CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

Drama has been a very unique form of art since the very beginning. It has been an enabling and enriching medium of art. Also it has been the best form of art to reach the masses more effectively. No other art form has ever been able to reach as many people as much as drama did. The drama audience require very little or no preparation at all to appreciate a play, unlike any other form of art, such as music and dance, which all need a certain amount of preparation and a degree of taste. Music, painting, sculpture, architecture and all other forms of art need the audience/connoisseur to have cultivated a taste to appreciate what is being presented as the expression of art. They all require a certain amount of knowledge, without which the art expression falls flat. Drama does not need any such preparation as it is an expression of life itself.

The technicalities of theatre production need not be known to its audience because what they eventually see on stage is nothing but a re-enactment of life. Hence it is not surprising that drama became a very popular and powerful form of art until it was challenged by the modern mass media. Yet it can be safely said that drama/theatre even today yields a formidable influence on the people and can be as
during the 16th century it was the most popular and influential form of entertainment in Europe.

Undoubtedly Shakespeare has been the greatest English dramatist of all times. It is difficult for any writer, of past, present or future, to match his dramatic skills, to bring in such a variety of characters, themes and situations on stage. His versatility is unmatched. The characters and situations in his plays are more universal than local. They are not limited or restricted by time or space. Hence Shakespeare is the only playwright who is widely read even today for he alone can entertain and educate people of this age too through his plays of thought.

Shakespeare wrote close to a million words that have survived into print is one reason for the multiple uses to which his words have been put for four centuries since they first began to make them available. Writing so many different pieces of the highest quality has meant that he can lend himself to various analyses, and the widest possible variety of critical approaches. His works stand as a reflection of the widest possible range of human pre-occupations.

Shakespeare is a mountain into which one tunnels. Each reader finds what he seeks and his/her finding is different from that of the other. This is one way of conceiving the great oeuvre and its benefits.
A quite different concept, also a half-truth, is of the Shakespeare
canon as a kind of mirror, which reveals its readers and their
preoccupations much more immediately and vividly than it shows
what it really is in itself. These two ways of thinking about
Shakespeare have their uses. They illustrate some of the main turns
of modern critical thinking, and they help to explain both the
strengths and the weaknesses of modern approaches to Shakespeare.

The age in which he wrote is different and was for a different
people. His intention seemed to be simple: to entertain people. He
probably did not even have a vague idea of the ideologies and
theories of drama and literary arts. Yet his works have been analysed
in the most modern perspectives and theoretical canons. And yet
Shakespeare seems to stand aloof and away from all that has been
happening to him and his works, undisturbed and unaffected.

Perhaps there is no other writer who is worked upon so much
by the academicians as much as Shakespeare. He has attracted the
lay man as well as the scholar with equal vigour for his works have
not only a universal appeal but also relevance to all times. They are
being staged even today in their various forms. Some performances
retain their original Shakespearian form, some plays are adapted to
suit the modern times and theories. The genius of Shakespeare has
been feeding the common man as well as the intellectual critic for over years. ‘What makes him timeless?’ is one interesting question that needs to be probed.

Apart from that the special focus of this study is to see whether Shakespeare was influenced by the customs and conventions of his times or if he was an independent mind, beyond the local reach of his times. Did he really have a foresight that outreached his immediate present? Writing in the 16th century, if he could write in such a way as to appeal to the audience of the 21st century, some 500 years ahead of him, how modern was his mind in reality? Did he live by his own individual norms and principles that were quite different from the then prevailing ones? What were his views regarding women? Did he, too, treat them as meant only for domestic household purposes or did he attribute to them more share of responsibility than what the then society had actually allowed? How differently has he portrayed the women characters in his plays? Or, are they differently portrayed at all? Or are the women characters in his plays given any serious thought at all and have they been well developed? Do his women characters illustrate and demonstrate true human nature or does Shakespeare paint them according to the biases held by the then society? These are the few interesting questions that will be in the
backdrop when the treatment of women in Shakespeare’s works is dealt with in detail in this study.

Scope of the study

The study intends to focus on the treatment of women in the Shakespearean plays. Feminism and gender studies have gained much significance in the recent times. However it is not due to the prominence they are given that this study focuses on the women characters. It is more due to the humanitarian concerns and with an aspiration for the equality among both sexes that the study has been undertaken.

Understanding the position, status and the role played by women during the Elizabethan age of Shakespeare will help in understanding of the problems related to women since ages. The unvoiced agonies of women suffered through centuries might have been articulated knowingly or unknowingly by the genius of Shakespeare. A thorough and close analysis of his women characters will definitely throw more light on the issue. Apart from mere underlying representation of the women of his times, Shakespeare might as well be a guiding light as to how the gender disparity be reduced or be rid of.
The study focuses on providing a comparative perspective with the help of which other writers' and playwrights' works can be examined. This study can be a source for a more comprehensive understanding of gender issues. It can also be one of the beginners of the series of studies which can extend to the current day writers with gender issues as the central theme for debate. The study also attempts to provide an insight into how a study of characters in a playwright's works can be related to the present day scenario.

Review of literature

Shakespeare wrote his plays with the sole intention of staging them and it can be assumed that he probably did not mean to publish them in the print form. It was only after his death that his plays were compiled and given a readable form by the actors who performed in his plays. Hence there are a variety of versions of Shakespeare's plays giving rise to the question of authenticity. However scholars have toiled for many years and his texts have been refined by them and given a widely acceptable form now.

