

Shakespeare and Kannadasan

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Abstract

This essay is an attempt to bring out certain similarities between the Tamil poet, writer and playback songwriter Kannadasan and English dramatist and poet Shakespeare. What I have observed in Shakespeare and Kannadasan's writing is an exaggeration. Kannadasan wrote and lived – century and Shakespeare was a dramatist and poet of the 16th century. It is interesting to know that Shakespeare and Kannadasan commonly share certain aspects. As Shakespeare was born in a village, came to London, and tried opportunities in the field of drama, Kannadasan also came from a village to Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu to get opportunities to write for the Tamil cinema and both to earn money. Both Shakespeare and Kannadasan created and transcreated taking the ideas from their reading of classical writings. They both studied only eighth standard but improved their knowledge of literature by studying old and classical writings. They have extraordinary observations of life and the world. They have observed well the many different aspects of life and characteristics of people in general and the different aspects and works of nature. They have improved their knowledge through deep observation and self-study. They recorded the facts about life and nature outside of the context of writing. Whenever they have the opportunity to write, they have inserted the messages about life and the world, which they have gathered through their hard study and observation.

Keywords: Shakespeare, Kannadasan, Comparative Literature.

Introduction

Shakespeare has written plays, dramatic poetic lines and poems and Kannadasan has written screenplays and playback songs for cinema and poetry. Shakespeare has worked for the theatre but Kannadasan has worked for the cinema. Both of them have worked for money, but they have never sacrificed the art while working for the money and it is their greatness. Shakespeare's lines containing information about life and the world mesmerized the audience and likewise, Kannadasan's lines containing information about life and the world from the audience immediately attracted them fully. As scholars of the world celebrated and celebrated Shakespeare's lines, Kannadasan's lines were and are celebrated by people of Tamil Nadu and people of southern India as the Tamil language is parental one of their different mother tongues. The southern Indian people have high regard for Kannadasan and high praise for his lines with the kind of surrendered enthrallment because they convey some rich and wonderful ideas about life, people, nature and the world as Shakespeare's. The main argument is that both Shakespeare and Kannadasan convey the ideas of life and the world with some kind of exaggeration, which makes their ideas and thoughts clear, brighter and popular bringing them name and fame.

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An amount of exaggeration is necessary in speech, writing, singing and acting to make the point reach the audience successfully. It may be apt here to quote one famous actor Sevaliar Sivaji Ganesan from Tamil Nadu. He has acted in hundreds of Tamil movies and he is popular for a sort of exaggerated acting, which cannot be taken negatively for as an actor

he shines in his action with exaggeration with less or more amount. He has a face, appearance, majestic and high tone, big and good eyes, majestic and stylish walking, etc. He has acted, spoken dialogues, walked, laughed and cried with a kind of exaggeration and shined as a star in them all. He used to show his way of understanding and imagination of the matter for which he acted. He showed much involvement in the acting of any role from hero, villain, and comedian to farmer, beggar, coolie, and innumerable different roles. He happened to be innovative in his acting in any role through his big involvement and imagination about his acting any particular role. He has even acted as Othello for the scene of murdering Desdemona with another very talented actress Savithri, who acted as Desdemona, from Tamil Nadu. The argument here is that such exaggeration makes the art of all kinds successful as Poe says the death of a young lady and more that the death of a beautiful young lady will attract the heart, mind and soul of the reader instantly making the poem successful. Such exaggeration also brings beauty and attraction to the matter. I quote some lines of Shakespeare and Kannadasan to prove the point. They haven't written the following lines not only with exaggeration but with a kind of similarity in meaning. Shakespeare writes,

**We are to gods as flies to wanton boys
They kill us for sports**

Kannadasan writes in one of his playback songs:

Who will not be rocked if he is rocked, Kanna (by you Kanna)

Who will not be rocked in the cradle of desire? Kanna (by you Kanna)

The name Kannan represents God. The meaning Kannadasan makes in the above lines is that God is responsible for men wallowing in several desires. He means that God with a purpose makes men rock in the cradle of desires to teach men lessons about life and transform them good shaking off the illusions about things in the world. Shakespeare has written with the meaning that God makes men do many things and finally kills them. As the butterfly in the hands of wanton boys, men are in the hands of God who only makes them do many things in the world as he desires or plans and finally makes them leave the world through death. Shakespeare means that everything happens with men from birth to death according to the desire of God. So He is responsible for everything men do including his death. Shakespeare writes of life:

