

# Chaucer's contribution to English literature

Chaucer in some ways inaugurated English poetry at the time when English was considered a vernacular in England and French and Latin reigned. Chaucer was just not a first-rate literary artist; he was the pivotal figure in English literature who encompassed earlier traditions, genres and novelty in forms and literary content with his ingenious innovations. John Dart has called Chaucer the father of English poetry due to his exceptional contributions to the English language. Similarly, Matthew Arnold has remarked, "with him is born our real poetry."

Chaucer was the first English poet who gave full expression to the new hopes and aspirations of the people of his time. He was a realist who found fitting subjects for his poetry not in gods and heroes of a Golden age but in life that unfolded before his eyes. He mixed freely with humanity and expressed its aspirations and concerns in his poetry with full sincerity. Chaucer's realism is truly discernible in his mammoth work *The Canterbury Tales* in which he has painted the truthful picture of the 14th-century life through a group of pilgrims. By introducing pilgrims from different classes and giving an analysis of their manners, virtues and follies, clothes and habits, Chaucer didn't just give voice to the tendencies of his age but he also added new dimensions to the act of literary characterisation.

Another remarkable aspect of Chaucer's work is his humour which is delightful and stimulating. Before Chaucer, English humour was synonymous with buffoonery and horseplay, but he refined and raised it to the standards of literary humour which were kind and patronising as in the case of the clerk of Oxenford and semi-farcical in the case of Wife of Bath. By his remarkable observation of

inconsistencies in conduct and power of selecting what is typical in manners, Chaucer also paved the path for satirists of the forthcoming generations.

Chaucer is known for his metrical innovations. He invented Rhyme Royal stanza pattern which is a seven lined stanza in iambic pentameter with a rhyme scheme of ababbcc. He was also one of the first to use blank verse for his poetry with only a few anonymous short works using it before him. Chaucer is also recorded in the oxford english dictionary as the first author to use many common english words in his writings. These words were probably frequently used in the language at the time, but chaucer with his ear for common speech, is the earliest masuscript source.