

6th Lecture

She Walks in Beauty-Byron (1788-1824)

She walks in beauty, like the night Of cloudless climes and starry skies; And all that's best of dark and bright Meet in her aspect and her eyes: Thus mellowed to that tender light Which heaven to gaudy day denies. One shade the more, one ray the less, Had half impaired the nameless grace Which waves in every raven tress, Or softly lightens o'er her face ;Where thoughts serenely sweet express How pure, how dear their dwelling place. And on that cheek, and o'er that brow, So soft, so calm, yet eloquent, The smiles that win, the tints that glow, But tell of days in goodness spent, A mind at peace with all below, A heart whose love is innocent!

Type of Work and Year Written

“She Walks in Beauty” is a lyric poem centering on the extraordinary beauty of a young lady. George Gordon Byron (commonly known as Lord Byron) wrote the poem in 1814 and published it in a collection, *Hebrew Melodies*, in 1815.

Theme

The theme of the poem is the woman's exceptional beauty, internal as well as external. The first stanza praises her physical beauty. The second and third stanzas praise both her physical and spiritual, or intellectual, beauty.

Commentary- of Lord Byron's-'She Walks in Beauty'

The poet is describing a woman. He says: her beauty is like the beauty of a clear, starlit night. It is a beauty that combines the most attractive elements of darkness and brightness. It is a gentle, soft beauty like the beauty of night which is more tender than that of the day.

It is a perfect beauty in which the darkness of her hair sets off the fairness of her face; a face which shows only the most serene, pure thoughts. A face which smiles and expresses the innocence of the heart and mind.

It is a matchless poem in which beauty takes on new dimensions. Physical beauty is not everything . more important still is the beauty of the soul., mind and manners. This is perfection itself. A strange balance is struck between night and day, darkness and brightness, shades and rays, mind and body, etc. All these outline the image of perfect beauty.

In the first stanza, the lady is walking in beauty. She wears a dark dress. She is like the night when the sky is clear and the stars are twinkling. The stars here may be the jewels glittering on her dark dress; darkness and brightness, in an incredible balance , meet in her aspect(the dress) and her eyes (glittering like her jewels or the stars). The simile in line one is followed by the double alliteration in line 2(cloudless climes and starry skies).

This is followed by the antithesis in line 3 (dark and bright) and the metaphor in ‘meet” (L 4). From the very beginning, Byron has decided to exploit as many poetic devices as he can outline the perfection of his beautiful portrait in which there is a touch of softness , tenderness and delicacy.

In the second stanza, the lady's beauty is likened to that of a great portrait in which the rays and shades have been studied carefully so much so that “ one shade the more, one ray the less/ Had half impaired the nameless grace. Sweet thoughts go hand with purity of body and mind.

In the third stanza, there is softness, calmness and eloquence. Beauty speaks for itself. The winning similes reveal goodness of heart, peace of the mind and innocence of love.

The romantic characteristics in the poem:

This is an idealistic image of beauty which exists in worlds other than this real one. It lives in the poet's imagination. It is a beauty one often meets in dreams in Romantics such as Wordsworth, Coleridge and Keats.

The poem is a lyric and its sounds are very important in the creation of its total effect.

R.S: ababab.

Rhyme Scheme and Meter

The rhyme scheme of the first stanza is ababab; the second stanza, cdcdcd; and the third stanza, efefef. All the end rhymes are masculine. The meter is predominantly iambic tetrameter, a pattern in which a line has four pairs of unstressed and stressed syllables—eight syllables in all. The first two lines demonstrate the pattern followed throughout the poem except for line 6, which has nine syllables.

Use of Alliteration

Alliteration occurs frequently to enhance the appeal of the poem to the ear. The most obvious examples of this figure of speech include the following:

Line 2:....cloudless climes; starry skies.

Line 6:....day denies

Line 8:....Had half

Line 9:....Which waves

Line 11...serenely sweet

Line 14...So soft, so

Line 18...Heart Whose

Other Figures of Speech

Examples of other figures of speech are the following:

Lines 1, 2:.....Simile comparing the movement of the beautiful woman to the movement of the skies

Line 6:.....Metonymy, in which heaven is substituted for God or for the upper atmosphere

Lines 8-10:.....Metaphor comparing grace, a quality, to a perceivable phenomenon

Lines 11-12:.....Metaphor and personification comparing thoughts to people; metaphor and personification comparing the mind to a home (*dwelling-place*)

Lines 13-16:.....Metaphor and personification comparing the woman's cheek and brow to persons who *tell of days in goodness spent*

Model question

1- The rhyme scheme of the first stanza in She Walks in Beauty by Byron is

.....

A- abbaacc

B-ababbc

C- **ababab**

D-abbbcc

The correct answer is (c)

2_ The theme of She Walks in Beauty is the woman's exceptional

A –power

B- ugliness

C- patience

D- beauty

The correct answer is (D)