PLAY

The Merchant of Venice

Life of Shakespeare

Willian Shakespeare, one of the greatest dramatist of the world, was born on April

23, 1554 at Stratford-on-Avon in the country of Warwickshire. His father's name was John Shakespeare who was a prosperous businessman of Stratford-on-Avon. He had two sisters and three brothers. His mother belonged to the family of Arden who had been landowners in Warwickshire for many years. We know little about Shakespeare's childhood and education. He was deficient in formal education. He was sent to the Village Free Grammar School where he learnt 'Little Latin and Less Greek'. He seems to have acquired some knowledge of French and Italian. His time at school was cut short by the misfortunes of his father. He was asked to help his father in his business but he did not like the job.

At the age of eighteen, he married Anne Hathway who was eight years senior. He had three children. The first child Susanna was born shortly



after the marriage. After two years, twins were born-a Sonmaned Hamnet and a daughter named Judith. The son, however, died at the age of eleven. He left Startford about 1585 and arrived in London the next year. He did there some small jobs and then started writing plays. He died in 1616 at the age of sixty two on the anniversary of his birth day. He was buried in Startford Church in Avon.

Shakespeare is known more as dramatist than a poet. He lived for the major part of his literary career in London. He started his work as a minor actor in some little known play-house. He is also known as a stable boy in-charge of horses outside the theatre. He started his literary career by writing Comedies, Tragedies, Historical plays and poetry. He wrote thirty-seven plays, one hundred and fifty four sonnets and two longer poems.

The names of the longer poems are The Rape of Lucrece and Venus and Adonis. His famous Comedies are the Merchant of Venice, Twelfth Night, A Mid-Summer Night's Dream, Much Ado About Nothing, As You Like it etc. His popular Tragedies are Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth and Othello. Among his historical plays, Richard II, Richard III, Henry IV, Henry V, Julius Caesar and Antony and Cleopatra are widely known. He thought of a drama as a form of poetry. Though his style was decorative, yet it was also forceful and vigorous. He is the most quoted and the most quotable of all English poets. His sonnets are known as Shakespearean sonnets. Some of them are very artificial. The finest and the most passionate sonnets are those in which he expresses his love for his patrons and friends. Indeed, the sonnets are incomparable for the beauty of their imagination and perfection of versification. They possess a very delicate music which has seldom been surpassed.

Shakespeare was one of the most successful English writers of his time. Earls of Essex, Southampton and Lord Pembroke were his close friends. He was also greatly admired by Queen Elizabeth. He was endowed with an evergreen imagination. He had also deep insight into human character. Indeed, he was one of the greatest dramatist of the world.