



## Reconstructing Gender Dynamics: Exploring Father-Daughter Relationships through a Feminist Lens in Shakespeare's 'King Lear'

Muhammad Sanaullah Khan<sup>1</sup> Memona Mujahid<sup>2</sup> Dr. Saralah Devi<sup>3</sup>

### ARTICLE DETAILS

**History**

**Revised format:**

Nov, 2020

**Available Online:**

Dec, 2020

**Keywords**

Feminism, Father-Daughter Relationship, Gender Dynamics, Shakespeare, King Lear

### ABSTRACT

This research conducts a feminist analysis of Shakespeare's renowned play, 'King Lear,' delving into the intricate dynamics of father-daughter relationships during the patriarchal culture of the sixteenth century. The study adopts a qualitative paradigm and utilizes a non-random sampling technique to select a suitable sample for analysis. Employing feminist literary theory, the study focuses on specific dialogues between King Lear and his daughters to unravel the underlying nature of their relationship. The paper provides ample context and background, incorporating insights from psychoanalysis and previous feminist works. Shakespeare portrays the father as an authoritarian and cruel figure who becomes submissive and vulnerable once he relinquishes power to his daughters. Likewise, the daughters, empowered by their newfound authority over the kingdom, exhibit tyrannical tendencies. Through a detailed analysis of the father-daughter bond, the study reveals the abusive nature of their relationship, devoid of genuine love and filial duties, and primarily driven by the dynamics of authority and power. Moreover, this study sheds light on Shakespeare's balanced gender perspectives. However, it is important to note that the study is limited to the main plot of the play, overlooking the interconnected subplot. Future researchers are encouraged to include both plots in their analysis, offering a comprehensive feminist examination of 'King Lear.'

<sup>1</sup> M.Phil Qualified from the Department of English Institute of Southern Punjab, Multan

[sanaullahkhan274@yahoo.com](mailto:sanaullahkhan274@yahoo.com)

<sup>2</sup> Memona Mujahid, M.Phil Qualified from the Department of English Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan.

[Memona786ma@gmail.com](mailto:Memona786ma@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup> Dr. Saralah Devi, Associate Professor, School of Applied Psychology, Social Work and Policy, Universiti Utara Malaysia. [devi@uum.edu.my](mailto:devi@uum.edu.my)

### Introduction

This study delves into the application of feminism in Renaissance literature, specifically focusing on women

and their struggles during the 16th century. It examines Shakespeare's portrayal of female characters in a patriarchal society and explores the dynamics of their relationships with figures of authority such as fathers, brothers, and husbands. During the Elizabethan era, women's roles were largely confined to domestic affairs, with their authority transitioning from their parents to their husbands upon marriage. Motherhood and being a housewife were the prescribed roles for women, while the dominant patriarchal system considered them the "weaker sex" with limited access to education. In this society, women were expected to embody specific traits dictated by men, including purity, silence, modesty, reticence, solemnity, and compliance. Conforming to these gender roles was deemed "good" within the patriarchal framework, denying women independence and recognition as individual human beings. The belief in women's inferiority stemmed from sexism, considering them less powerful, resilient, practical, and analytical, thus excluding them from decision-making positions. These gender categories were deeply ingrained in society's collective mindset, influencing both men and women in their behavior and choices.

The research focuses on analyzing the portrayal of female characters in Shakespeare's play, *King Lear*, and examining their relationships with their fathers. By studying the characters' language and interactions, the nature of their bonds can be better understood, shedding light on the roles of women in a patriarchal society. Women have been marginalized since the ages. Women have not been allowed in the decision making of the home, they have been highly marginalized to their motherhood and domestic affairs but the writing of Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792 *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* and the motto of French Revolution from 1789 to 1792 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity' set up a platform for the demands of equal rights, treatment and opportunities in the social, political, cultural and economic world for women. Half of the generation of men from the world has been cleaned up in the destruction of world wars and the rest have been busy in defending their countries on the battlefield. Women have been left with nothing in their homes so, they decided to step up and started working outside their homes to bring money and food for their family. That was the time when they realized their potential and capabilities, and decided to raise their voices in their own favors. This gave rise to feminist movements. The terms 'Feminism' and 'Feminist' have not been quite popular until 1970s but they have been used earlier in the film, *Woman of the year* in 1942 by Katherine Hepburn. Feminist activists struggled to win the rights for women. For example, they discussed legal rights (contract, property, and voting), anatomical decency and volition rights, abortion, reproduction, protection from domestic violence, sexual harassment, and rape, workplace rights (including maternity leave and equal pay), and misogyny and sexism as well as other forms of discrimination against women based on their gender, race, or colour.

