

SHAKESPEARE AND HIS ARTISTIC POWER

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Received: 29 May 2019

Accepted: 04 Jun 2019

Published: 30 Jun 2019

ABSTRACT

William Shakespeare was a renowned figure of Elizabethan age and even in the present age, his artistic power is an exemplary figure of inspiration for many young writers. His name had been placed among the best play-wrights, the poets & the writers of the contemporary period. It is absolutely right that one who reads a few of Shakespeare's great plays, he will come to know about this great personality how he was trained, like his fellow-workmen, fires as an actor, second as a reviser of old play's and last as an independent dramatist. He worked with other contemporary playwrights and writers to know their artistic power & knowledge & then he used that power & knowledge to have supreme authority over the literary works and after that he used his power in his own way.

KEYWORDS: *William Shakespeare, Power & Knowledge, Independent Dramatist*

INTRODUCTION

One thing has that like other scholars he too studied and followed that public taste and within a year or two attained that supernatural power in writing plays pertaining to kings, clowns, gentlemen, heroes & noblemen, all of whose lives he seemed to know by an intimate association.

Eventually, his powers & knowledge could not only be seen in play writings but also in poetry writings. He also led the elite group of poets, scholars, dramatists & literary class of Elizabethan age. If we see his intelligence that was teeming with rich ideas & thoughts, he translated thoughts and ideas into his works and then twisted that power & knowledge with his mighty pen to give a beautiful piece of writings following one to another so rapidly.

In simple words, we can say that Shakespeare brought order out of dramatic chaos in a few short-years; he raised the drama from a blundering experiment to perfection of form & expression which has never since been rivaled.

It is evident that, in the Elizabethan period, when conditions fostered the art of drama, many writers started practicing as dramatists who in another age would have sought another medium, 'among them were Ben Jonson, Marlowe & Webster.'¹ With the passage of time, many poets as evidently diverted their imaginations from the drama which offered them only an incomplete and inhabited form of artistic communication.

At the same times, some of the questions & doubts were raised. And we have to focus upon the given questions:

- Was dramatic expression, then, partly induced in Shakespeare, as it was in Marlowe, Jonson, & Webster, by the favorable conditions, the prevailing mood of the age?
- Was he under the influence & power as his contemporaries?

- Was Shakespeare republican if so in which sense?
- Answering that it depended upon the nature of drama & the dramatic genius.

Above raised questions insinuated that knowledge & power which he conveyed to the readers are highly praising worthy & concerned here with the obvious characteristics of the literary form that we call drama.

To determine, then, what dramatic genius is in its essence, we must look below these formal characteristics, these outward signs of dramatic thought, as what are the innate powers of mind we are not concerned, that is with the nature of the average play but, first, with the nature of dramatic art, and the first of these may best be learned from the major drama for which he is so famous in the academic world.

Let us survey some of his great plays where he talked about infinite knowledge, the power of the aristocracy, the helplessness of the common people, their freedom & the restrictions which were imposed by the powerful kings. He also introduced in his tragedies; 'ghost and witches who had supernatural power and knowledge'² we must remember that we cannot arrive at Shakespeare's whole dramatic way of looking at the world from his tragedies alone, as we can arrive at Wordsworth's or at Shelly, Keat's, by examining almost any one of their important works. Although Shakespeare's whole dramatic view is not to be identified yet we can try to have maximum information regarding his success just after going through or after a profound study of his plays include Macbeth, Othello, King Lear, Julius Caesar, & Hamlet.

The above great tragedies of this period are associated with a period of gloom & Sorrow of his life. Due to this sorrow, he turned his thoughts back to Stratford & Caused, apparently, dissatisfaction with his work & profession. And at the same time, the abundant questions were coming in the mind of actors & play-wrights & they also suspected how did he in the midst of success, left the city life & seemed to look forward to the time when he could retire to Stratford to live the life of a farmer & country gentleman. This was the period when he inducted his mind to study about the common life of the common people & he wrote with the full maturity of his powers & transformed his personal experiences in the sonnets where he addressed 'Dark -lady' and 'Earl- of- Southampton' to express his personal disappointment & powers. His artistic skills appeared in his tragedies which are unique where the principal characters are involved in desperate circumstances or led by over whelming passions & freedom. Everybody acts in a dignified manner & the movement is always stately but grows more & more rapid as it approaches the climax, and the end is always calamitous, resulting in death or dire misfortunes to the principals.

If we survey his tragedies we will come to know that it is an inevitable fact that we have no access to the mind of William Shakespeare. If we apply our mind & look at the text of the plays in any way our personal predilection, sensitivity to life & professional training would help us to have information from his famous plays: Hamlet, Julia's Caesar, King Lear, Macbeth, Othello. Moreover, "Tragedy with Shakespeare is concerned always with persons of 'high degree' often with kings or princes, leaders like Brutus, Antony, General like Othello & Macbeth"³

A work such as Hamlet with its endless diversity & richness is likely to provoke many responses compared to, say, and certain interpretations of the play might appear to do greater justice to the reader's expectations from the playwright & expectation to have more knowledge from his play.

