
LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 13:12 December 2013
ISSN 1930-2940

Managing Editor: M. S. Thirumalai, Ph.D.

Editors: B. Mallikarjun, Ph.D.

Sam Mohanlal, Ph.D.

B. A. Sharada, Ph.D.

A. R. Fatihi, Ph.D.

Lakhan Gusain, Ph.D.

Jennifer Marie Bayer, Ph.D.

S. M. Ravichandran, Ph.D.

G. Baskaran, Ph.D.

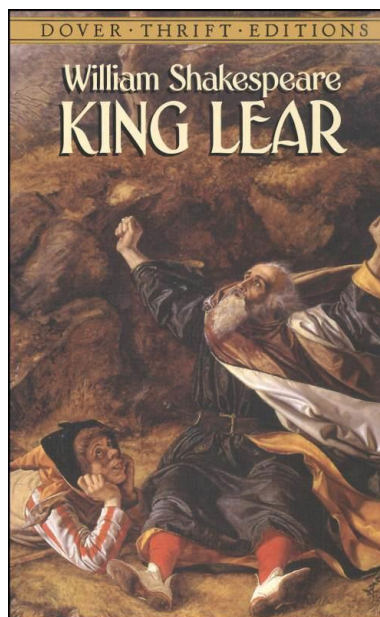
L. Ramamoorthy, Ph.D.

C. Subburaman, Ph.D. (Economics)

Assistant Managing Editor: Swarna Thirumalai, M.A.

Depiction of Woman as Human: A Reading of Excesses of Feminist Readings of Shakespeare's *King Lear*

Pankaj Sharma, Ph.D.



Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 13:12 December 2013

Pankaj Sharma

Depiction of Woman as Human: A Reading of Excesses of Feminist Readings of
Shakespeare's *King Lear*

History and Elements of Feminism

Feminism as a movement came riding on the back of postmodern and postcolonial theories. Return of the margin, dislocation of centre, return of the wretched and such expressions gained currency during the second half of the last century. The power structures were questioned and locations, gender and positions redraw these structures. The political power distribution of Centre-colony was dismantled and postcolonial came into being. Within the rise of the powerless, came the question of power-powerless relationship, at the micro level, even in powerless families, communities and societies it was the female who was the doubly colonized.

Feminism as a movement tried to understand and represent the whole world and its artifacts as expressions and manifestations of the patriarchal reality. New historicism, Cultural Materialism, 'history from below' and 'alternative histories' are the theoretical frameworks that have provided impetus to the feministic rereading and deconstructive angles.

Shakespeare Under the Lenses of Feminist Theory

Critic after critic have analyzed and dissected Shakespeare under the lenses of Feministic theory. Feminist theory borrows much of its methodology from Deconstruction and applies this in specific contexts that concern how gender roles the power dynamics between Men and women, and the roles those forces us each to play are depicted in culture and in literature. It wishes to examine, among other things: how women and men are (or are not) represented in a given work of literature, how and why certain gender stereotypes, archetypes, and paradigms are either "written into" our stories or undermined by them. But in the present case I have two serious issues to raise - first is that Feminism in its second wave and aggressive stance grew into a myopic vision and doesn't care to look at the complete picture. And second, I wish to understand that writer and writing have to be understood in their particular roles. A piece of work, a novel or drama or poem, is an artistic representation of reality as the writer sees it and weaves it in his words and form. But if there are suffering females in the work it does not necessarily mean that the vision of the writer is patriarchal. I wish to analyze my assumptions in relation to Shakespeare's *King Lear* its reception by the feminist critics, especially in the last thirty years.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 **13:12 December 2013**

Pankaj Sharma

Depiction of Woman as Human: A Reading of Excesses of Feminist Readings of Shakespeare's *King Lear*

***King Lear* as a Patriarchal Play**

King Lear is one play that has been facing the most severe of reprimands from feminist critics. Feminist critics like Coppelia Kahn, Kate Macluskie, Carmen Rodríguez, Catherine S. Cox and Peter Rudnytsky have taken up Shakespeare to be patriarchal and has found faults with the play on the grounds ranging from “absence of mother figure” to creating stereotypical female characters. The present paper tries to understand the faults and virtues, positioning and juxtaposing of female characters in Shakespeare’s *King Lear* as whole humans and try to advocate a stance opposite to feminist criticism.