According to Louise Tyson, Feminist Literary Criticism is concerned with "*the ways in which literature reinforce or undermine the economic, social, and psychological oppression of women*". (Tyson, p. 82). Feminist criticism deals with how cultures are inherently patriarchal, how women are marginalized in the writings of male authors and their exclusion from the history of literature. Feminist literary criticism can be traced back to Geoffrey Chaucer's 'The Wife of Bath' but Simone de Beauvoir (1949) wrote that Christian de Pizan was the first woman who wrote in defense of her sex in the *Epistle to the God of Love* in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century.

Shakespeare is regarded as the most universal dramatist of all ages by critics. He belongs to the era of 16<sup>th</sup> century in which women have been highly marginalized from the creative activities of the society. Shakespeare

seems to be highly affected by the cultural norms and values of his era. He portrays the traditional assigned gender roles in his works but his style of writing and presenting the story gives him upper hand from the other contemporary writers. He portrays women in the best possible way he can. A man's experience is considered as a half experience. He cannot experience or understand the nature and feelings of women. His plays portray two types of women:

- Women, who are independent and refuse to be submissive to men and society.
- Women, who are dependent and submissive, bound to social roles, lesser beings and negative stereotypes.

After going through Shakespeare's works, it seems as he was also unaware of the workings of the psychic mechanism of women. So, Shakespeare's writings show his ambiguous understanding towards females. Sometimes, he presents females as submissive and in some of his works, he shows the brave, intelligent women in the disguise of men. According to feminist readings of Shakespeare, one fifth of his plays contain gender disguises to show that women are equally competent of men. There are some examples of cross dressing in his plays such as Viola in *Twelfth Night*, Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*, Julia in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and Rosalind in *As You Like it*.

### Literature Reviews

Many researchers from the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century focused on the feminist patriarchal themes while analyzing *King Lear*. Levin (1988) declares that the suffering of Lear and Cordelia is created by sex role behavior in the patriarchal society. He blames patriarchal society for shaping the mindsets negatively that leads to the tragic fall. Similarly, Rubio poses the question, "Are the female characters stereotyped in King Lear as demonized or sanctified women?" His study indicates that Shakespeare focuses on the effects of power redistribution. He claims that Shakespeare presented an anti-feminist perspective where there is no sound distinction between devilish and sanctified women. From the findings above, it is concluded that women are neither completely evil nor completely good; but something in between.

Furthermore, a few studies have been done to compare the women from different Shakespeare plays as well. Jajja (2014) in his article compares the famous tragedies of Shakespeare (Hamlet, Macbeth, King Lear, Antony and Cleopatra, and Romeo and Juliet) by using the theory of deconstructive Feminism. The analysis of the texts of five tragedies of Shakespeare has proved that his writings are full of the doctrine of patriarchy and the portrayal of his characters strengthens the social construction of male and female stereotypes.

However, Haniph (2017) in her study focuses on the misogynic actions of the male characters and their influence on the female characters. Women are portrayed as immoral and negative stereotypes in texts. In these tragedies, women lack true freedom and liberty, and males make all key decisions that affect their lives without ever consulting them. Kaiter (2015) in his research condemns Goneril and Regan and suggests that they could have gained power and rights of the country without belittling their father. But it seems a quite impossible for women in a father dominated society. He points out that Lear abuses his authority over Cordelia and, then,

needs forgiveness that threatens the balance of patriarchal structure.

Rebecca Cho (2008) in her article declares that parents and children owe each other and share some rights and responsibilities at various times throughout life. Edgar and Cordelia remain truthful and dutiful throughout their lives to serve their fathers. The research is carried out to reveal the balance in the personalities of Edgar and Cordelia who do not express their love and affection through words but their actions. Alan Lopez (2014) in his study indicated Cordelia as a remedy for her injured father which he brought on himself by his lack of discernment, but also the injury he inflicts upon that autonomy by giving everything in the hands of Goneril and Regan. This study also reveals that her forgiveness heals the injured party, the one who happens to be both father and sovereign.

