

### ❖ Introduction:

The word Sonnet came from the Italian word 'sonetto' which means "a little sound or song" the sonnet is a popular classical form that has compelled poets for centuries. Traditionally, the sonnet is a fourteen-line poem written in iambic pentameter, which employ one of several rhyme schemes and adhere to a tightly structured thematic organization. According to M.H. Abrams

*'Sonnet is a lyric poem consisting of a single stanza of fourteen iambic pentameter lines linked by an intricate rhyme scheme.'*

In the words of **Dante Gabriel Rossetti**,

*"A sonnet is a moment's monument, — Memorial from the Soul's eternity To one dead deathless hour."*

The form is first credited to a senior poet of the Sicilian school, **Giacomo Da Lentini**. His sonnets, written in the mid-13th century, are the earliest known examples of the form. **Guittone d'Arezzo** was a contemporary of Da Lentini's who adopted the sonnet form and brought it to **Tuscany**. He wrote over 300 sonnets between 1235 and his death in 1294. This sonnet form was also used by **Dante Aligheri** and **Michelangelo**. However the most famous early sonneteer was **Petrarch** so the Italian sonnet is popularized as Petrarchan sonnet which provide model for all other sonnet's form like Shakespearean sonnet, Spenserian sonnet and so on.

### Three basic form of Sonnet:

- (1) The Petrarchan or Italian sonnet
- (2) The Shakespearean or English sonnet
- (3) The Spenserian sonnet

### ❖ The Petrarchan or Italian sonnet:

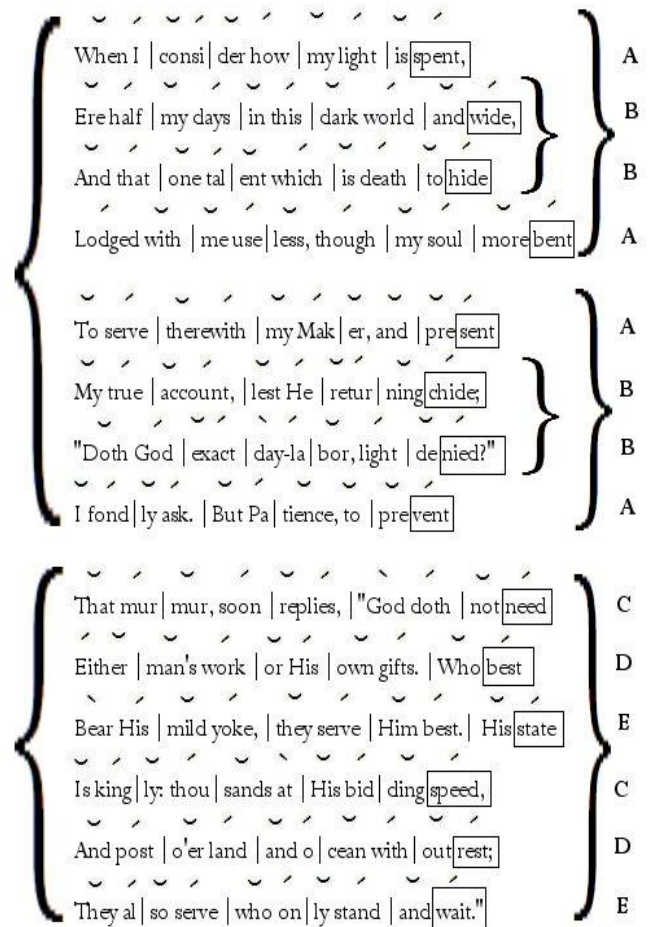
- The Italian sonnet is written in two parts, beginning with an **octave** composed of **two quatrains**. The octave presents a dilemma or problem.
- This problem is then resolved in the following **sestet**, composed of **two tercets**.
- The **ninth** line of the Italian sonnet typically introduces a **Volta or turn** that signifies the transition from problem to resolution.

Basic Sonnet forms

- The **meter** of an Italian sonnet is usually either **iambic hexameter** or **Alexandrine meter**, in imitation of French poetry of the time.
- The **rhyme scheme** of an Italian sonnet is quite different from that of its English cousin. Early Italian sonnets were written with a rhyme scheme of ABAB ABAB in the opening octave. This rhyme scheme later changed to **A B B A**, which is the standard for most Italian sonnets. There are variations in the prescribed rhyme scheme for the final sestet, the most common of these being **C D E C D E** and **C D C C D C**.

