

**The Renaissance and Shakespeare**  
**Prof. R. W. Desai**  
**Department of English (Retd.)**  
**University of Delhi**

**Lecture - 11**  
**Shakespeare's History Plays**

Hello, the next lecture in this MOOC on the Renaissance in Shakespeare will be delivered by Professor R W Desai, retired from the department of English, University of Delhi. This lecture is going to be on Shakespeare's history, plays from Richard the second to Richard the third; Professor Desai will talk about Shakespeare's views on history, kingship and the contemporary audience's reception of these plays.

From Richard, the second to Richard the third, cover a historical span over 109 years from 1377 to 1485. after which began the Tudor period with Henry the 7th which includes the reign of queen Elizabeth's; however, the writing of the Henriad plays by Shakespeare, did not follow the historical sequence. and this is the factor we must take into account in our study of the plays. thus though Richard the second in history died in 1400 and Henry the 6th in 1471. Shakespeare wrote the Henry the sixth plays in 1591 and Richard the second in 1594. in inverse order likewise the historical henry, the fifth died in 1422 and Richard the third in 1485.

60 years later, but Shakespeare wrote Richard the third in 1592 and Henry the 57 years later in 1599. again in inverse order thus giving rise to a pro (Refer Time: 02.05) view of events. that is, we see future events first then past events. the development of Shakespeare's dramatic art, then is at variance with the location of the plays in history. the outcome being that the plays he wrote later like Henry the fourth parts 1 and 2 have such unforgettable character as Falstaff Hal later, Henry the fifth hotspur and Richard the second. Contrasting with a comparatively immature style of Henry the 6th parts 1, 2 and 3 later in this paper we will look more closely at this interesting anomaly.

Turning then to the later plays in the chronology, Richard the second Henry the fourth parts 1 and 2 and Henry the fifth our focus will be on 2 aspects of these plays. one Shakespeare's view of politics in the context of historical events. and 2 the memorable characters as already briefly noted. and their role in the politics of the period. in passing

we should note that one of the recent critical approaches to literature is new historicism in which strong emphasis is laid on 2 factors.

First that the literary text is embedded in its own cultural and social time and place and therefore, should be studied in the light of its historical context. and second that the writing of the literary text could well have been influenced by conditions that might seem too remote to have played the role in the setting of the text. and yet if studied carefully might uncover some remarkable places of influence that could well compel us to rethink our interpretation of the text.

For example, in Henry the fourth part one nearly half of the play consists of the unhistorical scenes of Falstaff, the fat knight and his companions in the tavern and these scenes if closely analyzed might well be regarded as ironical and witty commentary on the serious things of grave political import, with which the high class members of the aristocracy are occupied. this lighting from the underground. So, to speak is not the feature of earlier plays like Henry the sixth part 1, 2 and 3 or Richard the third which are fully occupied with history having no room for low comedy. what we may well ask was Shakespeare's view of history, nineteenth century criticisms answer was that his view was based on the chronicles of England Scotland and Ireland by Raphael Holinshed 1577.

A name with which all of you are familiar and to the union of the 2 notable and illustrious families of Lancaster and York, by Edward hall 1548. both writers subscribing to what may be defined as the providential view of history. by which is meant that history is governed by a system of reward and retribution meted out according to a divine plan of perfect justice.

So, that whatever we sow, we reap. in accordance with our karma, but did Shakespeare implicitly subscribe to this doctrine the new historicist approach to this question suggests that Shakespeare was also influenced by at least 2 later political analysts from Italy Riccardo Machiavelli and Francesco Guicciardini; both of whom, were skeptical of the providential theory of human affairs being monitored by divine intelligence. concerning guicciardino moody prior observes that he and I quote from professor moody priors book. he despises the facile simplistic applications of the providential views of the men's affairs. and Machiavelli declared and I quote from Machiavelli anyone who determines

to act in all circumstances the part of a good man must come to ruin amongst. So, many who are not good.

Hence if a prince wishes to maintain himself, he must learn how to be not good. and to use that ability or not as is required Shakespeare was of course, as were all English writers greatly influenced by the Italian thinkers we have only to remember that almost all of the plots of his plays came from Italian sources and in England, we are going to it turn to Francis bacons metaphoric observation. that I quote all rising to great place is by a winding stair to note it is relevance to Bolingbrook's that is Henry the fourth he became Henry the fourth later.

