

Toru Dutt'S Craftsmanship

Key Words: *Toru Dutt, Style, Indian Literature.*

ISSN 0975 1254 (PRINT)
ISSN 2249-9180 (ONLINE)
www.shodh.net

A Refereed Research Journal
And a complete Periodical dedicated to
Humanities & Social Science Research

शोध संवयन

Toru Dutt was one of the distinguished poets in the canvas of Indian English poetry. This noble soul of Bengal raised the position of India in the literary world. Toru Dutt is regarded as the greatest displayer of philosophy and religion. Her finest and longest poem, 'Savitri' is a perennial fountain of inspiration specially for Indian girls. Her poetic craftsmanship is found at its best in 'Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan'. She is the supreme narrator and translator of 19th century.

Dr. Vidushi Goyal

Dept. of English,
M.H. College,
Moradabad.

Indeed Toru Dutt, by her sheer brilliance, was the first woman poet to interpret the spirit of India to the west. Being an extraordinary gifted poet whose life was dedicated to the cause of literature. She visited foreign lands and drank deep at their fountains of culture and closed her fragile life of sorrow During this period of intellectual exercise, she devoted herself to the interpretation of spirit and civilization of her country, leaving behind monuments of poetic genius that have won the approbation of competent critics and students of literature.

Toru Dutt was the great Indian poet who, by her fascinating poetry, tried to bring the East and West closer to each other. She might have felt that the Hindu faith, with its emphasis on spiritualism and moral values, was greatly needed to check and control the growing tide of western materialism. However, her aim was not religious or political but purely literary. Though her characters are mostly mythological, they are not treated as super persons. Humanbeing and has portrayed them as ordinary human beings who think and behave as human beings and Act in a certain manner in given circumstances. They are set in a typical Indian background but they are universal in their out look and character, and appeal to the people of all times and all places in the world of the two works that Toru Dutt wrote, '**A sheaf Gleaned in French field**' and '**Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan**' the latter is essentially native in genre and outlook.

Despite of her charming and valuable contribution to the Indian literature in English. She translated Indian idioms and collections, employed Sanskrit terms, modified the arrangement of lexical items within the structure of sentences so as to bring them in line with Indian usage. Her poems clearly show that she was developing as an artist and might have developed into a great artist had she been allowed more time destiny. But the reader should study her poetry in detail without thinking what might have been.

Toru's distinct position in the field of narrative and descriptive poetry is undisputed. She knew the art of telling story and describing scene or character vividly and convincingly. This talent of Toru Dutt is Clearly evident in **Ancient Ballads**. She was talented in story-telling, arousing interest and curiosity, creating suspense and dramatic situation

and drawing vivid characters. In this connection, Dr. A.N. Jha has rightly told of Toru Dutt, 'Indeed it may be reasonably said that had she lived longer she would have attained distinction in narrative and descriptive verse.... But perhaps in descriptive poetry she is even superior.'¹ Whereas her narrative skill may be seen in the way she manages to tell the stories of the ancient time, her descriptive power is obvious in the portraying of natural scenes and sighs, in the delineation of character and their hopes and fears, their woes and worries. For instance, in "**Savitri**" the God of Death is described with great power and vividness.

'Death in his place holds his court
His messengers move to and fro
Each of his mission makes report
And take the royal orders.....
Upon his head he wore a crown
That shimmered in the doubtful light;
His vestment scarlet reached low down
His waist, a golden girdle delight,
His skin was dark as his face bronze;
I radiate and yet severe.'²

Toru's narrative power makes the reader shocked when he reads old Ballads and legends. They were neither foreign nor alien for her and they gave her women's fancy free paly. In telling her tales she did not always use the recorded or popular events, but she took liberty in handling them.

Obviously, Toru's narratives are charged with lyric effusions of joy and pathos, anger and sorrow, hope and fear. But these expressions of writing do not disturb the easy flow of the narratives. The reader's interest is not allowed to suffer, and the art of narration keeps on moving. Apart from this, the volume "**Ancient Ballads**" presents certain subtle character portraying-Savitri, Sita and Jogadhya and Uma as the ideal representatives of Indian womanhood and offer an opportunity to the poetess to reveal the mysterious feminine nature. Toru's intimate feelingSAre expressed through them. In creating them, the poetess is the happiest. There are also many memorable male characters in Toru's poems such as Satyavan, Lakshman, Bharat, Dhruva, Buttoo, Sindhu and Prahlad. In portraying the inner feelingSAnd the complex moods of her male characters, She had adopted the device of dramatic speeches in her poems. She is matchless, rather peerless in portraying her characters, and was endowed with the gift of conceiving her characters with sympathy and understanding and portraying

them with sincerity and fidelity.

If 'Toru's "**Savitri**" embodies an ideal wife, in the pathetic tale of "**Sindhu**" there is an ideal son. When the young boy is filling his pitcher of water for his blind and helpless parents who are living as ascetics in the neighbouring woods, the boy is shot by mistake by the great emperor Dashratha. At the time of going he gives expression to the noblest sentiments that can ever fall from the lips of a dutiful son.

'And so I die – a bloody death –
To feet the world pass with my breath'
I gladly could have borne:
But for my parents who are blind,
And have no other stay
This, this weights sore upon my mind
And fills me with dismay.'³

After saying so, the boy passes away in an atmosphere of total pathos.