Example: **Milton's sonnet**

When I consider how my light is spent,  
 Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,  
 And that one talent which is death to hide  
 Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent  
 To serve therewith my Maker, and present  
 My true account, lest He returning chide;  
 "Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?"  
 I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent  
 That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need  
 Either man's work or His own gifts. Who best  
 Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best. His state  
 Is kingly: thousands at His bidding speed,  
 And post o'er land and ocean without rest;  
 They also serve who only stand and wait."



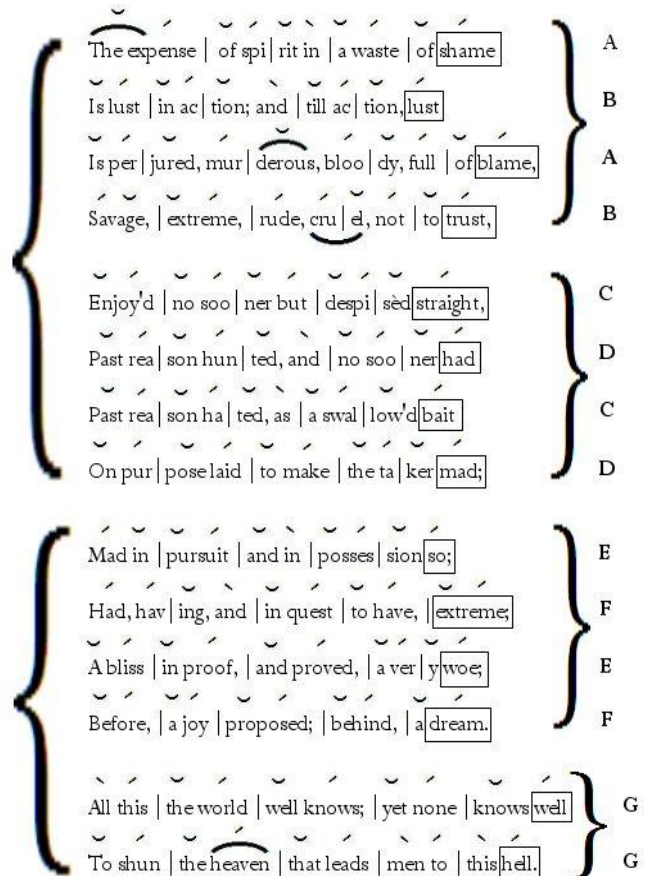
In the 16th century, English poets Sir Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, began translating the works of Petrarch into their own language and gave rise to the popularity of the sonnet in English, allowing poets like Shakespeare and Edmund Spenser to make the form their own. However, it was the lesser known poets of the early Italian Renaissance who invented the sonnet and paved the way for Shakespeare's success.

❖ **The Shakespearean or English sonnet:**

- The Shakespearean sonnet most often moves as **three quatrains** (four lines apiece) and a **couplet** (two lines), hinged at the **thirteenth line** with the **turn**.
- Shakespeare himself most often utilized the rhyme scheme **A B A B . . . C D C D . . . E F E F . . . G G** which creates rolling motion through the quatrains to the suddenly different, punch-line-like couplet.

Example: **Sonnet 129**

The expense of spirit in a waste of shame  
 Is lust in action; and till action, lust  
 Is perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame,  
 Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust,  
 Enjoy'd no sooner but despised straight,  
 Past reason hunted, and no sooner had  
 Past reason hated, as a swallow'd bait  
 On purpose laid to make the taker mad;  
 Mad in pursuit and in possession so;  
 Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme;  
 A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe;  
 Before, a joy proposed; behind, a dream.  
 All this the world well knows; yet none knows well  
 To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.



