

Marlowe's conception
of tragedy

Marlowe's contribution to English Drama

English drama before Marlowe was dull, dry, tasteless and crude: most of the native dramatists were blind imitators of the classical model of drama. As interest in the study of the classical model of drama, writers or classical authors was revived with the advent of Renaissance. But little could they realise the absurdity of bringing classicism in the age of Romanticism. Classicism can not flourish in the age of imagination and emotion which characterized the Elizabethan period. The Elizabethan people were surcharged with the spirit of adventure and discovery. They had little regard for moderation and austerity. That is why, their dramas could not appeal to the imagination of the Elizabethan people. There were some native dramatists who tried to record faithfully passion and fervour of the native people. But they had little sense of form. In fine, the drama in England was struggling between the formalism of the classicist and the formless enthusiasm of the new playwrights. The problem of the drama was to survive, was to combine vigour and enthusiasm of the new generation with the form and style of the Senecan tragedy. Seneca was adopted a model of classical drama. It was at this critical juncture in the history of English drama, Marlowe appeared in the firmament of English literature. Very carefully, he combined the passion and fervour of his time with the classical model of drama. But he was not blind imitator of the classicist. He adopted the classic model but adopted it to suit the spirit and sensibility of his time. What he brought on the then stage came to be known as Romantic drama. That is why, Marlowe is remembered as the greatest fashioner of drama in English literature. He tried to bring ^{new} drama out of the ^{old} ~~dead~~ ^{stagnant} ~~of the~~ ^{of the} ~~morality~~ ^{of the} ~~and~~ ^{of the} ~~rambling~~ ^{of the} ~~interludes~~ ^{of the} ~~and~~ ^{of the} ~~set it~~ ^{of the} ~~on the road to success.~~ ^{of the} ~~Before Marlowe, the art~~ ^{of the} ~~of characterization was not developed.~~ ^{of the} ~~The characters~~ ^{of the} ~~were mostly puppet and personified abstraction.~~ ^{of the} ~~Marlowe~~ ^{of the} ~~replaced them by live individual bubbling with fire and~~ ^{of the} ~~passion.~~ ^{of the} ~~In fact, his characters were paragon~~ ^{of the} ~~of humanity.~~ ^{of the}

Marlowe broke with the medieval conception of tragedy and brought about a revolutionary change both in the content and style of tragedy. Before Marlowe tragedy was primarily concerned with the reality. The then dramatist depicted the fall of kings and queens at whose death even the heaven blazed forth. Marlowe brought out his tragedy out of the defeat and death of common individuals fired with insatiable inspiration and invincible will. His heroes appear heroic everything they say or do. Although, they are lowly born. Tamburlaine is a common peasant. Barabas was an ordinary moneylender. Faustus was a common German doctor-scholar. It is the insatiable ambition that is the theme of Marlowian tragedies. Marlowe ushered a new era in the history of English literature by inserting a new class of tragic heroes. That is why, Marlowe is ~~rem~~ remembered for introducing heroic themes and their heroic treatment. The greatness of tragic hero does not lie in his position but his quality of ambition. Marlowe has made his intention behind writing Dr. Faustus clear ~~thru~~ through the mouth of chorus. He says that he does not want to narrate the story of mighty princes and their adventurous deeds, nor does he want to narrate the story of that love-affair which caused and created the downfall of many a great dynasty of kings and emperors. On the contrary, he wants to narrate the story of a common man of a base stock. When he attains much height in the field of knowledge. He gets puffed up with pride and erases all limits like Icarus and is finally destroyed because of his own limitless ambition. Such a story of a common man appealed to the taste and temperament of the Elizabethan men. As they had come to discover infinite potentiality in an ordinary man. This is not all, ~~with~~ Marlowe is the first to introduce ^{conception} of a tragic hero in spite of attaining omnipotence with the help of Mephistopheles he remains ~~not~~ dissatisfied. In fact, he is dogged by ~~few~~ apprehension and the possibility of damnation at the time like a nightmare. Here Marlowe seems to have attempted new. He rounds the defect of human heart.

with the result, the relationship between motive and action has been for the last time expressed into the undeveloped art of characterization in the then English tragedy.

That excessive indulgence in oneself becomes the cause of tragedy. He catered to the taste of the people, modifying the ideal conception of an ideal hero.

During the middle ages Senecan model of revenge tragedy came to halt. He deviated from the medieval conception of tragedy. As he held his own conception of tragedy. For him a tragic play is not merely a thing dealing with the defeat and death or bloody crime or revenge. For him, it became a tale of ambition. He raised his subject matter of tragedy and made it heroic. It became a struggle of a great ^{worldly} man for the unattainable - a struggle which leads him to inevitable death and destruction. He introduced a new class of a tragic subject well suited to the native fervour and passion of the time. At the place of revenge tragedy he provided with tragedy caused by ambition and insatiable passion. Tamburlaine had indomitable passion for world conquest. Barba had passion for wealth and Faustus had passion for beauty, power and wealth. He wants to become demi-God on earth. Passion is one of the prominent characteristics of the Renaissance spirit. That is why, it is said that Marlowe ushered a new era for the English tragedy.

One important feature of Marlowian tragedy is that his heroes dominate the world in which they live with the rest. Other characters in the play become more or less minor. Hence Tamburlaine, Dr. Faustus and The Jew of Malta are the plays of one man, one hero. The real conflict which originates from a person or a group of men opposed to the hero does not exist in them. But it is far from truth that there is a lack of conflict in the Marlowian tragedy. Conflict is the life breath of drama. Marlowe replaces the external conflict raging in other dramas the internal conflict. Internal conflict is more vigorous than the external one. In Dr. Faustus, we see that the conflict continued in the mind of the heroes. He endows his tragic heroes with greatness and nobility of soul. Marlowe does not write a play to prove a theory or principle to illustrate his objective as a dramatist was to read the state of human mind under certain conditions. An individual has become the subject of study in the hands of Marlowe.