

**SHAKESPEARE – FROM THE ‘GLOBE’ TO THE GLOBAL**

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Literature is a reflection of man's life. It reflects man's life and the society he is surrounded by. It talks of the history of man of the past, the present and the future. It enables one to collect pearls of wisdom and knowledge through thought provoking principles of life that have been depicted in the noble works of great masterminds. The best example is William Shakespeare of the Elizabethan era, which is the most amazing and fascinating period in English Literature. Shakespeare, the master of drama in his time, wrote plays that not only appealed to the people of Elizabethan England but to the world at large too. William Shakespeare, the versatile writer, showed through his plays, the essence of Bhagavad Gita. Lovers of literature draw immense knowledge and facts of life from his plays which have been read, translated and staged in different cultures.

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Literature mirrors life. It reflects man's life – his aspirations, feelings, emotions and thoughts influencing his life and the society he is surrounded by. It talks of the past, the present and the future. It enables one to collect pearls of wisdom and knowledge through thought provoking principles of life that have been depicted in the noble works of great masterminds. The best example is William Shakespeare of the Elizabethan era, which is the most amazing and fascinating period in English Literature. Shakespeare, the master of drama in his time, wrote plays that not only appealed to the

people of Elizabethan England, but to the world at large too. The readers or the audience of the plays get easily associated with the universal characters. This dramatic effect has proved the test of the time. William Shakespeare, the versatile writer, is a phenomenon, a ready reference, akin to the Bhagavad Gita, or the great Hindu Upanishad. Immense knowledge and profound wisdom can be drawn from his plays which have been studied by researchers and proved to be a resourceful treasure house like a bountiful honey bag, to draw nectar perennially. The more one draws, the more one is



enriched. He seems to portray a kaleidoscopic view for one to interpret his works according to one's own thought processes over generations in all cultures.

William Shakespeare was an English poet and dramatist, grown to the stature of the greatest writer in the English language. He is considered to be the world's unsurpassed dramatist.

Shakespeare was a native of Stratford-upon-Avon. He made a beginning of his career between 1585 and 1592, being successful as a poet, a dramatist and a writer. He was a part owner of a playing company in London, called the Lord Chamberlain's Men, and later came to be known as the King's Men. His early plays were comedies, histories and genres, the great master pieces, which reached great heights in academic excellence by the end of the sixteenth century. He later wrote mainly tragedies which include Hamlet, King Lear and Macbeth, which are all great works of a master mind. He wrote tragicomedies also called as romances, in the third phase of his literary career.

Shakespeare started his career as an errand boy, working for the 'globe' theatre and gradually rose to a great height. He was respected and regarded as a unique playwright in his own day, but his reputation rose to greater heights only from the nineteenth century.

The Romantics and the Victorians regarded Shakespeare in their respective ways, worshipping him with great reverence that George Bernard Shaw called 'bardolatry'. The influence of his works is evident even today, as it is still being taken up for study and research.

Shakespeare is unique because of his simple, subtle and natural expressions of life. He wrote not for name or fame, nor for posterity, but to earn a living. His realistic depiction and blend of human psychology with nature's ways, made his plays appealing and everlasting, to be passed on by generations, to be the icon for people to admire, appreciate and acquire values, to lead a meaningful life. He is undoubtedly, the greatest of all great authors of English language. It is no wonder that his name has become synonymous to English Literature. He is a known figure in all regions, all cultures and with the intelligentsia. His works speak volumes of

his depth of knowledge and understanding of human nature. Without factually pursuing any course or studying in a university, Shakespeare had a natural inclination and a perfect understanding of human psychology, which helped him conquer the literary field with little effort. His true depiction of the comedies, tragedies and romances stands as a testimony to his great work of literary art of all times.

The fact that Shakespeare is so revered and regarded as the greatest of all is mainly because of his simplicity and natural accuracy of portrayal of human characters. Each character is depicted realistically in a unique way, similar to characters in real life. We tend to associate ourselves to the characters and become one – be it reading or watching his plays. There is an element of human touch involved, that sensitive lining and subtlety, making the plays realistic and touching. The readers or the audience get so engrossed in them that they associate themselves with the characters. His characters have become universal. This special characterization has made a dramatic effect on all lovers of literature and even others of different professions. This influence is time immemorial. It has stood the test of time. All cultures of varied regions have adopted and taken them to heart, getting close to their own personal lives. There is so much to learn from each of the characters – so much of truth embedded in the dialogues that they have become quotable quotes! They carry in them, everything that an individual requires and can acquire for a life time. There are many lessons to be learnt, morals to be imbibed, values to be followed and truths to be understood and inculcated by one and all. Reading and understanding Shakespeare is an enlivening experience which becomes a rich source of knowledge and information for one to bank upon, for ready references. It is a treasure house of both, the comic and tragic sides of life, which thus becomes a ready beckoner for one to choose the right path of living.