Critics have been studying Shakespeare from different perspectives. Until the beginning of the twentieth century, Shakespeare was studied from a biographical perspective. It was only with the rise of modern theorists that Shakespeare has been studied
from other viewpoints. On the one hand there were writers like Samuel Schoenbaum who put together a biographical work like *William Shakespeare: A Documentary Life* (1977) and on the other hand there are thinkers like Derrida who sought to reject and deny any supremacy or status enjoyed by Shakespeare till then. With Barthes *The Death of the Author* (1970) and Derrida leading the thought schools, the biographical approach gradually was driven out and more modernist approaches were adapted. With that shift, the attention was diverted from the identity of the ‘dark lady’ in his sonnets to what the words actually said. Then on, as Barthes argued, the author was not used as a justification nor was he used to fix meanings to his words. Today Shakespeare study ranges from collecting material about the author to deconstructive approach which attempts to deny and demolish the canonical Shakespeare.

There is a hugely affluent legacy from the logocentric tradition, though like many bequest it has also proved something of an embarrassment. The idea of sacred Shakespeare as a cultural tradition and the consequent quasi-religious devotion to the Shakespeare canon, both stand as manifestations of that concern for the fixities of the written word and a hierarchy of settled values. Derrida’s deconstruction and post structuralist thinking generally
have set themselves to deny and demolish that sacred and canonised Shakespeare. An essay by Terence Hawkes, ‘Telmah’ (That Shakespherian Rag: essays on a critical process, 1986)\textsuperscript{iv}, is about the principles lying behind the edition of Shakespeare which John Dover Wilson conceived in the First World War and the early days of the Russian revolution. It gives a vibrant account of the fixative logocentric impulse which critics usually now see as negative and reductive. Today the Shakespearean studies cover the entire range, from the continuing efforts of editors to fix the text and the material facts about the Shakespeare oeuvre at one extreme, to the most deconstructive attempts to dismantle the hierarchy of values found in the work by centuries of traditionalists at the other. It is interesting to looking at both the historical spread of different approaches to Shakespeare through the centuries all over the globe with various political set ups.

Shakespeare’s work first rose to fame on the stage. Stage performance was evidently the only form of publication that the author wanted and could have for his plays, and if his fellow-players had not put together an edition of the surviving play-texts for the press seven years after his death, in 1623, most of them would not be available for reading now. Early in the eighteenth century the first
edition designed for the reader rather than the playgoer appeared. Many such versions appeared and the process reached its height with the appearance of Dr. Johnson’s edition in 1768. For two centuries there were alternative Shakespeares, the versions presented by the theatres of the time, often in quite radically altered forms, and the texts for the study and the scholarly reader. Only in the twentieth century when Shakespeare was firmly lodged as a subject in education syllabii occurred did the two alternatives begin to be reconciled.

There has been a lot of research work that has been undertaken on Shakespeare in the twentieth century. The current research has focussed on the recent trends and interests in the Shakespearean literature. The doctoral works on Shakespeare across the world since 1990 till 2006 were considered to assess the focus of interest in Shakespeare’s works. Some 194 theses have been submitted and published on Shakespeare and his works between the above mentioned period. A brief summary of the themes of these theses has been provided here for reference.

The Shakespearean plays have been studied from a post colonial point of view as in the *Power relations and fool-master discourse in Shakespeare: a discourse stylistics approach to*
dramatic dialogue by Calvo. C. vi They have also been studied from the racial perspective where The Merchant of Venice was analysed from Shylock’s point of view. The research works comprise of a variety of themes on Shakespeare ranging from politics to masculinity of his characters. There have also been studies attempted at the condition of the stage, the actors of those times and Shakespeare’s influence on the modern writers like Dickens, Brecht and other of the nineteenth century. There have also been efforts made to study the tragedies of Shakespeare. The adaptations of Shakespeare’s plays and translations into various languages of the world have also been an interest for the researchers. His works have been studied for a linguistic analysis as well.

Out of the one hundred and ninety four theses that were produced from 1990 to 2006, there were only nine theses that focussed on the women issues. Prince. K’s Women's Shakespeare, Shakespeare’s women (University of Birmingham. 2004) vii was a general study on the women characters of Shakespearean dramas. Chapple. F’s Shakespeare’s women on the Russian and Soviet screen: Othello, Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth (University of Sheffield. 2002) viii was an attempt to understand the depiction of Shakespearean women on the Soviet stage. Davies. P. J’s Daughters,
wives, mothers and men: transformations of women in Shakespeare's comedies (University of Wales, Swansea. 2001) focussed on the transformations of the women characters in Shakespeare's comedies. Wright. M. R.'s Women were deceivers ever: a study of woman's deception of man in four plays of the Renaissance. (University of Exeter. 1990) was a research on the characteristics of the renaissance women in general and was not specified to Shakespeare alone. Ritchie. F. J.'s "The merciful construction of good women": women's responses to Shakespeare in the theatre of the long eighteenth century (King's College, London. 2006) was more concerned with the feminist response to the women characters and the noble way in which they were depicted. McGowan. J. A.'s Reading witches, reading women: late Tudor and early Stuart texts (University of Wales, Bangor. 2001) was focussed more on the evil side of the woman that was portrayed by Shakespeare. Gibbs. J. B.'s Anglo-Scots relations and representations of women, 1560-1612. (Goldsmiths College, University of London. 2000) was more an anthropological study of Shakespeare's works. Women and power in the late plays of Shakespeare (University of Birmingham. 1997) concerned itself with the power equations of the early times. Powell's Six Shakespearean heroines: criticism and performance since 1960 in the light of the feminist movement (University of
Birmingham. 1991) xiv was an attempt to study the Shakespearean women characters from a feminist point of view. Of the nine research works mentioned above, out of the one hundred and ninety four works, only the last work i.e. Powell’s *Six Shakespearean heroines: criticism and performance since 1960 in the light of the feminist movement* deals with all the women characters that appear in all of Shakespeare’s works while the other works are related to various issues other than the women issues.

