

Balance of Emotions and Logical Impulses: A Comparative Study of Biblical and Shakespearean Women Characters

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Abstract: All tongues speak of the world's greatest playwright Shakespeare. He is a dramatist of all times and ages. He has created a history by carrying the reputation in language and literature. His plays enable the readers to have an insight through life's challenges. It voices emotions and intense feelings. Emotions are an integral part of our lives. This world takes us to meet millions of people carrying different emotions and impulses. The universe induces us to take decisions depending on our emotions either good or bad. We are categorized what we are with all the desirable options staring into our souls. The reinforcement of these emotions decides our destiny. Our experiences with the human psyche of various minds help us to explore interesting applications of human behavior. People come from different proportions having various experiences and that acts as a catalyst to decision taking. As all human brains have an emotional and logical side, it helps us to discover who we are and thus assists us to 'embark upon a journey of the mind, heart and soul'.

1.1 Lady Macbeth vs Jezebel

Lady Macbeth is a duchess of emotions. Her emotions lead her to play with her inner conscience. Her emotional wave travels through her brain that induces her to strive hard for the materialistic victory of her husband. Emotions lead to imagination as well. Imagination leads to intellectual thinking and intelligence paves way to take decisions, either evil or bad. Lady Macbeth is a villainous character. She is immersed in thoughts to make her husband victorious. She carefully deals every move of her ambition to make her husband Macbeth a king. This play proves that she is ambitious only for the sake of her husband. She is a backbone to his victory of becoming a king. Her emotions make her strong and her strong will shows the strength of a woman. Even though her emotions and thoughts rule her she knows to control her tantrums and to keep her nerves at place. Firstly, she plans the murder of King Duncan with her husband. This very idea of murdering Duncan emerges first only in the mind of Lady Macbeth even before her husband. She understands the fact that only her initiative would make this matter successful.

The raven himself is hoarse
The croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
Under my battlements. Come, you spirits,
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top full

Of directly cruelty! make thick my blood (Lear 1003)

These lines are a prayer to the 'spirits that tend of mortal thoughts'. She is a woman of vigour and strong will who never turns back once she decides. She is clear in her vision to accomplish whatever she desires. She invokes to the power of immortal thoughts of evil that she may become masculine (unsex) forgetting her feminine qualities and to commit the deed of murdering King Duncan. Her impulse of heinous thoughts leads her to encourage her husband to perform this act of murder. She feels contented that she has done a task in favour of her husband. Lady Macbeth cannot be portrayed as a devilish woman. It is her inert love for her husband that induces her to such a crime. Than anyone, it is her who knows her husband well that he is ambitious but does not have the shrewdness and

strength to achieve his thoughts. Emotions can make a woman superior and inferior as well. Before committing the murder, Lady Macbeth seems superior in all that she does. Every move of her plan makes her confident and superior. She is unaware of the fact that decisions leading to her downfall is lying in wait for her.

These lines can be applicable to the character of Lady Macbeth who can sacrifice anything and everything for the love for her husband. Love prompts her to accept more than what a woman can accomplish. Her willingness to forget herself as a woman pictures how much she loves him. After the murder is committed she sinks into loneliness and depression. She lacks sleep and groans with anguish. She understands that even "all great Neptune's ocean" would not wash or clean the stain of blood from her hands. This sense of guilt provokes her to commit suicide.

The character of Jezebel in the holy Bible, like Lady Macbeth leads to the downfall of her king. She is dominant and encourages her husband to go against the will of God. Her evil thoughts persuade him to do fatal deeds. She is not a woman of chastity but with arrogance and pride she seizes the opportunity of sharing the throne of a king. Ahab blindly lends ears to his wife's desires that push him down from being a blessing to a curse. Edward B Coe writes that she is the 'Lady Macbeth of Hebrew History'. She is invested upon with some extraordinary force and character which appals 'fate with a tragic grandeur which belongs to no other woman in the Bible'. Like Lady Macbeth she also possesses intellect and strong will. She uses this strength of her character to destroy the king and also her generations. King Ahab seems to be 'nothing' to his domineering wife. He is a worthless and spineless and so she is overpowering and fraudulent in all her ways.

Thus Lady Macbeth and Queen Jezebel can be called twins belonging to the 'corrupt tree' with no fruits but rotten roots bearing treacherous branches and trees.

1.2 Cordelia vs Ruth

King Lear stands as an example of how emotions of women play a vital role. The emotions of Goneril and Regan contrast with the emotions of Cordelia. In the opening scene, we