It is a wonder as to how, a lad in his early teens, started a career mainly for a living, went on to carve a name for him, a historical era that began, only to become an evergreen phenomenon, to lead people to enthrallment and excitement. There are students of literature working on him, who have done research on his works and still, the aura of the great artist remains in attracting many a student, to fill his study with books on Shakespeare – his sonnets and plays, each of them being a rich ground for in-depth study.



Each of the plays talks of life. In them is reflected the entire human thought process, be it of love, anguish, greed, friendship or history redefined in his historic plays or comedies with sketches of subtle humor.

Shakespeare developed the English theatre –The Globe. It became a venue for intellectual entertainment. The great poet's expertise in poetry had an enchanting influence over it as it was highly patronized by the intelligentsia as well as those looking for pure entertainment. His plays contained elements like characterization, plot, action, language and the genre, which glorified them with their perfect synthesis of thought and action. They depicted poetic justice. The 'Globe' theatre transformed during the time when Shakespeare arrived in London between 1580 and 1590. The themes of the plays and the characterization were symbolic in their presentation. Shakespeare glorified his plays with simple morals and values showing realistic episodes of human nature which had an emotional impact on the audience.

Slowly and gradually, Shakespeare began to be recognized as a great poet of sensitive thought and tender feelings. He had the versatile talent of depicting all angles of human behavior. This unique presentation of thought, word and deed in his plays made him gain popularity and it rose to a great height by the nineteenth century. It had a tremendous effect on the people as they could visually see and enjoy the simple human portrayal with all its natural flavor. Shakespeare was admired for his artistic and dramatic talent by the Roman critics.

The original flavor in Shakespeare's plays gained him much popularity over all the contemporary writers and he came to be known as the greatest dramatist of all. He has been regarded as the best of all and has become undoubtedly, the renowned writer of all ages. He had thus become the pride possession of England.

The natural appeal that was found in Shakespeare's plays was an important factor for them to be staged more often than any of the other plays and they were also taken as a source of origin for the Hollywood films.

It was the time when English language was undergoing a change due to the influence of other cultural impacts and invasions. It easily accommodated thousands of words from Greek, Latin and other languages through its association with varied nationalities. Interaction and communication among the varied cultures

synthesized into a beautiful blend of the language. Thus it became a language with a rich vocabulary. Many English words and phrases that are in use presently have been coined by Shakespeare.

Shakespeare became a role model for many writers and poets of the later years. Herman Melville, Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, William Faulkner and Samuel Taylor Coleridge are some who influenced by him. There has been a great effect on the English language due to the introduction of new words and concepts and the writing style of blank verse and grammatical expressions. Shakespearean quotes became a yardstick for many and English language was then standardized. A Dictionary of the English Language by Samuel Johnson was published with many quotes from Shakespeare, which added glory to the language.

A few quotes which speak of the great foresight and vision of Shakespeare are:

1. **"This above all: to thine own self be true"** from *Hamlet* - Act 1, Scene 2.

The translation being, *Be true to yourself*. How truthful it is! One's conscience will always prick. One may cheat anybody but not one's own self!

2. **"Neither a borrower nor a lender be; for loan oft loses both itself and friend"** from *Hamlet* - Act 1, Scene 3.

The translation being, basically, one should avoid lending and borrowing money from friends because it could eventually lead to trouble in the relationship. This is a bitter fact that money distances people in good relation.

3. **"All the world's a stage and all the men and women merely players."** from *As You Like It* - Act 2, Scene 7.

The translation being, life is like a play and human beings are like actors within the play. Philosophy says that, Man is God's best creation. He plays his role to justify his birth and disappears when it is time for him to leave. Only his memories are left behind.

4. **"Suspicion always haunts the guilty mind; The thief doth fear each bush an officer"** from *King Henry IV, Part III* (Act V, Scene VI).

The translation being, a guilty mind is always afraid of its own shadow, suspecting a rope to be a snake!



William Shakespeare has stood the test of time and proved to be a universal writer for all ages, all people, all the time!

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