

Analysis of Shakespeare's Lear's regeneration in *King Lear*

Nur Lailatur Rofiah

English Literature Department, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Gresik

ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to describe: 1) The character of Lear in Shakespeare's King Lear, 2) How Lear gains the regeneration and self education about his environment, 3) Assessing the divine dispensation in Lear's tragedy.

This research is qualitative method. Qualitative method is a research procedure that results in description data in the form of words. The data of this research is King Lear a play by Shakespeare. This research used intrinsic approach. Technique of collecting data is used by reading the play and analyzing the play. The technique of analyzing data is using content analysis of three elements, which are reading the data, presenting data and analyzing.

Based on the result of the research can be concluded: 1) Lear's character win the initial play was arrogant, self-deceived, and powerful. 2) Lear struggles to gain the education of his environment must undergo several predicaments in his life including betrayal by his own daughter, expelled from his kingdom, going madness and exposed through the storm. 3)

Keywords: *Shakespeare, Drama, Tragedy, King Lear, Regeneration*

BACKGROUND

Shakespeare is the most influential writer in English Literature. Shakespeare wrote *King Lear* around 1905. *King Lear* is one of the most important tragedies by Shakespeare including *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *The Winter's Tale*. It is also famously called as *The tragedy of King Lear*. The play is derived from the British legend *Leir of Britain*. The story is about the tragedy of a king who wants to share his realms for his three daughters based on the love contest among them. She who is able to express her love beautifully shall get the largest bounty. Alas, Lear was deceived by the oily art of his two daughters and disowns Cordelia, the daughter who loves him the most. Lear inability to see under the surface and his unawareness brings him to several predicaments in his old age, including madness. But despite is his old age, Lear emerges become the new Lear in the last act and gain the regeneration. It is

interesting to trace the how he gain the self education, realization of his environment.

The research contributes the study about tragedy of a king who falls into the level of tramp. This research attempts to analyze how a person gains a self realization of all his mistakes and admits them. It also exposes the journey to gain purity and salvation through the mental and physical torture from his surroundings. It makes us aware the importance of rethinking in every decision person made, and not to take decision in state of anger.

RESEARCH METHODE

The instrument of this research is the author herself as the subject of the study by reading and understanding he references which support this research. The author herself will collect the data as well as analyze the data. The approach that used for this research is intrinsic approach. The author used literary approach.

The researcher used qualitative method in this research. The data is analyzed directly and the research is taken from a play by Shakespeare, entitled *King Lear*. In qualitative research, it is focus in obtaining a truthful description. The truthful description is from the problem or situation in the play *King Lear*. The researcher will describe the problem in the play.

DISCUSSION

King Lear, A tragedy by Shakespeare, was firstly performed on 26 December 1606. The play is not only tragedy of parents and children, of pride and ingratitude; it is also a tragedy of kingship. Wilson Knight calls it as a tragic vision of humanity in its complexity, its interplay purpose, and its travailing evolution.

In the first scene of the play Lear enters the stage with a great fanfare and pomp of power, with all his majesty; pride, proud and arrogance assert his highness and greatness of a king. Lear talks on map of his kingdom, and his “Darker purpose”, there is dramatic irony in this word as the play moves later on his kingdom, he publishes his will to “Unburthen’d crawl toward death” and transfer the power to the young to prevent the “future strife” discord, conflict and war amongst his three daughters (Goneril, Regan and Cordelia) after his death. He wants to divide his kingdom to the daughter on the basis of stupid love contest in which his daughters have to take apart.

Lear disowns Cordelia when she refuses to submit to the irrationality of Lear order to barter her love for material profit and banishes Kent as well, who dares to come between the “Dragon and his wrath” shows the Patriarchal and Machiavellianism hegemony on a parent and a king. Kent calls Lear “Hiedeous Rashness” On contrary, Lear allows himself to be deceived by the “oily art”

word of the two daughters thus make Lear commits sin and initiate the spring of tragedy. He considers that his decision is the mirror of the Gods’s order shows Lear’s lack knowledge both self and environment “Thou swear’st thy Gods in vain”. His concept of the division of the kingdom and his concept of religious consciousness are misdirected. He doesn’t realize that after sharing his kingdom he is a king no more. There is no king without power and authority.

“Tis the infirmity of his age; yet he hath ever but

slenderly known himself.

-I.i L.293-4

When Lear decides to lie under the protection of his two daughters, he becomes the victim of neglectness and being treated as not a king when Goneril thinking the safety of her own and kingdom, thus Lear thinks that “the world is sleep”. From this scene now on, Lear must endure the consequences and become the part of the unwanted by his two daughters and he cannot change the condition. Fool gives the comment of Lear’s environment as in the state of “Darkling” and he is a mere “Lear’s shadow”.

The cruelty of Goneril and Regan makes Lear admits that he does sin by disowning Cordelia and banishing Kent. Lear moves toward madness is not sudden but gradual. Apart from his own action, his daughters also contribute the major consequence of his suffering. He keeps on struggling to invoke the Gods to keep him sane but Fool’s comments accelerate Lear’s madness. Prof. Sohail Ahsan in his Thesis had a notion, If Lear would come to awareness, then he must pass the “cycle of experience”; physically, mentally step by step his mind is forced by the Evil forces to move him to mental instability.