**Tomorrow, tomorrow, and tomorrow
Creepeth in this petty pace from day to day
To the syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.**

Shakespeare in the above lines has recorded life as a tale told by an idiot, as the one full of tensions and difficulties, and as the one having no meaning finally. The exaggeration in the lines of Shakespeare and Kannadasan can be noted. With complete exaggeration, which makes the matter instantly clear, attractive, reachable and successful, Shakespeare has shown how the space passes in a very subtle way in a very small amount of time not alerting men to become conscious or which men cannot naturally be conscious, but taking them to the last minute of time of their life, which is already recorded or decided, which Shakespeare puts compressing more meanings as "To the last syllable of recorded", which is a great example

for the great, extraordinary and matchless way of putting words for conveying the ideas in great and entirely different way, which can be found with Kannadasan's writing too. Shakespeare compares life to a "brief candle" that burns out very quickly and calls the man with life a "walking Shadow" and a poor player of his life who moves here and there and does so many things in the world of the stage during his lifetime and he is forgotten when he dies. What is very important, rare, unknown and great is Shakespeare his great way of employing words apart from his great ideas. The point is that Shakespeare and Kannadasan employ words making a meaning which is unknown in other writers and it displays their greater perception of all the meanings of the words they have used in their writings. Kannadasan in one playback song has written:

**When the ant is skinned and seen, the elephant has come
When my heart is skinned and seen, Janam (genius) has come
The heart that remains before birth has come today
The peace that comes after death has come**

Kannadasan writes in one playback song for the ladylove in the hands of her lover losing her control completely out of emotional love:

**Oh parrot (ladylove) with untidy hair
Oh the fruit (ladylove) tasted with love
It is the state...What is the fate?
(what fate causes this state of immersing in the feeling of love and surrendering
Fully to lover not minding the shame)**

Kannadasan has written it for the situation of a young girl in the hands of her lover with her feelings of love kindled in which she has a mind to think of her shameful state with her untidy hair and other of her awkward position. Kannadasan calls it a fate of human beings through which everybody has to pass through and has written meaning that it is a shameful fate that human beings have got. He has written the meaning of fate it is what human beings have in general. Shakespeare writes about love with all exaggeration to show the short period of love:

**Making it momentary as a sound,
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream
Brief as the lightning in the collied night.
That, in a spleen, unfolds both heaven and earth;
And ere a man hath power to say "Behold"
The jaws of darkness do devour it up
So quickly bright things come to confusion.**

Shakespeare in the above-quoted lines means that love is short-lived and he brings out the meaning by saying that before one gets the power to tell somebody to see the lightening, it will be swallowed by the jaws of darkness. Going beyond the point of writing before one saying, Shakespeare writes with all exaggeration before one even gets the power to speak it and no more idea and exaggeration can be added here. Shakespeare writes here and everywhere with final exaggeration and nothing can be added more or altered. Kannadasan has written for one of the playback songs:

**Where is peace there I want a place
Where men don't live there I want a place**

These above lines are a very good example of the lines of Kannadasan written with great exaggeration similar to Shakespeare's. The meanings of the lines are clear without the necessity for explanation, In the same playback song Kannadasan has written:

God who created eyes and created woman is cruel one

When my hands play Veena cries

When my hands embrace the flower shoots

If I am let to sleep, I will worship you Mother (Goddess)

If I am given peace today at least, I will sleep Mother (Goddess)

All the above popular lines of Kannadasan make interesting meanings in original Tamil listened, enjoyed and applauded in Tamilnadu. One can note the exaggeration in the meanings of these lines. Since the meanings of the lines are clear, let us move to the other examples. The point is that all the great lines of Shakespeare and Kannadasan have been written with exaggeration.

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Author Contribution Statement: NIL.

Author Acknowledgement: NIL.

Author Declaration: I declare that there is no competing interest in the content and authorship of this scholarly work.



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