

## Study Material, B.A Part I (English Hons. )

### Elizabethan Poetry

**Sir Philip Sydney** was a statesman, a courtier and, above all, a man of letters in the court of Elizabeth. The literary oeuvre of Sydney consists of *Arcadia*, a prose romance, *Apology for poetry* (1580), a collection of literary and critical principles and *Astrophel and Stella* (1591), a collection of sonnets. These sonnets are the first direct expressions of personal feelings and experiences in English poetry.

**Edmund Spenser** was one of the prominent poets of the Elizabethan age. Spenser's literary volume is massive which includes *The Faerie Queen* (an epic poem), *The Shepherd's Calendar*, *Amerotti* (a sonnet sequence), *Prothalamion*, *Epithalimion* and other miscellaneous poems. Edmund Spenser is a typical representative of his age as his work combined the best of both the Renaissance and the Reformation. Besides, his contribution to poetic style, diction and versification is memorable. The introduction of Spenserian Stanza, which has been admired by countless critics and imitated by all poets since its introduction is his most remarkable contribution to the English literature. Spenser's poems are remarkable for the richness of language and melody of the verse; the golden diction which he drew from every source- new words, old words, obsolete words.

**The Faerie Queen:** Out of all Spenser's works, *The Faerie Queen* deserves special mention. Not only is it one of the longest poems, in English language, it is also important for its style. Spenser has used his famous Spenserian Stanza for the first time in this poem only. The poem is an allegorical epic that deals with the adventures of a number of medieval knights. The poem draws on history and myth, particularly on the legends of Arthur.

**William Shakespeare:** While Shakespeare was regarded as the foremost dramatist of his time, evidence indicates that both he and his contemporaries looked to poetry, not playwriting, for enduring fame. Shakespeare's sonnets were composed between 1593 and 1601, though not published until 1609. That edition, *The Sonnets of Shakespeare*, consists of 154 sonnets, all written in the form of three quatrains and a couplet that is now recognised as Shakespearean.

Apart from sonnets, he has also composed two long narrative poems, namely, Venus and Adonis and The Rape of Lucrece.

### **Important Concepts/Events/Terms**

**Spenserian Stanza** is a verse form that consists of eight iambic pentameter lines followed by a ninth line of six iambic feet (an alexandrine); the rhyme scheme is ababbcbcc.

An **epic** or heroic poem is a long verse narrative on a serious subject, told in a formal and elevated style, and centred on a heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation or (in the instance of John Milton's Paradise lost) the human race.

**King Arthur** was a legendary British leader who according to medieval histories and romances, led the defence of Britain against Saxons invaders in the 5th and early 6th centuries.