“The Gods are just, and of our pleasant vices

Make instrument to plague us”
V.iii L.170-1

Hielman said this madness as the Expiatory phase, madness also the symbol of disorder and distraught world where expectancies are defeated and norms contemned; it is and it signifies a “breach in nature”. Here it collaborates with the storm: these two phenomena so often thought of as existing primarily in relationship to each other are actually most important in their common function as indicates the spiritual state of the world.

A voyage to realization begins when Lear starts able to see below the surface and realize the difference among his daughters. His sorrow is due to his realization that both children are alike. He is forced by reality when he sees his deputy, Kent is put on stock by Regan and Cornwall. The voyage of the physical suffering also started when he begs Regan for physical need “raiment, bed and food” but if man just concern on the physical need without concerning on spiritual knowledge then “Men’s life is as cheap as a beast” contradict Hamlet’s “What a piece of art is a man” Lear begs to the Gods for giving him patient.

In the trial scene, Lear caused by the hardness of heart concerned with the retributive justice, just to make their subject equal, to punish his two daughters he invokes the Gods to destroy the creative machinery to be destroyed which is created evil.

“Crack nature’s mould, all germens spill at once

That makes ingrateful man!
III.ii L8-9

But losing patient just make man closer to despair and gain nothing except suffering and it is regarded as sin. Later he appears

in the stage of self- knowledge that he was being flattered by his two daughters. Since men all are miserable sinner, they have right to be forgiven. Lear has gained the right religious correspondence between the macrocosm and microcosm.

Lear is moving toward knowledge through a slow painful process; he will be awakened to the reality and true need of man away from his kingship. He takes the protection of nature when the Evil is dominating his world. He falls to the stormy heath by nonetheless of his daughters, the two daughters thus become the concrete symbol of Evil. Storm in one level is not only the symbol of divine wrath and symbol of the disorder but also an instrument for man to make man towards enlightenment. The person who will be exposed to such storm will be awakened. In the storm, Lear learns “the art of our necessities” and become aware of the humanity.

“My wit began to turn,
come on, my boy. How dost, my boy? Art cold?

I am cold myself. Where is this straw, my fellow?

The art of our necessities is strange and can make vile things precious.

Come , your hovel”

III.ii L.68-72

“Prithee, go in thyself; seek thine own ease:

This tempest will not give me leave to ponder

On things would hurt me more. But I’ll go in.

[to the Fool] in, boy: go first. You houseless poverty

II.iv L.23-26

Through madness and storm, unnatural suffering, Lear achieves new regeneration. Gods has given him to some other high place. He is now able to define the right and wrong, the goods and the

evils. The mythical concept of storm that if the new structure is to be built, the old needs to be destroyed, same with Lear has emerged become a new configuration after being subject to the storm. Kenneth Muir said, the old Lear died in the storm. The new Lear is born in the scene in which he is reunited with Cordelia. His madness marked the end of the willful, egotistical monarch. He is resurrected as a fully human being.

“You do me wrong to take me out of the grave”

IV.vii L.45

The three moments of Lear’s development to the new configuration according to Bradley’s theory are – his recognition of error, his compassion for the poor, and his kneeling to Cordelia. The reunited between Lear and Cordelia become the symbol of Lear’s Salvation as Cordelia is the symbol of love, she is a Christ like figure. Cordelia gives back his title as “King” his “Kingdom” and “Put fresh garment” as imagery of the spiritual image, new configuration being and suggest of a change. He comes in the sense of amid music. Music is the essential part of cosmic set up. Suggest of order, harmony, symbolically to tranquility from disorder to order.

Lear has gained the ripeness, that is to understand right or wrong to sustain even if his suffering are in the highest order. Lear moves from one suffering to another. Even when Evil is on ascendant and Good maybe defeated but Gods give

References:

- Thesis : Divine dispensation in King Lear and the last plays of Shakespeare, Sohail Ahsan, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. 1984
- King Lear, 8th Ed by Kenneth Muir, The Arden Shakespeare. London, 1967
- This Great Stage, Hielman, R.B, University of Washington Press. USA, 1963
- The Wheel of Fire; Chapter: The *Lear* Universe by G. Wilson Knight, Routledge, 2001

the capacity to man to endure which is part and parcel of the divine plan. That is the concluding comment by Edgar :

“Men must endure

Their going hence, even as their coming hither:

Ripeness is all”

V.iii

L.9-11

CONCLUSION

Most of Shakespeare’s Drama adapted from the Britain. *King Lear* portrays the gradual journey of the king into madness and the acknowledgement of his surroundings. Lear’s predicament starts from his stupid love contest, disowns Cordelia, deserted by his two daughters, this mental torture from his beloved children caused his madness, which is different from the madness of *Hamlet*. Not enough until here, he is exposed physically in to physical torture of the rain, storm and thunder. There he starts to understand the meaning of Universal compassion and sharing to the human being. He also gains the self education about his past mistakes to disown Cordelia. Lear’s reunion with Cordelia indicates his salvation since Cordelia is considered as Christ’s figure-like . In Lear’s journey, we cannot dispose the supernatural influences either it comes from the pagan Elizabethan belief or the divine dispensation in Lear’s progress.