

## Shakespeare's Women Character As A Mirror of Society

**Dr.Monikumari ,Guest lecturer**

S. M . College, Bhagalpur

TMBU, university, Bhagalpur,BiharPincode812007.

### Abstract

*The English language and literature both owe a great deal to Shakespeare. Many contemporary authors hold him in high regard. He lived by the motto, "Knowledge, passion, and drive," and they are the three words that most describe his life. We all have a much deeper respect for literature because of his teachings. According to the data gathered so far, Shakespeare's depiction of women in his plays is consistent with the historical time in which he lived. Someone has noticed this. Shakespeare's female characters may be understood by reading the play in its whole and analysing it from a holistic perspective. , if one were to take into account Elizabethan norms and values. They have to always be respectful to authority and moral standards. Shakespeare divides women into two groups: the submissive, obedient, and moral ones, and the independent, dominant, and immoral ones. Some commentators think Ophelia and Helena would make a good couple. Both the human condition and the culture of the time in which Gertrude was written are reflected in her story. Shakespeare invests his characters with equal parts power and weakness, which helps to make them seem more human. Women throughout the Renaissance, with the exception of those from privileged backgrounds, did not often have access to formal education. Major female characters in his plays are often portrayed as weak, stupid, and submissive. Particularly in the plays when they play the lead. Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream," in which Hermia, who loves Lysander, is compelled to marry Demetrius, is often cited as an example of the tyranny of women in today's culture. Despite her feelings for Lysander, she cannot be with him. This is because Hermia's father is overjoyed at the prospect of his daughter marrying Demetrius. Since she can't convince her father to change his mind, she has little choice but to go along with his decision. In contrast to Lysander, Demetrius is well-known due to his wealth and nobility, and as a result: Hermia's dad thinks he'd be the best possible match for his daughter, so he proposes they be married.*

**Keywords:** Society, Shakespeare, Lysander , Women, Women in Society, Lysander, Demetrius

### Introduction

Each art form's audience will have a unique set of experiences and perspectives when exposed to a piece of art. Some people may find the way women are portrayed in William Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream insulting because of this interpretation. There are a number of factors which might have influenced the viewpoints expressed by the readers. In the first scene of Act I, Egeus presents a dispute to Theseus, the Duke of Athens, since his daughter Hermia is refusing to marry the

man he has chosen for her. To show that readers have learned this viewpoint via instances like this, just look at how many of them there are. Instead, she's decided to settle down with a guy who's on the same social level as her. Theseus cautions her that she may be executed or forced to live the rest of her life in a convent if she disputes the accusations. Some readers may find this distressing, particularly if they see Egeus' apparent lack of objection as evidence that he doesn't care how this makes Hermia feel. Some readers might perhaps be upset by this. As a result, Hermia may conclude that Egeus doesn't care about her and is just interested in protecting his reputation as a man. The drama does not want to hurt women; rather, it exploits these situations to illustrate the unequal treatment of women in our society. It should be made clear that the play does not insult or demean women in any manner.

### **Treatment of Women in Society in Shakespeare's Plays**

Some readers may also find disturbing another scenario where women are treated poorly. As Helena walks behind Demetrius through the woodland, chanting him praises, this occurs in Scene 1 and 2 of Act II. The reader may find this disturbing. However, Demetrius treats her with contempt and avoids contact with her at all costs. She is left to the whims of the wild animals when he says, "I'll get away from you by hiding in the brakes" (2.1.227). Many readers will be outraged not only by Demetrius' violence against Helena, but also by Helena's own contempt for her femininity in following him and enabling him to mistreat her in such a heinous manner. Demetrius's treatment of Helena is brutal under any circumstances. The way Oberon treats Titania, who some readers may identify with the maltreatment of women in general, may also distress some of them. To get what he wants or to get retribution for being denied what he wanted, Oberon manipulates his wife Titania into falling in love with Bottom. Bottom is a low life. Oberon's wife's affections are often misunderstood as a commodity he may utilise at will. I can understand how the portrayal of women in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" can be offensive to some, but I don't find it to be offensive at all. When Egeus takes his daughter before the Duke, Shakespeare is only portraying an occurrence that happened within his time period. Whether or not this account is true, what it does reveal is the inequality of the period more than it reveals anything about the nature of women. There is not a shred of proof that the author intended to drag down the suffrage struggle for women or argue that women aren't worthy of equality. Marriages were entered much more for social reasons than for love and passion, as history shows. It was generally accepted at the time, but it was subsequently realised how horrible it was in the West. Over time, more and more people in Western civilization realised their mistakes. Applying today's standards to this play would be a disservice to both. The way Egeus treats Hermia is similar of how Capulet does to Juliet in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. Capulet seemed to care much about Juliet's well-being at first. Given that his daughter is just thirteen, he advises Paris to postpone his plans to marry Juliet