Confession to his son Hal later Henry the fifth, I quote God knows my son by what bypaths and indirect crooked ways I met this crown. and I myself know well how troublesome it sat upon my head. as some of you no doubt know it was Richard the second who banished Bolingbroke, for 6 years when the one to one combat between Bolingbroke and Mowbray was about to take place each having accused the other of high treason against the king, the king then banished Mowbray for life and extracted from both of them a promise to respect his sentence. and never plot against him or the throne up to this point in the plays action Richards authority is undisputed.

In accordance with the doctrine of the divine right of kings. as for example, stated by Thomas hooker 1586 to 1647 ecclesiastical polity kings, I am quoting from hooker kings therefore, no man can have lawfully power and authority to judge if private men offend. there is the magistrate over them which judgeth. if magistrates offend they have their prince if princes offend there is heaven a tribunal before which they shall appear on earth they are not accountable to any.

This is a note which we can relate to the great chain of being the theory that there is a hierarchy, which is observed in all forms and patterns of nature whether pertaining to actual nature or the human nature in the play itself Bolingbroke's father john of gaunt endorses this belief let heaven revenge for I may never lift an angry arm against his minister. and later on in the play Richard himself invokes heaven to defend his cause god, for his Richard hath in heavenly pay a glorious angel, then if angels fight weak men must fall for heaven still guards the right. This simple straightforward assertion of faith in the king being impregnable against challenges to his authority is; however, shown to

crumble in the face of worldly might and political strategy for at plays end Richard is forced to abdicate by Bolingbroke and dies at the hands of an assassin. thus is called and questioned the notion of the divine right of kings, but the further complication ensues which Shakespeare explores and develops with fine psychological insight, namely the pangs of conscience that now haunt Bolingbroke and run like a thread through the 2 parts of Henry the fourth Shakespeare's most mature and gripping of all his history plays.

We will now consider briefly some instances of the psychological insight of Shakespeare just mentioned. which shifts the reader or the viewer's attention away from divine providence to the human dimension in worldly affairs. thus rendering his plays timeless as doctor Johnson noted Shakespeare is above all writers a poet of nature, the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life. Henry the fourth part one opens with Bolingbroke.

Now king Henry longing to set out on a pilgrimage to the holy land Jerusalem in order to do penance for having usurped the crown from Richard and thus assuage the noise of his troubled conscience, but continuously he is courted by various circumstances, as he himself says, but this our purpose. Now is 12 months old and (Refer Time: 11:56) is to tell you we will go ironically on his deathbed at the end of Henry the fourth part 2. he ruefully laments never having the label to realize his dream due to his failing health. and asks an attendant lord to convey him to the chamber named Jerusalem, where he may die in peace.

It has been prophesized to be many years I should not die, but in Jerusalem which mainly I suppose the holy land, but bear me to that chamber there I lie, in that Jerusalem shall herry die. Henry is a complex character portrayed as ambitious and unscrupulous. Yet eliciting our sympathy for his sensitivity and introspection. Thus anticipating in certain ways Shakespeare's creation of a far more memorable character, Macbeths who like Henry cannot resist succumbing to the temptation of securing the crown. Yet is tormented by his restless conscience, to add to henrys predicament is the anguish he feels over the manner in which he was forced by political necessities to take decisions for the public good that he personally and privately abhorred. struggling against the trap in which he finds himself a captive he discusses with the earl of Warwick the way in which the men are drawn into the vortex of historical necessity not so much by choice as

because they fit in with the shape that events take and so are enlisted by the forces of political compulsion to fulfill their innermost capable destiny.

Henry, by this reasoning absolves himself of personal guilt in the deposition of Richard and blames the events that compelled him to become a factor in the formula that history was evolving. Though then God knows I had no such intent, but that necessity is. So, bow'd the state that I and greatness were compelled to kiss. The earl of Warwick's reply is strongly reminiscent of Cassius's view in Julius Caesar, a play that I am sure many of you know very well. A freedom and determinism warring with each other is not in agreement with Henry's self-exoneration that places an equal responsibility on the individual's freedom to make the right choice in terms of moral and ethical principles. In other words, Warwick insists that each individual is accountable for the choices he or she makes. He says there is a history in all men's lives figuring the nature of the times deceased is then history the biography of certain individuals, do we agree with Henry or with Warwick.

