

Glimpse of Different Religions and Philosophers in Shakespearean Plays

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Abstract

The Literature is very didactic in nature. It has many great philosophers and moral preachers. Wordsworth and Robert Browning are often defined as a moral preacher. Shakespeare and his plays were never considered as didactic. He was renowned for his plays, poems, artistic skills and narration. If we read the plays thoroughly, we will find many fragments of holy books in his writings. He delved deep into the human mind and explained the real nature of man, how a man should be, what he should do and what he should not do. His every line has a vision of wise man. His works are full of practical experiences which motivates us to be good and do good. Shakespeare's dialogue has relevance in present scenario also. The holy books: Bhagwad Geeta, Guru Granth Sahib, Holy Bible has quoted same philosophy whose fragments we can see in Shakespeare's work. He is a missionary who edifies to be morally correct in thoughts, speech and actions. In the present paper I attempt to explore the essence of holy books in Shakespeare's work. The comparison between his works and Indian philosophy highlights his wisdom.

Keywords: *Shakespeare, Philosophy, Morality, Indian Values*

William Shakespeare is most renowned writer of the English literature. He is often acknowledged as a great writer, playwright, and philosopher. He peeped deep into the human nature and transcends the time and circumstances in which he wrote. He is undoubtedly a man of ages. His plays record the timeless truth which sustains forever. It has its relevance in present scenario also. In his plays, he tried his own way to impart Value among his readers. His way of disseminating moral lessons were unique and appreciable. He imparted values to mankind through his plays. Man is bestowed with both good and bad qualities. People across the world share same thoughts, feelings and emotions. All of his plays imbibe the qualities of a man which is necessary for human existence. They are also marked with same complexities of relationships, human nature and struggle as a common man do. His plays act as a moral instructor that break all the boundaries of era and places and educates it readers. His

preaching's are like that of our religious guru's, holy books and of eminent personalities that are justifiable of all ages and circumstances. Both of them; Shakespeare and different religions preach the same content but in different forms. Like them, Shakespeare's quotations contain timeless truth which is always valid.

Shakespeare is men of letters and a moralist who always guided the people to choose right path. He never said anything in words rather gave a picture to his thoughts and carved it into his plays. He is never considered as a moral preacher like Wordsworth and Browning. William J. Long opines Robert Browning as a moralizer as he cannot be "disinterested, satisfied, as Shakespeare was, with life itself, without drawing any moral conclusions. Browning has always a moral ready, and insists upon giving his own view of life, which Shakespeare never does". Moreover Huxley muses on the eclecticism of Shakespeare's religious allusions by saying, "Unlike Milton or Dante, Shakespeare had no ambition to be a systematic theologian or philosopher... What he gives us is not a religious system; it is more like an anthology, a collection of different points of view, an assortment of commentaries on the human predicament offered by persons of dissimilar temperament and upbringing". Thus Shakespeare was never considered as a moralist. But if we study him in detail and analyses his quotations we could say that different religions have also commented on the human predicaments. They all teach us the way to live life and tackle different problems.

The characters of his plays speak. They speak about the atrocity of life, dilemmas and state of helplessness through which he passes from time to time. His plays shows that a man had to undergo the great sufferings due to his over ambition, wrong choices, greed, avariciousness, wrong doing etc. Shakespeare in his play Julius and Ceaser says "Men at some times are masters of their fates". In his plays he allows his character to choose the path, enact upon his thoughts and decide their fate. They have freedom of choice which ultimately shapes their characters and decide their destiny. Like all the religious scriptures, in Julius and Ceaser, Shakespeare has beautifully written "The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, But in ourselves that we are underlings." He highlighted the fact that it is we and not anyone else who are the cause of our downfall. Thus we should not blame anyone for our suffering. His characters are just like common man and woman whose experiences correspondence with that of our own. The human nature shares all these common emotions. No one is devoid of it. Due to moral weakness the man has to face his downfall. Shakespeare in his plays favors truth, honesty, bravery, goodness. In Bhagvadgeeta also, Sri Krishna talks about free will. He says that our happiness and sorrows, success and failures are governed by our decisions.