But the current work undertaken is different from all the other previous research works mentioned above. None of the above works have specifically discussed the women characters exclusively. They all deal with various aspects where as the current thesis deals solely with the way in which Shakespeare depicts his women characters in his tragedies. The reason for focussing on the women characters in tragedies alone has already been represented earlier, that being the assumption that the tragedies are more realistic representations of life unlike the comedies the sole purpose of which was to entertain the audience at any cost.

Apart from the academic research works, Shakespeare has always consistently drawn critical appreciation from renown thinkers of all his succeeding generations. A brief study of the critical opinion
formulated from time to time can be presented as follows. The rise of the romantics gave prominence to the novel form and the literary critics started to view Shakespeare more as a novelist than as a dramatist.

The characters, the plot, the emotional interaction between them got more prominence from the critics than anything else. AC Bradley’s treatment of the plays as novels in *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1954)\(^{xv}\) led him to express qualms about “such non-realistic features in King Lear as Edgar writing a letter to his brother when both lived in the same house, but he was finely sensitive to plot structure and emotional power.” In the succeeding years Harley Granville Barker in his *Prefaces to Shakespeare* (1927-48)\(^{xvi}\) demonstrated the same qualities with an orientation towards theatre concerns. These essays were influenced by William Poel and his experiments with the Shakespearean plays. Poel had tried to stage the plays with just the speech, minus the sets, denying the audience the spectacle. It was a reactionary experiment to that of Henry Irving and Beerbohm Tree, who staged Shakespeare in a Victorian theatre tradition. Poel and Barker both believed that Shakespeare had to be staged in as much an original form as much possible as they regarded him to be far superior to any of his successors and hence was not to
be meddled with in any way. This kind of loyalty lost its force in the 1930s. By then modernism had gained momentum and realism had been giving way to symbolism. Shakespeare lost importance as a dramatist and his works came to be viewed as poetic imagistic constructions. The discoveries by Caroline Spurgeon and Wolfgang Clemen that some plays made a consistent use of a few particular set of images gave strength to this approach which led to the holistic analysis of Shakespeare’s plays as complex image-patterns. Such an attempt, to view plays as a whole, the holistic principle adapted by Wilson Knight \textsuperscript{xvii} has come to be known in the critical theory as the hermeneutic circle.

Prior to this, in the nineteenth century, Friedrich Schleirmacher \textsuperscript{xviii} had emphasised the fact that the problem of interpretation was the need to know the parts before the whole could be known and vice versa. This circle, the whole leading to the part and the part leading to the whole could be overcome by study of systematic patterns of imagery that are evident in Shakespeare’s tragedies. The plays could be viewed as poems, a coherent organisation of its imagery.

This approach of viewing the plays as poems was prevalent among the Russian Formalists and the New criticism which
flourished in the USA in post world war era. Both, the Russian Formalism and the New Criticism were structuralist in nature, the existence of which owed much to the political readings of the texts. The New criticism stuck to the close reading of the text alone, keeping aside any moral, social or political postures. Paradox was the finest kind of poetry for New criticism. Ambiguity was the embodiment of the inherent complexity of any meaningful statement. W.H. Auden characteristically summarises their view saying that

"...poetry is the exact expression of mixed feelings."

There were several reasons for the popularity of the New criticism. One major reason for its popularity was the belief during the height of cold war, that literature was accessible to the reader only if s/he was politically and socially neutral. The other reason that contributed to the popularity was the belief that paradox and ambiguity were the best form of expression that literature could use to teach moralistic values as they were matters of sensitivity and sensibility. Hence New criticism had to view Shakespeare’s plays as poems full of paradoxes inherent in their image patterns.

Thus the problem of hermeneutic circle spreads itself beyond the text itself. The text is just another part of a much wider whole. Every word is dependent on the social structure within which it is
constructed, said and heard. Hence Shakespeare's texts came to be thought of as contingent by both semioticians who approached them as word games and by the deconstructionists who challenged the hierarchical structures.

Semiotics - the study of signs and codes in communication faces a tough challenge when it has to deal with a theatre text. A signifier in semiotics needs both a speaker and a hearer. A play when read, instead of being read, loses much of the interaction that is vital in the complex exchange of signs. This poses a severe handicap on the semiotician. This difficulty extends from the purely verbal to the whole culture in which the exchange between actor and spectators is surrounded. Shakespeare's plays were written for performance, for a particular group of actors to perform in a specific theatre to a community of audiences that he knew closely, and most of these people were familiar with his work equally intimately. Reconstructing the exact and accurate historical conditions becomes almost impossible.

Modern work in reconstructing the original Shakespeare has been tackled in various ways, most notably by the linguistic semioticians and by the New Historicists. They work at opposite ends of the scale, the semioticians deal with words while the New
Historicists with society. This spectrum is not in any significant way biased. Marxist criticism does engage some of the same territory as the New Historicists, and uses same expressions.

The problems of modern theorizing about how to approach Shakespeare are at their clearest with deconstruction. Its firm opposition to hierarchical structures which maintain settled value-systems makes its advocates fundamentally hostile to the concept of a sacred Shakespeare, with a holy canon, and all the minutely detailed editorial labours on the text which go with that concept. This position the deconstructionists share with all the post-structuralists who focus on the responses of the modern reader rather than the original compositions themselves.