At this stage of his dramatic and theatrical career Shakespeare was grappling with questions that are relevant for us today. How do we define words like nationalism patriotism tolerance intolerance freedom of speech? While Henry the fourth is addressing the problem of freedom and determinism this does not prevent him from being a canny politician. Even on his deathbed he advises the son Harry later Henry the fifth to use political acumen in distracting the minds of the people from thinking of these issues by the cunning strategy of waging foreign wars. Therefore, by having (Refer Time: 16:41) to busy giving minds with foreign quarrels that action. Hence born out may waste the memories of the former days.

How well Harry learns the lesson is the mainstream of Henry the fifth. The play that we will now examine in some detail having heard his father's advice to busy getting minds with foreign quarrels, Harry did it to the letter. Henry the fifth is replete with wars waged against France, but we must remember that these wars were fought by men like the groundlings who watching the play saw themselves as pawns to be sacrificed on the battlefield. So, as to secure the continuing authority of the aristocrat rulers and politicians.

Thus Shakespeare's history plays were a powerful lesson exposing the subterfuges and the exploitation of the common people in the name of patriotism and nationalism. Henry

the fifth with soft support for his kingship with restoring exhortation, we few we happy few we band of brothers for he today that sheds his blood with me shall be my brother, but the (Refer Time: 18:12) may well have sounded hollow to many in the audience, who saw through it is ulterior motive and resisted being dazzled by it is celebration of military valor and reckless warmongering by turning now to an examination of the comedy scenes in these plays in which Falstaff plays a major role, we will realize that Shakespeare included these scenes not merely to provide entertainment, but also to expose through them the hypocrisy of the ruling class in one of the most extraordinary scenes in Henry the fourth part 2 Falstaff is shown recruiting soldiers from the lower strata of society with cynical contempt for their simplicity and naivety Falstaff and justice shallow are in charge of the recruitments shallow said where is the roll where is the roll where is the roll.

Let me see. So, a marry sir rafe mouldy, let them appear as I call let them do. So, let them do. So, let me see where is mouldy, mouldy here and please you shallow what think your sir john a good limbed fellow young strong and of good friends Falstaff, is that man mouldy, mouldy yes and (Refer Time: 19:48) Falstaff is the more time (Refer Time: 19:51) used shallow ha most excellent. I faith hinges that are mouldy lack use very singular good in faith well, said sir john very well said Falstaff prick him mouldy. I was pricked well enough before and you could have let me alone. My old dame will be undone now for one to do her husbandry and her drudgery, you need not to have pricked me there are other men fitter to go out than I Falstaff go to peace mouldy you shall go mouldy. It is time you were spent mouldy spent the scene the scene is both hilarious and deadly serious beneath the hilarity is corrupt practice bribes from the more well to do recruits were taken by Falstaff's pauper.

So, that they may escape enlistment and when the army finally, is formed it consists of tatterdemalion men totally unfit for battle on seeing the men, Hal remarks I did never see such pitiful rascals to which Falstaff replied tut good enough to toss food for powder food for powder, they will fill a pit as well as better tush man mortal men mortal men, Hal continues to be shocked. Ay, but sir john methinks they are exceeding poor and bare too beggarly is Falstaff, hard hearted and callous towards the men who will be cannon fodder or he is a hard nose realist who knows in any war the worst sufferers are the soldiers who died or are wounded on the battlefield, exposing the hollowness of the

notion of valor cultivated by the politician who are responsible, for conflicts Falstaff soliloquy on the notion of honor has been ranked by many readers as being on par with Hamlet's famous soliloquy to be or not to be that is the question.

In the first part of Henry the fourth before the battle of Shrewsbury begins Falstaff and Hal have a brief exchange Falstaff Hal, if thou see me down in the battle and bestride me. So, to the point of friendship Hal why thou owes God a death Falstaff is not due yet, I would be loath to pay him before his day what need I be so forward with him that calls not on me well is no matter honor pricks me on a, but how if honor prick me off, when I come on how then can honor set to a leg no or an arm no or take away the grief of a wound no, honor has no, skill in surgery then no, what is honor a word.

What we may well ask is Shakespeare attempting in these scenes. one answer is of course, that he is satirizing the corrupt state of affairs in the English army queen Elizabeth's sanction of sons for the army was pitifully inadequate. on account of her determination to build up a strong navy as all of you no doubt are aware in 1588 England had repulsed the Spanish armada, and won a great victory over Spain since then the royal navy has become invincible plundering the Spanish ships that carried bullions back to Spain from south America, thus enriching the coffers of the English queen who as a consequence neglected the army giving rise to the kind of corruption witnessed in the scene with Falstaff and mouldy, but Falstaff is not entirely a parodist of the high up political goings on in the country.

