

RESEARCH OF PAPER

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE AS A DRAMATIST: A STUDY OF HUMAN RELATIONS AND PSYCHOLOGY IN THE PLAYS

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William Shakespeare is the greatest dramatist in the English Literature. He was the pioneer Elizabethan dramatist. He was born on April 23, 1564 in the village of Stratford on Avon in the country of Warwickshire. His father was John Shakespeare, William Shakespeare's mother; named Mary Arden belonged to a prosperous family. She was the daughter of Robert Arden. It is known that the parents of William Shakespeare were illiterate.

William Shakespeare's education is known little. Perhaps he attended the Grammar School at Stratford and took some words from Latin and Greek. He Shakespeare was fascinated by the charm and beauty of the little village, Stratford. The forest of Ardren, the old castles of Warwick and Kenilworth impressed him. It awoke the boy's imagination power. As his characters show the goodness, the gossip, vices, emotions, prejudices and traditions of the people concerned to him. In his beautiful play *Romeo and Juliet* he describes the nurse, is simply the reflection of some forgotten nurses whom he had met and talked ever the way side. Shakespeare might had to leave his school for the help of family members as his father lost his property and was in debts. We can guess by his plays that he was a country school master or lawyer's clerk. But the evidences from his various plays show him to have been a botanist, a courtier, a clown, a king, a woman, a Roman etc. In this way he was everything in his imagination.

It is known that Shakespeare was married with Anne Hathaway, the daughter of peasant family. His play's characters make mocking references to marriage. Shakespeare left his wife and family and went to London. So it is believed that the marriage was hasty and unhappy for him. But this belief seems untrustworthy as his plays reference the happy side of love and marriage. So we can as well say that Shakespeare's marriage was happy one. He was departure from Stratford in 1587 and went to London where he joined Burbage's company of actors. His reason for living Stratford was considered his arresting to steal a deer from Sir Thomas Lucy's park and then he fled away to escape the consequences.

Shakespeare's greatest literary work is concerned period 1587 to 1611 that is not known well. Shakespeare was a gentle for his followers and indeed honest and opens to them. His earliest plays *Love's Labours*;

Comedy of Errors and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, provide the evidence of his entrance in the string society and his knowledge and observation to depict them in the plays.

He was interested in his art of writing and he so worked hard for the old plays to revise them and got practical knowledge. It gave him well result with his chronicle plays *Henry VI*; *Richard III*; *Richard II*; *King Lear*; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; and *Romeo and Juliet*; fulfilling the taste of his audience as his motive was to please them. His dedicated to the Earl of Southampton was his work *Venus and Adonis* immensely became popular in London and so it gave him the large amount of money.

Now Shakespeare became partner of the Globe and Black Friar's theatres. On these theatres Shakespeare's plays were presented by the own company's actors. Within a decade he became most famous actor and was one of well known literary man in England. *Merry Wives of Windsor*; *Much Ado About Nothing* ; *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night* were well known plays of this period. They reflect deeper knowledge of human life and human nature; the characterization and the humor in the plays were the result of his genius.

After that the period of gloom and depression took place in the life of Shakespeare and this gloomy world was presented in his plays and that was the sign of the full-maturity in his powers. This was time of his highest power of expression and his prime attention was to occupy the gloomy side of human experience. The plays concerned this period are *Julius Caesar* ; *Hamlet*; *All's Well That Ends Well*; *Measure For Measure*; *Troilus and Cressida* ; *Othello* ; *King Lear* ; *Macbeth* ; *Antony and Cleopatra*; *Coriolanus*; and *Timon of Athens*. It is too believed that the gloomy side of human and tragedies in his plays were concerned in a point to his personal misfortunes.

It was the time when Shakespeare's dramatic power was declined as his last plays show those are loosely constructed and unsatisfactory in characterization and too much declined in style and verification. The particular comedies of this period are: *Pericles*; and the Unfinished *Henry VIII*. *The Tempest* is his last play based on an actual shipwreck. Shakespeare did not think of his drama's success as they were greatest the world had ever produced. He made no attempt to collect or publish his literary work. After a few years of quiet at Stratford on Avon Shakespeare died on the anniversary of his birth, April 23, 1616. On the 25th of April 1616. A memorial was made and following lines were written for the readers. To quote.

“Stay, passenger, why dost thou go so fast,
Read, if thou cannot, whom envious death has placed,
Within this monument- Shakespeare; with whom
Quick Nature died; whose name doth deck the tomb
Far more than cost: since all that he hath writ
Leaves living but page to serve his wit.”¹

Now Shakespeare's tomb has become almost a place of pilgrimage for his admirers and so thousands of them visit his tomb every year.