Post-structuralist and deconstructionist approaches to Shakespeare are not at all negative. The feminist approaches, particularly, probing gender and role-playing, have provided considerable insight, especially into *Twelfth Night* and *As You Like It*, in which the probability of an Elizabethan boy actor playing Rosalind as a girl who then plays a boy playing a girl offer the same kind of riches for the question of identity as *Troilus and Cressida* (Dusinberre, 1975, and Belsey, 128).
“It is in the nature of drama, and above all Shakespeare’s plays, that it examines identity, social and sexual, and role-playing, in the subtlest and most complex forms.” (Rouse, 128)\textsuperscript{ix}

The main preoccupation of the New Historicists is a broader version of the question of sexual identity which the feminist critics have taken up so well. Identity for the New Historicists, however, operates on the social rather than the individual scale. Patriarchy, for instance, is not seen as a feminist concern but as a question about authority in political life, and its manifestations in the subtext of the plays. This approach, while its ultimate interest is in the individual psyche or subconscious, is similar in many ways to that of the Marxists. Marxist historians work within an overarching programme of economic and social process, a relatively settled patterning which the deconstructionists reject for being too structured and therefore facile. The Marxist view, like many others, is subject to the problem of the hermeneutic circle, needing to understanding the whole before the parts can be understood and vice versa. In a limited sense the New Historicists avoid or at least minimize this problem of circularity by limiting their concern to individual texts and individual manifestations of the questions of identity, in a world which they accept as fluid and ever-changing. The avoidance of assumptions
involving fixity of any kind is now a fairly standard feature of modern critical thought.

The problem which these theoretical debates leave most obviously unresolved is the need to be comprehensive, a new version of the hermeneutic circle. For all the concern with the modern reader as the basic focus, the original text has to be known, too if anything valid is to be obtained from it. With Shakespearian drama this returns us to the problem of the performance text. Saussure’s concern for the semiotics of interconnections between play and audience, the distinctive nature of theatrical discourse, ought to sit at the heart of any modern reading of Shakespeare. The trouble is that most modern approaches to this problem are frankly inadequate. Debate has settled itself into an un-resolvable choice between different kinds of modern approach, Shakespeare on the stage or Shakespeare on the page. The facile answer is that Shakespeare is much more accessible on the page, given the extra leisure for study which a reader has, and our loss of knowledge about Shakespeare’s original staging conditions.

The approach to Shakespeare as a performance text involves some obvious losses, in the opportunity to analyse the semiotic intricacies in the words and in the loss of immediate access to footnotes and similar information about the word-games, the echoes
of famous phrases, reiterated images, even the use of once-familiar Elizabethan proverbs. All the editorial aids to understanding are lost, or at least put aside, when the play is seen in the theatre. Equally, though, the approach to Shakespeare as a written text involves losses. The collective experience of laughter and other emotions is not an insignificant element in the growth of a play’s story. Laughter in a theatre is much more coercive than the private amusement which happens in reading. The intimate cohesion of the performance, the flow of feeling which accompanies the brief but compelling surge of the story on stage, the very substantiality of a drama enacted by living people in a theatre, are likely to evaporate when it is taken in private.

Of course if any single performance is taken to be the definitive version of the play by any playgoer it will become as reductive as any other fixed reading. That is one of the many grounds of post-structuralist hostility to the approach which conceives the play as theatre texts. A performance invites consideration of a play as a whole, an organic unity, and semioticians, New Historicists and deconstructionists all prefer to deal with plays in or as fragments. The idea of the work of art as an organic unity carries with it the undesirable assumption that the author is an authority on his or her
own work. “To engage with a performance, particularly one composed as what is sometimes called director’s theatre, where the director’s interpretation reshapes every component of the performance into a particular reading of the play, is little better than facing a surrogate author. Semioticians and post-structularists are all readers, not playgoers. What they lose by that is not insubstantial.” (Bradley, 79)

Before structuralism began to take over British thinking about critical theory, the standard defence against the invasion was eclectic. It ignored the attempt to establish a single controlling principle, preferring to make a selection from amongst the more appetizing isolated ideas. This approach is usually known as pragmatism. Among philosophers it is sometimes also known as the British disease. To large extent, pragmatism is a defensive posture, designed for protection against the rigidly doctrinaire positions of the theorists and allowing the believer to enjoy a relatively casual and unhindered romp through the daffodils of literature. Consistent adherence to theory is distinctly strenuous by comparison. Pragmatism is the selective middle position implied by the evaluation of reader’s text against performance text and the calculation of the losses entailed in the adoption of either as an exclusive position. It is not, however, a
comfortable position. One of the major troubles with any attempt such as this one to grapple with conflicting theories is that each theory seems to contradict its rivals, the result being that the increasingly despairing reader is drawn more and more towards a central position and the classic posture of the pragmatist. The central position may seem like the still point in a turning world, but it might equally well turn out to be a whirlpool which will drown the reader. It is certainly a black tangle in the middle of the circle of intersecting and diametrically opposed theories, a no-man’s land where everyone on the surrounding perimeter is your enemy. In the end its difficulties become a version of hermeneutic circle. To be a successful pragmatist you have to know all the theories, and the postures they put you in. To know all the theories properly you have to believe in them. If that seems more like catch 22 than the hermeneutic circle, it is because they are versions of the same difficulty.

