Documentary on Some English Poets: An Analysis

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Abstract: Now a days, documentary has become very famous to know and feel the poets. The most important components of documentary are poems of the poet, prose, evaluation of the poet by the other poets and so on. In making scene in the light of the poet’s life symbols, detailing, cinematic presentation make documentary artistic. Although the inspiration of documentary is the life of poet but it is actually the director’s own realization.

Keywords: documentary, life, literature, poet.

It was 1959. The birth centenary of Rabindranath was ahead. Different associations were busy in the preparation of it. The Indian government also formed a centenary celebration committee on the poet. The committee decided that a documentary would be made on the life of Rabindranath. But on whom would this task be given? Some were eager to give this task to Tagore-specialist Satyajit Ray and some were to any renowned historian. One of the members of the committee was Pandit Jawharlal Nehru. Although he was in favor of any artist. After many dilly-dally, the responsibility was assigned to Satyajit Ray.

This historical documentary was made in two ways. One was big; it had six parts and the language was English. The voice was of Satyajit Ray. The smaller one was divided into two parts and was made in different languages because it was the best way to send Tagore to everyone in this multilingual country. But the bigger one has been the topic of discussion among the audience. The documentary begins with the death and funeral of Tagore. The life story of the poet begins with the last point of extinguishing of the funeral flame. This seeing of life by removing the veil of death reminds us the technique of French film director Jean-Luc Godard.

The period between the childhood and death of Tagore has been depicted in the documentary. Which music instruments and background music are applicable for a visual —— Ray has combined in proper ratio. He has not depended not only on the information for making it believable and enjoyable. Beside description, by doing performance he has presented the life of Rabindranath, his creation and contemporary context before the spectator. Like Raja Rammohan Roy is going on a horse car. As if this scene of one minute has become a symbolic one. This adventure for curing the leprosy of the society is not to be stopped.

Its a small village of Warwickshire on the bank of Avon. Around this village there are Arden’s forest, ruins of old palaces, Roman army camps and tracks used by the soldiers. This inventory of nature and history used to flow child Shakespeare to the fairy world. The memories of this place come again and again in his poetry and plays. The documentary ‘Shakespeare Legacy’ on his 4th death centenary begins with this moving scene of nature and history. Contemporary political and social history, stories of Shakespeare’s personal and literary life can be found in this documentary through the description and explanation of the discussants. How Shakespeare looked like——that research has been endeavored through technology. At the end of the documentary the motion of the Avon is pictured with instrumental music. This scene not only gives ease to the eyes and thought, but like the eternal stream of the river, the Shakespearean literature will live in the mind of the readers——the director wants to give that indication.

The year 1798 is memorable in the history of English literature. William Wordsworth and S.T. Coleridge published Lyrical Ballads collaboratively. With the publication of it there begins a new age. Victor Hugo describes this age as ‘Liberalism of Literature’. Even after the three centuries the readers are mesmerized to this age. Velerick Dalton’s documentary on William Blake, Malcolm Hossick’s documentary on William Wordsworth and P.B. Shelley, documentary on Keats —— all are the manifestation of that fascination. Not only individually, but Michael Mandell has made documentary on the whole Romantic age. In BBC documentaries we can see different documentaries on the different traits of the Romantic period.

The documentary ‘John Keats: His Life and Death’ begins with the warbling of the birds. The camera moves towards the grave of Keats. “Here lies One Whose Name was writ in Water”. Then lying down of a patient in operation theatre and blood everywhere. Keats is also present with the doctors. We know that Keats was sent to a surgeon at Edmanton for apprenticeship after his matriculation level study. In that scene some different faces are condemning Keats from the two sides of the screen and they are actually representing the critics of his poetry. Shelley and others thinks that harsh criticism is responsible for the death of Keats.

In the next scene we can see that Keats is engrossed in writing poetry and the description of the commentator. Through the fall of the horseman the death of the father of Keats is suggested. The shock for his mother’s remarriage is shown through the scene of the crushing of mirror in the hands of Keats. The standing scene of the poet before the mirror after the scene of satire
The Beat poets like Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg. The recitation of the poems like ‘On the Road’ and ‘Howl’ are also present in it. We are also informed the impact of this movement upon the next generation. The documentaries are being made on the poets in different languages in the different parts of the world. Documentaries are being made on the poets in different languages in the different parts of the world. In 1997, Amalia Schiava makes a documentary on Pablo Neruda—“Poet of His People Pablo Neruda”. The documentary is descriptive. The director presents the reading of the poems with acting. In the beginning and the end of the documentary sea is present as the symbol of emotion, wideness and restlessness. In the beginning of the documentary the flapping of a bird in the purple sky though the roaring of the sea indicates the imaginative power of the poet and with that it also indicates the limitless appeal of art. As his country, its tradition and public life are very important parts in his life and poetry, all these are captured in camera.

In Satyajit Ray’s documentary “Rabindranath” where the last phrase of the poet’s life is described, there Satyajit Ray draws the contemporary crisis. Rabindranath’s “Sabhyatar Sankat” was also written at that time. The sound of siren, to save the life of the frightened people in Madrid and the death of the people by bullets--- all these are parallely presented with the reading of “Sabhyatar Sankat”.

It was 4th March of 1961. Prime Minister Neheru was very sad. His friend had died. With devastated heart he sat in the Rastrapati Bhawan to watch the film by Satyajit Ray. The film ends with the humanitarian confidence. The director shows that optimism through the reading of Rabindranath in parallel with the sunrise. The coctail of this sound and scene creates an unique atmosphere. Through the watching of the movie Neheru backs his strength. Two months later while he was giving the award in the hand of Satyajit Ray, he remembered that day and the very documentary.

So, in the hands of a talented director, the life of a poet, his creation and his philosophy can be eternal. The endeavour of the poet’s whole life can be transfused into the heart of the people. Where poetry is bound by the boundary of language, a camera can give it the wings.

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