

SHAKESPEARE'S ROMAN HISTORICAL PLAYS – JULIUS CAESAR (1599)**Meenakshi Yadav¹, Dr. Tushti Sharma²**¹Research Scholar, ²Supervisor^{1,2}Malwanchal University
Indore, Madhya Pradesh**ABSTRACT**

William Shakespeare, English national poet and one of the most distinguished English literary playwrights produced his most well-known works. He started his literary career as a comedy and chronicle writer, but he did not confine his literary genius with comedies and chronicles. He also produced very prestigious tragedies, tragi-comedies, romances and poems. His main concern in the history plays was order, disorder, importance and continuity of monarch, in which he also emphasized the Englishness and advised on the destructive influences of civil wars and disobedience against the monarchs. The Wars of the Roses, in which the Houses of York and Lancaster fought on the monarch of England. Henry Tudor defeats Richard III and succeeds to the throne as Henry VII. He achieves to unite the two families, marrying Elizabeth of York. Shakespeare lived under the reign of Elizabeth I, who was the last monarch from Tudor dynasty. Shakespeare warns the audience against the dangers of civil wars and speaks well of the Tudor dynasties in his history plays, such as King John, Edward III, Richard II, Henry IV (Part I, II), Henry V, Henry VI (Part I, II, III), Richard III, Henry VIII. This plays were about the English history.

Key words: National poet, romances, continuity

INTRODUCTION

The central idea of the play is the decay of republicanism in Rome and The rise of Caesarism. In Act I/ scene i, there is a monarchical spirit abroad of which the populous give unconscious evidence. Citizens cry out:- (III/ii/53) = “Let him be Caesar, Caesar’s better parts shall be crown’d in Brutus” The Nation is calling for a representative in whom it may put supreme and unlimited confidence. Roman imperialism began under Julius Caesar and assumed definite form in the absolute military monarchy of his nephew Augustus.

The another idea of the play is “Good cannot come out of Evil” ,Brutus is noble, wise, valiant and honest but he made shipwreck of his life by one great error. He committed crime to prevent, as he thought, a greater crime and by so doing, he brought upon himself and his country, greater evils than those he had sought to avert.

THE CHARACTER OF BRUTUS –Et tu, Brute! Then fall Caesar!

Et tu Brute! Then fall, Caesar! (III/i/77) : These are the last words of Caesar spoken by him as he falls dead stabbed by the Conspirators. When the conspirators begin stabbing him, he tries to defend, but when he finds his dearest friend, the noblest man among those stabbing him, he feels no desire to live, so he gives up resistance and with these words he falls down dead.

“Et tu Brute?” You, too, Brutus (Latin) – do you also, Brutus, my best friend and the man with whom no ignoble thought or deed can be associated, wish my death and stale me? Then it is time for me to die, according to the version of the death of Caesar given by the Greek writer Suetonius, the last words of the dictator were: “and thou, my son”. The origin of the expression Eu Tu Brute is not definitely known but might have borrowed by Shakespeare, from a Latin play “on Caesar acted at Oxford in 1582. Lastly “Then fall Caesar” - Caesar addresses to himself.

Shakespeare’s Brutus is undoubtedly the very noblest figure of typical and ideal republican in all the literature of the world, (Swinburne, 1880, A study of Shakespeare) Brutus was noble and patriotic sitting high in all the people’s heart, And yet his cause was a failure. Brutus was a philosopher

rather than a man of action, a good theorist, but a bad conspirator, Bookish, not practical, he would come by Caesar's spirit and not dismember Caesar.

Brutus gentleness is seen in his intercome with everyone. Brutus was a philosopher. He belonged to the stoic school of philosophy, which held that pleasure and pain are independent of outward circumstances and are of no significance in themselves, that a life, virtually spent ensures perpetual happiness; that the wise man cannot really meet with misfortune, outward calamity being a divine instrument of training designed to teach indifference to external conditions; and that virtue is to be cultivated for its own sake.

