



LACK OF MOTHERLY AFFECTION IN SHAKESPEAREAN TRAGEDIES

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Abstract:

William Shakespeare is an excellent mastermind, who has approved the vindictive violation of universal attitudes in human existence; even a versatile affectionate mother becomes an embodiment of a negative explorer rather than a vintage one. In Shakespearean tragedies, exceedingly women characters acquire virility in their psychological appearances and somehow this profound characteristic worked like a hurdle for a motherly character to unveil her demonstrative universal phenomena towards her child. This controversial womanly attitude reveals the artistic quality of realistic Shakespearean catastrophe, which robustly drove out an individual focus to lead an extraordinary invention of human eminence that there is nothing called perfect and not even a mother to her child.

Key Words: Tragedy, Motherly Affection & Shakespeare

1. Introduction:

The present study attempts to see Shakespeare's literary activities where his high dignified tragedies content the mother-child relationship in a different view existing with extraordinary challenge and discloses an impulsive hideous track of human behavior and displays a universal view on motherly characteristics in a different fragrant recharged with melancholic and pessimistic representation towards children. Here Shakespeare's awesome depiction of human psychology prevails on evil force and hardness of women's heart works like hopeless revengeful melodramatic reaction overlapping with the disguise of conspiracy to gain power, crown and love. And women's performance as a mother sketches the mystery and diabolic revengeful villainous view to her child; it is a sort of hidden or passive extension of Shakespeare's ideology on women's character; especially the lack of motherly love and attachment with children. It represents a complex vitality to create a new depth on Shakespearean study. In Shakespearean tragedies mother's performances are like: 'monstrous spectacle' (Queen Tamora), 'demonic force' (Lady Macbeth), 'mysterious unknown rhythm' (Queen Gratrude). Finally, Shakespearean presentation of barbarity, cruelty, violence and inhumanity of mother's character are rejecting the ideology of moral reference from the dictionary of humankind.

2. Objectives and Methodology:

The main objective of this study is to find out how the powerful and reliant mother-child relation is encircled by the transformation of revengeful judgment in Shakespearean tragedies. This work also deals with the prominent supervision of evil force creating a situational support for negative attitude and stone-hearted bizarre performances applicable even for a mother. The present research is a study of motherly characters' performance in Shakespearean tragedies, which stands on social perspective, as well as, psychological prospect. Here, from all the magnificent tragedies of Shakespeare, a selection has been considered with a critical evaluation by the help of

some secondary sources. The only helpful method for the research is observation method.

3. Scope and Justification:

As mentioned above, the present study covers a selection from all the famous Shakespearean tragedies with a critical observation of the absence of motherly affection in the selected texts, which is the main focal point of this research, the ultimate scope of the present work remains within the boundary of looking into the 'lack of motherly affection' in these plays. And, undoubtedly this is a new approach to study Shakespeare as there has been almost no such available research specific to the topic. Though several studies are available on the 'role of female characters' in the works of William Shakespeare, the 'lack of motherly affection' is obviously a novel dimension to look at the Shakespearean genius from different dimension.

4. Review and Discussion:

4.1. Lack of Womanly Soft Hearted Performance:

In Shakespeare's tragedies negative womanly performance is byword for hidden mischievous descry; through their (women's) hard hearted negative efficacy and cool hearted monstrous quality devastate the entire life-line of all tragic protagonists. Sometime women act works like 'good host' externally but behind this affability they are like 'ungrateful foxes'. Just like old graceful King Duncan clarify Lady Macbeth as a 'good host' but ironically she is one of the greatest conspirators of Shakespearean world, who engrafted Macbeth's heart to take over Duncan's life. Even in the last speech Malcom firmly declared Lady Macbeth as Macbeth's "fiend like queen; who took off her life by self" and definitely her cruel heart is more determined to create explosive hazard "rather than her violent hands".