Every theory is in some degree reductive. A theory provides a system by which experience can be organized and made into sense, or at least into something which the hopeful student will find comprehensible. All theories are constructed against the threat of chaos, which is the absence of system or organizing principle. We need theories, organizing principles, to make sense of what comes at
us, however provisional and imperfect that sense may have to be. That is the basis for all dogma, religious and political alike. What applies to experience in life also applies, in smaller way, to Shakespeare. We need some theoretical basis for any coherent approach to the plays, but any theory is by its nature reductive, and the temptation sometimes to stray beyond the bounds of system and the coherence provided by system is unavoidable. Different people will in any case find different theories to fit their different needs, and even in a single individual the theories may change as the needs change. Critical apostasy, like religious or political apostasy, is not a rare phenomenon. The one essential is to know where you are in the circle at any given time.

With Feminism, began a new awareness and attitude of viewing everything with a woman’s perspective, irrespective of whether the play is by women, of women or not. Women began to question the responsibilities thrust on them by nature and society since ages. A woman’s position, though has begun to change has not changed much as Beavour says, “The two sexes have never shared the world in equality. And even today woman is heavily handicapped, though her situation is beginning to change”(Beavour, 26). How defective, flawed and biased the attitude was toward the women in

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those days and even to this day can be understood by the following quote by Millet- "They have been considered a dependency class who have lived on surplus. And their marginal life frequently renders them conservative, for like all persons in their situation (slaves are examples here) they identify their own survival with the prosperity of those who feed them. (Millet, 38)

Feminism is a significant ideology, fast developing in the modern times. It emerged as a concept in the west with the objective of providing a space for women in the society, later on embracing the superb ideas of an egalitarian society, where the dialectics of male dominance and female subordination are erased. Having started as a social movement, it became a discourse, wielding a formidable influence on world literature and branching out as French, Italian, American, Canadian, Black feminism and Third World feminism in literature. In England, Virginia Woolf’s universally acknowledge book, *A Room of One’s Own*, appeared in 1929 daringly declaring a war with men of letters who ridiculed and looked down upon the creative ability of women. Her proclamation that women would no longer be the angels in the house, living in dull obscurity, as slaves and property of their husbands, turned women’s writings to a new direction. Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* came not only as
the product of the transitional period between the old and new feminism, but also as one of the most significant works ever written on women’s status in the society. She called upon women to look for new roles in the society and create a new space, shedding their assigned position and designated duties:

*Shut up in the home, woman cannot herself establish her existence; she lacks the means requisite for self-affirmation as an individual; and in consequence her individuality is not given recognition.* (Beauvoir, 541)

Different schools of feminists came up with theories. The three important schools among them were the Liberal feminists, the Marxist feminists and the Radical feminists. The Liberal feminists complained about the unequal distribution of rights and privileges between men and women. their demand was for an equal citizenship.

The Liberal feminists ask for equality in the sense of sameness of attainment, and therefore treatment, and justify it via sameness. (Evans, 131)

Women writers like Richards Blustone and Betty Friedan argue that sexes are the same, and whatever differences there are, should be eliminated. They are more inclined to think that men and
women are homogenous groups. They said that a future without
gender would be a just one. (Evans, 43)

Marxist feminism was a British offshoot of feminism. According to the Marxist perspective, history is dominated by a struggle between social classes. The obviously known fact about human history is that women have constantly been denied important rights. Hence it was inevitable that Marxist feminism would emerge with the women constituting a seriously underprivileged class. Several Marxist concepts, redefined by Louis Althusser\textsuperscript{xiii}, particularly his definition of ideology and his concept of interpellation proved useful for feminist literary studies (Althusser, 142) Althusserian feminism examines how literary texts, film, commercials, and so on hail and interpolate their readers or their audience and position them with regard to gender. Frederich Engels’ \textit{The Origin of Family Private Property and State} \textsuperscript{xxiv} also provides an insight into a classless society.

The Marxist feminists emphasized the need for economic independence to liberate women and bring a socialist order with equality. They said that women should be allowed to enter into public life for which the state should take the responsibilities of all domestic work like food preparation, childcare, nursery etc.
The radical feminists opposed hierarchy and wanted to abolish all forms of oppression. They sailed in a completely different path to raise their voice against patriarchy. They called for a change in the social order where woman's identity is merged with the identity of man. They did not want to identify women on the basis of their marital status. They said that women's sufferings were the repercussions of male chauvinism of an individual. They evolved the new concept of sisterhood by which they meant finding out the root cause of women's sufferings and eradicating them by the united efforts of the emancipated women all over the world. They also advocated the humane sisterly approach to the problems of the un-emancipated women with the aim of creating a classless and raceless egalitarian society.

Living an androgynous life was the extremity to which some of the radical feminists went in the twentieth century. They said that childbirth and nurturing should be institutionalized so that the differences between men and women in dress and behaviour could be got rid of. It was with the publication of *The Dialectic of Sex* by Shalamith Firestone that there started an important debate on artificial reproduction both within and outside the feminist movement. Firestone wanted to work out of a theory and practice
radical feminism with the aim of preparing a ground for ‘the overthrow of the oldest, most rigid class / caste system in existence, the class system based on sex.

There has been a wide leap in the way women have been seen and treated from the days of Shakespeare and now. There have been numerous movements across the world to fight for the rights of women, for their equality, for their social and economical upliftment. There has been a sea change in the way they are treated, respected and revered. The old notions of them being mere objects of desire have become redundant. It is therefore quite appropriate to evaluate the older texts for their depiction of women. It is even more necessary to put the characters of Shakespeare under the magnifying glass of the critical analysis of modern theories. More important is to see whether Shakespeare also held the same biases, opinions and notions about women which the general public of his times held or if he was a thinker and writer who rose above the local perceptions of his times and could see things and people as they actually were.

