

Relevance of Shakespeare for the Contemporary Genre

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Abstract: We all believe in things that have happened in our lives. Individually we tend to retain at least a few events that occurred in the past. Though forgetfulness acts like a boon at times, some aspects can never be forgotten. Especially Plays were not written for the purpose of reading but just for the sake of stage performance and inner satisfaction of the author. Reading, understanding and remembering the major characters and situations in the plays of Shakespeare caused flutter and goosebumps among students, when they had to face a test on Shakespeare or submit an assignment to the English teacher. The plays of Shakespeare were deep, straight forward, comic and serious tragedies along with some historical insights provided through historical plays. Shakespeare is the most revered of all English dramatists. The plays still have some validity and relevance in the modern context. The 36 or 37 plays that were penned down perhaps are the most entertaining dramas for all time.

Key Words: Goose bumps, remembering, penned, characters, occurred, forgotten, performance, retain etc.

Though there are people who argue that Shakespeare is not relevant in modern society because of his use of old English, projection of unexpected attitudes and tales which are irrelevant to the life of modernity.

Some of the plays written by authors from the modern period are considered as worthy for analysing purposes. Shakespearean plays mirror the existing society of the modern times which the reader generally loves reading. Most of the themes have been covered by Shakespeare that appeal to both the mind and the heart. It is quite certain that while going through the plays of Shakespeare and deciphering the role players point of view we are generally surprised. Anyone with or without any inclination for English Literature, cannot and will not ignore Shakespeare. That is the impact he created on the audience. The themes of love, friendship, marriage, revenge and the like have deeply explored the nature of human beings, their mentalities and responses and reactions to different situations. This is the reason why the play wright is practically relevant even in today's world.

Teachers teaching Shakespeare often develop a tendency that they are imparting education through modern languages. There is pure fear at being picked on. Shakespeare's wise thoughts and witty humour could either be understood or they remain aloof from being

comprehended. Shakespeare coined and used many phrases that are practised even to this day and they are not obsolete whatsoever.

Those who studied Shakespeare had no option of carrying the text in. All the important words, phrase and quotes had to be by hearted and at the same time they had to comprehend the inner meaning of all that they byhearted. There is no surprise because the younger generation of people have fallen flat for Shakespearean narratives, poems and his language. The plays of Shakespeare that were enacted on the stage made it much simpler for people to understand and be delighted with the performance in a lucid manner. People who had suspicions on Shakespeare should better watch his dramas on stage only to rejoice by leaps and bounds and in fact that was Shakespeare's desire.

The plots that were intricately woven with, out of the blue tales, dynamic ladies and a variety of feelings deeply engross the spectators and keep them spell bound. We all know that Shakespeare caused a magical effect on the language English. Every single scene in Shakespearean plays kill our time in a fanciful manner. We never get bored. This is a clear indication that even with the passage of several centuries the characters are spoken of in one context or the other. The content of the stories and the way the characters are treated are of much relevance even to this day. The reason why the plays of Shakespeare have succeeded is owing to the method in which the different emotions of several role players, has been portrayed, amalgamated with love, care and affection for one another. The feelings and emotions as portrayed by Shakespeare amongst his characters makes us develop some sort of connectivity with these characters. The projection of women characters in Shakespearean plays was quite unexpected in those days but we understand that they definitely have more relevance in today's scenario. Shakespeare who is known for his amazing skill in revealing the emotional features of his characters, also had his impact on the English Language. Shakespeare was a master in using different figures of speech both in his dramas and poetry. It is indicative of a variety of comparisons. In course of time, right from The Shakespearean age everyone realized, the kind of entertainment that was derived from his plays, as the emotions that are inherent in human characters are projected. The dramas of Shakespeare will always draw crowds and will stay in the world as long as life on earth exists because of the nearness of the spoken native language. The plays will be treated affectionately with fully mature characters and their potential to attract the masses because of the descriptions of human emotions. There are four great tragedies namely, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth and Hamlet, among the 37 plays of Shakespeare. In one of the great tragedies Othello, the hero Othello is influenced into believing the villainous character Iago but mistrusts his wife. Iago makes Othello believe him and tries to convince him by showing a pseudo evidence against Desdemona and informs Othello that Desdemona has an illicit affair with Cassio. Desdemona asked for the reinstating Cassio who was stripped off his post because of his drunkenness, followed by a street brawl. Iago further uses the point that Othello is not a suitable husband to Desdemona as he is a black moor. The kind of plots used in the plays are akin only to William Shakespeare and no one else. Many a reader believe that the characters and their portrayal have a tremendous impact on the significant parts of the play. The elements which are supernatural are noticed by the audience in a majority of Shakespearean dramas particularly in two of the tragedies namely Hamlet and Macbeth. Similarly the way love has