Here a pivotal figure in Shakespeare is 'ambition', where women get a leading line to follow expanded development to beget a terminus strong heart, which has a verdict control over their companions; like in the drama *King Lear*, Cornwall husband to Regan, fastened by his wife's order. As of ambition Bacon's criticism about ambitious person is if they find the way open for their rising and still get forward, they are rather busy than dangerous and look upon men and matters with an evil eye. And in Shakespeare's hand women become imperiously influential characters for men to dig out the margin of ambition. On the other hand, Regan and Goneril both are the opposite parts of the same coin. If Goneril is the withal part of rush voice to her father, King Lear, Regan is the cool natured evasively mask-wearing 'smooth liar'. More unexpected fatal irony played in their cases like: after Cornwall's death, Regan shows no sympathy for her husband and without any hesitation she desires to win Edmund, but she is poisoned by her own elder sister Goneril. "She becomes jealous of Regan, and desperate enough to poison her in order to try to win Edmund for (herself). She has ... written a letter to Edmund ... asking her intended lover to kill her husband under cover of the battle ... sexually frustrated completely ruthless disappointed in her aims. She defiantly refuses to answer any charges and stabs herself through the heart" (Wilson, 1986). Now to compare Cordelia with her two atrocious sisters: indeed thousands of Goneril and Regan cannot cope up the testimony of only one Cordelia because of her innocent innovative mentality. Cordelia represents rationality but fixed with mysterious coolness, but Lear is misled by the force of falsehood of Goneril and Regan. Finally, if Cordelia is considered as a calm and mild hearted woman, Regan and Goneril are considered as King Lear's ultimate murderer.

In *Julius Caesar*, women characters are not that much preferred: but Portia, Brutus's wife and Caesar's wife Calphurnia both are portrayed as typical women of Elizabethan era. Calphurnia, a caring wife, who wants to save her husband from the upcoming assassination; but ironically Julius accepts the fatal law of his own destruction. Adjacent to Calphurnia, Portia is an unfold character. But beyond any doubt, she is brave enough to take any manly decision and this leads her to make terrific mistake like self-death. Indeed Portia has been afraid of Brutus's fatal destination, because after Julius's assassination Portia realized that it was her husband's diabolic activities and she said, "O I grow faint ... And bring me word what he (Brutus) doth say to thee (Lucius the servant)" (II.iv.43,46). Perhaps Portia always wants to see her husband as a loyal one to his nation, not as a traitor. And that is why it is better for Portia to grant self-death, rather than to face introversive 'criminal heroism' of Brutus; which hurts her heart with a whisper of a nameless fear. Finally, Portia becomes distressed and commits suicide by a horrific way: "filling her mouth with burning coals and keeping her lips together" (IV.iii.note). Portia shows her manly strength by her deadly deeds and by her words throughout her entire life once she felt proud about her father and husband and wants to be like them: "I grant I am a woman, but withal" (II.I.292).

Titus Andronicus also depicts a dying and dazzle blooded "republican Rome that has lost the ability to inspire its citizens, to behave virtuously." *Titus Andronicus*, a terrific revenge tragedy, where queen Tamora an elusive woman, who shows the vindicated margin of avenge full of horror and fear and has no mercy over man and matter. Towards King Titus, she hides her real face of revenge and finally shows blood bath exploitation over Titus' family. And in final portion of the play Lucius' declaration about the merciless offence of Titus' family: where entire world observe the end of the innocence and the beginning of merciless avenge over mankind and merciless punishment for Queen Tamora even after death: because of her relentless avenge full of ferocious crimes; she acts like a hungry tiger: "As for that ravenous tiger, Tamora,

No funeral in mourning weed,
No mournful bell shall ring her burial; (V.iii.195-198)

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, the earnest part is Cleopatra's death. Though suicide is known as cowards' act, her suicide approved her loyalty as a queen, as well as, a conqueror as a true lover. This death creates a climax for the total plot construction where Cleopatra's end is the metaphysical symbol of internal reunion of two incredible (Antony and Cleopatra) lovers.

In *Hamlet*, women's characters are not cruel rather mysterious. Queen Gertrude never performed like a cruel lady but somehow she becomes the wired reason for all the catastrophes happened in *Hamlet*.

Coriolanus is a patriotic drama, where Volumnia, a vigorous mother, sacrifices her son Coriolanus beyond any fear or sorrow for the purpose of her motherland. She declared that if she had "a dozen sons she had rather eleven die nobly for their country" (I.iii, 17, 19). Volumnia, a woman made of mighty patient and a lion-heart, shows the way of success over the verdict line of her life. Here, her ruthless defense gives her pleasure overlaps with danger and fame.

