had missed. They were referred to as pink poets. They were aware of the cracks in western society as well as other countries entangled in the web of competing cultures and ideologies. In this regard, the problem facing poetry in the 20th century was the art's constricting scope as it dealt with the complex material advances. In reality, there has to be a critical connection between the aesthetic and the human-social dynamic. In the modern world, there is a need to critically examine one's environment. There was hope for change in the anti-imperialist struggles taking place at the time, despite the doom in the market-dominated world.

TERMINAL QUESTIONS

Q. 1. There is a specific way in which poetry carried the influence of life in the 18th century. Elaborate.

Ans. The poetry of the 18th century was particularly adept at revealing the hypocrisy, dishonesty, and falsehood on exhibit in everyday interactions in urban centres. The poetry was influenced by the reality. The reality was a large part of the times was played by the powerful sector of trade and business that was wealthy but lacking in dignity. They didn't care about sentiments or emotions at all; only success mattered to them. It was all nonsense and foolishness. Those were the recent realities. Throughout the century, the common people of the nation acquired power. The merchants who eventually came to rule the roost were born from the common people who worked in production in small towns and villages while travelling to the cities. Their produce was changing into goods since it was meant to be distributed to a wider range of consumers who lived far from the producers. The result was an increase in the money that this group possessed. Additionally, this industry needed morality and excellent manners that matched their level of social power. Their work and objective were centred on planning, communicating effectively with other craftsmen, expertly managing the class of artisans, and managing labour. On the other hand, skillfulness would offer deceptive strategies to promote disagreement and conflict. Thinking and reason were so required. Even if they are practical, these traits better suit the new way of thinking than daring investigation of the surroundings. To illustrate how similar the two were, compare them to the severely acerbic poem that functioned

as literature's representation of the age. It was like this in 18th century poetry like that of Alexander Pope. Pope wrote numerous works with the word "essay" in the title, such as *An Essay on Man* and *An Essay on Criticism*. Even though it had a slightly unfavourable meaning at the time, the word was symbolic of the changed circumstances. These evolved into representations of Augustan poetry that aided in legitimising and promoting the then-emerging society. Then, two elements in particular – closeness to language and a focus on reason rather than emotion – came up. Pope argues that the poets of today lack actual genius. The same may be true of detractors, who are completely uneducated. The wisdom of critics and poets alike is derived from celestial forces; the former is in charge of deciding what is right or wrong, while the latter is the one who writes. Based on what each group is expected to offer to society, Pope wants to make a distinction between the two. "Heavenly powers" is the only term under discussion here, and it relates to the two individuals' innate proclivities rather than any specific God or Gods. Additionally, the calibre of the work is taken into consideration when writing and evaluating. When effort and merit are reduced to labour and value, the poetry passage begins to resemble a statement made by a shopkeeper about the trade. However, because he brings up important topics like what is beneficial for society and what literature can tell us about how to evaluate an individual's creative effort, Pope is no less of a poet than his counterparts from the 17th or 19th centuries. He does bemoan the decline in the calibre of critical and poetic writing. The irony in these statements is that they come from people who don't take their work seriously and who let laziness and mediocrity get in the way of innovation. Besides, mediocrity would function through the commonplace and unimaginative rather than through imaginative engagement with reality and profundity of thought. Pope's poetry is rooted in the realities of his time and exposes the deterioration engulfing modern sensibility.

Q. 2. What was the distinctive feature of Romantic poetry? Explain.

Ans. The lofty took a backseat in the Romantic poetry as the commonplace took control, in contrast to the unimaginative Augustan poetry. The Romantic poets elicited the hidden facets of human interest and acknowledged the need of lofty goals in life. Along with nature, rural simplicity, and the thrill of daydreaming about society transformation and human fulfilment, the Romantic poetry was also closely linked to these things. The French Revolution, which had many characteristics with the American War of Independence, had an impact on the Romantic poets. This was the crux of the opposition to monarchy. The political consolidation of the English bourgeoisie would not understand these two movements.

William Wordsworth was a key proponent of the new fashion. Wordsworth set out to pick out specific incidents and situations from daily life, explain or describe them in as much language actually used by men as feasible, and then add imaginative touches to give them an uncommon aspect. He also sought to make these occurrences and situations fascinating by being honest about them without coming off as pretentious. This is arguably most crucial. Living a simple, rural life was typically favoured because it offered a better