Apart from the various critical perspectives from which Shakespeare can be analysed is the question of his contemporaneity and relevance in the modern age and to the vernacular literatures of the world. Since the introduction to the British literature in the 19th
century, the Indian population has continuously been charmed and captivated by the Shakespearean magic. There have been numerous translations and adaptations of the Shakespearean plays into various regional languages of India. There have been many attempts by several Kannada scholars to fit Shakespeare to the regional setting. Shakespeare has never ceased to raise the interest of the Kannada writers. The attempts at appropriating Shakespeare are ceaseless to this day. Many generations of Kannada writers have tried to appropriate Shakespeare into their own literary culture through translations and adaptations. Each generation has had its own specific goals, objectives and strategies of dealing with Shakespeare. Initially, towards the end of the 19th century Shakespeare was introduced to Kannada literature for enriching the Kannada literature and to revive the Kannada theatre. The translators tried to present Shakespeare to the Kannada audience and readers in such a way that he was completely disguised, Indianised and unrecognisable. The settings, the names of the characters and places, times everything was altered in such a way as to ensure that the play looked as native as possible. The next generation of Kannada writers tried to present Shakespeare as objectively as possible, without making many changes, without distorting the original. They tried a literal translation of Shakespeare, trying to minimise the interference of the
indigenous culture. The third and the subsequent generations of the writers have tried to use Shakespeare as a source material for their own creative expressions. They have tried to present Shakespeare in the way they have understood him. The recent translations have been more re-interpretations and new works inspired by Shakespeare, than mere translations.

The earliest of Shakespeare's translations in Kannada date back to 1871. According to Rev. Ferdinand Kittel\textsuperscript{XXVI}, Channabasappa had published his version of \textit{The Comedy of Errors}. Between 1871 and 1929 a wide range of Shakespearean plays had been translated into Kannada. These included the comedies and tragedies like \textit{The Comedy of Errors, The Mid-Summer Night's Dream, The Taming of the Shrew, Two Gentlemen of Verona, All is Well That Ends Well, Cymbeline, A Winter's Tale, Tempest, Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear and Othello}. Some of these plays were translated several times during this period.

The two outstanding names of the early translators of Shakespeare are M.L.Srikantesha Gowda and M.S.Puttanna. They are notable not only for the reason that they were the first to try rewriting Shakespeare in Kannada, but also for the also for the quality of their adaptations. They are also important from the point of
view of translation studies as they very clearly visualised the problems involved in appropriating a creative work from an alien language into Indian languages like Kannada. In his introduction to *Prataparudradeva* (1895), a version of *Macbeth*, Srikantesha Gowda discusses the problem of translation elaborately. He argues that the model of translation from Sanskrit into Kannada is not helpful in rendering works from English. Sanskrit and Kannada share a common history, geography, mythology and poetics. In the case of English it was not as easy as it was not only the language that was different but the entire cultural background.

The early translators of Shakespeare chose the mode of adaptations because they were more faithful to their own cultures than to the writer from whom they were borrowing. Their main intention was to introduce the different forms of literatures and the best writers of the world into their own language. They only wanted to enrich their culture and literature than being faithful to the great writers of the alien culture. Hence they made elaborate changes in the names of places, characters and historical situations so as to acclimatise them to the local conditions. As their translated versions were intended to be staged, the early translators had to ensure that there was a clear cultural communication with the audience and it
obtained their acceptance. Hence the translations used to be such complete transformations that it would be hard to recognise the original in them.

If the first of the translators chose the mode of adaptations, their immediate successors chose to translate him objectively. D.V. Gundappa in his introduction to his translated version of Macbeth clearly defines his approach: "My intention is to show Shakespeare’s world as objectively as I can. My endeavour is to reproduce not only the story but descriptions, the syntax and the historical content – in short, the image of Shakespeare’s world."

D.V. Gundappa believed that a wider world view and exposure to life in other cultures were necessary to modernise our thinking. Hence he felt that it was not necessary to make changes in names of places, characters and settings.

Masthi Venkatesha Iyengar followed the same approach as that of D.V. Gundappa in translating Shakespeare. But Masthi Venkatesha Iyengar differed from D.V. Gundappa in two important ways. Unlike D.V. Gundappa who resorted to old archaic Kannada, Masthi Venkatesha Iyengar employed the Kannada spoken in his time. Secondly, he paid a greater attention to Shakespeare’s poetry. His translations were so literal that, he not only translated prose as
prose and verse as verse, he reproduced the original word by word, line by line.

K. V. Puttappa’s rendering of *Hamlet* as *Rakthakshi* can be considered as an independent work as the poetic genius of K. V. Puttappa takes Shakespeare’s work and makes it completely his own. Parvathavani’s rendering of *The Taming of the Shrew* as *Bahaddura Ganda* also appears to have achieved similar kind of independency from its original.

The recent translators of Shakespeare have chosen the same plays but for a different reason and purpose. The new generation of translators, of whom Ramachandra Deva, Nissar Ahmed and H. S. Shivaprakash are prominent, were guided by the considerations relevance and self expression and the needs of the theatre. Commenting on his own approach to Shakespeare Ramachandra Deva says, “I was trying to bring Shakespeare to Kannada through myself, to understand myself and my times through Shakespeare.” This new trend that neither has Shakespeare nor the audience in the focus but the translator or other things such as the relevance of an old writer in the modern age with respect to the new age problems, was a clear deviation from the earlier attempts of translating Shakespeare.
It is evident that Shakespeare has held the imagination of the Kannada writers for more than a century now and seems to still enjoy a liking among the new and young generations alike. Many writers across the generations have been interested in him for different qualities in him and for different reasons and also for different purposes. All these writers who appropriated Shakespeare in Kannada have experimented with style, language, diction etc. But none have changed the very nature of the characters portrayed by him. The characters, be it male or female, have retained their qualities in the translated versions too. So they are not much different from Shakespeare’s portrayal of them in English. It can therefore be assumed that the women characters of Shakespeare are the same in his translated versions as they are in the originals.