4.2. Mother: A Vindictive Cruel Hearted Personality:

Ironically, parents become children in their old age: it as a sort of natural riddle, where human being has no option – even an old father becomes a childlike parent to his young aged children. For example: in *King Lear*, the old king before distributing his kingdom to his daughters wants the assurance from them (his daughters), who might

love him most and give the best effort to carry the father's comfort; as we also find, "an old man is thrice a child" (*Hamlet*, II.ii, 384). However, King Lear ironically becomes a victim of flattery and suffers so deeply. In old age, man wants relaxation, happiness and pleasure in life and wants an assurance from reliable kinship. So, King Lear also desires happiness and trustworthy relation from his daughters. Beyond Cordelia, Lear wishes a motherly support from Goneril and Regan. But they were ruthless and the embodiment of inhuman identity. In old age, people become children to their sons and daughters; children become parents to their aged parents. Here, ironically in the most exact regarded support, King Lear makes a serious mistake by disbelieving Cordelia, who has been almost a motherly character. On the other hand, later on, when King Lear realized his mistake, he cursed his daughter Goneril:

"Ingratitude thou marble hearted fiend.

More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child

Than the sea-monster!" (I.iv,254-255)

"Lear is an aimless atom in a universe of aimless atoms. Man is heroic in these circumstances when, like Lear, he has the capacity to create a large self even out of the destructive element - to make his own meaning." (Heilman, 1984)

In *Macbeth*, we see, before killing King Duncan, Macbeth has been hesitant by doubts and fears. And Lady Macbeth tries to persuade him that, it is the 'golden ornament' or option of life. This night can be the highest courageous active time to fulfill Macbeth's desires. But Macbeth has had fear on the King's humble honesty and virtues which will speak piercingly in his defense to the complete world and denounce Macbeth's great flaw in murdering him. Pity in the form of a new born baby riding upon the storm discloses Macbeth's heinous crime to the whole world; though Macbeth has been much weak as a man to commit such a crime, as a woman, Lady Macbeth has had a determined guard to fulfill her fancy. Here she says:

"I would like the poor cat wanted to eat fish, but didn't want to get her paws wet by dipping them into the water to catch the fish" (Roderick, 40).

"Does unmake you. I have given suck, and know

how tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me-

I would, while it was smiling in my face,

Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums

And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn

As you have done to this. (I.vii.54-59)

Critics have sometimes wondered, how many children Lady Macbeth had and what happened to them. Most probably, as an atrocious mother, these children are the signs of her cruel murdering and seems to her as a sacrifice to her unreadable furious mind. Even for this crime (murdering King Duncan) she forced her husband to show his masculine power and finally to prove himself as 'a man': and he becomes a beast or strives to become either a god or a demon. All these are unnatural distortions of his proper human nature in the "Doctrine of the Chain of Being", everyone had their place in the ordered system if any one tried to raise too high, he would fall below his human position into bestiality.

We find, Lady Macbeth wishes to be an evil one by rejecting her motherly natural to gain the power of crown:

"Come, you spirits

That tend on mortal thoughts unsex me here,

And fill me, from the crown to the toe top -full

Of direct cruelty! make thick my blood; (I.v,40-43)

She prays to those powers of evil which inspire human beings with thoughts of wickedness to take away from her the weakness of a woman. She wants to let womanly softness fill from top to bottom with bloody thoughts, and she makes her mind insensitive to pity and kindness. Breastfeeding is a natural gift to a mother like a lifesaver to a child, which here Lady Macbeth activates for her evil wishes to gain her subject. She becomes an absurd mother, who can murder her own child to protect her ambition, she forgets to have mercy on a child as a mother and totally loses her identity as a human being and denies the order of God by destroying His creature and becomes a beast.

In *Titus Andronicus*, Queen Tamora, a revengeful mother, confirms her inmost bottomless zeal to avenge over the sacrifice of her eldest son, done by Titus. She becomes an endless pile to villainy and vengeance constructed as she says: "I'll find a day to massacre them all," and finally she raises her vengeance in her heart and though she is a mother, she overcomes the harmony of motherhood faculty and dresses herself as a 'barbarous Tamora' inspiring her sons to outrage Lavinia, her step-daughter. Here, though Tamora is a step-mother, she takes the most unbelievably toughest and cruelest revenge against Lavinia. The following lines are the textual references on her (Tamora) vindictive performance: (Lavinia, Tamora, Chiron, Demetrius)

"Tam: Lascivious Goth, and all the bitterest terms
That ever ear did hear to such effect:
And had you not by wondrous fortune come,
This vengeance on me had they executed,
Revenge it as you love your mother's life
Or be ye not henceforth call'd my children." (II.iii.110-115)

