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रासो

अन्तर्विषयी त्रैमासिक शोध पत्रिका

वर्ष-17, अंक-3, जून जुलाई अगस्त 2024





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इतिहास, संस्कृति, साहित्य एवं दर्शन की त्रैमासिक शोध पत्रिका

वर्ष-17

अंक - 3

जून-जुलाई-अगस्त-2024

सम्पादक

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डॉ. रीता पारीक

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हुकुमचन्द नोबल इंस्टीट्यूट ऑफ साइंस एण्ड टेक्नोलॉजी, अजमेर

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डॉ. मृत्युंजय शर्मा

सह-आचार्य

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डॉ. निष्काम शर्मा

☆ शब्द संयोजन

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प्रकाशक-श्रीमती पुष्पा शर्मा, 51/1509, वेद विहार, लोहाखान, अजमेर द्वारा मैसर्स सृजन संस्थान, अजमेर
की ओर से प्रकाशित एवं मुद्रक-श्रीमती उषा गर्ग द्वारा मैसर्स आर्य प्रिन्टर्स, केसरगंज, अजमेर से मुद्रित।

Geoffrey Chaucer as a Chronicler of 14th-Century England

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Abstract :

Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* is a key piece of English literature that gives a clear view of life in 14th-century England. Through a group of travelers who tell stories during a journey to Canterbury, Chaucer shows the various aspects of medieval life, including how society was organized, religious beliefs and cultural practices. This research paper looks at Chaucer's role as a writer who recorded the time he lived in, exploring how his work reflects the political and social environment of his era.

Keywords: Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, 14th-century England, medieval society, pilgrimage, social hierarchy, religious critique.

Introduction

Geoffrey Chaucer, known as the "father of English literature," used *The Canterbury Tales* to show the different parts of England in the 14th century. By using a pilgrimage as the main setting for the stories, Chaucer creates a picture of medieval society that includes people from all different backgrounds.

The Social Structure of 14th-Century England

The 14th century in England saw important changes in social, political, and economic areas. The old feudal system was starting to change, with a growing middle class. Hard times like the Black Death led to labor shortages and changes in power. Religious institutions, which were once seen as perfect, began to face criticism due to issues like corruption and moral problems.

Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* reflects these changes. The journey to Canterbury is like a journey through life, with each pilgrim representing a different part of society. Their stories show how society worked and challenge the norms of the time, touching on topics like class differences, gender roles and the moral failures of religious figures.

Chaucer's Characterization as a Reflection of Society

In *The Canterbury Tales* Chaucer introduces a wide range of characters

शोध-पत्र में उल्लिखित सन्दर्भ एवं विचारों के लिए लेखक स्वयं उत्तरदायी है, सम्पादक नहीं।

who represent different parts of society. The Knight is an example of the noble class, showing chivalric qualities. On the other hand, characters like the Pardoner and the Summoner show the corruption within the Church. The Wife of Bath brings up questions about marriage and women's independence, offering a more progressive view.

Through these characters, Chaucer gives a detailed look at medieval society, showing both its strengths and weaknesses. His careful portrayals encourage people to think about what was considered normal and consider other opinions. Religious Critique and Moral Commentary Religion was a big part of life in the Middle Ages, affecting everything people did. But Chaucer's portrayal of religious figures in his work shows a more complex truth. Characters like the Pardoner and the Friar are shown as morally ambiguous, doing things that go against Church teachings. The Pardoner, for instance, sells relics and indulgences to make money, using people's faith for personal gain. This shows Chaucer's criticism of the corruption and its effect on society.

At the same time, the Parson is portrayed as a true and humble priest, contrasting with the corrupt clergy. This suggests that real religious devotion exists outside of institutionalized religion.

The Role of Women in Chaucer's Tales

Women are shown in many different ways in The Canterbury Tales. The Wife of Bath is a strong, independent character who challenges traditional views about women's roles. Her story and introduction discuss topics like women's sexuality, power, and independence, challenging the norms of her time.

Other women, like the Prioress and the Second Nun, are shown within the roles society expected of them. While their stories reflect the pressures on women, they also show the complexity of female identity in medieval society.

Chaucer's Linguistic Innovation

Chaucer's choice to write in Middle English was a big step. When Latin and French were the main languages used in literature, Chaucer made English more accessible to a wider audience. His skill with the language and use of iambic pentameter helped raise the status of English as a literary language.

The rich language in The Canterbury

Tales shows the variety of English dialects from the time and captures the social and regional identities of medieval England.

Chaucer's Legacy as a Chronicler

Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales is not just a literary work, it serves as a historical record, giving insight into the social, political, and religious life of 14th-

century England. Through his detailed characters and compelling stories, Chaucer offers a deeper understanding of medieval life. His work remains widely studied and respected for its depth, humor, and critical outlook, making Chaucer a key figure in the history of English literature.

The Social and Literary Significance of Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales

Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* is a powerful example of the richness and variety of late medieval English society. The Tales show the dynamic nature of Middle English and act as a mirror to the conflicts of a society that was changing quickly. Because of its mix of humor, realism and moral reflection, Chaucer's work is one of the most important achievements in English literature.

Diversity of Voices

At the core of *The Canterbury Tales* is the variety of voices represented. The pilgrims come from many different social backgrounds, such as knights, prioresses, merchants, millers, clerks, and more. Each one represents a part of life in 14th-century England. This inclusivity was unusual for its time, as medieval literature was mostly the work of the aristocracy and clergy. By giving a voice to people from the middle class and the poor, Chaucer shows a future where social mobility would be more common. Chaucer's use of satire and irony adds depth to his portrayal of society.

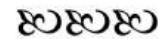
In stories like *The Pardoner's Tale* and *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, he highlights the dishonesty of religious and moral leaders. The Pardoner, who speaks against greed but admits to the late medieval Church. The Wife of Bath, on the other hand, questions traditional views on gender and marriage through her strong and confident voice. These characters are not just exaggerated figures; they show the mixed nature of human behavior, including both their longing for purpose. Chaucer's clever use of irony lets him criticize without being too direct, encouraging readers to think about moral issues on their own.

The Canterbury Tales also marks an important change in English literature. Written in Middle English instead of Latin or French, it helped to establish English as a serious language for writing. Chaucer's skill with poetic forms, especially his use of iambic pentameter and rhyming couplets, influenced the way English poetry was written later on. His language blends refined courtly style with everyday realism, just like the stories themselves. As linguist David Crystal points out, Chaucer's writing reflects a time when English was becoming a language capable of expressing all aspects of life.

In terms of morals and themes, *The Canterbury Tales* looks at big questions

about life such as love, greed, faith, corruption and the search for forgiveness. But Chaucer's view of morality is not simple. He does not show a clear list of good and bad traits but instead shows how people in everyday life are morally mixed. Even those who seem bad show some truth and those who seem good are not always free from pride. This mix of good and bad in characters predicts the realism found in writers like Shakespeare and Dickens, who also show how personal desires and social expectations interact.

In conclusion, Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* is a reflection of 14th-century English society. Through his many characters and their stories. Chaucer shows the many layers of medieval life, offering a thoughtful critique of the social, religious and cultural standards of the time. His work is not just entertaining, it makes readers think about the deep complexities of human nature and society.



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