Shakespeare gives full freedom to the character to choose their fate. They have free will to decide what to do. According to Bradley (2005), "These emotions are found invariably with Shakespeare's tragic heroes-Othello's jealousy, King Lear's pride, Macbeth's ambition,

Romeo and Juliet's lust, lead them to end their lives". *Everywhere the reader can relate himself with these characters. The plays were written back in 16th century by its utility and influence is found even in today's world. The character he has carved on paper seems to have telling the human condition of today's man. In 21st century, a man is in constant dilemma of what to do and what not to do. It's the same as Hamlet asks himself "To be or not to be". In this condition of confusion the man often tends to take wrong decisions. He is tempted by the vices. So he suggests to stay calm and ponder upon situations before taking any steps. Our holy books also say the same. They says that the main reason of our destruction is Kama (lust), Krodha (anger), Lobha (greed), Moha (love/ attachment) and ehnkara (ego). They all preach us to stay calm and then perform the action. The great Hindu philosopher and theologian, Adi Sankaracharya says*

"Kama Krodhaschalobhaschadehethistanthitaskarahjnanaratno-paharayatasmatjagratajagrata desire, anger and delusion- these three dacoits which are residing inside a man will loot the jnana-ratna (gem of Spiritual wisdom) and will deprive the precious gem of self- awareness and place man in ignorance. Therefore, oh man beware".

In King Lear, the king faces a downfall because he was fond of flattering. King Lear declared her daughter as unfaithful and unkind just because she was reluctant to flatter her father and was blunt in her speech. Psalm 5: 9 say, "For there is no truth in their mouth; their innermost self is destruction; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongue". Further Bible 29:5, says "A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet". The flattering is even emphasized today and one who does not flatter other is considered as unfaithful. So try to stay away from flattering. Do not believe people who indulge in such activities.

In As You Like It, he has artistically quoted "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts." Through these lines he wants to convey the idea that we all are mere puppets in the hands of god. We should always bear in mind that our life is a play; we are here merely to play the role and make an exit. So do not bother about the result. The religious scripture Guru Granth Sahib- 736 says that "the Director (god) stages the play, playing many characters (life forms) in different costumes (bodies); but when the play ends (world ends); he takes off the costumes and then he is one and only one". Thus both of them conclude that we change our costumes from time to time and play our roles as assigned to us by the almighty. We are mere players who work as the director says.

In Macbeth Act III, Shakespeare says, "What's done is done". He says that the past is gone; don't keep pondering about what had happen. Past is gone leave that behind and keep moving on. In Bhagvad Geeta also Lord Krishna says that we should not repent on our past or

worry about the future. God has planned our every move, so be optimistic and have faith on god that whatever is happening and will happen, will be for our betterment. Leave everything onto God and perform your duty.

It is often witnessed that man has a high degree of envy in them. People often compare themselves with other and get envious. They are jealous of their siblings and friends. This characteristic is deep rooted in man's nature. It overpowers man in one or the other form and forces him to commit mistakes. In the influence of this green eye monster they often commit heinous crime. They indulge themselves in atrocious acts and ruin their own life. This nature of a man is the main cause of the degradation of values. In regard to this in Othello he says "O, beware, my lord, of jealousy; It is the green-ey'd monster, which doth mock the meat it feeds on".

He says that everyman should be beware of this monster who generally hovers around us every time and captures our senses in its clutches so tightly that we can't get free of it. In Bhagvad Geeta also it is said that "While doing your duty, let me tell you, never bring in any of the attitudes of the outer self. Anger, hate, jealousy, attachment, all pertains to the outer self" And in James 3:16 it is beautifully quoted, "For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice". Thus a man should avoid being jealous because it only leads to destruction and downfall of many people.

Everyman is mesmerized by the beauty of this glamorous world. They prefer materialistic world to spiritual world. They visualize that whatever is beautiful and attractive is only real and truth but this conception is utterly wrong. We should not run after the materialistic world. Shakespeare in his Merchant of Venice says that all that glitters is not gold. Whatever seems to be beautiful and fascinated is not necessarily always good and worthy. "Beauty lies in the eyes of beholder". Many a times we perceive things in opposite ways. He says that we should always critically evaluate all the facets of life and then derive at a conclusion. Haste decisions should always be avoided as it brings downfall. Every religious book teaches us the same thing that we should denounce the materialistic world as it is mere pomp show. The things which seem to be pleasant and soothing are fake and not the reality. The reality is beyond our imagination. We should indeed prepare ourselves for the world of eternity.