4.3. Mother: A Victim of Situational Interaction:

Human being can do so many work during his survival and even can take so many actions to control his life, but they do not have any control over time and fate. Here life is an adventure based on situation or atmosphere where,

"Our wills and fates do so contrary run
That our devices still are overthrown.
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own." (Hamlet, III.ii, 221-223)

Hamlet shows how life has been trapped by situation and even creates a monstrous face of a dearly mother like Hamlet's mother: although it is true that Hamlet's mother married King Claudius after her first husband's death, she has always been soft and a motherly one to Hamlet. Towards Hamlet, her greater crime is her marriage and about this marriage Hamlet's comment is: "I am the man whose mother married his uncle who murdered his father" (Bloom, 1998).

Hamlet knows from the beginning that his mother has not done anything to murder his father but it is his high apathy that his mother stays with King Claudius as a wife or as a bed partner, and as a son Hamlet never accepts this marriage, from which we can identify Queen Gertrude as a victim mother of 'Oedipus complex'.

"It is very difficult to generalize about Hamlet, because every observation will have to admit its opposite. He is the paradigm of grief, yet he expresses mourning by an extraordinary verve, and his continuous wit gives the pragmatic effect of making him seem endlessly high spirited, even as he mourns for his father's death and nevertheless the question of human existence and human survival is the center of Hamlet's heart, and this burning question has an unpredictable answer of fullness and an emptiness playing off against each other in our life cycle" (Bloom, 1998).

In *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo's mother Lady Montague is measured as a mother, who is a prey of situational interaction. In this tragic play, only Lady Montague is a mother, who fulfils the entire strategy of a true mother. She is fretful about her son, whom she apparently loves very much. She dies of grief at Romeo's deport, without ever knowing the superior source for desolation that follows his (Romeo's) arrival. After Lady Montague's death, Romeo's father Old Montague comes to Prince and with a frustrated voice declares the message of Romeo's mother's expiring:

"Alas my liege, my wife is dead tonight .Grief of my son's exile hath stopped her breath." (*Romeo and Juliet*, V.iii, 209-211)

About Volumnia in *Coriolanus*, the heroic mother of the heroic son Coriolanus, the rhythm of the Romans, has been put into great grief when the son exiles from Rome and joins Volscian's army that has enmity with the Roman people. Now, to save the kingdom, Volumnia first becomes a saver of the Romans, and then she meets her son Coriolanus as a mother: and to save her land she performed here, as a messenger from Rome and attempts her level best to convince him (Coriolanus) not to fight against Rome. Here, situation makes her so spick and span that even a mother bows her own son to secure her origin. And Coriolanus becomes a helpless one, who just loves and honors his mother blindly and says: "My mother bows, as if Olympus to a molehill should in supplication nod," (V.iii, 29-31)

Here, both mother and son are compiled to face the situation and become the victim of time and fate. To forgive the Romans, Volumnia the most decent mother of the world bows towards her son Coriolanus. As a mother, Volumnia kneels before Coriolanus: what an unnatural and difficult gesture for parent! But as a dutiful citizen, Volumnia does her best; and she firstly thinks that Coriolanus is a soldier and then he is a brave son to a dearest mother; even though she knows, if Coriolanus runs to save his homeland, beyond any doubts he will die and Volumnia will lose her valiant child forever. But only for the pledge of her country and her people, she is ready to make this sacrifice, even though it is her only one lion-hearted son, Coriolanus.

4.4. Mother: A Demo of Realistic Philosopher:

A mother can create thousands of ways to save a child's life; or she can show her child the ways of survival; even to take hard decision for life support, a mother can attach her teaching to her child in an artistic way, where a mother can be a demo as a realistic philosopher. Here, the child is just like a raw material of nature and the mother, the teacher to teach from the aid of nature. For example: in *Macbeth*, when Lady Macduff realized that there is no hope for her husband's return, she informed her son about his father in a natural and in a realistic way that if his father is no more, how he will survive in this world:

"Lady Macduff:Your father's dead,
And what will you do now? How will you live?
Son: As bird do mother" (iv.ii.30-31).