The English Drama of Elizabethan time did not arise from imitation of the classical drama of Greece and Rome. England had a tradition of native drama and it was full of mysteries, miracles and interludes etc. As Catholic countries of Europe and England, the drama was arisen to teach the masses the tenets of Christian and Easter. It proves that drama is obviously inherent very ritual of the church.

The creation of drama has been deeply rooted in the religious instincts of mankind. It happens the same thing in the dramas of India, China and in Egyptian and also the modern Christian drama. The history of drama is also concerned with religion and the early aged dramas got merged gradually into Elizabethan drama. Mysteries in the dramas and their stories have been got from scriptures, is marked for the development of the drama, with it the loves of saints called 'Miracle plays'. The instructions of Church were given for the Miracle plays of mysteries. The miracle plays became more popular in the public in the compare of mysteries.

Both mysteries and Miracles plays were based on the teachings of the church and theology. The Miracle plays provided moralities and characters in their virtues. In the Miracle plays, allegories of various vices of man were dramatized as well as his temptations like greed and lust, virtues as love and charity. Moralities continued flourished till the end of sixteenth century and became popular in the hay day of Shakespeare's fame.

It was the beginning age of sixteenth century when another kind of play arose known as the interlude and was different in type and origin. Among them some were derived from the moralities themselves, some from French farces and others were from Latin school plays. It was the prime writer, John Haywood of interludes whose aim was to amuse and not moralize. His interlude *Four P's* was very popular in the public. The English drama wider went a sea change. English dramatists were influenced and impressed by the work of the Roman and that of Greek but were more impressed by the Roman dramatists instead of the Greek dramatists.

The tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides and the comedies of Aristophanes influenced them less than the tragedies of Seneca and the Comedies of Plautus and Terence. The idea of tragedy as dramatic art came from the ancient to the modern world or pagan Greece to Christian Europe along with the renaissance. In England the tragic art was transmitted largely through scene.

There were also other sources which encouraged the practice of writing tragedies. They were mainly

Aristotle "Politics" and commentaries on it by Misturno, Scaliger, Castelvetro, Sydeney and others. These critics treated Aristotle 'work primarily as a study of the technique of tragedy and extracted out of it a social morality that suited their taste and environment. The main concern of tragedy is with truth and pleasure. It gives the pleasure of knowledge. Plato had used the word Catharsis to mean purification or sublimation. Accepting this meaning, Aristotle seems to confirm that tragedy, first by arousing pity and fear, ultimately sublimates and raises the spectator to a state of understanding.

Shakespeare's tragedies are exceptional beings in which there is an intensification of life. The hero is a man of exceptional life but ----- - the Character there is a fatal flaw which ultimately brings about the ambition. Othello is over credulous and Lear is too rash. In each of his tragedies the hero is presented in the grip of some fatal flaw in his character, which in spite of external circumstances leads him to his fatal doom. Hamlet meets his tragedy because of his vacillating nature. Macbeth meets his end due to his overweening tragedy.

Shakespeare introduces some form of supernatural agents such as ghosts and witches which are placed in closest relation with the main character. Supernatural agents play their own part in influencing the life of the supernatural agents give a confirmation and distinct form to inward movements and inner workings of the hero's mind. The witches in Macbeth and the ghost in Hamlet mould the character of the 'hero to some extent and prepare him for his tragedy.

In Shakespeare's dramas we find the whole of human nature portrayed in his characters, e.g. credulity in Othello, Ambition in Macbeth, Philosophic meditations in Hamlet, simplicity in Lear, nobility in Brutus, friendship in Antonio, villainy in Lago, beauty in Miranda and Perdita, fidelity in Imogene, devotion in Desdemona, fieriness in lady Macbeth, intellectuality in Portia and biting sarcasm in Beatrice. The following main feature about Shakespeare's is unrivalled in literature. From king to clown from lunatic and demy – devil to saint and seer, from lover to misanthrope, all are revealed with the hand of the master, Surveying this multitude, one can only cry out as Hamlet dose: what a piece of work is man.

Chance or accident In the Shakespearean tragedy chance or accident plays its own vital role. To ignore it totally in the tragedy is to distort reality several chance incidents happen in Shakespearean tragedies which instead of averting the tragedy hasten its speed. Tragedy is precipitated by chance happenings. For example in Romeo and Juliet it is chance and just an accident that Romeo never got the Friar's message about the potion and Juliet did not awake from her long asleep a minute sooner.

It was further an accident that, Edger arrived at the prison just too late to save Cordelia's life. It was an accident that. Desdemona dropped her handkerchief which was picked by Emilia and inadvertently passed on to Lago. In Hamlet it was merely a chance that the pirate ship attacked Hamlet's ship so that the prince

was back in Denmark. But Shakespeare, in spite of introducing these chance elements in his tragedies, does not allow them to be so important as to destroy the sense of casual connection of character, deed and catastrophe.