been treated by Shakespeare in his dramas like “Twelfth night, Romeo & Juliet” is deeply projected through the characters with great feelings and emotions. These feelings are fully mature and are shown in a pleasant manner. Shakespeare always had drawn two different kinds of audience and all of them rejoiced his dramas. Shakespeare gave quite a good share of importance to music as well in his plays and people understood and related the themes and emotions to a number of characters in his plays. Characters like Macbeth are presented as very complicated and apprehensive ones. Revenge is another predominant theme presented in some of his plays through the portrayal of characters. It is in the very human nature itself that people carry vengeful attitudes. Not only vengeance but also jealousy is inherent in many of the role players in his plays. The use of symbols and apt imagery is one of the hall marks of Shakespearean plays. One of the most highly watched and revered play was the Hamlet and how the character attracted both the high and low. There is still a controversy that many of the plays were not written by Shakespeare. But there is not much evidence to believe that there were other authors who were supposed to have written the plays in the name of Shakespeare. Romeo and Juliet, the star-crossed lovers even to this day generate a positive appeal among the people. The play Merchant of Venice is so near to human beings that a friend risks his own life in order to help another friend. Bassanio wanted to woo and marry the fair Princess Portia of Belmont. Antonio had to furnish Bassanio with the required money to go to Belmont. All the money of Antonio was in the form of goods and merchandise sent in ships to different parts of Europe. Hence Antonio was forced to raise a loan. Shylock gave them the required loan of 3000 ducats for 3 months. A bond was extracted from Antonio that if the loan was not returned before the stipulated date, Shylock is entitled to cut a pound of flesh from any part of Antonio’s body. The reason why Shylock made Antonio sign such a bond is that Antonio used to lend money to many venetians in times of need without charging any interest. That spoiled the business of Shylock who was a usurer. He charged exorbitant rates of Interest. He was insulted by Antonio many times before in the market place and called a dog. Shylock was looking for an opportune moment to carry out his revenge. Here the readers are confused with a question whether Shylock was more sinned against than sinning. As expected by Shylock the money taken as loan was not repaid on time and Shylock took the matter to the court. All the wise men including the Duke requested him to show pity on a Christian. Shylock did not budge and wanted to go ahead with what was mentioned in the bond, which entitled him to cut a pound of flesh. Shylock was now reminded of the harsh treatment meted out to him in a Christian land. He was a Jewish money lender and all the Jews were forced to wear a red cap in Venice. He was spat on the face by Antonio some time ago, he was called a dog and was further infuriated with different kinds of insults. So, Shylock did not want to let this opportunity of taking revenge on Antonio slip away. The question is why was Shylock illtreated by the Venetians and was it wrong to be a money lender? The reason is clear. Lending money to the needy is not wrong but expecting them to pay interest on the loan raised is considered a sin in the Christian land. Ultimately Shylock lost the case when Portia dressed as a male lawyer won the case in favour of Antonio. She informed that Shylock is entitled only to a pound of flesh and not a single drop of Christian blood should fall on the ground. Shylock then got ready to receive twice the amount of money which was offered to him but he had unthinkingly refused to accept earlier

