

Prof. Shailesh Ranjan  
Assistant Professor  
P.G. Dept. of English  
Maharaja College, Arq

## 1. Life of William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare was an actor, playwright, poet, and theatre entrepreneur in London during the late Elizabethan and early Jacobean eras. He was baptised on 26 April 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon in Warwickshire, England, in the Holy Trinity Church. His father, John Shakespeare appears to have been a glover. He was besides a corn-dealer or farmer, and trader in all kinds of agricultural produce. William Shakespeare was the first son and third child of John Shakespeare and of Mary Arden, daughter of a husbandman and land-owner. John Shakespeare thrived in worldly life till he rose to be Mayor of Stratford, and then its chief alderman, - and thus he claimed a coat of arms as a gentleman.

It is usually held that Shakespeare went to the free Stratford Grammar school at the age of seven and stayed there till he was fourteen or sixteen at the latest, when he picked up his "little Latin and less Greek." John Shakespeare later appears to have fallen on evil days and his son was consequently withdrawn from school. What Shakespeare did after he had left school is uncertain, and must be left to the fancy of every reader.

It is on record that Shakespeare at the age of eighteen was married to Anne Hathaway, his senior by eight years by special licence on November 28, 1582. He had one daughter named Susanna and twin sons named Hamnet and Judith. Thus, when Shakespeare was hardly twenty-one

he was burdened with three children and a wife eight years older than himself and it is suggested that he must have worried about them. His domestic entanglement might have been the reason for his abruptly leaving Stratford to seek his fortunes elsewhere. Shakespeare left Stratford in or about 1586 and took the way of London to fame and fortune.

### Shakespeare in London :-

The legend that Shakespeare, on his first appearance in London employed himself in holding horses heads outside theatre doors or worked in a printer's or lawyer's office, is now discredited. The earliest notice of Shakespeare in London occurs in 1592 in the death bed effusion of Robert Greene - A Groatsworth of Wit Bought with Million of Repentance, in which Shakespeare is referred to as "an upstart crow, beautified with our feathers" and as "Johannes factor rium". Amidst these conflicting views one thing seems to be certain that Shakespeare began as an inferior actor in some playhouse in London. By and by he acquired popularity and came to be recognized as an excellent actor. Meanwhile he started writing and adapting plays in collaboration with other established playwrights. Soon he began to outshine other contemporary playwrights by dint of his excellent poetic powers, glowing imagination and wide sympathies. He began to be envied by such eminent playwrights as Greene who was second only to Ben Jonson. Greene was so much vexed by the growing popularity and fame of Shakespeare that he brought out a malicious pamphlet entitled: "A Groats Worth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance."

Gradually Shakespeare came to be patronized by several eminent persons of England including Queen Elizabeth and King James I. In 1593, Shakespeare published his first book

of poetry 'Venus and Adonis' and dedicated it to the Earl of Southampton who was so pleased with it that he awarded him several hundreds of pounds with which Shakespeare got a share in the Globe Theatre. Hence onward Shakespeare's fame and fortune grew by leaps and bounds. Many of his plays were acted before Queen Elizabeth and King James I. His dramatic skill and poetic qualities were unanimously and universally praised all over the country.

→ Shakespeare back to Stratford:

After an absence of some eleven years, Shakespeare returned to Stratford as a man of fortune. In 1597, we hear of his purchasing a big house, New Palace, at Stratford and thereafter, though he continued to work in London, he having great love for his native village, visited it regularly at least once every year.

About the year 1612, he retired from business and settled entirely at Stratford. He had worked hard producing, on the average, two plays a year, and now his health was failing him. His health began to decline in the early months of 1616, when he made his will, leaving almost the whole of his property to his eldest daughter Susannah Hall. He died at the age of fifty-two on April 23, 1616 and was buried inside the chancel of Stratford Church on the 25<sup>th</sup> with the following epitaph (believed to have been written by Shakespeare himself before his death) inscribed over his grave:

" Good Friend, for Jesus' sake forbear  
To dig the dust enclosed here  
Blest be ye man yt spares these stones  
And curst be he yt moves my bones ."

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