Moreover, another study is carried out to imply the humanistic views of Shakespeare by employing feminist perspectives. Clegg (1994) asserts that individuality is the enemy of any routine system like patriarchal rule. The researcher indicates that Lear selfishly tries to keep Cordelia from developing her sense of thought and power but her individuality shows in her language, ideas and actions. The researcher tries to imply that a woman can't be independent without being perceived as spiritless and hard hearted. The findings of the research suggest that Shakespeare is not a feminist but a humanist who believes that a sinner can also receive favors.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Louise Tyson's (2006) feministic theory is applied in present study as a theoretical framework on some dialogues of the play King Lear. Feminist theory is concerned with the expulsion of women as being separate individuals. Women are oppressed by patriarchy, socially, economically, politically and psychologically. Feminists argue in their theories that it is mainly because of the dominance of patriarchy that women are considered lesser beings and different from men. Patriarchal ideology has its deep root in the religion where Eve is presented as the origin of sin and death into the world. Feminist theorists examine the writings of male authors that comprehensively show the gender discrimination through their portrayal of male and female characters. All feminist activities have the utmost goal to change the world by prompting gender equality.

There are some key terms and concepts which are widely used in feminism and these are patriarchy, traditional gender roles, objectification of women, sexism, masculinities, femininities, and language used about women and by women. Language is fundamental to gender inequality, and it contributes to the lack of power of women. Some derogatory terms and words such as slut, squirrel, fox, chick, and honey are used as a game to strangle women. Women have been used for the satisfaction of men's lust and considered as the sex objects and men's property. They are exploited in the hands of father and then are transferred to another man that is her husband. Both men undermine their abilities and use their power and authority to restrict them to their traditional gender roles. These restrictions of the gender roles are inherent in culture not in nature and they represent inequalities. These are some major concepts that have been applied in the analysis of the play.

The researcher has selected qualitative research methodology to analyze the 'King Lear' from feministic lens. The quotes have been chosen by the non-random sampling technique. This is a purposive sampling in which the researcher hand picks the sample according to a specific purpose he has in his mind. The focus of the study is to

explore the behavior and deep emotions of the main characters of the play with respect to their familial bonds and relationships.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

This study examines the father-daughter relationship in Shakespeare's play *King Lear*, focusing on authority, power, and love during the 16th-century Renaissance in England. From a feminist perspective, the analysis reveals a generational conflict between traditional hierarchical order and patriarchal authority upheld by the fathers, and the daughters' affirmation of progressive bonds based on individual trust and cooperation. The play revolves around King Lear and his three daughters: Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia. Set in 16th-century England, the play portrays the King as powerful and clever, but also reveals his vulnerable side. He uses authoritative language to assert his power over his daughters, reflecting the patriarchal society of the time. However, the daughters challenge their father's authority, leading to a severely damaged relationship characterized by a lack of communication, power struggles, and a thirst for individuality.

At the beginning of the play, King Lear decides to divide his kingdom among his daughters because he is old and unable to govern. He sets up a love test as a condition for their inheritance, expecting his daughters to express their love and obedience. Goneril and Regan manipulate their words to please their father and are rewarded with portions of the kingdom. In contrast, Cordelia fails to articulate her affection adequately, resulting in her being disinherited and deprived of her father's love and affection. King Lear sees her response as a challenge to his authority and believes she is not dutiful.

Shakespeare portrays Goneril and Regan as malicious characters, treating their father poorly, while Cordelia is depicted as virtuous, loving, and caring. King Lear fails to distinguish between genuine love and flattery, suggesting that he never had a close relationship with his daughters. KING LEAR: 'Goneril, Our eldest-born, speak first.' (Act I, scene 1, 54) 'Speak' is the word that shows power of the speaker, this is the basis for power in the play. The relationship between father and daughter is based on authority that is clearly shown by the language used by the king as a father of his daughters. His daughter thinks of love test as a golden opportunity to flatter his father and get rid of his power.

