

The Renaissance and Shakespeare
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Lecture - 03
Shakespeare's Life & Times

Hello friends. Now you will hear lecture delivered by professor Rupen Volter Desai retired from the department of English on Shakespeare life and times. Professor Desai will also talk about political developments in the Elizabethan age, and the significance of the reformation and Protestantism in England. I hope you enjoy these modules on Shakespeare life and times, thank you.

welcome to this introductory talk on William Shakespeare. I think all of us will agree that Shakespeare is the best known author all over the world, his plays have been acted in all languages of course, originally in English, but in so many countries in translation adaptations in India, we have both Shakespeare in his original language and Shakespeare in translation. He continues to be not only a best seller, but also perhaps the most popular play write on the screen on television, and in this talk I would like to introduce you all to various aspects of Shakespeare life.

He was born in 1564 in small town Stratford, upon Avon in England and grew up in rural surrounding.

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He went to London after he was beyond his myth teams and was an actor in London for some time before becoming a play write a dramatist. Let us look at a portrait of Shakespeare called the chandos portrait most probably painted by Berbinch Richard Berbinch who was Shakespeare friend.

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But more than friend, it was also Shakespeare most prominent act actor. And had a long association with Shakespeare, no one can be absolutely certain that berbinch painted this

portrait, but traditionally it is ascribed to him as all of us can see berbinch has captured Shakespeare on canvas when Shakespeare was still fairly young. And thus you all can see the artist is captured kind even (Refer Time: 02:29) mythic look in the eyes contemplative reflective perhaps the best poetry of Shakespeare they are all together 8 poetries, that we have not all of them authentic though like everything pertaining to Shakespeare surrounded by controversy by speculation.

But this is the most interesting one the next picture which shows us Shakespeare birth place (Refer Time: 02:37).

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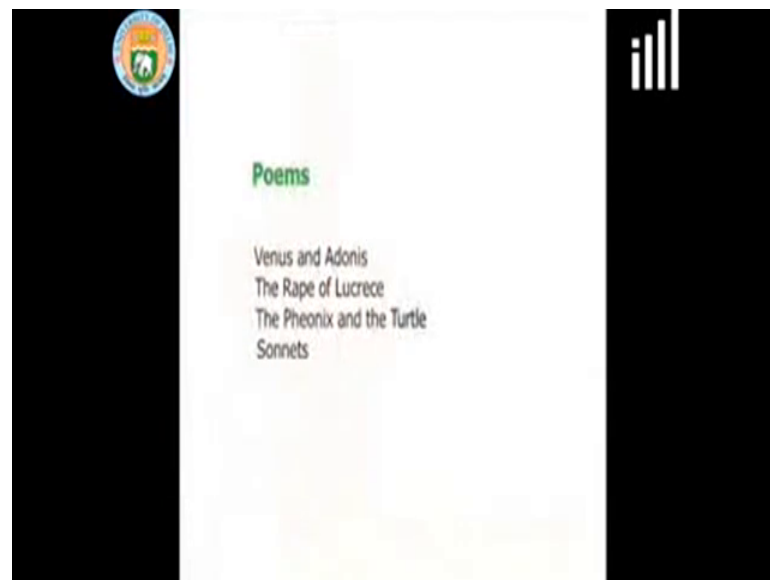
And as you can see it is a handsome house gabled the present it is been rebuilt and shows us that Shakespeare grew up, a next beautiful surroundings the row of flowers the hedge in front that you see perhaps was far more extensive in Shakespeare time, but still it gives us a good idea of the kind of house in (Refer Time: 04:46) Shakespeare grew up. Now Shakespeare married at the early age of 18, and the girl he married was 8 year senior to him Anne Hathaway. So, she was 26. Now this of course, may seem very unusual, very unorthodox. And great deal of speculation has gone into time to explain why this disparity.

Why Shakespeare chose to marry a girl who is 8 years a senior. Much of this speculation is unconvincing, but it has no basis. Apparently the family of Anne Hathaway was well known to the Shakespeare family. In fact, her father had financial dealings with Shakespeare's father, John Shakespeare, and there is no reason to suppose that the marriage was the first one or that it was quickly contracted in order to (Refer Time: 05:58) some circumstance, which perhaps would have brought scandal upon the family.

All this is speculation, when I like to caution all of you here today. By saying that a great deal pertains to Shakespeare that he is not known. 3 children were born to the couple: Susanna the eldest, and then twins Hamnet a boy and Judith's, of course, a girl. Hamnet died at the age of 11.

