



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S AND MILTON'S CONTRIBUTION TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

This paper throws light on the contribution of literary Giants, Shakespeare and Milton to English language and Literature. Warren King clarifies, of all the 17,677 words Shakespeare used in his works, 1,700 words were invented by Shakespeare himself. Shakespeare's language and strict discipline gave liveliness and intensity to his writing style. On the other hand, Milton's contribution to English language and literature is no less important. His works remain as outstanding masterpieces in English literature. He too coined new terminologies in English and created new metaphor like epic similes. But in his actual practice in the matters of vocabulary, sentence structure and syntax, he displayed the veracity and extravagant which is characteristically Elizabethan.

Keywords: *language, English literature, writing style, contributions and vocabulary.*

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

William Shakespeare is widely known as the greatest writer in the history of the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist. The rules of the grammar were not standardized prior to the Shakespeare reign. Shakespeare's scripts contain

over 2200 never-before-seen words—a diverse collection of loan-words from foreign languages, compound words from existing English terms, nouns turned into verbs, and creatively applied prefixes—many of which have entered into everyday language. Many Shakespearean English words became standard



and embedded through the dictionary of Samuel Johnson where Shakespeare name appears several times. He is remembered always for his significant contribution to English language.

For instance, the word Swagger is from Shakespeare's coined word Swag, Meaning "to boast or brag" used in "Midsummer Night's Dream," "2 Henry IV," "King Lear".

VOCABULARY

Shakespeare introduced thousands of words into English making the language more colourful and dignified. Warren King clarifies that Shakespeare, in his works used almost 17,677 words out of which 1700 were new words coined by Shakespeare himself. Shakespeare is also known for borrowing words from the classical literature and other foreign languages. His style of inventing words can be seen from changing nouns into verbs, changing verbs into adjectives. Some other words are invented by him by adding prefixes and suffixes.

In his essay, "Shakespeare's Native English", Jonathan Hope of the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, Scotland. Writes:

"The Victorian scholars who read texts for the first edition of the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) paid special attention to Shakespeare: [H]is texts were read more thoroughly, and cited more often, so he is often credited with the first use of words, or senses of words, which can, in fact, be found in other writers."

Here are a few examples of words we can thank Shakespeare for.

Arch-villain: Timon of Athens, Act V, Scene I

Assassination: Macbeth, Act I, Scene VII

Bedazzled: The Taming of the Shrew, Act IV, Scene V

Cold-blooded: King John, Act III, Scene I

Dishearten: Henry V, Act IV, Scene I

Eventful: As You Like It, Act II, Scene VII

Eyeball: The Tempest, Act I, Scene II

Fashionable: Troilus and Cressida, Act III, Scene III

Addiction: Othello, Act II, Scene II

POETRY

Shakespeare introduced two main important factors in poetry— " verbal immediacy and the moulding of stress to the movement of living

emotion". The words of Shakespeare reflected passage of time with "fresh, concrete and vividness". They give the readers an idea of the time frame. His notable ability to analyse and express emotions in simple words was astounding:

"When my love swears that she is made of truth,

I do believe her, though I know she lies-"

— (Sonnet CXXXVIII)

On reading the sonnet above, one can realise how Shakespeare expressed in simple words, "complex and even contradictory attitudes to a simple emotion."

Shakespeare's language and strict discipline gave liveliness and intensity of his writing style. "It encouraged the association of understanding with the depth of content and variety of emotional response to a degree unparalleled in English". Such is the artistic skill of Shakespeare. The sonnet form was limited structurally, in expression and in theme.

JOHN MILTON

John Milton (1608-1674) is considered one of the greatest poets of England. He is known for his epic poem "paradise lost". His works namely: *Paradise Lost*, *Lycidas* and *Samson Agonists* are considered outstanding masterpieces in English literature. According to linguists in, *On Shakespeare* "Milton followed in Shakespeare footsteps by enhancing the English language for poetic and dramatic effect. Milton stands beside Shakespeare in many ways. He too coined new terminologies in English and created new metaphor like epic similes. He too borrowed the words from other foreign languages into English. Many of his coined words are still active. Words coined by him are: embellishing, slow-motion, reforming, besotted, padlock, disregard, enjoyable, chastening, defensively etc.

According to Gavin Alexander of Cambridge university, who has trawled the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) for evidence writes:

Milton is responsible for introducing some 630 words to the English language, making him the country's greatest neologist, ahead of Ben Jonson with 558, John Donne with 342 and Shakespeare with 229. Without the great poet there would be no liturgical, debauchery, besottedly, unhealthily, padlock, dismissive,



terrific, embellishing, fragrance, didactic or love-lorn. And certainly no complacency.

MILTON PROSE VOCABULARY

Milton is regarded a great enricher of English Language. He occupies anomalous position in the history of the English language of the seventeenth century. Milton in his actual practice in the matters of vocabulary, sentence structure and syntax, displayed the versatility and extravagant which is characteristically Elizabethan. Milton was not given to any methodical or precise exposition of his views on the English language. We find in him no serious complaints about its inadequacies or concrete proposals for its amendment. Nevertheless, a careful reading of his works, both in English and in other languages reveal the considerable interest in language in general and in English in particular.

From classical and renaissance sources Milton drew his belief in the importance of the role which language plays in human society. It is not only an instrument of civilization, the medium of "things useful to be known." but a living barometer of manners and morals. There is an intimate and real connection between the two; indeed language actually helps form the manners of men. Some of the famous words coined by Milton are: Pandemonium, Lovelorn, Unoriginal, Earthshaking, Space, Enjoyable, Fragrance, Sensuous, Debauchery, Terrific, Goosier etc

CONCLUSION

Shakespeare analysed the human condition, not just for Elizabethan England, but throughout the world and for eternity. Even today you and I quote Shakespeare without knowing it: if you act more in sorrow than in anger, if you vanish into thin air or have ever been tongue-tied, hoodwinked or slept not one wink, you're speaking the Bard's English. Milton, say his fans, works on an altogether different, higher plane. In Paradise Lost – the best poem ever written in English – Milton moved beyond the literary to address political, philosophical and religious questions in a way that still resounds strongly today. In his complex, intellectual poetry he drilled down deep into the eternal truths and sought to embody new scientific discovery in his work. His engagement with the issues of the day – with the nature of knowledge, slavery, free will, love and creation – was

unparalleled. Despite complete blindness in middle age, he was the English republic's best known, most fervent apologist, and a key civil servant for Oliver Cromwell. In his other works, notably in Areopagitica, his attack on censorship, he showed himself as much a master of prose as well as poetry. He defines not only his age, but our own.

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