Absence of Mother

Coppelia Kahn has made a detailed study of *King Lear* in her Essay “The Absent Mother in *King Lear*.” Kahn puts the absence of the mother at the root of evils and says that in the play, “The only source of love, power, and authority is the father- an awesome, demanding presence.” (Kahn 141) In *King Lear*, the mother of Cordelia, Goneril and Regan is missing, leaving Lear to raise his three daughters alone. In spite of her upbringing without a mother, his youngest daughter, Cordelia, has grown up to be an honest and loving woman. The other two daughters, on the other hand, have grown up to be cheating and power-hungry. Perhaps with a mother in the picture, the two older daughters would have turned out differently.

Kahn notes, “both sexes begin to develop a sense of self in relation to a mother-woman. But a girl’s sense of femaleness arises through her infantile union with the mother and later identification with her” (147). Since a mother was not there to show her daughters how to act and behave like women, they had no choice but to follow in the men’s footsteps.

But how can three women be raised in the same situation and turn out so differently?

One possible answer to this question is because Cordelia is Lear’s favorite daughter. Lear’s bias towards Cordelia is probably what leads to Regan’s and Goneril’s character flaws.

Masculine Predicament

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 **13:12 December 2013**

Pankaj Sharma

Depiction of Woman as Human: A Reading of Excesses of Feminist Readings of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*

Myra Glazer Schotz states, “focusing on the ‘masculine predicament of kingship and fatherhood,’ the Lear world presents us with daughters but the play predicates itself on the absence of their mother, the absence of a Queen, the absence of a feminine principle to act as a symbolic and psychological counterbalance to male authority(162)”. Although the Kent and the Fool are there to counteract Lear’s authority, they do not as much influence his wife would. Kent advises against Cordelia’s banishment but is then himself banished. Lear’s wife, the mother of his daughters, is probably the only one who could have prevented Cordelia’s banishment.

Results of Father’s Upbringing

We have to look at certain other perspectives as well. For example, there exists a parallel between Lear and Gloucester, because neither of them has a mother for their children, and they both have disowned their children who are actually truthful nor loving to them. When Lear asks his daughters to say how much they love him, Cordelia says that words cannot express how she feels for him, but apparently her sisters can easily find the right words to please their father: “Cordelia cannot produce golden words, cannot ‘coin her heart in words,’ but her heart has love of a better and weightier metal(161)”.

If Kahn’s assumption is to be slightly stretched, then Cordelia’s failure with language is also a result of her Father’s upbringing. Instead of saying what her father wants to hear, Cordelia replies, “Nothing, my lord” (I.i.91). Lear tells her, “Nothing will come of nothing” (I.i.94). Lear is telling her that if she does not speak her feelings for him then she will not get anything from him.

Parallel to Gloucester

This scene is similar to the one in which Gloucester disowns his legitimate son, Edgar, and professes his love for his devious illegitimate son, Edmund. In the scene where Gloucester denies that Edgar, a good child, is his son we can observe a similar attitude in Lear towards his kind daughter, Cordelia. Gloucester says, “I never got him,” meaning he never fathered Edgar. Both men have no mother to consult, and both men are blinded by false affection and loyalty which ultimately lead to their destruction. It’s a textual fact and no

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 13:12 December 2013

Pankaj Sharma

Depiction of Woman as Human: A Reading of Excesses of Feminist Readings of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*

one can deny that but how can two opposite things be blamed on the same source. If Cordelia is masculine, so is her failure. To put it in different words, King Lear begins with the failure of masculinity and its aftermath.

Use of the Word and Image of Mother

The second point of development in Kahn's premises is about the use of the word and the image of 'mother'. In King Lear the word 'mother' is mentioned twice, both times in a negative manner. A reference in Act II, scene iv, when Lear says, "O! how this mother swells up toward my heart." The word 'mother' in this statement refers to a sickness that felt like a child in a mother's womb. It is also like the suffocation of the mother. Mother is related to the womb, the supposed seat of hysteria, as beautifully presented and proved by Kahn. Another reference to a mother is made when Lear is talking with Regan. He says, "I think you are [my child]; I know what reason I have to think so: if thou shouldst not be glad, I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb, sepulchering an adultress" (King Lear. II.iv.136-139). Lear is telling her that he knows she is his legitimate daughter and since he has given her his kingdom she should treat him better. According to Lear, the mother can easily be blamed for the unfavorable way her daughters, Regan and Goneril, have turned out.

Could Have Avoided the Unwanted Results?