GONERIL:

'Sir, I love you more than words can wield the matter;

Dearer than eye-sight, space, and liberty;

Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare;

No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour;

As much as child e'er loved, or father found;

A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable;

Beyond all manner of so much I love you.' (60)

Goneril gives a long speech to butter up his father. She claims that words are unable to express her love for her father. She says that he is dearer to her than the light of her eyes, than the freedom of her actions, or anything rare in the world. She claims to love him as she loves life with all its generosity and bounties. His second daughter, Regan concurs with the same love that her sister shows for her father. She feels the same way as her sister but she adds a little twist by saying that Goneril's affection for her father, 'comes too short' in front of her. By articulating those words, she means that her love is even more less than her sister's.

REGAN:

'I profess

Myself an enemy to all other joys,

Which the most precious square of sense possesses;

And find I am alone felicitate

In your dear highness' love.' (75)

Her speech shows that she is even more greedy and sinister than her sister and her words are more artificial. She calls herself as an enemy to all other joys but she is an enemy of her own father. King Lear misinterprets the speeches of her two daughters and so both are rewarded with the large part of kingdom for being obedient and submissive. All the words or expressions that are used by Goneril show her flattered nature to deceive her father in order to gain kingdom, and more importantly power that is associated with higher position and wealth. Blindness is used as a metaphor here in the play; he is blind to the blatant hypocrisy of his two daughters. The relationship is fake out between the King Lear and his two daughters, Goneril and Regan.

CORDELIA:

'Nothing, my lord.'

KING LEAR

'Nothing!'

CORDELIA

'Nothing.'

KING LEAR

'Nothing will come of nothing: speak again.'

CORDELIA

‘Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave

My heart into my mouth: I love your majesty

According to my bond; nor more nor less.’ (90 )

Cordelia is asked to speak the words of love for her father as it is the order of the king. She is not supposed to go against him. She is no one to challenge him by saying ‘Nothing’. When she says nothing, it does not mean that she does not love him but loves him as where sweet talk and flannel is not needed. King gets shocked by hearing the words of Cordelia and asks again. She replies the same ‘Nothing’ because she is not that sort of girl who will use extravagant words to express her feelings. But king does not comprehend her true nature and gets angry in a spur of the moment. Cordelia’s refusal enrages him and this presents a picture of Lear’s poor capacity to deal with the relationships. ‘Nothing’ is seen as a metaphor here which shows that king understands nothing about his daughters. She talks about logic and reason that is not expected from the woman in the renaissance age. The women can only speak according to the wishes and thoughts of men. Her intellectual talk and logic enrage him more.

Through the lens of feminism, Lear’s assessment, from his patriarchal perspective is quite different. He cannot imagine a woman talking so confidently with reasons and logics but it is her own daughter who is doing this in front of him. It is difficult for him to comprehend this situation while living in a patriarchal society. Cordelia’s assessment of the situation is to be plenary veracious with her father when her sisters chose to be mendacious. As Lear loses power over Cordelia, the relationship between Cordelia and Lear ends here because power and parental relations are interweaved. The whole scenario presents the physical and psychological victimization of the feelings of women that affect in developing the true relationships with father.

KING LEAR: ‘Here I disclaim all my paternal care, Propinquity and property of blood, And as a stranger to my heart and me, Hold thee, from this, for ever.’ (115). Cordelia’s negative to flatter Lear can be interpreted as her opposition to his father’s authority. Cordelia replies with a reason to a love test but Lear unreasonably reacts by dismissing her from all the love, affection, property and parental care. He says that she is stranger to him. He is so annoyed by the response of his daughter that he can’t bear her in his own land. So, he calls for her suitors’ i.e, King of France and the Duke of Burgundy. The Duke of Burgundy rejects her without dowry. This is an example that shows that woman is seen as a commodity by man. Cordelia is not asked by her father whether she wants to get married or not. Marriage is forcefully imposed on daughters according to the wish of father.

Shakespeare has truly represented the features of his age. Cordelia clears herself before her suitors that she has not committed a serious crime but she has not the art of flattery. She does not have a pleasing tongue to plead others. Calm and independent nature of Cordelia is shown how she deals with the terrible situation in which she is all alone. She does not want an unsuitable partner for herself despite being deprived of all love and worldly matters. Real feelings and emotions matter to her the most. She does not let her mind loose in the difficult situation. She handles the matter carefully and tackles the things with open mindedness and broad heart. She

challenges the patriarchal values by rejecting Burgundy on her own behalf.