can see how King Lear rates the love of his daughter according to the emotional utterances of his daughters. The words of Goneril and Regan vary from their emotions. They are ready to utter anything to please their father. They win over his heart using glossy emotional languages even though their emotions vary at heart. Goneril says that her she loves her father more than “Words can wield the matter, dearer than eyesight.” Goneril and Regan have a ‘glib and oily art’ to confess their ‘hypocritical professions of love’. It seems like a contest to win the best part of their father’s kingdom. Goneril and Regan gain the best part of the kingdom. Next, King Lear invites Cordelia to present herself. He addresses Cordelia as ‘his joy’ because he loves her more than the other two. He is shocked to hear her say “Nothing, my Lord” to this he answers “Nothing will come out of nothing”. This line portrays the expectation of flattery from a father. A father here doesn’t understand the love of his lovable daughter who loves him truly. Flattery makes him blind. Even though Cordelia’s heart is filled with emotions of love, she is unable to put it in word. Many a times emotions can only be felt not expressed. Cordelia is an example here. Lear offers her a second chance, she beautifully utters the truth that she loves her father ‘according to my bond, no more, no less’. This makes King Lear furious as he expects to be flattered more by her. Lear, outbursts his temper and calls her ‘untender’ and treats her as a stranger. As a result he divides the kingdom between his two daughters Goneril and Regan. King Lear fails to understand his daughter who is “most rich, but poor” but king of France who loves her is happy to accept her, who is an embodiment of virtues.

King Lear’s emotions are brought out in the last two acts. Lear is outraged by his two daughters Goneril and Regan. He suffers from the greatest ‘storm’ of having cheated by his daughters. He understands the true nature of his daughters and calls them ‘tigers’ and not ‘daughters’. Shakespeare powerfully portrays the psychological disturbances happening in the inner self of King Lear. His mental agony shoots up to the level of making him insane. ‘The emotional strain’ converts Lear into ‘real madness’. Charles Lamb says about King Lear’s passion that they are terrible as volcano: they are storms turning up disclosing to the bottom that sea, his mind with all its richness. It is his mind, which is laid base. Dr. Bucknill also points out that

Intellectual energy may indeed, sometimes be seen to grow stronger under the greatest trials of life but never when the result of these trials is mental disease. So far as eloquence is the result of passion, excitement of passion may stimulate its display and it is remarkable that so long as Lear retains the least control over his passion, his imagination remains comparatively dull, his eloquence tame(Bucknill 164).

King Lear is in his madness. As a result of his wrath, he stands helpless and is incapable of ruling, though being a king. His decision taken at the moment of anger strips him from his throne and makes him impotent though potent, powerless though powerful. He feels that even his dogs have turned against him. His only companion till the very end is none other than his faithful fool. He regrets for having done injustice during his days of wealth and prosperity. His days of pain and sorrow teach him at the end of the play. His desire is to be with Cordelia till his end, but when she dies, his emotions are so attached to him that he also enters into the resting place where she is.

Emotions play a vital role in the play King Lear. Cordelia is an embodiment of innocence, love and sacrifice.

Even though she is devastated, she comes back to her father to render love and help. she is a chaste and upright woman with clear conscience, being hurt she does not turn this kind of behaviour of her father into vengeance, but treats him with love, gives him shelter and care. She gives him everything though he gives her nothing. Love conquers all.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres (1 Corinthians 13: 4,5,6,7).

This biblical quote reflects the inner self of Cordelia.

The character of Ruth in the Holy Bible mirrors the character of Cordelia in King Lear. Ruth is a Moabite woman and the protagonist of the book ‘Ruth’ in the bible. She stays with her mother-in-law Naomi, who has lost her sons where one of them returns to their home. Naomi pours out her heart and weeps, then Orpah, the other daughter-in-law “Kisses her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth clung to her’. Ruth seems to be a character full of love having an angelic heart. She is clean in mind and unblemished. She decides to stay with her mother-in-law all her life. She replies

Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me (Ruth1: 16,17).

She is affectionate, truthful and blameless which ought to be the characteristic traits of a noble woman. She is an obedient and pleasing personality like Cordelia. She finds favour in the eyes of God and as a result she rises from ashes to riches. She is an open-minded person who shares every move that happens with Boaz to her in the field. She is serene woman with patience and endurance.

Naomi is worried that Ruth might find a ‘home’ to dwell all her life. So she advises Ruth to meet Boaz at the threshing floor. She never resists instead obeys every word given by Naomi to her. This shows her adoration she has towards her mother-in-law. She just answers ‘I will do whatever you say’. She finds favour in the heart of Boaz who is also flawless and God-fearing. At the end of the story, the way she is blessed by God, elders and the readers is appealing to the readers. The elders around her say “We are witness. May the Lord make the woman who is coming into your home like Rachael and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel”. Her life does not stop just by receiving blessings from God but also is a blessing to all especially to Naomi whom she loves. Her heart’s desire is fulfilled, where she gives bring to a son and it is Naomi who rears him up. She hails to be blessed enough to be the great grandmother of King David who creates a history in the Bible. Thus, when a woman is tender footed, innocent as a dove, angelical in her ways and clean as lily-white, her every steps are ordered, gives delight, receives blessing and turns out to be a blessing to the world.

This paper focuses on the different emotions a woman exhibits. Lady Macbeth being an evil doer is portrays as wicked. Her thoughts are haunted with evil thoughts to make her husband as a king. Queen Jezebel, a woman of wickedness is no ordinary women but a strong-minded idolatrous woman with vigour and force to accomplish her deeds. In contrast to Lady Macbeth and Jezebel are the characters of Cordelia and Ruth.

Both are called to be innocent and charming; adorned with honesty and integrity. They are virtuous and represent angelic deeds and God's goodness.

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