In Midsummer Night's Dream Act V Part I, he says, "It's not enough to speak, but to speak true." And in Henry IV, Part I, also he quotes "while you live, tell truth, and shame the devil". Like every moral preacher he gave importance to truth. He focused upon the need of speaking truth. He wants us to stick on the path of truth and honesty and make devil feel shame that he is not powerful enough to tempt the man to speak lie perform wrong deeds. He wants man to keep his head high in proud by walking on the path of truth, honesty and

goodness. Further in Antony & Cleopatra he says, "If I lose mine honour, I lose myself". These two quotations reflect the idea of Gandhiji who used to say that we should always speak what is truth and be honest to oneself, because if "character is lost everything is lost". A man is known by his character. If one is honest and always speaks truth, he is respected and praised everywhere. Shakespeare has even said that "No legacy is so rich as honesty". A man with no moral values has no existence. He is equivalent to a monster. He beautifully concludes by saying that what else than a value like honesty truthfulness and preservation can provide you?

The title "All Well that ends Well", itself is a great source of motivation and inspiration to a depressed man. Man has the habit of living in past sufferings and agony and keep pondering upon it. He says that whatever may be the circumstance a man should always adopt a positive attitude. The happiness and melancholy is part and parcel of one's life. It comes and goes to teach a man a lesson for life. A man should not keep thinking about the suffering and depress himself rather they should feel happy that the suffering has gone and the end was pleasant. All that ends well, in happiness and joyful attitude is good. All the religions also teach us that good and bad is part of life. Happiness is preceded by sorrow and sorrow by happiness. They go hand in hand. Birbal once wrote and gave an important message to man that "yehwaqtguzarjaayega". Nothing is stagnant. Just remember that ant bhalatoh sab bhala.

While highlighting the importance of patience in a man's life he says "How poor are they that have not patience! What wound did ever heal but by degrees?" Through these lines he wants to convey the idea that a man should have patience to endure things. He should calmly and coolly ponder upon things and find the solutions to the problems or answer to their queries. The moral Preacher also focuses upon the importance of "Dhareya" (patience), they say that we should always adopt patience in life. Whatever is ours will come to us. No Body can change the right of fate. It is just that we need to observe patience and wait for right time.

The Shakespeare has also focused on the main agenda of living a healthy and peaceful life, which is, forgiveness. He viewed that we should forgive all, even our enemies if we wish to live a healthy and peaceful life. In The Tempest (Luke 6:27-35) says "But I say to unto you which hear, love your enemies, do good to them which hate you". Shakespeare has quoted these lines as in Matthew (5:44), where it is said that But, I tell, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Gandhiji also opined that the weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong. So free your mind from all worries by forgiving everyone who has done wrong to you.

In nutshell, we can conclude that he is a real preacher who had touched the important Facets of man's life. He has made an attempt to teach us about humanity, wisdom, truthfulness, honesty etc. which are essentials of human life. Through his writings he tried to convey many beautiful messages to his audience/ spectators and forced them to think analytically and evaluate their status. Ferris-Gettemw says that if he is to paint life universal and complete, he cannot eschew immoral characters, but he can and does show his morality in the handling of these characters; his carvings force man to ponder about reality and rethink that where he is and where he should be. He can understand the basic agenda of how to live a life. In Julius Ceaser Act II Part I, he says, "With all kind love and good thoughts and reverence. Your voice should be as strong as any man". He is a great tutor who taught us many lessons of life and made us understand that we should not get upset with bad situations and wrong people that enters our life. He opines that always wrong person gives us the right lesson of life. In short he can be connoted as a true moralist who studied and taught us about the different behaviors of man and different situations that he encounters in life. He has made us understand about the real purpose of our life which different religions, holy books refer to.

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