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**S. No 4 B.A.Part-1 English (Hons) Topic: *Sonnet* Dr U P Singh,
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A sonnet is a fourteen line poem with a fixed rhyme scheme. Often, sonnets use iambic pentameter: five sets of unstressed syllables followed by stressed syllables for a ten-syllable line. Sonnets were invented by the Italian poet Giacomo da Lentini during the 1200s. The word sonnet is derived from the Old Occitan phrase *sonet* meaning "little song." Over time, the sonnet form has evolved. Here are the two most common types of sonnets written today:

a. Italian (Petrarchan) Sonnet

The Italian sonnet is based on the original sonnet invented by da Lentini. The Petrarchan sonnet consists of an octave (group of eight lines) followed by a sestet (group of six lines). The typical rhyme scheme is as follows: a b b a a b b a for the octave and c d d c d d, c d d e c e, or c d d c c d for the sestet. The octave introduces a problem or conflict, and then the sestet addresses or solves the problem.

Here is an example of an Italian sonnet written by William Wordsworth:

Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour: (a)
England hath need of thee: she is a fen (b)
Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen, (b)
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower, (a)
Have forfeited their ancient English dower (a)
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men; (b)
Oh! raise us up, return to us again; (b)
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power. (a)
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart; (c)
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea: (d)
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free, (d)
So didst thou travel on life's common way, (e)

*In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart (c)
The lowliest duties on herself did lay. (e)*

“London, 1802” has the rhyme scheme of an Italian sonnet: a b b a a b b a and c d d e c e. In the octave, we learn of a problem: Milton has died and England is in moral decline. In the sestet, we learn of the solution: unlike England, Milton was filled with glory and morality which England must adopt in order to recover.

English (Shakespearean) Sonnet

The Shakespearean sonnet is named after Shakespeare not because he invented it but because he is the most famous writer of this type of sonnet. Typically, the English sonnet explores romantic love. Its rhyme scheme is as follows: a b a b c d c d followed by e f e f g g. Here is an example of an English sonnet by William Shakespeare:

*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;
Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:
So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
So long lives this and this gives life to thee.*