

## ENGLISH LITERATURE AND HUMANISM

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### ABSTRACT

*Before going to main theme of the paper, it is a essential to tell when humanism came to English Literature, who were its pioneers and before its emergence what was the position of English Literature in old, middle, renaissance and classical Renaissance period. The time period of about 500-1100 AD in British history is characterized by foreign invasion and internal struggles. This resulted in mixing of several races, the tongue and culture with the departure of Romans from British isles in 407 AD, fifth century saw the conquests and gradual occupations by Germanic tribes, angles, jutes and sexons who moved from Scandinavia and to Britain. The king Alfred, the great (871-900 AD) Stopped the advancement made by Vikings (known as Norman of Danes). Long before the language came to writing, it was used as merry-making by singing folks, scops gleeman or bards who sang in the evening the war deeds of the day or the sagas of the past. The scop (Singer) and gleeman (poet) were also attached to court and their songs and poems were inspired by their love of pastoral freedom, their love of nature, their roles, their reverence for womanhood and their struggle for glory as a ruling motive in every noble life. Mostly, English was Germanic, having come from the languages ; of Angles, Jutes and Sexons. Hence the language was blended with strong influence of Latin.*

### INTRODUCTION

Later, Scandinavians (Vikings) also contributed many words to old English. By the end of old English Period, (marked by Normal conquests), old English emerged as establish literary language. Initially, English literature both as written and spoken came in versified form. Old English Poetry was marked by themes of wars conquests and bravery. Caedmon and Cynwulf were well known English religious poets in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century respectively. About 8<sup>th</sup> century, Beowulf was placed in a Christian setting before it, had all features associated with the pagan past : short pagan ballads, each celebrated some separate act of hero. The poem

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Beowulf about 3182 lines in length pagan in its representation of wild natural scenes, fierce weather, and bitter climate stormy seas, deadly fogs, hails, rain, the marshy lands and stormy seas. In the words of Legouis and Calamities,

*"Beowulf is every part a hero: the ideal of an active force serving good and triumphing over evil...."*

After poetry, there developed old English prose in 9<sup>th</sup> century. It also had now and then some elements of poetry; It had Latin influence, the language of church and the educated people. It contained factual, historical and religious setting. King Alfred, the great (871-900 AD) one of the most significant rulers of the first millennium translated many works from Latin especially in the areas of religions, history and philosophy. The chief old English prose writers were Aelfric and Wulfstan old English contains the style; homilies, stories of saint's lives, Sermons and Bible translations. Aelfric, the Abbot of Eynsham wrote three cycles of forty homilies (two volumes catholic: Homilies and lives of saints) as well as other homilies, pastoral letters and several translations. Wulfstan, the archbishop of York wrote Civil and church-related legal codes as well as homilies.

Drama in English literature came after prose before its emergence; poetry had already taken birth. Origin of drama shows the brief scenes of monasteries acted out in churches to illustrate bible stories. Later on, they developed into full length plays. The sources of dramas were chiefly from catholic traditions and ceremonies where whole society was from the king to the lowest citizens.

After old age of English Literature middle period (C-100 to C-1500) become the literary as well as the spoken language of England. In the End of middle age. Thomas More (1478 to 1535) who wrote Utopia was a centre point of entire ideological sphere. Time period of Old English Period is about 500-1100 AD in which English Literature remained in unwritten form.

In fifteenth century, Humanism took root in England. As in Italy, Humanism took place in England at a time when the education it promoted was suitable to the need of governing class: the monarch, member of the council church, officials and civil servants. It became necessary to write Latin well in the century. Humanists Gave attention to grammar and the elegantly subordinated syntax of ciceronian's style so that diplomatic and domestic matters of the state can easily be handled. Humanists programme were also launched in the century that produced great literary work.

The base of humanism lies in Renaissance that is marked by intellectual and social movement. Humanism and its ideas first came from Italy, then from all Europe. Humanism is a discovery and re-evolution of the aspect of classical civilization, ancient Greek and Rome,

and application to these aspects to intellectual and social culture. It is also in many ways an attack on scholasticism, the dominant intellectual school of the middle ages. In early days in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, scholasticism had been a dynamic vital method, but by 14<sup>th</sup> century, minor points of philosophy & theology were more organized. Later, scholasticisms was opposed and debated over as the dancing angles on the head of a pin.

After old age of English Literature, middle Period, c. 1100 to c. 1500 became the literary as well as spoken English of England. In middle age, manuscripts were composed and words were analyzed to produce most accurate edition. This period is also marked by invention of printing press. Hence the late fifteen century is known as printing capital of Europe.