Response to Shakespeare’s plays has been changing from time to time. In the context and background of many critical theories and interpretations, the approach to Shakespeare has been from different angles. However Shakespearean texts are alive in the stage as part of living images of life itself. New revelations are registered. As a man born in 1564, his mind, environment and expectations were all different from the present time. For instance, in his time, Kings were absolute rulers by divine right as well as in actual power: Church
going was compulsory: the printed word was strictly censored. Marriage brought personal independence as well as unending responsibilities but most people had to wait until their mid or later twenties before they could understand and by obedience to a lord or master, subjugation of wife to husband, exercises of piety, education through memorization, were all highly prized norms. Punishment by death for a number of offences was upheld as morally and socially necessary. Universal suffrage, equal opportunity, racial equality, religion tolerance, bureaucratic conduct, psychiatry, contraception were all either unknown are highly suspect. Hardly any statement about morality, society, politics or psychology that we might make today would be comprehensible to Shakespeare’s contemporaries.

Rene Discartes published his book, *The Discourse de la Methode* in 1637 and was the most powerful single agent in eventually opening all intellectual, moral and religious ideas to scientific investigation, but by the time Shakespeare wrote *Hamlet* around the year 1600, pragmatism and skepticisms were governing the thoughts and deeds of many in conflict with the older guides of tradition and authority. A new sense of man, society and history was emerging Shakespeare’s plays and more alive than any other writings from that time.
That Shakespeare was indestructible was recognized even in 1623 by Johnson

_Triumph, my Britain, than hast one to show_

_To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe_

_He was not of an age. But for all time (ibid)_

Johnson continues saying

_And all the Muses still were in the prime_

_When like Apollo he came forth to warm_

_Our ears, or like a Mercury to charm (ibid)_

He was the star of poets without whose rage or influence the London stage had no hope of survival.

Edward Bond, a 20th century Shakespearean critic observes “had Shakespeare not spent his creative life desperately struggling to reconcile problems that obsessed him, he could not have written with such intellectual strength and passionate beauty.”

The nature of right and wrong, in what way an individual should be part of his society, why some men were tyrants and others were saints, why some governments despotic and why at other times
reason appears briefly to rule a country or a city. Shakespeare asked these questions as he passed from youth to age in a world that was both young and old.

Shakespeare did explore the boundaries of his knowledge but in plays, not in treatises, formal methods of speculation or manifestoes. His imagination created an image of life to be enacted within the time and place of performance and his opinions about any subjects can be represented only by what happens in that imaginary world living in consciousness using whatever our experience natural with an imaginary can bring to that advantage.

"The range and variety of the characters in Shakespearean plays show the huge reach of his concerns for social life, the articulation of their plots expresses an analytical restlessness and a search for correspondences and comparisons. He wrestled with the images of men and women with relationships between them and with the cause and effect of actions.

No one before Shakespeare had looked so closely at the human mind and passions, fears and hopes raging in it. And not all these individuals could have fitted into the society of the good government."(Rouse,48)
Objectives of the present study

The specific objective of the study has been to have an in-depth analysis of the principle tragedies of Shakespeare to find how the woman characters have been treated by the dramatist-Shakespeare. The reason for focussing on tragedies rather than his comedies or both, is the presumption that the comedies were written in a lighter vein, only with an intention of entertaining the masses, whereas the tragedies were more serious and realistic portrayal of life itself. With that presumption, it is also assumed that the women characters in the tragedies might have been depicted more realistically than in the comedies.

Therefore it is appropriate to study only the women characters in his tragedies than in his other works as they may not be realistic portrayal of the women of his times and might have been creations of his whims and fancies only to serve a restrictive purpose of amusing the masses. If that were to be true, then his women characters as well as the male characters in the comedies are characters that might be highly farfetched and unrealistic. Though there are to be seen some realistic glimpses of life in the comedies of Shakespeare, they cannot be accepted as truthful rendering of life as their main objective was
simply to entertain masses and the playwright might have taken any number of liberties to achieve it. But in tragedies Shakespeare wanted to be more serious and realistic in reflecting life as he wanted to portray the true human nature.

Thus another objective is as follows: the study is intended to assess how realistic a picture of women has been portrayed by Shakespeare in his plays. Some critics have said that Shakespeare is a feminist. Some others have argued that he is an anti-feminist. Both the stands are extremes. Both the statements cannot be true at the same time as they contradict each other quite evidently. So it is one of the primary questions the study tends to answer, “how far a feminist was Shakespeare?” or “how far was he an anti-feminist?” Apart from the feministic perspective, it is also intended to analyse how realistically the women characters have been portrayed. Whether justice has been done to them or they have suffered due to the importance given to the male characters.

At this juncture it would also be an interesting point to discuss why none of the translators deviated much form Shakespeare when it came to the portrayal of women characters. Did they all unanimously agree that nothing can be
bittered with respect to the women characters? Was it the Shakespearean women characters were all well developed? Or did they also share a bias against women to care more about the women characters alone, unworthy of more consideration? This study thus attempts to evaluate the treatment of women from the viewpoint of womanhood, motherhood, love, feminine, authority and the women’s position in society and state.

Women characters have attained a degree of perfection in real life. The delineation of characters in the plays of Shakespeare reveals not only emotional and intellectual insight but also virtues and weakness of real women from the present world.

