

Shakespeare in 21st Century

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Abstract:

The attempt to talk or write about Shakespeare can be a mammoth task. It is difficult to read or present Shakespeare completely, using only one parameter because he himself is the universe of literature and majority of the galaxies of his creation will always be remaining unreached. The ardent writer, whose imaginations were so natural, that the relevance of his inventiveness persists present around us. The gist of his creative works stands as the epitome of human life. The aim of this paper is to discuss the relevance of Shakespeare's creations in the modern life. The effort to understand and to relate the impression of his literary works in the fields of human nature, psychology, politics, and human relationships, theatres, movie adoptions (creative and performing arts) in the context of 21st century may be interminable. This paper aims to answer the question "What is the status of Shakespeare's thoughts in the 21st century?"

Key Words: Relevance, timeless, significance, age, generation

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A.C.Bradley in his book *Shakespearean Tragedy* writes: “Shakespeare was so masterly a playwright, and had so wonderful power of giving life to unpromising subjects, that to a large extent he was able to surmount his difficulty”. Shakespeare’s plays have fostered the protagonists like Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, and King Lear who are controlled by their thoughts that lead them to the madness and self-destruction. The plays are full with humour, love, disloyalty, anger, deception, generosity, envy, fights and murders. He vividly depicts the categories of human conditions that are not going to change ever. Thomas Jefferson has rightly observed: “A lively and lasting sense of filial duty is more effectually impressed on the mind of a son or daughter by reading *King Lear* than by all the dry volumes of ethics and divinity that were ever written”

His famous soliloquy “to be or not to be” from *Hamlet* is what has been experienced by all of us in a life later or sooner. It has become the part of decision-making process. According to Daphinoff (a Professor at the University of Fribourg, Switzerland), “Hamlet’s wonderful reflection on the waste of human life, compared to Falstaff’s quibbles quibbling on the term

honour in the face of imminent death, is one of Shakespeare's most prevalent, gripping comments on the folly of war and the intrinsic value of life”

The Merchant of Venice sensationalizes the issues of intolerance, religious problems, injustice and cry of mercy. The centuries old depiction of issues is still relevant on both national and international level. If we talk in the context of India only, the new paper headlines are filled with the same disputes. Shakespeare is still appealing.

“More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us,” said Matthew Arnold. Shakespearean sonnets are the masterpiece of their kind .The universal expression of celebrating unrequited love is rested in *Venus and Adonis*. K.R.Srinivas Iyengar in his book, “*Shakespeare- His World and His Art*” writes about the popularity of Shakespeare's sonnets; “If there were no sonneteering vogue in the 1590's, Shakespeare by himself wouldn't have started any such fashion. On the other hand, had Shakespeare not ridden on the crest of the prevailing vogue, who will today care to read (or even read about) the sonneteers of the Elizabethan age?” This clearly interprets Shakespeare's mastery of sonnets.

Literature is the source through that theatre performances get flourishing. In the modern era, the charm of Shakespearean drama has not dimmed even after centuries. Both Hollywood and Bollywood love to reframe Shakespearean themes. The films like Haider, Maqbool, and

Om-kara have the plot of Hamlet, Macbeth and Othello respectively. It shows the timeless impact of the Bard's creativity. The film stories, having the plot of 'Comedy of Errors' with the addition of modern-day taste, attract larger audience even today. The film stories, based on with the addition of modern flavours attract larger audience even today.

Roman Polanski (1971) directed the movie that was the adaptation of *Macbeth*, he clearly says: "The themes of tyranny, brutality and politically motivated murder that were dramatized by Shakespeare are timeless - reports are frequently presented in the media of instances of such atrocities." Grigori Kozintsev, the Russian director's adaptation of *King Lear* is known as the famous versions of Shakespeare's plays. Kozintsev clearly gives two key features that relate Shakespeare even today:

- (1) There is a connection between Shakespeare's dramatization of power and the abuses of power in contemporary politics.
- (2) The political reading of the play suggests better understanding of the Russian life pre and post Tsarist rule.

Gregory Doran's film adaptation of *Hamlet* for the BBC series in 2009 won many critics' favour. In this adaptation, David Tennant played the role of Hamlet. In the words of J.J.Jorgens: "David Tennant presents a young, agile, intelligent and angry Hamlet, using body language that is familiar to observers of modern youth."

'*Romeo and Juliet*' has the charm to inspire Bollywood love stories in which the families are enemies to each other and do not allow two lovers to meet. The villainous characters in the movies remind us of Shakespeare's brutal and wicked villains. The infamous wicked villain, *Iago*, is even present in Indian daily soap operas in the female characters too. They envy the prosperity and advantages of the central characters and so they conspire to damage the relationships and create miscommunication.

Shakespeare has coined many of the terms and phrases. He left the heritage of words and phrases. There are many controversies about them but they are very popular and used worldwide. The famous phrase '*Catch a Cold*' is taken from Shakespeare's *Cymbeline*. The well-known term, '*Break the Ice*' first appeared in *The Taming of the Shrew*. The original lines were; "And if you break the ice, and do this feat, achieve the elder, set the younger free". Shakespeare devised the word '*Obscene*' for something that is tasteless and it was used in his *Love's Labour Lost*.

Shakespeare relates envy with "green eyed Monster" in his play *Othello*. We use the phrase "*Green with Envy*" to convey jealousy. Shakespeare's brilliance of inventing new quotes left us rich sayings, such as "*Vanished into thin air*", "*stood on ceremony*", "*a laughing stock*", "*laughing yourself into stiches*" and "*slept not one wink*". In his famous comic plays such as *Much Ado about Nothing* and *The Tempest* gifted us his sense of blunt insults such as "I do desire we may be better strangers", "More of your conversation would infect my brain".

Barbara Gaines, the theatre director in Chicago talks in the context of political significance of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. She admits; "We talked a lot about Vietnam and the Korean War. About the ancient Rome and Troy. About all of history. In addition, if there is human life on this planet in a couple of thousand years, they will be dealing with the same problems.....The names in the latter may have been Brutus and Julius Caesar and Antony, not Colin Powell and Saddam Hussein and George Bush, but the politics and power struggles are intensely familiar."

Another Shakespeare scholar Marjorie Garber admits the political significance of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*: "Shakespeare After All," this particular play "is as likely to be taught and read today in classes on political theory, business, and "leadership" as it is in the context of Shakespeare and his literary contemporaries," adding that the play speaks "pertinently, and impertinently, to the modern and postmodern condition, to modern history, and to modern politics, rhetoric and oratory." The current world political scenario is nothing but the modern version of *Julius Caesar*.

Again, to read and relate the famous bard Shakespeare in our age, he sounds still fresh and renewed. His masterpieces inspire many other fields of arts. The challenges are there as far as his use of old English words are concerned but that can be overcome. He deals with familiar concerns. Shakespearean characters, themes, and stories are the supply of the meaning for all age groups. The key features of his works are class, racism, betrayal, the status of a woman in

society, crime, death and boiling issues in today's world relate Shakespeare to the non-English speakers too. The fragrance of his novelty of ideas even today appeals different levels of our life.

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