

Irony



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

R. Preeti 4/2008 IRONY Irony is a figure of speech that has been used by poets from various literary epochs, to embellish their poetry, and has been majorly used as a tool to further the underlying idea of the poetry piece. Some of the best pieces of ironic poetry have been analysed in order to attain a clear understanding on the concept, while also examining the impact irony has had on English poetry, over the ages.

Robert Browning's 'Porphyria's Lover' is a good example of this. Apart from the superficial meaning that the poem conveys, about a woman's undying love and inability to devote her entire life for it. However, the love of her life makes things easy for her by killing her! The underlying irony is the attempt to highlight the harassment meted out to women of the Victorian era.

Women couldn't live life on their own terms, due to social norms and mores. The situation itself is ironic, considering that the male in the poem liberates the women from leading a life of misery by sticking to these social limitations and boundaries. The irony adopts the form of a Dramatic Irony. Evidently, the ironic idea further the hidden theme of the exploitation of women in the Victorian era.

Similarly, 'Ozymandias', by P. B. Shelley is another work that contains an underlying message. The poem talks about Ozymandias, who rises to power and falls in Egypt. The underlying irony is the very fact that in spite of all the power one attains, it becomes history at some point or the other and goes into oblivion. This applies to governments and all those who lust for power; for eventually, it's all gone! The irony here is more of a situational irony, considering the spiritual and more mature outlook that the poet tries to portrays as a part of the irony.

The next poem we could consider is Ariel Dorfman's 'Hope', which is an irony

on the pain and suffering that engulfs the world of mankind. His poem is a philosophical irony, and is a reflection and revelation into the miseries that this world.

W. H. Auden's 'The Unknown Citizen', the poet talks about the pitiable state of a 'black' tenant, whose name is reduced to mere numbers. The sheer discrimination and hatred-filled attitude that is the ironical set-up of the poem becomes the crux. It is more of a verbal irony, entwined with the situation existent in the real world.

The final example of Adrienne Rich 'Aunt Jennifer's Tigers' is an irony on the pitiable condition of women, and on domestic violence meted out to them. The very men that were created out of women, and emerged from a woman's womb, have become responsible for this pitiable state. The irony is evident, not only in the situational form, but also verbally, in the usage of words like " massive weight", " ringed", etc.

Thus, in view of the above examples and many more that can be quoted, Irony is a great tool to help the poet bring forth his idea in a subtle yet effective manner.

#### REFERENCES

Robert Browning, " Porphyria's Lover"

Percy Bysshe Shelley, " Ozymandias"

Ariel Dorfman, " Hope"

W. H. Auden, " The Unknown Citizen"

Adrienne Rich, " Aunt Jennifer's Tigers"