In Romeo and Juliet the conflict is external. It is centered in the hatred of the two houses represented by various other characters. In Richard II again the conflict is external. The king stands on one side, Bolingbroke and his party on the other side. In plays like Othello, Macbeth, Hamlet and Lear, conflict is both internal and external. Macbeth is divided in his own soul before the murder of King Duncan. Hamlet's vacillation makes him inert and inactive. Othello is strong within himself.

Thus Shakespeare creates the psychological tragedy of the hero by presenting the moral conflict within his soul resulting in his death. The hero is entailed in the great crisis of his life and falls a victim to his own inner conflict of the soul. Truly the Shakespearean tragedy reflects what Meredith had stated later in the nineteenth century "In tragic life, God would No villains need be, passions spin the plot."

We come now to the hero of the tragedy. The heroes of Shakespeare's tragedies are exceptional beings in whom there is an intensification of life. The hero is a man of exceptional life but the Character there is a fatal flaw which ultimately brings about the ambition. Othello is over credulous and Lear is too rash. In each of his tragedies the hero is presented in the grip of some fatal flaw in his character, which in spite of external circumstances leads him to his fatal doom. Hamlet meets his tragedy because of his vacillating nature. Macbeth meets his end due to his overweening tragedy.

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Shakespeare's treatment of History. Historical drama is History dramatized. According to Lessing's "a creation of fiction woven around the historical characters." But Lessing's definition of an historical play cannot be applied in the case of Shakespeare's historical plays. Though Shakespeare allows his artistic inventiveness to play upon the history, yet he does not consciously temper with the facts of history, except in respect of certain minor points.

The historical plays of Shakespeare, covering a wide period, are faithful chronicle of English History and they truly represent the long history of England covering over a period of about 350 years. The historical plays of present the history of England from 1250 to 1550, Nearly 350 years of English reign, their tumult and confusion, their peace and conflict are treated in the historical dramas. In all, Shakespeare wrote ten

historical plays. They are divided into three groups. The first group of it is devoted to the reign of *Henry II*: secondly, three plays such as *Richard II*, *Richard III* and *King John* brings before us studies in kings and kingship.

Thirdly, plays namely the two parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V* represent Shakespeare's ideal of kingship. His last play was *Henry VIII*, pieced together and completed by Fletcher. In these historical plays not only has the dramatist given us an account of the history of more than 300 years, but he has also provided nice portraits of English kings. According to Dowden says about these studies of kings and kingship John is the royal criminal, weak in the criminality, Henry VI is the royal saint, weak in his saintliness.

The feebleness of Richard II cannot be characterized in a word; he is a graceful sentimental monarch. Richard III, in the other group, is a royal criminal, strong in his crime. Henry IV, the usurping Bolingbroke is strong by a fine craft in dealing with events, by resolution and policy, by equal caution and daring. The strength of Henry V is that of plain heroic magnitude, thoroughly sound and substantial, founded upon the eternal verities. Here, then we may recognize the one dominant subject of the histories viz , *how a man may fail and how a man may succeed in attaining a practical mastery of the world*. These plays are, as Schlegel has named them, a "Mirror of Kings."

The Historical plays of Shakespeare are a link between the process of his development of comedy and Tragedy. In between the period of the comedies and tragedies come the historical plays and these plays serve their own purpose. His one great object of the historical plays was to make Englishmen more patriotic. In these plays the fire of patriotism burns brightly. Can these be anything more patriotic than the praise of England by dying John of Gaunt in *Richard II*?

The English comedy was influenced by the Plautus and Terence to lesser extent than Seneca the English tragedy for reason that the English comedy was *Ralph Roister Doister* written by Niccolao Udall, Headmaster of Eton (1540) acted in 1553. Although it was modeled on the comedy of Plautus and Terence still not a pure imitation. Some characters are covered the classics and while others have been taken from English life.

Renaissance comedy was more popular among Elizabethans and Jacobean though less esteemed than the Renaissance tragedy. John Lyly (1554), George Peele (1558-1597), Robert Green (1560-1592) and Thomas Nashe (1567-1601) were the Prime writers of comedy. His major plays are the *Woman in the Moon*; *Compass*; *Midas*; and *Love's Metamorphosis*. William Shakespeare also followed his sparkling dialogues. *The old Wives Tale* is a parody a satire on romantic comedies *David* and *Bathsheba* is known for its musical quality and blank verse.