Hamlet is an important play of Shakespeare which reflects the Elizabethan qualities in which the revenge is the

primary motivating force both for the protagonist as well as the plot. Shakespeare introduced many elements in his play which were adopted by many revenge play-wrights of his age include the ghost, intrigue, betrayal, a hesitant, unsure hero & his inaction chiefly based on moral scruple, madness & melancholia, etc.

So far as Hamlet is concerned he sails in the same boat, he commits himself to avenge his father's death at the hands of Claudius, his uncle, who also marries his mother & snatched the throne of Denmark. How did he know the truth: as the play opens with the officers guarding the royal palace who are terrified by the appearance of the ghost who would not speak to them. Nor the ghost confides the reason for his appearance in Horatio who joins the guards on the third night. But he speaks to Hamlet:

List, list, O list!
if thou didst ever thy dear father lovE
Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder
Murder most foul, as in the best it is,
But this foulest, strange & unnatural
O' horrible O horrible ' O most horrible!
If thou hast nature in thee bear it not,
Let not the royal bed of Denmark bell
Adieu, adieu, adieu,
remember me.

(Act I sc v, 11, 24, 26, 27-8,80-83 & 91)

Hamlet is horrified to learn that the murderer is Claudius who had seduced his wife & poured poison in his ears as he slept. Hamlet promises to carry out his obligation as a son and avenge his father's death. But many weeks pass & no action is taken. He doubts & suspects that the ghost may have been an evil spirit. Primarily, he does not relish the role of avenger. Rather, he needs to make sure that the ghost did give him facts.

On the one hand, Hamlet vacillates between his belief that the ghost was actually his father's spirit & had just cause to approach his son & his apprehension that it was an evil spirit & meant to cause trouble. Hamlet's ambiguous & ambivalent thinking reflects the confused thinking of his times. Claudius nefarious design to kill his own brother to have power such act of him violated the special laws, moral order & religious sanctity unlike him. Hamlet's sensitivity and multifarious attitude values of personal relationships enriches his character.

Eventually, how Shakespeare conveyed to the audience that evil cannot overcome the good, even the powerful person would have to vow down before God. When powerful King Claudius tries to pray:

O' my office is rank,
it smells to heaven,

it had the primal eldest curse upon't,
 A brother's murder!
 Pray, can I not,
 Though the inclination is as sharp as will.
 My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,
 And like a man to double business bound,
 I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
 And both neglect
 Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
 To wash (this cursed hand) white as snow?
 O bosom black as death!
 O limed soul, that struggling to be free,
 Art more engaged;
 My words fly up, my thoughts remain below.
 Words without never to heaven go.
 (Act iii, sc iii, 11, 36-43, 45-46, 67-69, 97-98)
 Hamlet find Claudius a praying,
 And now I'll don't...and am I then
 revenged to take him in the purging of his soul.
 When he is fit and seasoned for his passage?
 (Act III, II, 74; 84-86)

Hamlet thought that this would be the right time to kill him. At this time both the victim and the avenger are destroyed along many other innocent bystanders.

'Julius Caesar' is an exemplary old play of Shakespeare which reflect republican ideas & spirit of a variety of characters who may have great valour prowess & countless virtues include them. Julius Caesar a great soldier leader & famous artist. He earned name & fame all over Europe as conqueror & the common people considered him a great national hero. He was a leader of the Imperial party. Whereas his close friend Brutus was a brave, courageous, impetus who had high & noble morals. Brutus watched Caesar's growing ambition with great anxiety & was troubled with his self-Importance.

If we profoundly think & study the psychological mind of Brutus it suggests us how cleverly Shakespeare propagated his republican spirit through Brutus to the audience & shows them, the spirit of Brutus who values freedom &

wants to safeguard the interest of the common people. And now the war, which had previously been going on his mind, becomes more acute. Cassius a member of Republican Party had proposed though indirectly the assassination of Caesar. Brutus was, therefore, in dilemma. Many questions raised in his mind should he join a conspiracy to murder a close friend of his? Because of this conflict & turmoil in his mind, he could not sleep all night. The true spirit of republican was propelling him to save the national interest of Rome.

A couple of Soliloquies by him revealed to us his state of mind and the predicament.

In the first soliloquy, he says that 'Caesar is becoming more & more powerful & once he becomes more powerful, he would begin to show complete disregard for the rights of the common people & become a dictator of Rome landing the common masses in a great trouble'⁴ His democratic ideas were seen when he compares Caesar to a serpent's egg which on being hatched produces another serpent. It is therefore desirable to kill Caesar just as it is, desirable to crush serpent's egg.

In another soliloquy as Cassius suggested it seemed to him like horrible dream or nightmare obviously his guardian spirit and his bodily powers seemed to be holding a debate & his mind was just like a kingdom in which a revolt has broken out stated simply that a mental conflict was going on in his mind between his loyalty to Caesar and his republican principles soon afterward, we find that his republican spirit & his anxiety to safeguard the rights of the people have proved to be stronger than his friendship for Caesar.