for at least two more summers. As an added bonus, he makes it seem like Juliet's decision really matters. "Merely court her, beautiful Paris, capture her heart; my wish to her permission is simply a fraction; and, she agreed, within her reach of choice Lies my assent and a voice that is fair-according," he advises her (R&J 1.2.16-19). Capulet first acts in a way that is not in the best interests of his family because he cares for his daughter, but he changes his tune once he realises that his family may need the political influence that her marriage to Paris would give. As Juliet makes it clear she does not want to marry Paris, Capulet has a nervous breakdown. He belittles her by saying, "by my soul, I'll ne'er acknowledge thee, Nor what is mine shall never do thee good," and by instructing her to "hang, beg, starve, and die on the streets" (R&J 3.5.193-5). More probable than the author intentionally tarnishing women's reputations via their work is that they were only reflecting the society of the day. The play's central message is that, historically, women were supposed to defer to their male guardians in matters of both personal and professional life. Many women were forced into marriages under Richard III, regardless of how they felt about their prospective husbands. Following Richard's murder of Lady Anne's husband, for which he shared responsibility, Anne was persuaded to wed him. But after that, Richard realised it would be better for him to marry his niece Elizabeth, so he had Lady Anne murdered to make way for the wedding. This is another proof that women never had the freedom to pick their spouses in the past since marriage was only a social institution. Richard had to know that after what he did to Lady Anne and Elizabeth's brothers, no one of them could ever love him again. And Richard had to know that, after what he did to Elizabeth's brothers, Elizabeth would never love him. Richard was already much older than she was, and he was also a scary uncle, even if he hadn't done anything inappropriate. Most kids would rather avoid spending time with this uncle than any other. It was well known that Richard was just marrying these women for political benefit, therefore he didn't give a hoot whether they loved him or not. Regarding the scene when Helena pursues Demetrius while disparaging herself, I think it would be less problematic if the roles were reversed and it was the guy who was pursuing the woman who was criticising him. It's not worrying, and it shouldn't be worrying to anybody. Shakespeare is not endorsing the behaviour of the female characters or Demetrius' abuse of Helena. On the other hand, the fact that Helena is portrayed as an idiot in this article would discourage some readers from thinking in this way since they would then share the common perception of her. It's possible that Oberon's treatment of Titania is upsetting as well, but it's hard to feel sorry for her after seeing her husband transform Bottom's noggin into an ape's. I don't think this narrative is discriminatory, yet there may be unfair treatment. The mistreatment of women in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is disturbing, but in my opinion it is a mirror of the times and, most likely, of many generations before to Shakespeare's time, therefore I find it hard to fault. Neither I nor my tale would be mistreating

women if I wrote about how Iran still approves of stoning women who commit adultery. I would only be repeating what I have learned to be true about the laws of that country as of the previous year. In fact, bringing it up to an audience that is unaware of it could aid their argument. Shakespeare probably did not abuse women in any way, but to imply otherwise in his stories would be unjust. Shakespeare was well-known to have been a keen reader and writer of historical topics. I'm sure he learned about the treatment of women in the past through his reading, and he'd have to be insensitive not to see parallels in our own day. The only way the narrative might be disturbing to me is if it contributed to the maltreatment of women in the story. If that's the case, it's very concerning, however, it's important to note that the problem existed long before the play was written.

### **The Characterization of Female Characters in Shakespeare's Plays and Sonnets**

The manners in which Shakespeare's female characters are interpreted and enacted on stage, in addition to the manners in which he depicts women in his plays, have lately been the subject of investigation in the academic community. Despite the fact that women are seldom at the centre of Shakespeare's plays, the heroines in his works comprise a diverse array of personas and archetypes (the few exceptions include Rosalind in *As You Like It* and Cleopatra in *Antony and Cleopatra*). These include Cordelia's uncompromising frankness, Beatrice and Kate's quick wit, and Portia's brilliance. Cordelia is also known for her sharp wit. Shakespeare's young women characters, in particular, are said to have tremendous intellect, vigour, and a strong feeling of personal independence. Other examples include the ruthlessness of Lady Macbeth, who is the opposite of Shakespeare's young women characters are said to have tremendous intellect, vigour, and independence. These similarities may be seen across the board in this collection of female characters, although critics have pointed out that they are more prevalent in the younger women. Some critics regard Shakespeare as a champion of womenkind and an innovator because of the sharp departure he made from the flat and stereotypical portrayals of women that were common among his contemporaries and earlier dramatists. These qualities are the basis for their praise of Shakespeare in this capacity. Shakespeare has been hailed as a champion of womenkind as a result of this, which led to the plaudits. On the other hand, there are critics who argue that even Shakespeare's female characters who are portrayed in a positive light have characteristics that are tempered by negative aspects. These critics point out that even Shakespeare's female characters have characteristics that are tempered by negative aspects. They contend that this demonstrates that Shakespeare was not immune to the deeply ingrained sexist tendencies that were prevalent in the society of his country and the time period in which he lived. [Citation needed] They say that this demonstrates that Shakespeare was not immune to the deeply ingrained sexist tendencies that were prevalent in the society of his country. Within the texts of the plays, young women, for instance, are often accused of being promiscuous, and women who occupy positions of leadership are generally portrayed as being capricious and very prone to corruption. Both of these generalisations are rather widespread.

