

## 2. Elizabethan Poetry.

Elizabethan Age or Shakespearean Age has been described as a time, when men lived seriously, thought seriously and wrote seriously. The songs of Elizabethan period are intense moments captured in the verse of great beauty. Song it seems was not the specialist job in the Elizabethan period. It was the spontaneous expression of joy and pain. The great tragedies and comedies of the period are linked with lovely lyrics and songs.

A historian regards the publication of 'Shepherd's Calendar' in 1579 as the opening of the golden age of Elizabethan drama. In the first half of this period, little verse of distinction was written. The principal collection of published in the Elizabethan Age or - 'Bower of Delights', 'Phoenixnest', 'Passionate Pilgrims', and 'England's Helicon'. These collection contained the poems of Lodge, Peele, Sir Walter Raleigh, Drayton and others.

Edmund Spenser (1552-1599) of early life and parentage we know little, except that he was born in East Smithfield, near the Tower of London, and was poor. His education began at the Merchant Tailor School in London and was continued in Cambridge, where as a poor size and flag for wealthy students he earned a scant living. After leaving Cambridge (1576) Spenser went to the north of England. In Kilcolman, surrounded by great natural beauty, Spenser finished the first three books of "the Faery Queen". In 1589 Raleigh visited him, heard the poem which with enthusiasm, hurried the poet off to London, and presented him to Elizabeth. Spenser remained the greatest non-dramatic poet of the period. His 'Shepherd's Calendar' and 'The Faery Queen', are great poetic creations. Spenser also wrote a series of 88 Sonnets. Spenser reflects the vigour and great zest for life, show typical of the Renaissance period.



Spenser fell in love with his beautiful Elizabeth, an Irish girl; wrote his Amoretti, or Sonnets in her honour. Spenser's next visit to London was 1595, when he published 'Astrophel', an elegy on the death of his friend Sidney and three more books. The work of at least two great Elizabethan poets - Donne and Ben Jonson's are clearly different from their contemporaries. Donne was a metaphysical poet. Ben Jonson's poems were more great than those of the early Elizabethan poets.

Shakespeare also wrote a large number of poems, all sonnets. In fact he wrote 154 sonnets. No other period in literary history can be described richer than the lyrics of Elizabethan period.