Mark Antony, in his famous oration, modestly declares himself to be 'no orator as Brutus is' and the student of the play is hereby sometimes led to regard Brutus as the type of an excellent orator. But, such is not the fact. The speech of Brutus made no deep impression upon his audience (III/ii/12 to 49 and 58 to 64); the resistless eloquence of Antony took all ears captive (III/ii/75 to 200 and 211 to 232 and 240 to 253). Antony effected his purpose; Brutus did not. Brevity and logical precision were the chief characteristics of the speech of Brutus. Only when, under the influence of some strong emotion did he rise to eloquence, as when he forbade the oath (II/i) or when he bade his fellow-conspirators stoop and bathe their hands in Caesar's blood (III/i).

ANTONY – “The sportsman turned statesman”

“Shakespeare keeps Antony in ambush throughout the play. Antony is certainly in what we might fancy would be his own lingo – a dark horse. There can be no more typically English figure than the sportsman was turned statesman, but a sportsman still.” _ (Granville – Barker, preface, 1927)

“There is one element in Antony and that he is not selfish: His attachment to Caesar is genuine ----- one tender emotion of his heart is used by him as the convenient weapon on with which to fight his enemies and raise himself to power” (Mowlton- Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist, 1885)

The most admirable of Antony's qualities in his devotion to Caesar. It shows itself as much after as before Caesar's death. Brutus describes him as a mere “limb of Caesar” (II/i/165); Cassius speaks of the “in grafted love he bears to Caesar (II/ii/84) and of him as “So well beloved of Caesar (II/ii/156). Even in the presence of conspirator, Antony does not conceal his affection. In the message he sends through his servants, he mentions how he feared Caesar, Honoured him and loved him (III/i/129).

Antony was a man of great ability, but little fixity of purpose. He was resourceful and could yield to circumstances. At one time; he is cunning and persuasive, at another, outspoken and bold. Cassius understood him, and with reason dreaded his power – “you know not what you do; do not consent That Antony speak in his funeral (III/i/232)

Antony's great speech in the forum is one of the finest specimens of eloquence to be found in English language. Of course! Shakespeare has exhibited the fully developed character and Mark Antony, adopting Plutarch's opinion that the love of Cleopatra did Waken and Stir up many vices yet hidden in him and were never seen to any. In the play “Antony and Cleopatra”, he is shown clever, dashing, and reckless, a magnificent debauchee with flashes of greatness gives himself wholly up to voluptuousness and entirely subjugates his reason to his passion. He loses the world and thinks himself repaid- by a kiss.

ANTONY'S FUNERAL SPEECH: - “Bloody treason flourish'd over us”

“One may so analyse the speech throughout and find it a triumph of effective cleverness. The cheapening of the truth, the appeals to passion, the perfect carillon of flattery, Cajolery, mockery and pathos, swinging to a magnificent tune, all serve to make it a model of what popular oratory should be” (Granville- Barker, prefaces, 1927)

Perhaps nowhere else in History as we find the procedure of the demagogue of Genius set forth with

such masterly insight . of course ! he is speaking under limitation and by permission before a hostile audience that will barely give him a hearing and his task is to turn them quite round and make them adore what they hated and hate what they adored.

He begins –“ For Brutus’s sake , I am beholding to you . He disclaims the intention of even praising the dead. He cites the charge of ambition and not to reply to it, but then, he insinuates arguments on the other side: Caesar’s faithfulness and justice in friendship . his pitifulness to the poor, his refusal of the crown . All these things were already known to the public . The Antony has managed to praise Caesar while not professing to do so, if he does not disprove what Brutus said, Yet in speaking what he does know, he managed to discredit Brutus authority.

He begins again “bloody treason flourished over us” (III/ii/195). He strikes now, the note of contrast between Caesar’s greatness yesterday and his impotence to-day; compassion, curiosity, selfishness are now enlisted on his side cries of “ The will ! The will ! arise” (III/ii/157) Now Antony is quick to take advantage of this response of the audience. He now refuses to his Caesar’s will , for they will rise in Mutiny. He steps down from the pulpit, taking care to have a wide circle around him . He does not read the will immediately. Antony is not better orator than Brutus is and – with sublime effrontery- that was probably the reason he was permitted to address ----- “ Were I Brutus , and Brutus Antony, there were an Antony , would raffle up your spirits and put a tongue. In every wound of Caesar, that should more, The stones of Rome to rise and Mutiny” (III/ii/224-228).

