

SUBJECT : ENGLISH

B.A.(HONS.) PART-II, PAPER-III

TOPIC- EDWARD II

BY DR.PRABHAT RANJAN KARN

ASSOC. PROF., DEPT.OF ENGLISH

DR.L.K.V.D. COLLEGE, TAJPUR

CHARACTER SKETCH OF QUEEN ISABELLA IN “EDWARD II”

A charge labelled against Marlowe's dramatic craftsmanship is that his women characters are not dramatically living. In fact his earlier plays are rather deprived of substantial feminine attributes. But in Edward II he portrays female character of Isabella as an important link in the whole action in the plot. She is much instrumental in the tragic fall of the weak king. From this viewpoint only Edward II can be held to be superior to all his plays.

Queen Isabella's character changes with the advancement of the play. She changes gradually into a hypocritical, vengeful, ambitious and even cruel woman. In the beginning of the play she is presented as an object of pity. She is the queen but she does not have queen like personality nor she enjoys the honour of a queen. Her husband is rather cold and cruel to her. He does not give her importance rather exploits her only to serve his base passion for his favourite Gaveston. The king's favourite proud Gaveston even insults her husband. The queen, however remains extremely submissive, loyal and ready to do anything to get the favour of her husband. She prefers to bear her own distress silently to spare him from troubles and worries.

A drastic change is seen in the role of Queen Isabella in the later phase of the play. She falls desperate due to her husband's follies and frivolities. All this moulds her to grow into a strong, determined, shrewd and corrupt woman.

Finally she comes forward with the French army to avenge the wrong committed to her by her husband and thus to punish him. She conspires with Mortimer and other lords against her husband. She becomes a party to Mortimer's cruel dealings with the king. She grows an adulterous relation with Mortimer and does all that she can to foster her secret love for him. She gradually turns into a power loving, unscrupulous and immoral woman from a timid, submissive woman of earlier scenes.

Yet, at last, in her favour it can be said that she shows real affection to her son. She proves herself to be an affectionate mother. She loves her son sincerely and wishes him to be the safe king of England.