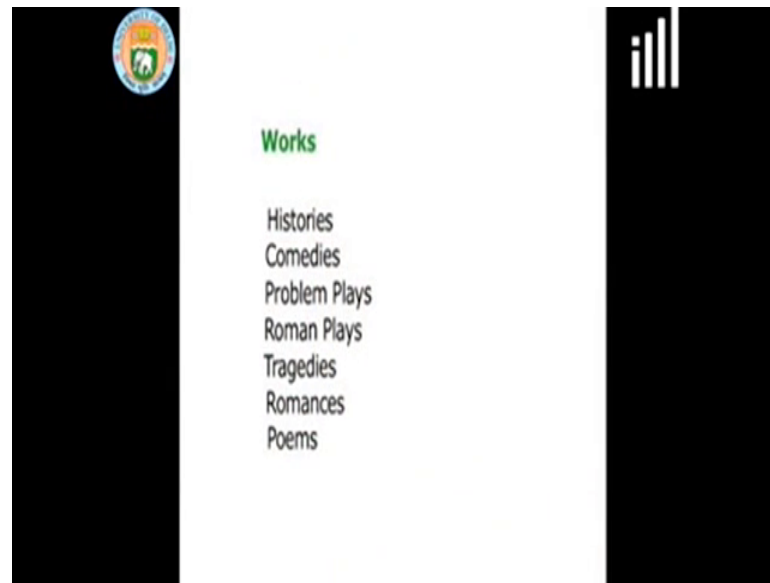
Around the time that Shakespeare was writing his most famous play Hamlet, the tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. Besides this supremacy as a playwright, he wrote a dramatist.

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Shakespeare wrote several long poems, Venus and Adonis, the rape of Lucrece, the phoenix and the turtle, and over a 150 sonnets. So, as all of us can see he was a prolific writer and with an unpretentious educational background.

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This is an astonishing feat, that Shakespeare was able to accomplish. This unpretentious background is also reflected in the building, that we see here in front of us the representation of Shakespeare school, the Stratford grammar school. And as you can see, it is a simple building very difficult for us to imagine, how in such a humble structure, Shakespeare, was genius unparalleled, grew mentally intellectually and developed into kind of writer that he was, extremely successful.

Shakespeare retired a wealthy man, bought a second largest house in Stratford called new place. Made of stone which was also unusual that time, most houses were made of wood. This one was made of stone, and serve it continued it survived for 70 years after the death of the last survivor. It is no longer extend, but according to records that have been preserved the house was very impressive, not only in it is exterior appearance, but also spacious with a high ceiling and certainly was indicative of Shakespeare success.

Now this may be rather unusual kind of an equation namely, a play write who did not have a university education, and in a profession that was idea little as counts. Let us not forget that theater drama the stage we are not considered to be highly respectable professions the highly respectable professions, where the military the army, the navy, England supremacy in the sea. And sure that all those joined officers in the navy had a certain status in society. Shakespeare status might not been as cons considered to be as

unimpeachable as certain other professions as we just now, saw the army the navy the church and yet Shakespeare retired wealthy to the extent that he could also buy a 107 acres of farm land, as well as the cottage close to new place. So, he was well in doubt, towards the closure his life. He died in 1616 was buried in Stratford, his tomb can still be seen, the inscription on the tomb says good friend for Jesus sake for (Refer Time: 11:24) to dig the dust and close it.

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Here blessed be he who spares these tombs and cursed be he who moves the wombs. So, much importance has been attached to these lines which might seem like doggerel, presumably written by Shakespeare himself. That no one has dared to dissent the bones of Shakespeare in this grave. Let us move on then, to the next representation the next picture of queen Elizabeth. And of course, I do not think anyone needs an introduction to queen Elizabeth the first.

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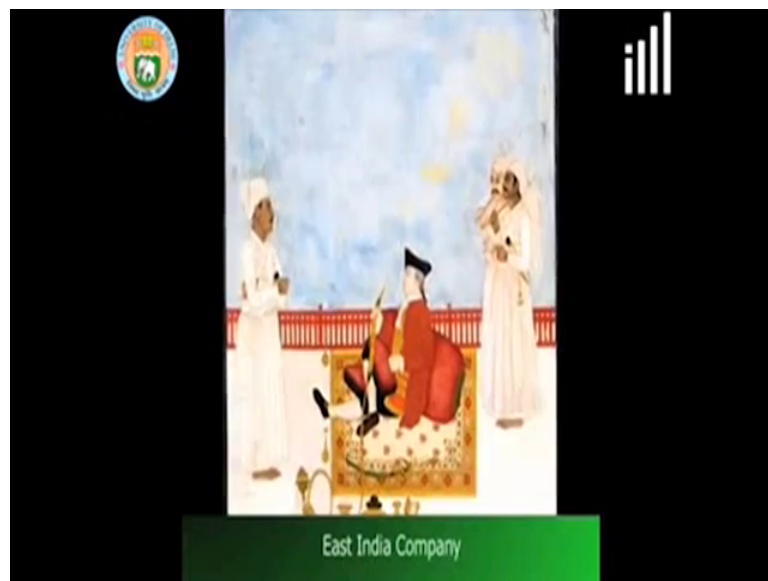
She was undoubtedly one of the most lustrous and successful monarchs from England. This picture of queen Elizabeth in regal splendor gives us a good indication of the symbolic supremacy that England, had now achieved as you can see she is standing on the map of Europe. Indicative of England's dominants growing dominants and the displacements of Spain as the supreme power.