In the second part of Henry the fourth he captures sir John Coleville of the dale a most furious knight and valorous enemy that Falstaff describes him with his usual dose of wit. the scene is both comical and serious a technique that Shakespeare perfected in the creation of Falstaff. and continued to use with telling effect in all of his subsequent plays. for example, in Anthony and Cleopatra the rustic who brings the asp whereby Cleopatra commits suicide, thus to use big words that without being too sure of their meaning when Cleopatra asks him hast thou the pretty worm of Nilus there, that kills and pains not his reply is comical truly I have him, but I would not be the party that should desire you to touch him for his biting is immortal, those that do die of it do seldom or never recover the bribery and corruption that Falstaff and his corporal practice is a replica of that prevailing among the upper echelons of society.

But Falstaff's imitable wit and perpetual gaiety are redeeming factors. recognizing the combination of opposites in Shakespeare's creation of Falstaff, doctor Johnson addresses Falstaff as a personal friend and companion, but Falstaff uninitiated inimitable Falstaff how shall I describe thee thou compound of sense and vice. of sense which may be admired, but not esteemed of vice, which may be despised, but hardly detested Falstaff is a character loaded with faults and with those faults which naturally produce contempt he is a thief and a glutton a coward and a boaster, yes the man thus corrupt thus despicable makes himself necessary to the prince that he despises him by the most pleasing of all qualities perpetual gaiety by an unfailing power of exciting laughter.

This is Doctor Johnson's description of Falstaff, yet despite Prince Hal's ostensible friendship with Falstaff and I stress the word ostensible at the end of the second part of Henry the fourth when Hal becomes king on the death of his father, he rejects Falstaff and banishes him till such time as he reforms himself and becomes a good citizen. this scene has become one of the central subjects for critical discussion and controversy and needs to be examined more closely.

At the beginning of the first part of Henry the fourth, Hal had declared in soliloquy that his plan is to reject Falstaff after becomes king. So, as to show his subjects how complete his commitment to good kingship is a speech. that for some critics is evidence of political expediency and calculatedness unworthy of a king, but for others an indication of his shrewd sense of the need to cultivate a popular public image and therefore, a proof of his potential to be a good ruler in soliloquy he addresses Falstaff and his companions.

Thus I know you all and will awhile uphold the unyoked humor of your idleness. Yet herein will I imitate the sun who doth permit the base contagious clouds to smother up his beauty from the world. that when he please again to be himself being wanted he may be more wondered at by, breaking through the foul and ugly mists of vapors that did seem to strangle him. So, when this loose behavior I throw off and pay the debt I never promised by, how much better than my word I am by so, much shall I falsify men's hopes. and like bright metal on a sullen ground my reformation glittering (Refer Time: 28:43) my fault shall show more goodly and attract more eyes than that which hath no foil to set it off I will. So, offend to make offence a skill redeeming time when men think least I will.



The rejection of Falstaff by Hal at the end of the second part of Henry the fourth, breaks Falstaff's spirit and in Henry the fifth he dies with a broken heart. So, those of you who are captivated by Shakespeare's creative genius displaying itself in the person of Falstaff and who are fascinated by the abundance of contradictory ingredients that go into his making my advice is that, you read the deeply moving account of his death by the hostess in Henry the fifth act 5 scene 3. and then try to examine critically your assessment of Falstaff. there is a considerable school of criticism that sees Falstaff in Hamlet that Shakespeare's 2 most remarkable characters.

Hals speech on his intention to reform himself anticipates in some ways the soliloquy by the hunch backed Richard the third who plans to be ruthless, and totally self-serving. So, as to attain the crown and thus compensate himself for the physical deformity with which nature has made his suffer. some of us may feel that Hals speech is a callous betrayal of friendship. at the altered self-promotion others may feel as did doctor Johnson. that the soliloquy prepares the audience for his future reformation, but the truth is that Shakespeare's hands were tied by history the early chronicles describe Hals wild youths which he renounced on becoming king. So, that Shakespeare had no alternative to incorporating this into the text of his play. here as we shall see in greater detail later is a drawback that dramatist using history as a base has to contend with, history dictating the plot and perhaps going against the (Refer Time: 32:04) of the dramatists own creative judgment.