Under new wave of artistic creation intellectuals adopted a new line of thought known as humanism that directed mankind to have earthly protection beyond that ever has been imagined earlier, with the distinction of this one, improvement in our memory was felt. It was humanist approach that brought the horror of dark ages black death out the mind of the people and started a fresh life. Middle class for the first time began to gain power in cities, trade and commerce and enterprise as in the right of man. People began to get out of their homes to share their hands in global or international trades. Modern scholars pointed out that was Cicero who popularized the term 'humanist'. For Cicero a lawyer who distinguished humans from brutes in his speech which allied reason, enabled them to settle their disputes and live together in concord with harmony under the rules of law.

The Sprit of humanism lies in expression of appreciation for the artifacts of the past. It was the early humanist who invented the term "Middle age and Renaissance". There was no line drawn between classical and Medieval Latin before humanist came. The humanists were the first to make this destination. Humanism is applied to the revival to classical literature. In 16<sup>th</sup> century, the word Humanist was signified as one taught and walked in the "Studia Humanitates" (Studies of humanities used by fifteen century Italian humanist to denote secular literary and scholarly activities in grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history. . . .).

It was distinguished from the field like mathematics, natural philosophy and ideology. Rediscovery, intensive study of Roman and Greek literature was made by scholars of humanism Central ideas of humanistic thoughts were reason... and a proper dignity for man. Many humanists also felt the need of a sound development of man's diverse powers, physical and mental, artistic and moral as opposed to mere technical of specialized trained. In Victorian Period, even Mathew Arnold also defined the predominance of study in general education.

The key counselor of King Henry came as a pioneer of human welfare with the arrival of English Renaissance (1515-1660) penning of Thomas more began to catch fast speed and

turned to humanistic approach. With the running of time Thomas more emerged as a pioneer of humanism.

In the specific work of Cicero, Aristotle and Plato they applied humanistic approach and elements in their work. They edited many ancient texts in Latin and Greek and thus reduced a heap of material into the work contained humanistic elements.

Pioneer humanistic came to classical antiquities to make a re-discover of the work. Latin Language was the soul concerned both as church language and the language of whole Europe. Petrarch, an Italian poet, a writer of Trecento (1300AD) was the first humanist. He was called spiritual father by his successor. It was Petrarch who re-discovered and transferred the work of Cicero, followed his style in his own Latin writings. He was awarded a laurel crown for his poetry and is said to have his one foot in the past and the other in the future. Petrarch found Cicero different man in his writing. Like Cicero Petrarch was medium in outlook.

Thomas More (Utopia) written In (1516) is in many respect a typical product of renaissance humanism. Utopia bears all the signs of humanist's interest in classical language. It is written in Latin with numerous allusion to classical Greek as well. Its subject matter comes from to classical work: Plato's Republic and Aristotle's politics. Its introductory section is replete with satire, irony and word play associated with ancient writer like Brum. More is said to be affected with the application of ancient political ideas that create ideal state. In many respect, Utopia contains hybrid humanistic thoughts own on one side, it is pithy and satirical, on the other, it is serious hypothesis of an idea, and common weals broaden in classical language and form.

Really Utopia seems philosopher's examples what is good for mankind and contains something more than classical ethics, humanism, elements of religion to change his own society.

The two friends (Desiderius Erasmus Hugely and Thomas More) greatly admired the Greek satirist- Lucian More and Erasmus are like the fundament respect that correct Christian ethics of an ideal society. If literature diversifies from humanistic, approach it no longer remains as literature. Hence Literature should both intensively personal as well as communal experience in which words, sentences, characters plots and tropes reveal about human, and something related to humans. It is possible only through literature that complicate things that require infinite amount of words and hardly to afloat can easily come to people's knowledge to make them aware for the welfare of the human passing from one age to the other to build up a nation in a strong foundation that age to age generation need to be familiar with the ancient culture tradition and the history to which men came from. It is literature that maintains the records written by great scholar (Authors philosophers, poets, etc) of the ages capturing and

interpreting what happened in the past and what is likely to happen in future It is the power of words that enriches culture to prepare a deep surrounding in which a person in future embraces other as his own brother without any distinction of cast, creed, religion and nationality.

It is really the essence of humanism that tends man to make verbal and written form in such a manner that leads to human welfare of society Literature and humanism are to intermingled aspects of human life, want of any one out of the both makes human life turmoil unrestrained, noisy, discontent. Sound literature prepares aura of joining hands that draws one to the other towards live and work together understand mutually. Literature can serve the society in many ways: through print visual auditory and visual oratory both ways. Written text can be in the form of fiction, non-fiction poetry, prose, novel, short story and drama in accordance with historical periods adhering to certain aesthetic refers to Literature.

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