4.5. Motherhood: Presentation of Different Taste and Approaches:

Motherhood characteristics are prevailing with dynamic views in Shakespearean tragedies. Here, lack of womanly inheritance refuses the natural innate sense of a mother, but untimely it has a fervent and cognate motherly attachment in different motives; for example, Lady Macbeth wishes to be an 'unsex' human so that she could not have an effect of humanity, not as a women, nor as a mother, because Lady Macbeth wants to enforce her rhythm with evil force to increase her power to kill King Duncan, finally to encourage Macbeth to murder the King. Before that crime, Macbeth imagines Lady Macbeth as a mother to infants sharing her rigidity and envisions her as male and

then reconstitutes himself as the indestructible male infant of such a mother. Here, Macbeth attempts to categorize masculine individuality from his wife with spilt-of-bad-mother, which fantasized Lady Macbeth's manliness or 'equation of masculinity' and 'aggression' of her human quality from her heart.

In *Othello*, motherly characteristics appear as a magical tone from a different perspective: here Othello's mother gives him a miracle handkerchief and says to give this gift to her daughter-in-law. After losing that handkerchief, we get a speech starting with "That's a fault" by Othello; Othello takes over trust from his wife; it is an irrational imagination which has no particular defense through reality, somehow, it is Othello's blind love to his mother, where his mother just told him the history of that handkerchief, but she never says that, if her daughter-in-law ever loses it, that becomes a proof of her losing chastity. But beyond any rational ideology Othello makes a miracle imagination on his mind in reality: when Iago, a false friend takes this weakness and constructs a plot of conspiracy over Desdemona and Othello's peaceful life; where this handkerchief becomes a 'black shadow of monster' by the name of mother's blessing and destroys the fortune of Desdemona in Othello's hand.

In *King Lear*, just before Lear rushes out into the blizzard, he implores to the absent gods to touch him with dignified fury: "let not women's weapons water drops/Stain (his) man's cheeks" (2.4.278-80). He attempts to assemble masculine rage against Cordelia, but Lear cannot sustain his anger and in the end, after his great rage has passed, he dissolves mercifully into relationship with the mother he has made of Cordelia. The drive towards masculine autonomy diverted in him is in effect deleted, which becomes the standard bearer for masculinity as he orders Cordelia's death." (Miola, 2004, pp. 293-294)

The Nurse of Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* is talkative and she loves Juliet very much, partly a substitute for her own daughter Susan, who died as a baby. She has a naturalness of sex and childbirth. This emphasizes a realistic attitude to love, as a mother, but Juliet's own mother Lady Capulet does not have that much attachment with her daughter; she is empty of any real feelings; as a result she becomes an artificial mother and the nurse as a substitute mother to Juliet.

In *Antony and Cleopatra*, Cleopatra, the Queen of Egypt once announces, "I am fire and air," meaning, human made from four basic natural elements - air, fire, water, earth; from these four elements man is made of air and fire causing in them to have extreme wrath and psychologically unstable sometimes in furry time. And women are made from water and earth; so they are naturally soft and emotional and take passion in tough time. But Cleopatra is an aggressive lady, who always just runs for Antony's love and has love for political power.

Queen Gertrude in the play, *Hamlet*, loves her son Hamlet, but in sound way and for the purpose of remarriage she becomes fixing up her words and her motherly love becomes pale.

Queen Tamora in *Titus Andronicus* is an embodiment of a malicious vengeful cunning mother, who demolishes the Titus family by crucial actions: rape, chopping of limbs and murdering; but as a mother or as a human being she does not show any mercy and finally unwittingly eating her death sons' flesh. Her terrific cruelties review the evil force lying in a mother's heart in an unlimited range.

5. Concluding Remarks:

In this universe perhaps mother's arm is the most safe and sound place for a child. But in Shakespeare's tragedies deplorably mother-child relationship even becomes antagonistic especially, in *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Coriolanus*, and

in *Romeo and Juliet*. Shakespeare reveals the dynamic version of motherly figures to amplify the dramatic motivation of womanly characters in an exclusive way. This paper has dealt with the implicit creation of motherly injustice towards their offspring, which sets on the lacking of affection enfold with the tributary of situational irony, misunderstanding, high temper, rapid decision taking, relational gap, revengeful catastrophe, etc. This paper ultimately aims at conveying the inhuman constriction of womanly characters, which are inherently equivalent to the rejection of motherly love in Shakespearean penmanship, moreover also forces on the vigorous pessimistic philosophy of Shakespeare towards mothers belonging to his perspective on woman as the second gender.

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