Toru Dutt's poems also reveal her matchless descriptive power. The ballads of her abound in the descriptions of nature and character portrayal. As one reads the ballads, one is impressed with the large space occupied by descriptions of nature. H.A.L fisher a generous man of letters, remembered Toru Dutt as 'this child of the green valley of the Ganges'⁴ In nature description in her poems, Toru may stand by Wordsworth Who found solace in the company of natural objects – Like Wordsworth, the poetess has portrayed nature as the healing power that comforted Savitri and Satyavan-

'At times
Trees on their path cast densest shade,
And Nightingales sang mystic rhymes
Their fears and sorrows to assuage'⁵

Obviously Toru Dutt's poetry has almost faultless technique. If she lived longer, she would have been a superb and rare craftsman in Indian English poetry. Her craftsmanship is skillful and she has exhibited her technical skill in metrical arrangement, diction, imagery and adroit handling of various verse genres. The defects of prosody and deficiency in scholarship were overcome by her in the poetic creations.

Poetic diction in Toru's works is characterized by simplicity ease and vigour. Her feeling for words was without mistake and fault but she carefully avoids those words that merely recreate musical effect and fail to communicate any deep thought. English was under her full command and mastery. P.C. Kotoky says, 'As an Indian writer of English verse, Toru Dutt's main achievement lies in her poetry, a fine sense of the

English language, a feeling of its rhythm and diction and the handling of the traditional verse form was seldom at fault⁶

Simplicity and vigour in Toru's poetic style may be attributed to her diligent interest in french poets who are simple, direct and vivid in poetic expressions. Toru Dutt's use of Hindi words is very appropriate and this she did to recapture the atmosphere of bygone mythological world of the days of the great epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

No doubt, Toru Dutt is admired for the delineation of faultless techniques and felicity of perfect verification. Her success lies in the use of ballad form because she has employed the ballad form in the octosyllabic metre and used it with remarkable brilliance and effectiveness in most of her poems except "**Sita**", "**Dhruva**" and "**The Royal Ascetic**". She tried pentameter in her poem "**Sita**" and a variation of the octosyllabic measure is clearly visible in "**Sindhu**". Blank verse, used by Toru Dutt is commendable and can be seen in her ballads like "**The Royal Ascetic and The Hind**" and "The Legend of Dhruva" are composed in blank verse. Grosse is correct in his assessment that the ballads and original English poem would ultimately 'constitute Toru's chief legacy to posterity'.⁷

Toru was not ever perfect in her versification yet she quite often achieved a wonderful metrical felicity that draws immense attraction of the readers towards her poetry.

Her use of imagery is very often replete with a masculine vigour and fearlessness, not only are apt and beautiful but vividly convey the underlying meanings. They are both delicate and tender, bold and vigorous as the situation requires. Her poetry abounds in apt and appealing symbols and it contains metaphysical elements too. As for instance the position of Savitri at the death of Satyavan in the woods, the glaring world-beyond atmosphere in the ashram or hermitage reminds us of John Carew's poetry of this brand (Metaphysical). Her phraseology is distinguished from the rest of the poets of the time. She uses words and phrases like 'ask unblamed', 'wife forlorn', 'dark expanse' etc.

However her style is altogether different from the other writers and poets of the time. Her style definitely matched her tempo, her visions and voice. She is no doubt peerless and here lies her own unique stylistic motif. Her poetry startles the reader whenever he goes through the velvetic lines of "**Savitri**" or "**Sindhu**" or from the poem of "**Lakshman**" Rightly

Alokranjan has remarked about Toru's "**Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan**." "This novelty in presentation and thought is the result of the poetic vision which gives the imminent doom, an optimistic colour. This is Indian as well as modern, despite the fact that the poet reveals in bordering on didacticism. What saves these poems from ethical prepossession is the poet's craftsmanship in the art of lyrical balladry marked with narrative simplicity. One thing must be taken into account Toru's India was not tourist's utopia. Though she knew her scott-throughly well, she did not subscribe to the latter's inclination to romanticize and mystify India."⁸

The collection of poems in 'Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan' is from the last and most matured of Toru Dutt's writings. The ballads are essentially Indian in outlook to reveal Toru's return to her native land. Everything that she had learnt of her country from books and from people, has been enshrined in these ballads. She did not anglicize her ideas but she kept them close to the ethical values of the original tales. While her understanding of modern life and her dedication to craft, has helped her to make these ideas relevant to posterity.

REFERENCES:-

1. Jha A.N., Introductory Memoir to ancient ballads, New Delhi, Doaba House, 1989, P-30.
2. Dutt Toru, 'Savitri (ed, A.N. Dwivedi), Prakash Book Depot. Bareilly, 2002-2005 P-127.
3. Dutt Toru, Sindhu, P-172 (ed. A.N. Dwivedi)
4. Fisher H.A.L, Forward, The life and Letters of Toru Dutt, P-VII, New Delhi. Everest press.
5. Dutt Toru, 'Savitri, P-125
6. Quoted from Kumar Satish, 'A Survey of Indian English poetry' Prakash Book Depot. Bareilly, 2001, P-47.
7. Gosse Edmund, Introductory Memoir 'Ancient Ballads, P-XXII London (OUP)
8. Das Gupta Alokranjan, This fragile exotic Blossom of songs, Indian literature, IX No -2 (1966)