CORDELIA: 'Peace be with Burgundy! I shall not be his wife.' (250). But King of France sees the beauty of her inner nature and accepts her without any dowry. Her nobility and honest nature strike King of France. He says that she herself is a gift, so he does not need any worldly possessions to have her. This is ironical in the sense that father has not been able to comprehend his daughter but King of France understands her. This shows a failed father daughter relationship in terms of showing love, respect and care for each other. Lear does not show any affection on her farewell with the king of France. He wishes not to see her anymore in his life that depicts the typical cruel nature of father of that age.

After her departure, Goneril and Regan start using bad word about his father. As the two women just got power, so they try to use every mean to retain it to them only. They make a plan to restrict their father and not to allow him to meddle into their affairs. Goneril yearns for more power. Albany, her husband is told to stay away because she thinks him so weak and gentle to know what is best. Power and authority leads the man to act insane. He does everything to exert his power or retain it. He acts like a god when he has power because it gives him authority to make decision about everything and control other's life. The same is true about women. Power and authority drive everyone crazy. They always have a fear that they may lose it. So, they act cruel and brutal to clear their way from any obstacle and obstruction. Shakespeare has shown in the play that women after gaining power act like devilish creatures.

GONERIL: 'if our father carry authority with such dispositions as he bears, this last surrender of his will but offend us.' (305). They show questionable morals, become ambitious like men and their heart and soul get emptied to feelings. They do not look up to their father, husband and state but get indulged in extra marital affairs. They break their oath of allowing his father to keep hundred knights for his services. King Lear decides to stay for one month each to both daughters. When he lives in the palace of Goneril, she asks her servants to give indifferent and scornful looks to his knights. She asks them to be careless and weary in front of him so that his father gets rebuked. She says that she and her sister are one in that matter to behave cruelly to him so that he leaves the place and never return back to them so, that their power would not be in danger. They decide not to be over ruled by him. It may be the case that King Lear has been so cruel and oppressive to them that his daughters started hating him. This shows the rebellious nature of women when they are highly suppressive. When they get a chance, they act the same to take revenge and that is how they make a catharsis. This shows a failed father daughter relationship that is based on authority and power but not on love. After seeing a scornful looks and torturous attitude of his daughter, King Lear asks to Goneril:

KING LEAR: 'Are you our daughter?' ( 216). He is surprised on the barbarous behavior of his daughter and asks whether she is his daughter that shows his loss of identity. She gives instructions to his father to make use of his excellent wisdom that he has stored somewhere in his brain. KING LEAR: 'Doth any here know me? This is not Lear.' (221). Goneril does not talk to him politely but instead gives him order that compels King Lear to think who he is. He thinks that he is not the same person who used to be the king and ruler of the kingdom or maybe he has lost his sight or intellectual capacity to look into the matters properly.

He is highly amazed on her behavior and says: KING LEAR: 'I should be false persuaded I had daughters.'

(225). Daughters are supposed to behave like obedient ones and listen to his father but the scenario has totally changed as the position of power has changed. He says that she should respect and obey him as it is the duty of daughter but actual behavior falsifies that belief. He says that when ingratitude is shown by one's own child, it is more horrible than sea monsters. He uses the words 'Degenerate bastard', 'Unnatural hags', 'Detested kilt', 'Serpent like' and many other such words to disgrace her. He curses his daughter to not to have any child or have a child who become a source of contempt for her. This shows the intense hate from father for his daughter. King Lear is more concerned with the taking away of his power and getting ruled by his daughter rather than the attitude of his daughter towards him. She reduces his number of knights for attending King Lear and he takes it as shaking his powers.

KING LEAR: 'I am ashamed that thou hast power to shake my manhood thus.' (295). He is ashamed that his daughter has power to shake off his manhood and he is unable to do anything. He feels humiliated that his daughter can influence him to the point where they can make him feel depressed, angry, and irrational—qualities that are essentially only found in women. She belittles her father and husband in this scene and makes decisions as the head of the family. He thinks that power is related to only men. He says that he will regain his power that he has given away to his daughters. This shows that power is adored by everyone and no one wants to lose it at any cost. Goneril says that those knights are the constant threat to her safety and authority in the kingdom. However, this demonstration of power by the supposed weaker sex is just the beginning, later she uses more power to achieve more threatening goals. Shakespeare has presented the daughter as a very cruel person for her father when she gains power.

