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**Topic: Earl of Surrey's Contribution to English Poetry**

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## **“EARL OF SURREY'S CONTRIBUTION IN ENGLISH POETRY”**

Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey's contribution in English poetry is remarkable. He is the second sonneteer in English literature after Thomas Wyatt. On one hand, Thomas Wyatt tried his best to translate Italian sonneteer; on the other hand, Surrey not only tried but also reformed the style of writing sonnets. If Thomas Wyatt is known as an artist in English literature then Surrey can be regarded as a craftsman as he improved the structure and style of composing a sonnet. He did not only reform it but also presented his genuine ideas in form of sonnets. It is only his contribution that sonnets are known as English sonnets in the world. Although,

he also followed the Petrarch's style yet he did not simply copied them. As compared to Wyatt, his sonnets has element of renaissance. Moreover, they are clear in language and very easily understandable. Undoubtedly, they have personal touch in them but Surrey, with a crafty hand, modified them. He used three quatrains and couplets, rhyming as abab cdcd efef gg. He was not a poet by profession as he was a soldier even, he introduced unrhymed iambic pentameters in blank verse, which gives direction to the new English poets. The definition of iambic perimeter, for the unknowns, is that; a foot contains one unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable then it is called iamb. Pent is substitute for five. Thus, a line, which is regarded as iambic pentameter, consists of five iambs. Surrey, in English history and literature always stands out in a crowd. If Surrey enhanced English sonnets, then it was rhyme and reason at that time. In fact, it was the need of hour to improve English sonnets.

Definitely, Petrarch became famous throughout the world because of his sonnets nevertheless if today we can write sonnets; its credit goes to Surrey because he added another form of poetry in English language. He was influenced by two famous writers, one was Petrarch and the second was Thomas Wyatt. His work was extraordinary but his duties resisted in his artistic work. The marks of his career can be found in his poetic work. Most of the campaigns, in which he participated, were ended in failure but

being a poet, he is notable. He was a well-known writer but it is relevant to mention here that Surrey's work was appeared after ten years of his death termed as **Tottel's Miscellany**.

Earl of Surrey was the second sonneteer in English literature but it is totally wrong to say that he played second fiddle. Surrey's work is part and parcel, while reading the innovation of sonnets in English literature. His work is praiseworthy. Not only, he restructured the poetry in English language but also illustrated his original ideas. If he presents his idea in form of sonnet then he convince his readers. He does not only leave everything on the choices of reader but also explains it in every sense. Before him, although sonnets had come to England yet he coloured them with his contribution. He shared the contribution of Wyatt to bring the sonnets in England from Italy.

Sir Philip Sydney praises the lyrics of this great poet in following words:

The achievement of Surrey in development of English verse is significant. Apart from the refinement in it, he has higher poetical faculty and increased ease. Emile Legouis's comments are also important to mention in this regard, which are: "His metrical innovations are important: he was the first to give to the sonnet its purely English form, less elaborate than the Italian but perhaps more suited to a language with fewer rhymes. His chief title to fame is his introduction of blank verse in his translation of Virgil's Aeneid."

With these observations, it is clear like pure water that Surrey is a great poet not by profession but by passion. His work was a gift to the poets of next four centuries. He took both his career and his passion with him side by side. He faced a lot of resistance because of his career but even though his work is appreciable. His career was hurdle in his artistic qualities, which is very beautifully expressed by Abercrombie as he says:

“Brought up in childhood with the King’s son, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, received an excellent grounding in classical and Renaissance literature. But fortune soon turned against him, and his adult life was filled with anxiety and tumult. The greater part of his twenties was spent in fighting some unsuccessful campaigns. Inevitably, such a career left its marks upon his writings. . Even in youth, he tended towards a ruminative cast of mind.”The long and short of the above discussion is that Earl of Surrey’s contribution in English language will be remembered for centuries. Both Surrey and Wyatt have contribution in English sonnets but Surrey has two elements in his work; one is the element of reformation and the second one is renaissance. If he and his involvement are skipped in English language then the English sonnets are rotten. If no structure was planned by Surrey then English sonnet will be hotchpotch of different languages, therefore, if sonnets, in English language are fresh today, then Earl of Surrey can claim feather in his cap.

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