Now, we have to note the last words- for though Antony feels entitled to indulge in this farcing and enjoys it thoroughly , he does not forget the serious business. He gives the hidden suggestion of mutiny and for mutiny, the citizens are now more than fully primed. All this, he has achieved without even playing his trump card. He has of course, never answered Brutus charge on which he rested his own case that Caesar was ambitious. In sum, Antony, by his speech, could turn the audience to his side and citizen said –“ Most noble Caesar ! we’ll revenge his death (III/ii/243/)” we’ll burn his body , in the holy place, and with the brands fire, the traitor’s houses (III/ii/255 and 256)

BRUTUS JUSTIFICATION OF CAESAR’S MURDER – “Think him as a serpent’s egg”

Brutus is hatred of the very name of King and dread of tyranny were so firmly noted in his nature that the instigation of Cassius were scarcely necessary to impel him to join in the conspiracy against Caesar. He said, that Caesar was no tyrant by nature, but then there was a possibility that sovereignty might change his nature and therefore he said he must ----- “ think him as a serpent’s egg.” Which hatched, would, as his kind, grow mischievous; and kill him in the shell” (II/i/32) such was the erroneous arguments based upon a mere supposition of an assumed possibility and making no allowance for his own possible errors of judgement, by which Brutus arrived at the conclusion that Caesar must be killed.

Shakespeare has emphasized the virtues of Brutus, while keeping those of Caesar on the background. He has endeavoured to prove that his motives in killing king were not those of jealousy, ambition and revenge, but of unalloyed patriotism . To do this, he has shown Brutus as kind and gentle, sympathizing with all who suffer and unwillingly to inflict pain except for reason of strong moral necessity . He has portrayed him most sympathetically in his relation as master, friend and husband showing that only a high sense of public duty could have made him lift his hand against Caesar .

It is this conflict between his humanity and his keen hereditary love of liberty, threatened by Caesar’s despotism, that gives Brutus a grandeur of character which raised him above his associates and which drew the admiration of his contemporaries and of posterity . Even his bitterest enemy acknowledged his integrity and the goodness of his heart.

CONCLUSION

Julius Caesar is the immemorable creation of Shakespeare in his writings on Roman History. He has transformed history into drama, prose into poetry without changing the value of the story. His poetic art is reflected in this play. He has made commendable use of Plutarch's writing. Julius Caesar was published in 1623 but its composition is of the year 1599 or 1600. Of course, the play on the name of 'The tragedy of the first emperor Julius was staged on 21-9-1599. The title of the play has received a major criticism; because Caesar appeared only in the first half of the play. Still it is said that "This play has no hero at all; and if there are heroes, they are more than one, the show of Caesar is observed completely from the beginning to the end of the play. The central idea of the play is based on political affairs and on the tragedy of characters. "Good cannot come out of Evil" is the central idea of this play. The major characters are 1) Julius Caesar 2) Octavius Caesar 3) Antony 4) Cicero and 5) Marcus Brutus.

The character of Brutus is well pictures by the Author "Et,Tu, Brute! Then fall Caesar" is world known statement which is used today as an important phrase; The whole hearted friend when joins in conspiracy, this phrase is universally used. Brutus is painted as a noblest figure and of ideal republican. Brutus was noble and of patriotic and because of his respect to the Roman empire, he joins in conspiracy and kills Caesar. Another character is of Caesar's friend, the Antony who is called as "The sportsman turned as statesman, He is always to the side of Caesar. Antony 's funeral speech is masterpiece and he turns the whole mob to the side of died Caesar with his popular oratory through he himself says that he is not good orator as compared to Brutus. Brutus justification of Caesar's murder is out of his love towards his country. Being a patriotic of Rome, he said that Caesar is a serpents egg and hence kill him in the shell. Brutus character though looks like villain, is not real. He is portrayed perfectly by the Shakespeare. In sum, Julius Caesar is one of the best Roman Historical play ever written by Shakespeare. For this, at least, we have to salute Shakespeare for his best artistic work

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