King Lear moves to his second daughter to ask for some justice and sympathy as being father of his eldest daughter, but Regan is same like Goneril. She rejects to meet him and then is forced but not glad to see him. Lear says to her if she is not delighted to see him here then he would think that his wife has not been loyal to him so that he has produced such unfaithful and disobedient children. This is the stereotypical negative portrayal of women in which blame is put on them if something does not happen as it is expected to be. He uses the words of flattery for her in order to get treated nicely by her but she does not get swayed by it and follows her sister's course of action.

REGAN:

'Good sir, no more; these are unsightly tricks:'(Act ii, scene ii, 155)

He gets furious when he knows that his servant has been put into stock by her.

REGAN:

'I pray you, father, being weak, seem so.' ( Act I, scene iv, 200). She asks her father not to talk as he used to do when he was in the power. She asks him to talk like a weak person. This depicts her repressed unconscious desire when she has been undermined by him when he was in the power. Goneril is good in a sense that she did allow his father fifty knights but Regan asks him to bring only twenty five or not a single one. They try to convince him to have the same attendants and dismiss his own. Lear says with a broken heart: KING LEAR: 'I

gave you all' (246). He says that with such disrespect and disappointment that he gave them all his possessions and yet they are treating him like that. He calls Goneril more acceptable than Regan. Regan shows her violent nature by plucking Gloucester's eye, killing his servant and by closing the door of palace for his father. She does not allow her husband to fight with the servant; she takes out the sword and cuts him into pieces that show that she does not have any confidence in her husband to get the things done properly. All these traits are ascribed to males that are shown by Regan in this scene. Shakespeare has shown that women can be as violent, evil and hungry for power as that of men. King Lear is left on the mercy of storm on a terrible night. He did not expect such sort of terrifying and humiliating behavior from his daughters. His madness is the result of the betrayal of his daughters and his loss of power and authority.

He thinks that it has become fashion in the society in which fathers are scolded by their daughters. But Edgar tells him that the king has cruel daughters while he has cruel father. A critic Tennenhouse (2013) feels that the play King Lear shows us the danger and risk of not pursuing the elderly course of patriarchal culture. Lear goes mad because he is unable to accept the authority of his daughters. However, by having a warm, non-patriarchal relationship with Cordelia, he is able to rehabilitate. The relationship of father with their children is depicted. In one plot father is being illtreated and in sub plot, children are being treated cruelly by his father. Shakespeare has balanced himself by portraying both men and women as wicked characters in his play, 'King Lear'. In the end of the play, Cordelia is informed about the condition of his father by the gentleman that is sent by Kent.

She cries by listening it: CORDELIA: 'Sisters! Sisters! You have brought shame to womanhood by your conduct.' (50). In Act IV, Scene IV, Cordelia comes to meet his father and asks the doctor to reduce his pain and use his possible skills to bring him back to life. CORDELIA: 'What can man's wisdom, In the restoring his bereaved sense? He that helps him take all my outward wealth.' (75). This shows the contrast nature of Cordelia with her sisters. She is ready to give all her worldly possessions to the one who will help to restore his father's senses. It is only because that it is only his father that matters her the most. She is an epitome of goodness because she does not think of taking revenge from his father who deprived him from his love and possessions.

CORDELIA: 'No blown ambition doth our arm incite, But love, dear love, and our ag'd father's right' (55). This shows her independent and courageous nature that she leads her own army to fight for his father to help him get back his rights. She is truly shown as a girl of love, courage and excellent independence. In Act IV, Scene VII, Cordelia appears again with the doctor, Kent and Gentleman. Cordelia gets disappear in the middle of the play that shows the stereotypical representation of women. It shows that people of 16th century has not been tolerant enough of her character more than that because she is all masculine and gentle in her nature.

When King Lear gets awake, he is not fully awake and recognizes anyone. He says that do not laugh at his mental condition if he says that this lady sitting next to him is his daughter Cordelia. When he is told by her that she is Cordelia. He says that she has all reasons not to love him because of his misjudgment but she has no intention to make him feel bad about his any decision of the past. She embraces him with all love and generosity of affection. Two traits of Cordelia are widely evident; independence of will and loyalty. Her early contradiction with her father's will shows her independence, her later union and reconciliation shows her loyalty to him. In Act V, scene III, Edmund enters as a victim while Lear and Cordelia as prisoners. Cordelia is a bit optimistic when she says to her father that they are not the one who received the worst possible fate despite

being good.