because he was blinded by his revengeful attitude. But he is justified in his actions as Jews were illtreated in Venice. Shylock was not allowed to receive the money which was twice the amount taken as loan. In fact he had to pay a fine to the Government for plotting to kill a Christian and he was really devastated when he was asked to convert himself into a Christian. This sort of play 'The Merchant of Venice' is all the more convincing both to the reader and the audience as to how friendship can do a lot in spite of the risks involved in going out of the way to help a friend in need. Surprisingly Antonio remained a bachelor throughout his life but helped by risking his life after signing the deadly bond just to furnish Bassanio with the money required to travel to Belmont and marry the fair Princess Portia. The play appeals to the reader in all possible ways. Firstly, the strength of friendship is well understood but at the same time many of the audience and the readers take the sides of Shylock and pity him profusely. There is another reason why he hated Christians. His daughter eloped with a Christian and married Lorenzo. The caskets scene is a ploy employed by Shakespeare to weave a kind of suspense in the play. The themes like revenge, love, friendship, money lending, profit motive, elopement etc are common scenarios in real life situations. Hence when these are touched and dwelt upon by a seasoned playwright like William Shakespeare in almost all his plays, they will never elude recognition and popularity. That is the reason why Shakespeare stays relevant even to this day in every nook and corner of the world. The promising nature of the plays will never bore the audience anytime. They are almost like epics which stand the test of time.

There is no surprise why William Shakespeare's plays are still read and themes exist to this day in the present century. In literature, movies and the stage the Shakespearean themes are preserved and appreciated by the world at large. William Shakespeare is popular for combining different genres and for projecting several means to make people enjoy his plays. The very life of human beings' circles round things that are influenced by Shakespeare genuinely. The story written by Edgar Allan Poe titled the 'The Tell-tale Heart' is about the story teller's desire to try to eliminate an old man from life. A similar theme is prevalent in the play 'Macbeth' and what guilt does. In both the tales, the story teller wishes to kill someone, and there is also a description how the minds of the characters border on insanity because of the crime of killing someone. In Poe's story 'The Telltale Heart' the narrator admits having committed the crime because he is able to hear the heart of the man who was killed by himself, where-as in Macbeth, the protagonist because of some sort of derangement, commences killing many others and ultimately, he too dies.

William Shakespeare had greatly affected movie makers, story writers and common people as well. Several movie stories are based on Shakespearean plays. Many movies have similar Shakespearean comedy, the neatly woven plots and sometimes the characters have been given the same names as used by Shakespeare in his plays. The popular movie 'Batman' has an identical theme that is found in the play 'Henry V' where the hero is shown as one who is suffering from loneliness. Many of the Shakespearean protagonists suffer just because they are alone and have no one worthy of friendship in their lives. The movie Titanic, also has themes used by Shakespeare in his plays; especially Othello the black moor falling in love with Desdemona a white lady who is from a different cultural background. The main characters in 'Titanic' love one another without thinking of their varied backgrounds. Several

movies having different Shakespearean themes made their intentions very clear; that is pure entertainment to people.

The *Tempest*, a pastoral tragicomedy by William Shakespeare, was written in the Renaissance period, around 1611. When the play was written, the particular context that the author intended and that the audience received would be different to the meanings and ideas that we pick up from studying or viewing the play nearly after 400 years.

Treating *The Tempest* from a historical context, people have realized that it addresses the fresh world of Americans and the commencement of The British Empire and its colonialism. One meaning that many analysts seem to have discovered is one that deals with the New World of the Americas and the beginnings of colonialism and the British Empire.

Sometimes it is known as 'fear of the other' or fear of what is unknown, but in this play it also means more to do with new opportunity and a new beginning on new country. Since the play was written, attitudes to many different things have changed, including the idea of colonialism and slavery.

Conclusion:

A play when it was first written by the audience and the analysts of the time are completely invisible to those studying the text today, but significant differences in society and cultural codes can change the range of meanings available.

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