



# Shakespeare and Ghalib: A Comparative Study of Their Lives in A Nutshell

Md.Parwez Alam

(Parwez Sheetal)

(M.Phil.English)

Haji Jamil Ahmed Road

Bhandaridih, Giridih, Jharkhand, India

[parwezsheelat@gmail.com](mailto:parwezsheelat@gmail.com)

Prof.Dr. Narendra Kumar Singh

University Professor

Deptt.of English

N P U Medini Nagar (Daltonganj) Palamu

[nksonghla@gmail.com](mailto:nksonghla@gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

Frankly speaking there is not a single authentic reply to the question regarding the date of birth of the most powerful and influential poet and dramatist of the world. It is shrouded in myriad folded mysteries. However, we have an authentic proof of his baptismation registered in the historical document that can be trusted that is April 26, 1564. Andrew Dickson writes in his famous book The Globe Guide to Shakespeare on page number 560 :

" All we know concerning William's arrival is that he was Christened at Holy Trinity Church , Stratford, on 26 April, 1564. Patriotic tradition holds that he was born three days earlier, on St. George's Day (also the date on which he died) but it might as easily have been the 21st or 22nd . The Shakespeares were then living in a large house in Henley Street \_ we know because John was fined in 1552 for having an illegal rubbish\_ tip outside\_ and as a consequence the building is now known perhaps over\_ reverentially as the "birthplace" . \*1

It is very much interesting and noteworthy to mention that both Shakespeare and Ghalib belonged to Martial stocks .Ghalib's ancestors were swordmen and in India they were landowners as well . His original name is Asadullah Khan. And the surname " Khan" has Martial significance. So is the case with Shakespeare. The surname "Shakespeare" also has martial significance . Sir Sidney Lee writes in his book ' A Life of William Shakespeare' on page number 13:

" Shakespeare came of a family whose surname was borne through the middle ages by residents in very many parts of England \_\_at Penrith in Cumberland, at Kirkland and Doncaster in Yorkshire, as well as in nearly all midland countries. The surname had originally a martial significance implying capacity in the wielding of spear ." \*2.

He again writes in the same article on page number 14:

" But there is a probability that the poet came of a good yeoman stock, and that his ancestors to the fourth of 5th generation were fairly substantial landowners ' . \*3

Both Shakespeare and Ghalib used to have beards and moustaches.Both were handsome, smart and romantic in their youth. Shakespeare's beard style was a unique combination of van Dyke beard style and common chinstrap that is a goatee style. Ghalib wore sherwani \_along coat closed up to the neck worn by men in India and pajama and also a cap on head. Shakespeare wore purple silk clothing as well as sable furs.Clothing that generally consisted of doublets\_a long sleeved waist length fitted jacket, jerkins a short\_sleeved jacket that fits tightly over the doublet,trunk\_puffy shorts and hoes. So far the questions of Shakespeare's having wine and enjoying extra marital affairs are concerned, they can't be answered with any documental proof however it is not very hard to assume that Shakespeare was also a drinker and he also had had some extra marital affair especially while living in London. There are some anecdotes that indicate that he was also a drinker like Ghalib. Ghalib was a drinker but not a heavy drinker and so was Shakespeare. No doubt, Shakespeare brilliantly talked about the "Spanish sweet fortified wines which is mentioned in the play Henry Fourth, part two and Canary wine is mentioned in the "Twelfth Night" and The Merry Wives of Windsor" and so on. Therefore it may be concluded that he really had had those drinks. As for his extra marital affairs ? The answer to this question is that scholars are divided on this issue because very few primary source documents are available. Nevertheless now people know about Mary Fitton, the dark lady of the sonnet. There are some anecdotes that indicates that he had a few affairs just like Ghalib. Howsoever there is no certain proof that Shakespeare had an affair or not ,but there are several anecdotes that suggest that Shakespeare had also affairs with other woman apart from his wife at least one of his contemporaries Manningham believed so.

As for Ghalib's ancestors is concerned, they belonged to mediaeval world as is mentioned in the book ' Ghalib: Life and Letters ' , translated and edited by Ralph Russell and Khurshid ul Islam :

"His ancestors belonged to a mediaeval world, where a noble entered the service of a more powerful overlord to whom he pledged his allegiance and his service in war in return for the wealth and rank appropriate to his position." \*4 Therefore they were military authorities and landowners as well.