We shouldn't forget that before the raise of England, Spain was the most powerful militarily politically diplomatically, she had established links all over the world. South America and particularly had been colonized by Spain, enormous quantities of gold and silver, where being extracted from Latin America, south America and English ships were intercepting, these galleons which were bringing back silvero. English pirate ships, I deliberately use the word pirate and piracy. Because we are familiar with it is reemergence, at the present time on the Shaw line on the coast of Somalia. Piracy is not dead and the English ships were notorious for their plundering of these Spanish and Portuguese galleons. Portuguese had already established themselves in India, but England was now challenging the authority of Spain and Portugal. And this portrait of queen Elizabeth well demonstrates the grandea towards which England was now aspiring. Notice the elaborate dress in which the queen is attired. Notice also the eligants of her posture the 2 arms extended, the hooped skirt that she is wearing, increasing her size or dimensions. And also notice the regal air with which she beholds her surroundings. Also

their particular attention to the background.

What could be flashes of lightening in the background. One side is light the other side is dark, and in between is the queen. All of us I think can speculate on the symbolic significance of these artistic touches. All in some sense together all taken together suggestive of England's dominance, of England supremacy.

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Also let us note that the east India company, which all of us know so much about today, considering the long colonial past that our country has, from the early or let us say the middle of the 17 century to 1947. This colonial heritage that we have with some of us might say is a blessing, in disguise it gave us the English language. Let us note that, which is perhaps today one of our most lucrative possessions. All of us are aware of this legacy that we have inherited from the English. So, that even though we may have mixed feelings, regarding this historical background. He cannot be denied that today we have an enormous advantage. And of course, you all know this advantage is being recognized increasingly by all the states that constitute India.

So, much so, that the municipal corporation of Delhi is now going to establish an English medium school in every constituency. So, that backward children might not be denied or

deprived of the advantage of knowing English. And to go back to what I said earlier of women in Shakespeare time, not been backward or retarded as far as education bent. This is well reflected in the fact that she queen Elizabeth daughter of henry the eighth.

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Who is all of you know had 6 wives not all at the same time, but in succession. She was

the daughter of Anne Boleyn. Queen Elizabeth's ascension to the throne was not a simple matter.

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It was fraught with controversy and resistance as her predecessors, Mary Tudor or Mary the first. Who was the daughter of an earlier wife of Henry the eighth, Catherine of Aragon? Therefore, Queen Elizabeth's half-sister and her predecessor was Edward the sixth, wouldn't reign for very long as he was her half-brother.

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Queen Elizabeth achieved great successes not merely in England becoming one of the most powerful nations of Europe. All of you heard of the Spanish armada.

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And how England vanquished this mighty naval power of Spain in 1588, but also in terms of political stability, one of the most important achievements of queen Elizabeth was

political stability. England was passing through tumultuous times, the renaissance came late to England, but accompanying the renaissance was the reformation. Both these terms are extremely important. Because if the renaissance reflects the intellectual the artistic the cultural emergence of England as a now way inferior to let us say Italy or France. The reformation reflected a break away, from the authority of the roman catholic church, situated it is headquarters as all of you know the Vatican. In which the pope was the supreme head.

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Now, this is an important facet of queen Elizabeth's reign, and requires careful attention. Today we might wonder why religion played such an important part in those times, the renaissance the sixteenth century in particular. But let us not forget that even in our own country the demolition of the babari masjid, illustrated tremendous of evils all over northern India. The repercussion are which can even now be felt now and again. As we all know political parties revised the memory of the demolition of the babari masjid, in order to achieve political millage. So, it is not anything very remote as far as we are concerned.

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And we should therefore, examine, how Henry the eighth broke away from the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, established England's own autonomy and how Queen Elizabeth continued maintaining this individualism, established the separate identity from the authority of the Vatican.