Apart from this Brutus felt strengthened, defensive, & chaotic to preserve the democratic & republican spirit. He believed that he would create many hassles, problems, impediment in establishing future of Rome as a republican county. All these added more worries into his mind. Then Brutus & his brother in law Cassius who was active leader prepared a plan & they suspected that Caesar might be offered the crown at the national games & the republican party did not wish Caesar to be made king, Antony offered him the crown of Rome three times but he refused to have it. Nobody could judge his innate cohesive desire except Brutus. It suggested us that he was impersonated and imperceptible & was also trying to befool the common people of Rome & his companions to show them that he was least interested in crown but indeed Brutus could smell what was going on in his mind which was not easily digested by him & decided to prevent him because he longed to see 'The Rome a republican state' of the people where they could freely express their views, thoughts, ideas, wisdom & desires.

On the basis of the above facts, Brutus took the pledge with his companions to kill the brave soldier of the soil just to save the integrity of the country. Brutus addressed the frightened people of Rome.

You may hear my explanation of why Brutus rose against Caesar. My answer is not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more. As Caesar loved me, I weep for him, as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it, as he was brave, I honor him but as he was ambitious, I killed him.

But if we study his traits, we shall come to know that Brutus was an idealist & true patriotic unlike other conspirators who propelled & instigated him to kill Antony also but he refused to do so because he was a true Republican hero & did not wish that people called them murderer or butchers.

After the assassination of Caesar a civil war started. The forces of the conspirators were being led by Brutus whereas the forces of the imperial party were being led by Antony, Octavius & Lepidus Both the parties were involved in the war resulted the forces of the Republican party had been crushed. The ideas & thought of Brutus which had been seen

also wretchedly crushed.

In the end, Antony confessed that Brutus was an above & virtuous man than all the other conspirators who had a personal grudge against him only Brutus joined the assassination of Caesar because of his democratic ideals to do the good for the sake of the common people. Antony also emphasized that Brutus represented true republican spirit in him & an excellent combination of all the good qualities & a balanced mixture of genuine elements.

It is absolutely right to say that Shakespeare with his magic lifted the mask from every face & propagated his philosophy to the reader & conveyed well always overcome evil in the long run and love, faith, work & duty are the four elements that in all ages make the world right. To criticize or praise the genius that creates these men & women is to criticize or praise humanity itself. If we read 'King Lear'. It is a play about love, power, human relationships, and family problems. King Lear's first scene introduces us to two dysfunctional families: those of king Lear and the Earl of Gloucester, Shakespeare has presented in this play the inexplicable riddle of life. All the principal characters of the play are preoccupied with the nature of the ultimate power & feel a passionate need to explain human suffering. Each character in the play under the influence of mysterious powers which dominate life. Man is not the maker of his destiny, he is a helpless puppet in the hands of the power that rules on high. He suffers because of his destiny & fortune.

Lear takes steps to legislate love. He sets up a public love test in which each of his three daughters has to compete with her siblings in declaring the greatest amount of love for her father. The winner will be awarded the largest third of Lear's Kingdom as a prize. Lear's contest will decide his fate & bring disaster to his life. He tries to reckon love Goneril later offers hospitality to fifty of Lear's knights whereas Regan offers accommodation to only twenty-five. Lear, therefore, concludes that Goneril loves her father twice as much as does Regan. Cordelia is the youngest daughter, who loves Lear so dearly & sees the problems in measuring love in this way refuse to play a game. Lear has become furious because of his power & madness, disinherited her only because she has nothing to say as proof of her pious love.

In conclusion we can say that if there is disorder in the family there will be disorder in the state because the state power & the family power are similar the power to bestow or abate, enlarge or scant, whether measured by the size of a kingdom or the number of knights, represents at its most important level, the power to confer with old love.

Ultimately after painstaking study of Shakespearean tragedies, his republican ideas for ideal society propelled us to say that Shakespeare drama is like an ever flowing river of life and beauty. For all who thirst for art & truth, he had a universal appeal which he got after long struggle right from his young age. Aristotle, " a Greek philosopher emphatically & poignantly defined "universality as the idealizing power in art i. e the capacity to lift the narrow world of the story to a higher, wider and vaster world".⁵ If we minutely see Shakespeare he had that power to twist the human tendency in his works. He was constantly generalizing, moving from the particular to the general. He had a yearning to deal with powerful elemental passions & knowledge with joys & sorrows common to all humanity. We all show our sympathy & share the feelings of the sufferers who may be the victim of fate & destiny. He could easily visualize the hidden feelings of human beings with his matured powers. He could also know the secret sources of impulse & passion out of which many are issues of life arise. Moreover, he had absolute command & knowledge over the many complexities of thoughts & emotions from the lowest to the lofty. In short, we can say that his works are a storehouse of beauty, wisdom, power & truth.

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