This is an issue that each reader must come to terms with using personal judgment. as a guide an example of the way in which literature challenges us to react one way or another depending upon our own critical faculties towards the conclusion of the second part of Henry the fourth Shakespeare gives us a highly dramatic scene in which Henry the fourth on his deathbed finds his crown missing from the pillow and is told by his attendant that Hal has taken it away king, where is the crown who took it from my pillow Warwick when we withdrew my liege, we left it here king the prince hath taken it hence go seek him out is he so hasty that he doth suppose my sleep my death finds him my Lord of Warwick chide him hither in any stage enactment of this scene; the crown becomes a powerful symbol of the goals for which aspirants strive fight and perish. we should note that while Shakespeare gives us a dramatic version of history. he is at the

same time giving us a lesson on the futility of the lust of power and fame a lesson that Tolstoy gives us in his short story how much land does a man require.

Are then the history plays intended to undercut the glory and the grandeur that is associated with the monarch? the marching music the trumpets the soldiers marching in perfect formation the speeches celebrating military valor and national honor. and if so why was Shakespeare not arrested by the authorities for thus sowing the seeds of discord among the common people. the answer to this question will be found I suggest in the willingness of the queen to accommodate a wide range of attitudes and views in the governance of the country; a couple of years before her death she addressed parliament with affectionate humility though God hath raised me high, yet this I come to glory of my crown that I have reigned with your loves there will never a queen sit in my seat with more zeal to my country, care for my subjects and that will sooner with willingness will venture her life for your good and safety than myself for it is my desire to live nor reign no longer than my life. and reign shall be for your good I unquote. another possible explanation for the censor board not taking exception to criticism of prevailing conditions could well be the long past historical context of the chronicle plays.

Shakespeare wrote going back to the fourteenth and fifteenth century a good hundred and 50 years prior to the reign of queen Elizabeth's. and therefore, immune from censure; however, members of Shakespeare's audience who were perceptive could have seen through the veil of history and recognized the contemporarity of the plays and the message they contained. an interesting instance of this was the staging of Richard the second 2 years before the queen's death in the hope that the deposition of Richard by Bolingbroke will alert the populous to the possibility of James the sixth, of Scotland son of Mary queen of scots succeeding queen Elizabeth to the throne of England.

The details of this episode are as follows. Robert devereux earl of Essex handsome bold ambitious and the favorite of the queen went to war against Spain and captured the important port city of Cadiz. as a result of this success his reputation soared immensely and he next persuaded the queen to send him to Ireland, with an army of 15 thousand men to quell the Irish rebellion of 1599; however, the expedition proved a failure. the queen was furious and Essex felt insulted and humiliated. It was at this point that Essex and his friends stormed into London and arranged the performance of Richard the second by Shakespeare's acting company, with the hope that the citizens of the city would raise

a rebellion and depose the queen. now you know that I am not Richard the queen said to her supporter Essex was brought to trial the chief prosecutor being Francis Bacon, convicted of treason and executed. Essex rise and fall greatly disturbed the nation and according to some eminent critics like John Dover Wilson, it may not be a simple coincidence that in the same year Hamlet was written.

Apart from the Henriad chronicle, plays Shakespeare also wrote in 1596 the life and death of King John which features between the early Henry the Sixth plays and the later more sophisticated and mature Henry the Fourth and Henry the Fifth plays. Historically it goes back to the thirteenth century to the Magna Carta King John may be regarded as a transitional play that combines the characteristics of both periods while at the same time containing at least 3 outstanding scenes. One the likelihood that Constance laments on the death of her son Arthur reflects Shakespeare's grief over the death of his 11 year old son Hamlet in 1596 to the pleading of Arthur with the assassin Hubert to spare his life and his subsequent death and 3 the Bastard who in many ways is a precursor of Falstaff and Edmund in King Lear here is some lines some Constance's lament on the death of Arthur grief fills the room up of my absent child lies in his bed walks up and down with me puts on his pretty looks repeats his words, remembers me of all his gracious parts stuffs out his vacant garments with his form.