William Shakespeare turned to the naturalism from the artificiality for his comedy. He firstly gave attention to the pattern of characters in this comedies rather than incidents. Another significant development in his

comedies is introduction of the clown by him his well known comedies are! *Taming of the Shrew*; *Two Gentlemen of Verona*; *Twelfth Night*; *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; *As You Like It*; *Merry Wives of Windsor*; *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale*.

Role of Women Another important feature of the Shakespearean Comedy is that women play an important part, if we analyze the comedies of Shakespeare, we shall find that they are governed and dominated by heroines rather than by heroes. The heroes pale into insignificance and the heroines come to the fore-front. The heroines of Shakespeare's comedy have all the gifts of inspiring and of returning affection. They are simply human and patiently natural in their response to emotional crisis, like that of falling in love.

To quote George Gordon:

"All lectures on Shakespeare's comedies tend to become lectures on Shakespeare's women, for in the comedies they have the front of the stage. Of most of Shakespeare's plays no such feminine predominance can be asserted. It is absent from his English Histories, and most of the Tragedies also"

During the Renaissance period the Elizabethan drama's developed in two directions the academic tragedy and the popular tragedy. The academic tragedy was based on the rules and regulations holding by the Italian cities. Including the use of chorus. This kind of tragedy was full of the crime and bloodshed and they were simply reported.

The popular tragedy was known as 'The Tragedy of Blood' or 'The Revenge Tragedy' practiced by Jacobean dramatists including the elements of murder, revenge mystery, magic ghosts etc. *Gorboduc* (1562) or *Ferrex and Perrex*, was the first English tragedy showing full impact of Seneca, written jointly by Sackville and Norton. Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1592) is well known tragedy in the English Literature. It is believed that this tragedy is to be a model for 'Hamlet' by William Shakespeare.

William Shakespeare is a dramatist who produced large number of tragedies. His most known tragedies are *Romeo and Juliet* (1594-1595), *Hamlet*, (1600-1601), *Othello* (1604-1605), *King Lear* (1605-06) and *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606-1607). All Shakespearean heroes are men of character. They are not victims of destiny. The Elizabethan age was the golden age of English drama and Shakespeare took the drama at top that never reached before. Man he is the focal point in the world and he is at the centre of that is taking place.

According to S. Dresden; "When everything has been created and the world is complete, man emerges and God says to him : 'I have given you no fixed place, no fixed place no fixed outline, no fixed task, so that you may undertake any task and occupy whatever place you wish. All else that exists is subject to laws that I have obtained. You alone are able to determine what you are.'" 2

During the 16th century the word humanism was coined to signify one who taught or worked in the “Studio humanists”, or humanities that is grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry and moral philosophy, as distinguished from fields less concerned with the moral and imaginative aspects and activities of man.

As M.H. Abrahams remarks it, “The truth is that the knowledge of external nature, and the sciences which that knowledge requires or includes, are not the great or the frequent business of the human mind and we are perpetually Moralists, but we are geometricians only by chance.... secretes was rather of opinion that what we had to learn was, how to go, good and avoid evil.”³

It was Mathew Arnold, Victorian age who forced on humanism. He strongly defended the central role of human studies in general education. Many of his ideas are the adapted of the older humanism. One of the views of his is that culture is a perfection of our humanity proper, as distinguished from our animalism, and consists of a harmonious expansion of all the powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature.

Humanism has been defined by Irving Ribner in following way, “It is a narrative of human history the history of Man’s deeds, Man’s purposes, man’s successes and failures. It admits, no doubt, a divine agency, but the function of this agency is strictly limited. The will of the gods as manifested in History only appears rarely is the best historian badly at all and them only as will supporting and seconding the will of man and enabling him to succeed where otherwise he would have failed. The gods have no play of their own for the development of human affairs; they only grant successor decree failure for the plans of men.”⁴

It is common to refer this aesthesis of classical and Christian views, typical writers such as Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spencer and John Milton as Christian humanists. Actually man is his own measure and he is free to live in independence of religion. Really William Shakespeare had keen knowledge of the supernatural powers gods, witches, fairies, spirits, Ariel’s, sylphs’ ghosts, apparitions etc. He gave them a real form which was the demand the audience of the age. In real the supernatural agency has no effect on man and his deeds as so free in his life. On the other hand he himself responsible for his success or failure since it is projection of whatever he does during the period of his life.

To conclude, we can say that William Shakespeare was really a man of writing skills. Firstly, he knew the demand and taste of his audience and then composed his dramas to fulfill their needs. It proves him that really, he was the master in the presentation of human relations and psychology. His Style of writing and keen knowledge of human relations and psychology made him ‘The Greatest Dramatist of the Elizabethan Age’.

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