Thespis “the Inventor of Tragedy”

Thespis was known as the inventor of the Greek tragedy. He was born in Attica, generally considered the inventor of tragedy, flourished in the time of the Peisistratidae. According to ancient tradition, Thespis was the first actor in Greek drama. He was the first prize winner at the Great Dionysia on 534 BC. Scholars differ on the scanty evidence about Thespis and his role in the development of Greek drama. According to Diogenes Laertius he introduced for the first time in the old dithyrambic choruses a person distinct from the chorus, who conversed with the leader and was hence called answerer. According to another explanation, he was so called from repeating the words of another – the poet or composer.

Thespis changed theatre by introducing basic elements of theatre. Such as: Prologue, Monologues, Masks, Makeup, Costume, and even the independent actor. Prior to Thespis, Greek theatre relied on the chorus to create dramatic tension. When Thespis addressed the chorus, engaging its members in tragic dialogue, he essentially became the first individual actor. Thespis walked around Athens pulling a handcart, setting up a kind of one many plays, where he showed the bad behavior of man. The word for actor “thespian” comes from his name. His contemporary Solon resented him, with the explanation that what he showed on stage soon would be acted out in reality as well. This new style was called tragedy.

Thespis was the most popular exponent of it. His name was recorded as the first to stage a tragedy at the Great Dionsya on 534 BC. In his first tragedies he anointed his face with white lead, then he shaded his face with purslane in his performance, and after that introduced the use of masks, making them in linen alone. He produced in the 61st Olympiad (536/5-533/2 BC). Eventually, on November 23, 534 BC, there are competitions to find the best tragedy and Thespis won the first documented competition. Today November 23, marks the traditional date when the first ever human being to take the stage and portray someone else other than himself took place. November 23 also marks the day when the ghost of Thespis supposedly haunts public performances the world ever, causing mischief and mayhem wherever he can in those performances.

It was happened in Greek, it is called the Greek tragedy. When the competitions to find the best tragedy it were instituted at the City Dionysia in Athens.

It was happened because Thespis because he want to introduced actors into his tragedies, who recited some lines between each verse of the chorus, whereas, till that time, tragedies had been performed only by a company of musicians and dancers. Thespis also want to changed theatre by introducing basic elements.

Thespis is credited with innovating a new style in which a solo actor performed the speeches of the characters in the narrative. The actor spoke and acted as if he were the character and he interacted with the chorus, who acted as narrators and commentators. Thespis is therefore considered the first Greek actor and his style of drama became known as tragedy. Actors in the west, ever since, have been proud to call themselves Thespians. And Thespis was not just performing in front of a few curious audience members and local villagers, he stood in the middle of circular area of stone, surrounded by an amphitheater with over 15,000 seats, all of them filled with Greek citizens. Theatre festivals were holy days wherein all businesses, even wars between city-states, came to a halt. And every man sat on an uncomfortable plank of wood, waiting to be entertaining, hoping to be enlightened, straining to listen, squinting to see. Thousands of Greeks waiting to watch a performance by Thespis, a performance that would deviate from the norm, that featured characters instead of just a collective chorus.