Whether Shakespeare wrote these lines with the kind of artistic detachment that James Joyce's Stephen in Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man believes is the hallmark of great writing. or whether they reflect in some way his personal loss in the death of his son is a question that each reader must answer individually King John is noted in the interlude in the writing of Henriad plays. So, our survey of Henriad plays brings us back to 3 parts of Henry the Sixth glanced at briefly at the commencement of this paper as noted these 3 parts were written much before the later Henry the Fourth, and Henry the Fifth plays. thus giving us a projected view of history by which is meant the inversion of history this may seem confusing, but on closer examination may turn up to be more enlightening, than the conventional linear view of history as cause and effect. if we reverse the sequence we first see the effect and then the cause a bipolar view of history in which hindsight and give us a new kind of insight in historical change and circumstance. those of you who are interested in the subject will want to read the 3 parts of Henry the Sixth. and will I fear be

initially be repelled by the complexity and plethora of characters that interact with one another.

In all 3 parts there are no less than 100 characters. as peter alexander points out the England at medieval times was driven by civil disorder, each feudal leader duke earl or baron having his own coterie of followers. similar to the many rajahs maharajahs and nawabs, who had their fiefdoms. in India until such time that the Mughal empire in the north and Sivaji in the south united a major part of the country followed by the British who further consolidated, it is political structure. of course, these are broad generalizations. Hence without going into particulars it can be said that with the battle of Bosworth's and the crowning of henry, the 7th under the Tudors.

We see the end of the feudal epoch the rise of the middle class to political significance and the realization of the idea of the state; this is a incisive comment by peter alexander one of the leading Shakespeare's followers particularly with reference to the history plays? in passing it is worth noting that the chaos and endless conflict of the wars of the roses the red and white rose that sets in during this period of English history. As a result of the hostility between 2 houses of Lancaster and York both being descendants of king Edward, the third has a parallel in the Mahabharata with which all of you are no doubt familiar in the rivalry between the kauravs and the pandavas both being descendants of king Shantanu and his wife queen Satyavati, in both cases the rival parties are cousins demonstrating that history often throws up patterns that are similar human nature being the same regardless of time and place.

The turmoil that sets in the war of the roses culminates with the rise of the hunchback in Richard the third. who determines to win the crown by hook or by crook deformed and repulsive in looks his bitter soliloquy is an admission of his grudge against the world. and is the first great psychological study by Shakespeare of an embittered soul from who recoil in horror, who yet kindles in us some feelings sympathy. Why love forswore me and my mother's womb and for I should not deal in her soft laws she did corrupt frail nature with some bribe to shrink mine arm up like a withered shrub, to make an envious mountain on my back. where sits deformity to mock my body, to shape my legs of an unequal size to disproportionate me in every part like to a chaos and am I; then a man to be beloved o monstrous fault to harbor such a thought. then since this earth affords no joy to me, but to command to cheque too (Refer Time: 43:01) such as are of better

person than myself. I will make my heaven to dream upon the crown and whiles I live to account this world, but hell until my mis shaped trunk that bears this head be round impaled with a glorious crown for many lives, stand between me and home and I like one lost in a thorny wood that rends the thorns and is rent with the thorns, seeking a way and straying from the way, not knowing how to find the open air, but toiling desperately to find it out torment myself to catch the English crown. and from that torment I will free myself or hew my way out with a bloody axe. why? I can smile and murder whiles I smile and cry content to that which grieves my heart.

And wet my cheeks with artificial tears and frame my face to all occasions. I will drown more sailors than the mermaid, shall I will slay more gazers than the basilisk. I ll play the orator as well as nester deceive more silly than Ulysses could and like a Simon take another troy, I can add colors to the chameleon change shapes with proteus for advantages. and set the murderous Machiavelli to school. can I do this? and cannot get a crown tut were it further off.

I will pluck it down as is evident in this devastating soliloquy Shakespeare anticipates the workings of Macbeths mind of Claudius scheming's of Edmunds villainy while at the same time exposing the machinations of all politicians in all ages, including our own to win, votes by deception and hypocrisy hateful as Richard may seem, on one plane on; another; he emerges as a single dominating and energetic figure a contrast of the preponderance of characters in the Henry the sixth plays. thus giving us Shakespeare's view of history as a movement towards the unification of the country politically Richard perishes in battle with Richmond Henry the 7th at the end of the play after which Henry the 7th has the last word.

