

Special Edition with introduction,  
detailed notes, scene-wise summary,  
annotations and questions and answers

# WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

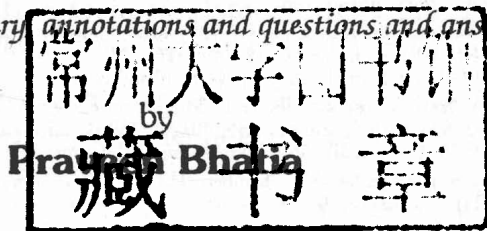


## ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA

*William Shakespeare*

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## PREFACE

Shakespeare, many critics have believed, did not wish to preach. He just wanted to portray human emotions in their entirety and leave its interpretation to our own value judgement. Whatever the merits of this comment, the fact remains that we must have a cogent philosophy based on inviolate morality and integrity if we as students of Shakespeare are to do complete justice to our existence. It is this inviolate, unimpeachable integrity that students will find throughout this book.

All moral things are simple. The moment we complicate them we dilute morality. This same parameter of existence is rigidly followed in the entire book presented to you. The book thus is as easily understood by school students as by graduate and post-graduate students. Since despite the simplicity, neither the lyrical quality of Shakespeare nor his comprehensive and profound understanding of human emotions is compromised the book is as much of utility to the serious scholars as to the teachers and professors.

I have found existing books on Shakespeare with unnecessary chapters devoting scores of pages which are not of any consequence, specially from the examination point of view. Moreover, the answers to various aspects of each play are nothing more than an accumulation of paragraphs of criticism from various English scholars. Since two or more questions are clubbed together and the critical excerpts are joined by a few sentences, the students often do not get an authentic answer to any single question.

All these shortfalls have been scrupulously removed from this book.  
This book contains :

- a) Answers to questions selected from question papers of universities and schools throughout India.
- b) Exhaustive explanations to Latin, Greek and Biblical references as well as Shakespearean and Elizabethan English.
- c) Paraphrase to the main text.
- d) Story and scene-wise summary along with critical appreciation.
- e) Reference to context from question papers of schools and colleges throughout India.
- f) Select criticisms of various scholars.

I hope students find the book valuable from the point of their examination as well as for a better understanding of Shakespeare.

**NAGPUR**  
**1996**

**PRAVEEN BHATIA**



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## SHAKESPEARE AND HIS AGE

Shakespeare's greatness, one critic said lay in his "comprehensive soul". That is the most poetic summation of a dramatic genius that has never been equalled. But if Shakespeare's plays and sonnets are the monuments of a remarkable genius, they are also the monuments of a remarkable age. His greatness was partly due to the work of his predecessor's. Spenser and Sydney mastered the verse. Christopher Marlowe excelled in theatrical management of character and situation. Literature in that era became an instrument of reason and the English language became its dignified medium. The era of Shakespeare began with the culmination of Spenser's concept of heroic idealism, of Johnson's superb satires, Bacon's introspection in the scientific philosophy and Donne's subtlety of poetry.

Yet for all of its emphasis on scholarship, humanism could flourish in the popular theatre because it was attached to tradition as well as to nationalism and individualism. It was attached to the medieval tradition of moral teaching through allegory. The heightened imitation of nature in poetry, inspired men to virtuousness and civility, and ultimately to the uprightness of the human mind.

The underlying theme of a great part of Elizabethan literature is a constant conflict between individualism and the preconceived sense of a moral order. Humanism alone, however, was not the sole source of vitality in Shakespeare's theatre. It was superimposed with the vitality of the spoken language to "be understood even of the very vulgar". Literature gained in consequence. Words and idioms, popular and learned, gained newer, sharper dimensions in the theatre. Drama flourished till poets remained closely in touch with popular speech and popular

and traditions. It declined as the popular influence weakened. The theatre was the point of closest contact between humanism and popular taste. Literary playwrights borrowed freely from popular sources, sermons, streets ballads and their like.