❖ **The Spenserian sonnet:**

- The Spenserian sonnet, invented by **Edmund Spenser** as an outgrowth of the stanza pattern he used in *The Faerie Queene* has the pattern:

**ABAB BCBC CDCD EE**

- Here, the "ABAB" pattern sets up distinct **four-line groups**, each of which develops a specific idea; however, the overlapping A, B, C, and D rhymes form the first 12 lines into a single unit with a separated final couplet. The three quatrains then develop three distinct but closely related ideas, with a different idea (or commentary) in the couplet. Interestingly, Spenser often begins **Line 9** of his sonnets with "But" or "Yet," indicating a **Volta** exactly where it would occur in the Italian sonnet; however, if one looks closely, one often finds that the "turn" here really isn't one at all, that the actual turn occurs where the rhyme pattern changes, with the couplet, thus giving a **12 and 2** line pattern very different from the Italian **8 and 6** line pattern.

Example: **Sonnet 75 from Amoretti**

One day I wrote her name upon the strand,  
 But came the waves and washed it away:  
 Again I wrote it with a second hand,  
 But came the tide, and made my pains his prey.  
 Vain man, said she, that doest in vain assay  
 A mortal thing so to immortalize,  
 For I myself shall like to this decay,  
 And eek my name be wiped out likewise.  
 Not so (quoth I), let baser things devise  
 To die in dust, but you shall live by fame:  
 My verse your virtues rare shall eternize,  
 And in the heavens write your glorious name.  
 Where whenas Death shall all the world subdue,  
 Our love shall live, and later life renew.

}	One day   I wrote   her name   upon   the strand,	A
	But came   the waves   and wash   ed it   away.	B
	Again   I wrote   it with   a se   cond hand,	A
	But came   the tide,   and made   my pains   his prey.	B
	Vain man,   said she,   that doest   in vain   ass ay	B
	A mor   tal thing   so to   immor   tal ize,	C
	For I   myself   shall like   to this   de cay,	B
	And eek   my name   be wip   ed out   like wise.	C
	Not so   (quoth I),   let bas   er things   de vise	C
	To die   in dust,   but you   shall live   by fame.	D
	My verse   your vir   tues rare   shall e   ter nize,	C
	And in   the hea   vens write   your glor   ious name.	D
Where when   as Death   shall all   the world   sub due,	E	
Out love   shall live,   and la   ter life   re new.	E	

❖ **Variation in sonnet :**

- The difference in temperament between **Spenser** and **Shakespeare** is revealed in the **rhyme scheme** each preferred. Spenser was a poet of elegance who looked back at other poets, Chaucer especially; and who wanted his readers to know that he was writing in the grand poetic tradition – whereas Shakespeare was impishly forward looking, a Dramatist first and a Poet second, who enjoyed turning tradition and expectation on its head, surprising his readers by turning Petrarchan expectations upside down. Spenser elegantly wrote within the Petrarchan tradition and wasn't out to upset that. Even his choice of vocabulary, as with eek, was studiously archaic.
- Though Shakespeare's sonnets were perhaps the finest examples of the English sonnet, **John Milton's** Italian-patterned sonnets (later known as "Miltonic" sonnets) added several important refinements to the form. Milton freed the sonnet from its typical incarnation in a sequence of sonnets, writing the occasional sonnet that often expressed interior, self-directed concerns. He also took liberties with the turn, allowing the octave to run into the sestet as needed. Both of these qualities can be seen in

*"When I Consider How my Light is Spent."*

❖ **Conclusion:**

The sonnet is one of the oldest traditional poetic forms. It first gained popularity by the prolific pen of Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch) during the Italian Renaissance. Two centuries later, the court poets of the English Renaissance--of significant note, William Shakespeare--adopted the sonnet and gave it new life. Edmund Spenser introduced another variant of the form through his 'The Faerie Queene' later known as Spenserian sonnet. A century later, John Milton popularized the satirical modality of the caudate sonnet. In the late 19th century, Gerard Manly Hopkins invented the curtal sonnet. Writers today, including Billy Collins and Natasha Trethewey, still use the sonnet form to explore concepts of love, language, limitation, musicality, and movement.

Thus, basically in a sonnet you show two related but differing things to the reader in order to communicate something about them. Each of the three major types of sonnets accomplishes this in a somewhat different way. There are of course other types of sonnets as well but these three are the basics. Coleridge; a poet and critic pronounced this form as,

*"A medium for the expression of a mere momentary burst of passion"*

❖ **Bibliography:**

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- Jay Ranpura