## **Role Of Women In A Patriarchal Society**

Characterizations of Women in Shakespeare's Works Artists like William Shakespeare pushed the boundaries of traditional English theatre throughout the Elizabethan era, creating groundbreaking works that are being performed today. When it came to theatre, the Elizabethan period was unparalleled. After Queen Elizabeth's death, Shakespeare wrote Macbeth, and with a patriarchal ruler in power, he had to be careful about the portrayal of women in his plays. After Elizabeth I was assassinated, the play Macbeth was composed. Shakespeare's Macbeth, a tragedy that has endured for centuries, probes the human condition and the basic challenges of being human, whether those challenges be experienced on a personal, bodily, psychological, or intellectual level. Macbeth, the play, was composed by Shakespeare sometime in the early 17th century. The popular drama looks at women's roles in society and the values that people hold dear to investigate the human condition. Furthermore, it follows a diverse cast of characters, all of whom bring something to the story and show us a new side of the human condition. William Shakespeare's 17th-century drama Macbeth examines the human condition from the perspective of women's roles in a patriarchal society. Culturally, women are portrayed as helpless, as objects of sexual harassment and as men's territory. Shakespeare examines the societal perception of women via the prism of Lady Macbeth and the three witches, challenging the norm. When the witches first appear on stage at the opening of the play, it is clear that they are up to naught good owing to their cunning and deceit. The three prophesies are as follows, and they are repeated when Macbeth is presented to the witches for the first time: "We raise our glasses to Macbeth! This statement is sometimes rephrased as "All hail, Macbeth!" or "Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis!" All hail, Macbeth, who shall be king hereafter! and Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor! were addressed to Macbeth. The witches utilise their prophecy to implement Macbeth's scheme, acting like a puppeteer would in controlling the outcomes of the puppet's actions. Is Macbeth's destiny chosen by the witches, or is he guilty for his own deeds? is a question Shakespeare asks his audience to consider the moral ambiguity of the scenario. Shakespeare's portrayal of Lady Macbeth is another another instance of his challenging conventional expectations of female behaviour. Lady Macbeth is the polar opposite of Lady Macduff, who exemplifies the positive stereotypes of women and the nurturing role that has traditionally been assigned to females. Lady Macbeth represents everything that is wrong with ladies in society. It is clear from Lady Macbeth's actions that women may be just as cruel and ambitious as males, since she is driven by her ambition to see Macbeth become king. As this demonstrates, women may be just as driven as males. When she tells Macbeth about her plan to murder the king and asks, "What if I succeed?" she reveals the manipulative part of her nature "Weak Duncan?

She replies, "What not upon His spongy officers, who should suffer the dishonour of our great quell?" as she plots to frame the King's palace guards for the murder. Lady Macbeth's command to "screw your courage to the sticking point, and we'll not fail" to Macbeth shows that she is the dominating partner in their relationship, which goes against traditional gender and cultural conventions. Also, at one point in the play, Lady Macbeth advises Macbeth, "twist your courage to the sticking point, and we'll not fail." Once Duncan is dead, Lady Macbeth takes charge, telling Macbeth that dwelling on the murder "will drive us insane." Like Lady Macbeth, we may learn that a thirst for power can have unexpected results. She shows this by defiantly opposing the gender roles that prevailed throughout her day. The belief that people's personalities and values are shaped by the culture in which they were raised.

## **Conclusion**

Shakespeare's comedies, tragedies, and other plays in general all have a broad array of female characters. These characters each represent a different facet of society during the time period they are set in. The plays of William Shakespeare have, for the most part, been interpreted in a manner that is consistent with the traditions and conventions of the patriarchal Elizabethan period. Shakespeare is widely considered to be one of the most influential figures in the English Renaissance. gender roles, the obligations that come along with them in society, and the biases that are associated with them. Shakespeare's plays have a diverse array of female characters, each of whom asserts their autonomy in a very unique way. Shakespeare's female characters also demonstrate their autonomy in many various ways. Rosalind, Viola, Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra, and Rosalinda are the female leads in this play. Shakespeare is the playwright who, according to Virginia Woolf, kept his works clear and free of any personal vices in order to characterise the female characters in his tragedies. She says this was done for the aim of characterising the women in Shakespeare's plays. Characters like as Desdemona, Ophelia, and Gertrude are all examples of this kind of character. Shakespeare had a reputation for his writing. This great skill for expressing human behaviour demonstrates the status of women in patriarchal civilizations as well as the depth of Shakespeare's female characters, which enables them to transcend the limits of time and makes the ideas of Shakespeare's works immortal.

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