Along with that it is also intended to assess the contemporaneity of Shakespeare. Why he still is relevant in the 21st century? What are the themes and issues that still hold relevance for him? How and why Shakespeare remains an important writer who cannot be ignored despite the fact that many centuries have passed since the time he wrote.

Shakespeare’s women have also been categorized and said to be typecast. The tragic innocent woman, the scheming femme fatal, the witty, but unmarriageable woman, the married off woman, women
who dress as men, falsely accused of adultery etc. Efforts are also made to probe whether all women characters of Shakespeare fall into any kind of pattern or they have been individually created and crafted like in real life where every person is unique some way or the other.

Methodology

The tragedies of Shakespeare that have been selected for a closer study will be examined critically from different viewpoints. The major women characters in the selected plays will be studied closely to bring out the deep set nature of women that the playwright might have infused into them assisted by his genius.

The similarities and differences between these Shakespearean women characters will be compared and contrasted to see if there is a pattern that the playwright has used to understand the women of his times or if they have been created with the best understanding by one of the best creative minds of the world literature.

A general survey of the Shakespearean plays that are being staged at present in the Karnataka region, particularly in Bangalore and Mysore cities, will be held in order to gauge and assess the themes and issues that the general public is interested in Shakespearean literature. The survey shall act just as an indicator as
to what kind of Shakespearean women characters are found to be appealing to the present day audience who are a product of a totally different era and of entirely different ideas and values.

Limitations of the study

The study limits itself to a few select plays by Shakespeare and that too only his tragedies. And in those plays, only the women characters are dealt with. That is a major hindrance to a comprehensive perception of Shakespeare's understanding of human nature. The study limits itself only to the women characters, leaving out the major characters that are men and the actual heroes of the play upon whom the plays were built. This is in a way an imbalanced way of looking at the Shakespearean works. The study tries to overlook the characters that were given the utmost prominence by the playwright himself and the other characters that he intended only as supplements to the major men characters are being dealt with in detail.
The study and its findings have been organized in the following five different chapters:

1. Introduction
2. A brief study of Shakespeare and his Tragedies
3. Treatment of women in Shakespeare’s Tragedies
4. Contemporaneity of Shakespeare’s women characters
5. Conclusion

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

This chapter gives a brief outline of what this study is about. It discusses the scope and significance of the study. It tries to discuss why the current topic for research is relevant and how it opens up wide possibilities for further research in the area.

It provides a brief summary of the works that have already happened in this direction and presents an argument as to why the current study has become necessary. It covers a wide range of literature that has been written on Shakespeare in the West, the literary theories in criticism starting from biographical criticism to the Post Structuralist and Feminist criticisms, Shakespeare in Kannada theatre, his impact on the Kannada literature, the way he was received over the generations of Kannada writers. It is hence a comprehensive summary of many things on Shakespeare, in brief.
The objectives of this study are also spelt out at the very outset in the introductory chapter.

A brief introduction about the way and manner in which the study has been conducted has also been stated under the heading Methodology in the chapter. The works selected for a deeper and closer analysis, the reasons for those choices are discussed in this part of the study. The other modes of research adapted in the study, apart from the literary comparative and critical analysis, are also briefly described in this chapter.

Chapter 2: A brief study of Shakespeare and his Tragedies

It is necessary to understand the significance and contribution of Shakespeare to the world of literature. Hence a brief biographical introduction is presented in this chapter regarding his life and times. It is essential to know about the society in which he lived to understand his works. Consequently a little introduction to the Elizabethan society also forms a part of the chapter.

After a brief introduction to the works of Shakespeare, a description of the tragedies is also added in this chapter. The Greek and Roman tragedies, the different concepts of tragedies,
and the literary worth of Shakespearean tragedies are also presented in this chapter.

**Chapter 3: Treatment of women in Tragedies**

This chapter forms the core of the study. It deals with the analysis of the women characters in the Shakespearean tragedies and the manner in which they have been portrayed by the great playwright. The characters are put through many perspectives of criticism and re-assessed in terms of modern literary-theoretical values.

**Chapter 4: Contemporaneity of Shakespeare’s women characters**

This chapter is, in fact, an extension of the previous chapter. It deals with how Shakespearean women characters are modern in the sense that they were not created with the general biases and perceptions that were prevalent during his times. The master genius of Shakespeare had thought beyond his times like a true artist and created timeless women characters in his tragedies, like he had immortalized the tragic heroes in them.

In this background, this thesis attempts to analyse the portrayal of women in the plays of William Shakespeare and the contemporaneity of Shakespearean women characters with special
reference to his principal tragedies namely *Macbeth, Othello, King Lear, Hamlet, Antonio and Cleopatra* and *Julius Caesar*. The research also attempts to critically examine the attitude of women characters, their role in the life and downfall of the tragic heroes in Shakespeare’s tragedies.

The contemporary views on the portrayal of women in the tragic plays of Shakespeare are also examined besides the adaptations made in Kannada vis-à-vis Shakespearean Drama in general and the tragedies in particular.

This includes the study of Kannada theatre and the stage techniques and the deconstruction of the perceptions and the portrayal of women in the context of the social changes taking place.

**Chapter 5: Conclusion**

The final chapter of the study presents a broad summary of the entire research. The chapter covers the arguments made to state the relevance and contemporaneity of Shakespeare in the present day literary situation. It also describes the various possibilities with which the study can be carried forward.
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A BRIEF STUDY OF SHAKESPEARE
AND HIS TRAGEDIES

“And this, our life, exempt from public haunt,
finds tongues in trees, books in the running
brooks, sermons in stones, and good in
everything.”

William Shakespeare