KING LEAR:

‘No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison:

We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage:

When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down,

And ask of thee forgiveness: so we'll live,

And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh

At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues

Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too,

Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out; And take upon's the mystery of things,

As if we were God's spies: and we'll wear out,

In a wall'd prison, packs and sects of great ones,

That ebb and flow by the moon.’ (Act v, scene iii, 20)

It can be seen that father daughter relationship restores here when King Lear cheerfully says that Come, let's away to prison. He says that they will both sing like birds in a cage and will find solace in each other. They will share laughs and stories with each other to pass the time and they will hear the gossips of fellow prisoners. This shows that old Lear has died in the storm who has suffered a lot because of his evil natured daughters while this is a new Lear without any arrogance and pride. He does not consider himself a king but father, a father to his lovely daughter Cordelia, for her he is ready to spend all his remaining life in prison to share joys and sorrows. He has now become an embodiment of love, affection and gentleness that are their real qualities of father who does not appear to be authoritative or false and does not try to subvert his daughter, but treats with humility and equity.

Goneril and Regan meet death because of their own poor deeds. Both wish to have Edmund as their life partner that give us the idea that both sisters obediently accepted their marriage without any refusal under the authority of their father. When they get power, their concern for Edmund shows that they have not been happy in their marriage. Goneril kills Regan and attempts a suicide. So, their selfish nature leads them to their destined fate.

KING LEAR:

‘And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no life!

Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life, And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,

Never, never, never, never, never!

Pray you, undo this button: thank you, sir.

Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,

Look there, look there!' (305)

Dies

Cordelia dies because of the order of Edmund. Lear takes Cordelia in his hand and delivers a long speech. The last speech of Lear shows how much he loved Cordelia. He asks why animals have life when his daughter has no life at all. It is a most poignant speech but in fact, a heart rending speech. With this speech, Lear's life comes to an end and the love of father and daughter remains alive and becomes an example for the rest of the generation.

This discussion deals with feminist perspective of King Lear that shows that how Shakespeare has presented himself as a balanced writer by portraying both devilish and angelic character of women in the shape of Goneril, Regan and Cordelia respectively. The relationship of father and daughter is thoroughly analyzed from a wider angle of feminism which covers the aspects of power, authority and love in the patriarchal society. This study informs the reader about the poor relationship of father with their daughters that lead them to the tragic end.

## **Conclusion**

Shakespeare was ahead of his time. *"He was not of an age, but for all time!"* (Jonson 1623, 1.45). Shakespeare's plays do not lack in women with positive qualities, and some are portrayed as par with men, but on the whole, the texts present them from conventional patriarchal perspective. Shakespeare has been known to the fact that women are capable of doing anything equal to men, but to meet the norms and values of the society, they have to sacrifice their real self and become a part of the patriarchal culture. The findings of the research imply that the relation between King Lear and his daughter is of abusive nature; they do not care for each other's feelings and emotions, they do not show any familial bond, and they have no mutual respect for each other. Family traits make Lear's daughters very much like him. Verbal aggression of Goneril and casual cruelty of Regan are inherited from their father. Cordelia is presented as a woman of strength and individualism. She loves her father from the core of her heart but Lear disregards the true feelings of her. Cordelia is presented as different from her father and sister, who opposes her father's traditions and refuses her sister's lead but makes her own choice. She makes distinction between good and evil, what is hidden and visible. She balances the cruelty of her sisters. Shakespeare has presented three female characters and they are all different from each other. They are sufficiently dissimilar so, it is difficult to make generalization. He is balanced in his portrayal so it is not possible to label him either feminist or anti-feminist writer. We are made to empathize with patriarchs and the patriarchal power structure that they stand for, which makes it an anti-feminist drama. When given power, women have a tendency to be more evil than men. Shakespeare has argued that women are either

compelled to submit, as with Cordelia, or they must be destroyed, as with Goneril and Regan.