Proclaim a pardon to the soldiers fled, that in submission will return to us. and then as we have (Refer Time: 45:48) we will unite the white rose and the red. smile heaven upon this fair conjunction, that long have frowned upon their enmity. what traitor hears me and says not amen. England hath long been mad and scarred herself. now civil wounds are stopped peace lives again that she may long live here god say amen. in the portrayal of Richard, the third we can detect the scenes, that make it germinate and give rise to the creation of the great villains of the later tragedies like Claudius Macbeths Iago and Edmund in writing to English history plays Shakespeare is inevitably restricted by historical necessity even though he did take liberties with historical facts, at times while

adhering to the broad outlines of history. the history plays then were in some sense a training ground for Shakespeare to probe cause and effect, boundless ambition followed by disastrous consequences, self-aggrandizement by using others as dispensable pawns in the way of advancement. So, that the time he wrote Hamlet in around 1600, he was able to create an amalgam of history and insight into the intricacies of human aspiration endeavor and workings of conscience.

With Hamlet Shakespeare seems to have deliberately turned away from English history, which he found too restrictive and went to Danish history dating back to the 13th century AD in the historian Danica by saxo Grammaticus. this camouflage was, but a thin disguise for the ongoing politics of England at the time. the queens death everyone knew was not far off. and the absence of an heir was a cause of much anxiety as the historian Trevelyan observes for 40 years and more the English had lived in the black shadow of the question what will befall us when the queen dies even though the Spanish armada had been repulsed and routed in 1588,

As we saw earlier, it was well known throughout Europe that Spain continued to have imperialistic designs against England. not only in terms of an old rivalry, but on account of the English navy as we have noted plundering Spanish ships laden, with bullion from south America from the high seas as well as the threat of the up and coming east India company, posing stiff competition to Portugal's presence in India Portugal and Spain having been united under a single crown from 1580 to 1640.

Why Hamlet is strictly speaking not an English chronicle play, it can be seen as an extension of the same in the form a Danish vania. the successor to the old king Hamlet is his brother Claudius, who like Richard the third can smile and smile and be a villain as Hamlet knows he marries Gertrude. He has elder brothers widow even as Henry the eighth Henry the eighths first wife Catherine was the widow of his elder brother Arthur. and at the plays end fortinbras of Norway walks in the bout of fight and gains possession of Denmark.

Even if James the sixth of Scotland son of Mary queen of scots Elizabeth's cousin steps in the bout of fight and occupies the throne of England, while between Denmark and Norway an uneasy truce existed every now and then marred by skirmishes as in reported in act one scene one of Hamlet the relations between England and Scotland were and are

similar as is evident from the likelihood of Scotland breaking away from the union of England Scotland wales and Northern Ireland should a referendum be held today.

Further the role of Falstaff to provide satirical comedy (Refer Time: 50:15) against the high politics intrigue and treachery prevalent in the English history plays, finds the yet more penchant expression in the roles of the gravedigger in hamlet. the porter in Macbeths Edmund in king Lear and Iago in Othello audience describing him as a joker in the back.

All of these characters disrupt the trajectory of the tragedies in various ways too complex for us to analyze, in the limited time at our disposal though it can briefly be said that each of them seems to deflect the plays action into an unexpected channel that both surprises and educates the audience in Hamlet the gravedigger scene as Maynard Mack pointed out is responsible for Hamlet us considerable change of mood. as seen in his acceptance of the boundaries in which human actions are enclosed, which Bradley erroneously called them fatalism Hamlet then may be regarded as being not only the culmination of the turmoil of the English chronicle plays, but as a kind of resolution as well towards the plays end Hamlet realizes, there is a divinity that shapes our ends and there is special providence in the fall of a sparrow.

He succeeds in revenging his father's murder, but he accomplishes under the aegis of providence. thus introducing a new dimension in the unraveling of history in the earlier period as lord reesmogg perceptively notes, if one looks at earlier contemporary English history. When Hamlet was written it is a fact that every English monarch had been forced by political events or he decided to execute or murder a king's man or king's woman in order to retain power. and that is after all is what Claudius did something is rotten in the state of Denmark Marcellus observes and Hamlet.

A few lines later accepts the responsibility that is, now is the time is out of joint o cursed spite that ever I was born to set it, right. unlike the bloodthirsty aspirant power of the history plays Hamlet is a reluctant agent of justice as lord Richmond further observes on one level, Hamlet is always a little way behind Claudius who seems to be taking the initiative at every turn, but on another level perhaps in a more fundamental way Hamlet is ahead of Claudius precisely because he is not limited by the politicians perceptive as

Claudius is Hamlet the intellectual can (Refer Time: 53:02) before and after something Claudius is incapable of doing.