Shakespeare too borrowed freely, though his sources are more varied than his predecessors, typifying his exalted muse and his all encompassing genius. He borrowed heavily from Plutarch's "Lives" and Holinshed's "Chronicles" and other classical translations. Yet he baffled and bewildered his critics and his admirers as he circumvented all established rules of his predecessors. He did the unthinkable when in one play after another he flouted the unities of time, and place, and an exasperated Jonson, the unyielding traditionalist, pronounced that Shakespeare's plays were a blasphemy and could not be managed on a stage. The scholarly and revered Jonson could not have been more wrong as later years were to prove. Shakespeare's plays were staged with brilliance by actors who had failed miserably with the prudishly correct plays of his starchy predecessors.

No dramatist can create live characters save by bequeathing the best of himself into his work of art, scattering among them a largess of his own qualities, his own wit, his comprehensive cogent philosophy, his own rhythm of action and the simplicity or complexity of his own nature. Shakespeare's predecessors and contemporaries all excelled in one or more of these qualities. Shakespeare excelled in all of them all the time, or at least majority of times, as he teased and tormented his readers with his exquisite wit on one scale, and sublimated them with his deep insight into human psyche on another. Plays like those of Shakespeare are written in blood ; not run cold, but running warm and lively through the author's veins and spills like molten lava on every word that he writes.

Shakespeare wrote in an age outstanding in literary

history and its vitality of language. The Elizabethan literary language, in the era in which Shakespeare wrote, was addressed to a mixed public, more trained in listening than in reading and more accustomed to group life than to privacy. Elizabethan writing lacked the intimate conversation and psychology of the modern novel, but was supreme in expressing sensations and the outward, demonstrative aspects of feeling. This factor explains why drama was the chief form of Elizabethan art. The era of Shakespeare saw the rise in capitalism. It brought about radical changes in the composition of society as spirit of competition became the focal point of the social hierarchy. The sixteenth century as a result was largely restless due to new found wealth, aided by political upheavals and religious wars, and a lack of intellectual synthesis. The whole universe was governed by divine will. Nature was God's instrument and social hierarchy was a product of nature.

Out of this chaos and puritan outlook to life and a rigid dogmatic religious order seeped in superstition and tyranny, evolved the period of Renaissance. Human history is evidence to the fact that when tyranny and dogma suffocated mankind he revolted against its superstition, timidity and regression. Renaissance resulted in a desire for a more productive form of scientific learning. It is in this era of evolution mixed with skepticism that Shakespeare existed. Shakespearean plays depict the yearning for scientific learning and human philosophy in its more myriad and intense form. It is his unquestioned genius that made him so appealing to the era of flux in which he wrote and makes him relevant even today after so much scientific advancement.

## CHAPTER 2

### LIFE AND WORKS OF SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare, we know was born in April 1564, at Stratford-on-Avon in the country of Warwick. His mother Mary Arden descended from nobility and his father John was a prosperous businessman of the village. John and Mary had eight children four sons and four daughters. William, the third child and first son, was christened on 26th April 1564. The only member of this group to survive the poet was his younger sister, Joan.

Shakespeare's father, it has been conjectured, had a zeal for public affairs and due to this zeal, neglected his own business. Due to a combination of political and business reasons, his father lost much of his wealth and was in all probability a man of very modest means. Shakespeare married Ann Hathaway, the daughter of an old family friend, in November 1582. The first child of the marriage, Susannah was born in May 1583. In February 1585, Shakespeare and Ann had twins, Hamnet and Judith. Some historians say that Shakespeare was an ignorant youth and was driven from his careless rustic existence to a very different career in London. The same historians tell us that Shakespeare began by rewriting the plays of others, among them those of Robert Greene. This transformation from a rustic of Stratford to a literary figure of London has been left unexplained and looks highly improbable on its face value. Why the works of a writer like Greene, who boasted of a degree from both universities, should have been turned over to an illiterate new-comer, is hardly comprehensible.

