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class - B.A. I  
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Topic - Elizabethan Poetry.

Elizabethan Period is the first really great period of English literature. The origin of Elizabethan Poetry may be traced to Renaissance. There were various factors that led to the growth of particular kind of literature in England. The invention of printing and gun-powder, the discovery of America, the rediscovery of Greece and the fall of Constantinople to Turkey in the 15th century brought about a complete revolution in the mood and attitudes of English poets. The knowledge of Greek and Latin classics enriched the fountain of inspiration. New experiments were made in poetry.

The Elizabethan Period extended over a period of about a century from ~~the~~ the middle of the 16th century to the middle of the 17th century. It is a term loosely applied to the whole of the Renaissance period. It is considered to be the richest period in English literature. It is marked by an independence of outlook, a variety of experiments, a wide range of subject matter and technique and an effusion of lyrical qualities. The English poet began his quest of "fresh fields and pastures new", to quote an expression of Marlowe. The genius of the period was best expressed in contemporary drama. But in the realm of poetry as well, valuable experiments were made. Sonnets, Blank Verse, and love lyrics of all sorts began to be written. Pastoral Poetry, satirical poems and poetic drama were not only imitated but also to perfection. Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson and Donne are the most important poets of this period. The underlying charact-



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existents of all these poets is a thirst for the knowledge of antiquity, taste for adventure, love of the beautiful and an adequate expression of the self. For the first time did English poetry attempt at an expression of powerful feelings. The age may be said to be the first Romantic period in English poetry. The melody of the nightingales and cuckoos was heard again in the period of Romantic Revival that we find in the poetry of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats and Byron. The two Romantic periods are akin to each other in sensibility, experience and expression.

The poetry of the Age of Shakespeare may be divided into two phases for the sake of convenience:

(I) Elizabethan poetry (1568-1603)

(II) Jacobean poetry (1603-1625)

(I) Elizabethan poetry (1568-1603): The poetry of the Elizabethan Era represents the spirit of conquest and self-glorification, humanism and vigorous imagination, emotional depth and aerial graces.

1. High conception of poetry: - Poetry was considered as a dignified and elevated form of literary expression. Sidney says: "of all science is our poet the Monarch". Poetry was not meant only for enjoyment. Its function was considered to provide profitable enjoyment. Spenser proclaimed that heroes and famous poets are born together. He showed that civilization and poetry go side by side. In particular he insists that "poetry is a divine gift and heavenly instinct not to be gotten by labour and learning, but adorned with both; and poured into the wit by a certain enthusiasm and celestial inspiration". Sublimity was deemed to be the essential quality of a poet. Spenser, Marlowe and Shakespeare had the immense power to exalt and subliminate the readers of poetry.

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