### **Future Recommendations**

Future researchers can work on the husband wife relationships and their extra marital affairs to go deep into the insight of female psychic mechanism. Madwoman thesis by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar can be applied in the future works to look into the fact that women become destructive when there are not provided with the platform for their creative abilities. If Goneril, Regan and Cordelia have not been much suppressed in their early life, they would not have acted like rebellions like they did. Other researchers can employ two theories at the same time as psychoanalysis and feminism, and deconstructive feminism to analyze the same text to look into the matters from multiple perspectives.

### **REFERENCES**

- Bateman, V. (2003) William Shakespeare: Sixteenth century feminist. *ESSAI* 1(8).  
<https://dc.cod.edu/essai/vol1/iss1/8>
- Bateman, V. (2003). William Shakespeare: Sixteenth Century Feminist. *ESSAI*, 1(8).
- Beauvoir, S. de. (1989). *The Second Sex*. New York: Vintage Books. (Original work published 1952)
- Boose, L. E. (1982). The Father and the Bride in Shakespeare. *Modern Language Association*, 97(3), 325-347.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/462226>
- Bradley, A. C. (1904). *Shakespearean Tragedy*. London: Macmillan.
- Bradley, A. C. (1950). *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*. London: Macmillan.
- Brandes, G. (2016). *William Shakespeare-A Critical Study*. anboco.
- Clegg, S. I. (1994). Shakespeare and Feminism: A Study of Four Plays (Doctoral dissertation). *University of British Columbia*.
- Clegg, S. I. (1994). *Shakespeare and Feminism: A study of four plays* (Doctoral dissertation, University of British Columbia).
- Dobie, A. B. (2011). *Theory into Practice: An Introduction to Literary Criticism*. Cengage learning.
- Dreher, D. E. (2014). *Domination and Defiance: Fathers and Daughters in Shakespeare*. University Press of Kentucky.
- Dusinberre, J. (1975). *Shakespeare and the Nature of Women*. London: Macmillan.  
<https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/831/items/1.0099107>

- Hanly, C. (1986). Lear and his daughters. *International Review of Psychoanalysis*, 1(13), 211-220. doi:13:211-220.
- Hickey, K. D. (2015). "Struck with Her Tongue": Speech, Gender, and Power in King Lear. *Masters Theses*. <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/theses/785>
- Jajja, M. A. (2014). A feminist reading of Shakespearean tragedies: Frailty, thy name is woman. *Pakistan Journal of Commerce and Social Sciences*, 8(1), 228-237. <http://www.jespk.net/publications/171.pdf>
- Kaiter, E. H. (2015). Feminist reading of William Shakespeare's King Lear. *Scientific Bulletin "Mirceacel Batran" Naval Academy*, 18(2), 286.
- Keely, J., & Lanyer, A. (2013). Did women have a Renaissance? *Arizona State University*, 8, 249-259. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/23617853?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/23617853?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents)
- King Lear and Its Sources. (2008). *Comparative Drama*, 42(2), 121-148. Retrieved from JSTOR.
- Levin, R. (1988). Feminist thematics and Shakespearean tragedy. *Modern Language Association*, 103(2), 125-138. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/462429>
- McManus, C. (2016). Shakespeare and gender: the 'Woman's Part'. *British Library*, 15. <http://dc.cod.edu/essai/vol1/iss1/8>
- Rubio, B. D. (1999). Are the female characters stereotyped in King Lear as demonized or sanctified women? *Jornades de Foment de la Investigacio*. [http://repositori.uji.es/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10234/79958/Forum\\_1999\\_7.pdf?sequence=1](http://repositori.uji.es/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10234/79958/Forum_1999_7.pdf?sequence=1)
- Shakespeare, W. (1963). *King Lear*. (R. Fraiser, Ed.). New York, United States: Russel Fraisered
- Shakespeare, W., & Orgel, S. (1999). *King Lear*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- Skura, M. (2014). Dragon Fathers and Unnatural Children: Warring Generations in Shakespeare. In L. Tyson (Ed.), *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide* (2nd ed.). Routledge: London
- Tennenhouse, L. (2013). *Power on Display: The Politics of Shakespeare's Genres* (Vol. 6). Routledge.
- Williamson, M. (1987). Patriarchal Structures in Shakespeare's Drama by Peter Erickson. *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 86(1), 108-110. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27709790>