There are others who indicate a different and more natural course of events. Those who accept Beeston's version that Shakespeare was a schoolmaster would find it easier to understand his progress as a dramatist.

Shakespeare probably arrived in London in 1584, though no certain date can be given of his arrival ; but by 1594 he had to his credit the quantum of work which could only have been possible through a considerable number of years. There is evidence that he was for a time at least a member of Lord Pembroke's company.

The first reference to Shakespeare is found in the words of Robert Greene who, frustrated with his own failure to make a living, lashed out at his employee, and perhaps prodigee, the young William Shakespeare, challenging his ability as a young actor as well as an actor dramatist whose success, had made it more difficult for Greene to earn his living. Shakespeare was already highly thought of and this was strengthened by his publication of *Venus and Adonis* in 1593 and *Rape of Lucerne* in 1594. *Venus and Adonis*, though his first work, was published after his reputation and success had been established on stage. There are conflicting views as regards his work, but it is now established with considerable proof that Shakespeare started his career as a dramatist a few years earlier than 1590.

Shakespeare's plays can be grouped in the approximate order of their composition as given in the diagram :

PERIOD	COMEDIES	HISTORIES	TRAGEDIES
1584-1592	COMEDY OF ERRORS.	1,2,3, HENRY VI.	TITUS ADRONICUS.
	TAMING OF THE SHREW	RICHARD III.	
	TWO GENTLE-MEN OF VERONA	KING JOHN.	
1592-1594	LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST.	VENUS AND ADONIS (poem).	
		RAPE OF LUCERCE (poem).	



PERIOD	COMEDIES	HISTORIES	TRAGEDIES
1594-1599	MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.	RICHARD II.	ROMEO AND JULIET.
	MERCHANT OF VENICE.	1. HENRY IV.	
	MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR.	2. HENRY IV.	
	MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.	3. HENRY V.	
	AS YOU LIKE IT.		
1599-1608	TWELFTH NIGHT.		JULIUS CAESAR.
	TROILUS AND CRESSIDA.		HAMLET.
	MEASURE FOR MEASURE.		OTHELLO.
	ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.		TIMON OF ATHENS.
			LEAR
			MACBETH.
			ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.
			CORIOLANUS.
1608-1613	PERICLES, PRINCE OF TYRE.	HENRY VIII.	
	CYMBELINE.		
	THE WINTER'S TALE.		
	THE TEMPEST		

The grouping of histories, comedies and tragedies is more for the sake of convenience rather than a fool-proof division of his art. Shakespeare was too profound, his each work too complex to be fitted into a particular group. Critics grouped his plays as tragi-comedies and comic-tragedies, their preference based on the fact of each play being inherently tragic with a residue of comedy or the reverse. Yet in tragedies like Julius Caesar, there is as profound a historical reference as there can be in any of the other histories. It is his treatment of the histories and the tragedies that place these plays where they are. Whatever their merits, the plays as grouped are the most accepted and the closest Shakespearean plays can ever come to be classified.

Some critics also believe that Shakespeare wrote his earlier plays like Titus Adronicus in collaboration, and that the first play entirely to have been written by him is Love's Labour's Lost. It is remarkable that the earliest and the latest plays, this and the Tempest, are apparently the most original in plot. It is in Love's Labour's Lost that Shakespeare displayed his penchant for drama. The Two Gentlemen of Verona and The Comedy of Errors represents no noteworthy advance in dramatic power. This is Shakespeare's period of apprenticeship. Once this period is past the crudities and the doggerel disappear, rhyme is replaced by blank verse and the characters themselves not only live and move but develop, and the plot and characters grow with each other before our very eyes. This advancement is marked in Romeo and Juliet, his earlier tragedy, and in the Merchant of Venice. It is in these plays that he mastered his craft, and at no stage does he permit his poetic and lyrical faculty to dominate his drama.

After this phase, Shakespeare turns his attention to English history deriving his material mainly from Holinshed's Chronicles. His treatment, though of his sources is unique. He takes his subjects in a moral order, beginning with the weakest