Kahn would like us to believe that the events that occur as a result of Cordelia's banishment in the beginning might have been avoided. A mother might have been able to tell Lear that he is being irrational and should not be so hasty to disown his favourite daughter, but why do we forget Kent coming in between Cordelia and Lear. A maternal figure in this play might have made it possible for Cordelia to take control of her father's throne at the appropriate time, saving many lives. A mother might have also saved all three of her daughters from being killed in the end of the play. Although Goneril and Regan are both deceitful children who abuse their power, a mother could have prevented them from causing their own deaths and the unnecessary deaths of Lear, Gloucester and many others. However, because there is no mother, the events that take place are bound to happen.

Absence of Mother in Other Plays of Shakespeare

This is not William Shakespeare's only play in which the lack of a mother figure leads to unfavorable situations. The moment we accept this logic, we have to accept that women are really powerful, having control of logic, reason and understanding over people as irrational as Lear, does it not raise questions of "Who really has the power?" if the possible queen could have saved the whole situation, what people like Kent could not, at least I would consider her a powerful queen and that actually defeats the very logic of Kahn's and feminist critics' most fundamental assumption.

Sex and Sexual Roles

Kate Macluskie is perhaps the most famous feminist critic who has come out with her analysis of Shakespeare as a patriarchal figure. In her essay "The Patriarchal Bard: Feminist Criticism and Shakespeare: King Lear and Measure for Measure," McLuskie begins with applying several feminist approaches to Shakespeare's plays, highlighting in particular the problems with the mimetic and essentialist models of feminist criticism. The critic then applies her critique of such feminist approaches to *King Lear* and *Measure for Measure*. She concludes that existing Renaissance and Elizabethan structures were so heavily loaded on Shakespeare that he could never see beyond those. McLuskie examines the way sex and sexual roles in *Measure for Measure* and *King Lear* are discussed by feminist critics, and review the problems with these types of analyses. She notes that feminist readings often "reorder" the terms of the text and shift the critical attention from the judgment of the action by focusing on the process by which the action may be judged.

The Context of *King Lear*

McLuskie examines the context in which the play was written: "[the audience] must accept that fathers are owed particular duties by their daughters and be appalled by the chaos which ensues when those primal links are broken" (98). McLuskie also mentions the concept of gifting, when she states that the contract made at the beginning of the play is the only power Lear has over his daughters and that the bargaining over the number of knights Lear is allowed should not be seen as an "egregious insult," but rather as a carrying out of that contract (103-4).

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 **13:12 December 2013**

Pankaj Sharma

Depiction of Woman as Human: A Reading of Excesses of Feminist Readings of Shakespeare's *King Lear*

McLuskie examines Cordelia's actions in a feminist context; her decision at the opening of the play is seen as a threat to the patriarchal system, which "is seen as the only form of social organisation strong enough to hold chaos at bay" (99). As being disowned and with no male attachment would put Cordelia beyond the boundaries of patriarchal conformity, she is reabsorbed into the patriarchal family by her marriage to France; at the end, her love functions as the restoration of the norm of a misogynistic society (99).

Male Power: Arbitrary and Tyrannical

McLuskie explains that Goneril's and Regan's treatment of Lear is only a reflection of his treatment of them when he was in power: arbitrary and tyrannical (105). With their stranglehold on power, they defy the standards of female weakness and submission and male dominance; "[i]n tragedy, [Shakespeare's] women are strong because they are coherent, [. . .] and the attacks which are made on them are the product of male resentment at this strength" (89). Thus, Lear's threats and curses are the result of the futile anger of a powerful man deprived of male power (105). When at the end Cordelia is reconciled with her father, McLuskie believes the action is futile as Lear possesses no power. The purpose of their dramatized reunion is to serve as the symbolic restoration of patriarchal harmony (101). McLuskie states that "[t]he feminist struggle [is] concerned with reordering the values ascribed to men and women without fundamentally changing the material circumstances in which their relationships function" (90). We are not asked to completely undermine Shakespeare's works as cries for patriarchal dominance, but to appreciate the exposition of the possibility of new forms of social organization as well as romantic and filial relationships (106).

Feminist Reading Will Help Understand *King Lear* Better

I believe a feminist reading is pivotal to the understanding of this play, as it is the women who affect and have a say in every major point. Cordelia understood the consequences of her failure to flatter her father, yet she chose that path. All alone nobody on her side, banished and all this by choice, still feminist criticism would like us to read her a victim. Victim she is, but she is not the victim of a patriarchal system, but of predicament of human irony of love and need. Disowned, she accepted France's saving marriage proposal, and later she used the power this gave her to save her father and further prove the claim she