With the writing of Hamlet then, Shakespeare concludes the saga of English chronicle plays and begins the new chapter with, the great tragedies Othello Macbeth king Lear and Anthony and Cleopatra. queen Elizabeth died in 1603 and these plays were written after James the first of Scotland had become the new king of England, the political climate had under gone a radical change.

Whereas under the Elizabeth's navy had prospered and England had asserted the American rights, under James he lost the supremacy and England lost out to Spain France and Holland in the competitions of supremacy both in Europe, as in distant land both east and west of England. In India for example, the Portuguese had established colonies in Goa, Daman and Diu while the French presence under Dupleix had gained political commercial and military superiority over the English presence under Lord Clive while reading Shakespeare's, history plays we must always bear in mind that they were being written during the reign of queen Elizabeth's and were therefore, viewed with retrospect from the perspective of the queens glorious reign.

In other words, Shakespeare's view of history is colored by the belief that history comes to the fullest and loftiest fulfillment with the reign of the queen. I am not suggesting that this phenomena logical view is incorrect or subjective on the contrary history has fully vindicated the queens rule for it is many spectacular achievements among which is the defeat of the Spanish armada and the establishment of east India company in 1600; it now only remains for us only to look at the last of the hernia plays henry, the eighth that was staged at the globe in 1600 and 33 years before Shakespeare's death, and 10 years after the queen's death as we might expect the play is more a pageant than a play celebratory of the queen's birth in 1533 and the prophecy at the time of a long and glorious reign would be followed by that of her successor James the first of Scotland; the archbishop of Canterbury prophesizes this royal infant heaven still move about her though in her cradle yet now promises upon this land a thousand blessings.

Which time shall bring to ripeness. and concludes with tribute to James the first. So, shall she leave her blessedness to one when heaven shall call her from this cloud of darkness who from the sacred ashes of her honor shall star like rise as great in fame as



she was and so stand fixed the play is by no means devoid of great speeches, even though for obvious reasons there is no dramatic suspense worth mentioning one such speech is the denunciation of cardinal Wolsey, by Catherine of Aragon daughter of Ferdinand and Isabella king and queen of Spain. and the first wife of Henry the eighth you are mine enemy and make my challenge you shall not be my judge for it is you have blown this coal betwixt my lord and me which gods dew quench, therefore, I say again I utterly abhor a from my soul refuse you for my judge, whom yet once more I hold my most malicious foe and think not at all a friend to truth the plays most remarkable scene is the fall of cardinal Wolsey from the kings favor for his ill-gotten wealth followed by Wolsey's moving dialect had I, but served my god with half the zeal I served my king he would not in mine age have left me naked to mine enemies.

In conclusion, it is important that we understand how difficult it is to convert history into drama the play enacted on the stage cannot exceed 3 hours, no audience can sit through a span of time longer than this least of all Shakespeare's audience. it consisted of large percentage of groundlings who required to stand in open space in front of the stage for the length of time accordingly Shakespeare had to compress historical time. So, as to make it fit into the limited span of 2 hours of dramatic time. and this necessitated in having to make a selection of episodes from history and weave them into an unified and composite whole.

So, as to form a baton that could be grasped and comprehended by his audience in modern times with the marvel of cinematography at the disposal of film directors task of accomplishing what Shakespeare had to do without this technology is indeed a miracle. It is imperative therefore, that we realize that Shakespeare's history plays are not historical documents, but rather highlights an impression of historic moments that had been chosen highly selectively, that have at times been transposed rearranged magnified and thus rendered dramatic. So, as to make a powerful impact on the minds of the viewers.

We must not read Shakespeare's chronicle plays as historians would expect, but a spectacular renderings of events out of history. which because of they having been captured in Shakespeare's vivid and inimitable language give us insights into the essence of historical truths, which transcend mere historical facts. in other words, Shakespeare's plays are concentrated micro cousins of history similar to the way in which a diamond is

composed solely of carbon in 1900 and 1 W B Yeats visited Stratford of Avon and saw the history plays performed in their right order.

He was deeply stirred by the experience and noted I quote the theater moved me as it has never done before, that strange procession of kings and queens of warring nobles of insurgent crowds of courtiers and the people of the gutter has been to me almost too visible, too audible too full of an unearthly energy. We must, but gift to Aristotle to the last (Refer Time: 60:09) on the distinction between drama and history I quote from Aristotle's the poetics which all of you know. hence poetry that is drama is something more philosophic and of graver import than history. Since its statements are of the nature rather of universals whereas, those of history are singulars or particulars.