Ghalib himself gives an account of his family background in one of his letters of February 15, 1867 :

" I am of seljuk, Turkish stock. My grandfather [ father's father] came to India from beyond the river ( Transoxiana) in Shah Alam's time. " \*5

Ghalib was born on December 27 ,1797 in Agra .He belonged to elite class . Unlike Shakespeare's father who also was a chief aldermen. Ghalib's father was a swordman. When he was 5 years old his father died in a battle then he was brought up by his paternal uncle but when he reached nine his uncle also died. After this he was brought up by his maternal grandfather.

It is a bitter truth that when Ghalib was born the Mughal Empire was facing its decay:

" When Ghalib was born the Mughal Empire was dying , and indeed it was already in full decline at the time when his grandfather came to India. A century before that it had been one of the most splendid empires known to world history. " \*6

It is an astonishing fact that Ghalib underwent many hardships but did not lose heart like Shakespeare. He had a firm faith that he would be praised at least after his death. He was praised in his life also but not as he wished. It is also a unique fact that Shakespeare was also not praised for his works and he returned to his native village silently . It is clear that his life has its beginning and end in one place. Andrew Dickson rightly points out in his book 'The Globe Guide to Shakespeare ' : " The story of William Shakespeare's life has its beginning and end in one place : the bustling town of stratford-upon-avon, in an area where the surname is still relatively common place." \*7

The two prominent masters of their times underwent the same pangs and changes. Unlike Shakespeare Ghalib faced ups and downs throughout his life . It seems , though it was not so , as if Shakespeare lived his last part of life peacefully in his native village. However this last part was originally his middle part of life with a view to his age that is just fifty two.

It is really very much surprising that at the age of 52 the greatest dramatist and poet of all times gave up writings while it may be the age of beginning for many writers. It is surprisingly noteworthy to mention that Shakespeare lost his only son and Ghalib lost all his children. None crossed infancy though he had seven children in total. The life of Shakespeare was full of sorrows, pathos, pangs and agony and so was life of Ghalib. Shakespeare and his wife Anne Hathaway had three children in total. The eldest daughter was born just after 6 months of their marriage since it was a strange love marriage where the girl was older than the husband . In general, the case is opposite. After Susanna they had twins Judith and Hamnet. Susanna was baptized on 26 May 1583 while the twins on 22nd February 1585. They had also four grandchildren but they all died without heirs. So there are no direct descendants of his generation today however, his sister Joan's pedigree is continue. So is the case with Ghalib. He had also no direct descendants of his line as well. He adopted Arif , his wife's nephew who also died at an early age and he wrote an elegy on the death of Arif.

The outburst of India's first biggest freedom struggle in 1857 ( In fact, this is the world's biggest freedom struggle which has been put into oblivion by the prejudiced and bigoted historians.) against the English proved to be the 'black death' in India unlike England's minor plagues. Ghalib lost his brother in the chaos of 1857 and then the royal patronage along with the pension . He had hard times then. In a span of six years, Shakespeare also lost many relatives. This might have been the cause for giving up all literary activities of his in the age of just 52 . Ghalib was also suffering from many illnesses at his last part of life like Shakespeare. As is mentioned in ' The Globe Guide to Shakespeare' written by Andrew Dickson that Shakespeare had faced many losses : " In April 1614 Shakespeare turned 50 . His last few years in London had been difficult. The death of his brother Richard in February 1613 what's the latest in a litany of funerals. Edmond (who became a player like his brother but found little success) died at the age of just 27 in 1607. Mary followed in 1608. Gilbert in 1612. In just 6 years William and Joan had lost their mother and three of their siblings. " \*5

Apart from death of several people of his relatives, his family problems along with his physical illness also proved to be fatal . Shakespeare enjoyed high rank in society along with the patronage of Earls and King James 1 as well but never got free from family problems. This was the case with Ghalib also. For example the death of Arif, the nephew of his wife whom he adopted as son had a long lasting and haunting effect on his mind. And during the uproar of 1857 the shocking news of his brother Yusuf's death, the news of seven years imprisonment of Sefta and the hanging of Maikash also had a haunting effect on his mind. Still he had not stopped writing unlike Shakespeare. He also enjoyed high rank in society along with the patronage of lords and emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar but was never free from the grip of his personal illnesses and hardships.

References:

\*1. The Globe Guide to Shakespeare written by Andrew Dickson

Page no 560

Profile Books

\*2. Sir Sidney Lee\_ A Life of William Shakespeare, page no,13. Prabhat Prakashan

\*3. Ibid

\*4. Ghalib- Life and Letters, translated and edited by Ralph Russell and Khurshid ul Islam, Oxford University Press

\*5. Ibid.

\*6. Ibid.

\*7. The Globe Guide to Shakespeare written by Andrew Dickson Page no 559, Profile Books

\*8. Ibid page no 576-78