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 **13:12 December 2013**

Pankaj Sharma

Depiction of Woman as Human: A Reading of Excesses of Feminist Readings of Shakespeare's *King Lear*

made at the beginning: love is demonstrated, not spoken. I wish to know from the celebrities of feminist criticism whose victory is it- the masculine Cordelia or Cordelia the human being? As for Goneril and Regan, they make the decisions in their household after Lear bequeathed them with his kingdom. They take charge of their own lives, not asking for their husbands' opinion on turning out their father, in allowing Gloucester's torture, and Kent's punishment, and certainly not asking for permission for their affairs with Edmund. McLuskie gives us insight into the powerful, intelligent and cunning women Lear's daughters truly are when faced with trouble and opportunity

Psychological Issues

Lear's deeply rooted psychological issues are examined by those interested in feminist criticism. He surrounds himself with devoted males like Kent and the Fool because, according to feminist criticism, Lear is afraid of females. Sterner proposes that Lear views female sexuality as evil; Cordelia is leaving her father and pledging devotion to another man partly because of the sexual impulse to procreate. The King sees this as an act of adultery committed by Cordelia because she loves another man. The audience is asked to accept this idea of patriarchal misogyny; daughters are expected to be endlessly loyal to their fathers. Familial relations are determined and fixed under the misogynist ruling, McLuskie adds that in Lear's kingdom, a woman's lust represents the core of corruption; "patriarchy, the institution of male power in the family and the State, is seen as the only form of social organization strong enough to hold chaos at bay"(140). But unless you are throat deep into feminism, this looks like taking things too far.

The Threat of Rampant Sexuality

Feminist critics have believed that the greatest threat to masculinity is the threat of rampant sexuality. To control such a threat, the patriarchy must rigidly define the boundaries enclosing woman and her body. Catherine Cox discusses one such corralling boundary in her essay, "“An Excellent Thing in Woman”: Virgo and Viragos in King Lear.” Cox claims that constructions of female characters in King Lear align with the virgo/virago binarism of the Patristic and Medieval literary traditions. To elucidate her point, she focuses her discussion on one of Lear's three daughters, Cordelia. Cox's analysis does attend to the oppositional

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 **13:12 December 2013**

Pankaj Sharma

Depiction of Woman as Human: A Reading of Excesses of Feminist Readings of Shakespeare's *King Lear*

relationship between Cordelia and her two sisters, Goneril and Regan, but only to emphasize Cordelia's characterization as an ambiguously gendered female who shifts back and forth across the virgo-virago boundary. By thus limiting her analysis, Cox ignores other aspects of *King Lear* that could corroborate her perception of traditional virgo/virago themes within the text, such as the differences in the sisters' reliance on a divine realm as their salvation.

Appeal to the Divine Realm

Lear is rife with images of and appeals to a divine realm. The references to "mighty gods" (IV.vi.34), "the stars above" (IV.iii.33), and the "heavens" (IV.ii.46) are far too numerous to list. The sheer volume and prevalence of these references and themes is reinforced by Edmund early on in the play:

This is the excellent foppery of the world, that when we are sick in fortune—often the surfeits of our own behavior—we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and stars, as if we were villains on necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance...and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on (I.ii.118-126).

Father's Obstinate Pride

Regan echoes this sentiment when speaking of her father's obstinate pride: "O sir, to willful men/The injuries that they themselves procure/Must be their schoolmasters" (III.i.302-304). Edmund and Regan are hereby rejecting the tendency in this British society to relinquish individual human agency to the divine realm. This inclination towards the divine belongs mostly to the male characters in the text. Lear's rants oftentimes are directed towards the gods, whereas Goneril and Regan make absolutely no appeals to ethereal divine powers, and instead address real people and earthly issues. This gender-specific distinction is most clearly seen in the verbal exchanges between father and daughter(s), as for example occurs in Act I, scene iv, in which Goneril requests that her father, "By her, that else will take the things she begs/A little to disquantity" (I. iv.248-9) his remaining ranks of soldiers. Lear is so disappointed and taken aback by her audacity, and appeals to "Darkness and devils!"

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 13:12 December 2013

Pankaj Sharma

Depiction of Woman as Human: A Reading of Excesses of Feminist Readings of Shakespeare's *King Lear*

(I.iv.252) and the equally elusive and reified “Ingratitude! thou marble-hearted fiend” (I.iv.259). Lear also asks Nature to “hear, dear goddess, hear!” (I. iv.275) and sterilize Goneril’s reproductive body. His lofty, heaven-directed, abstract language contrasts sharply with Goneril’s grounded, human-directed, objective speech. Furthermore, Goneril’s only appeal is to her sister, not to some divine being: “What he hath utter’d I have writ my sister...Inform her of my particular fear” (I. iv.331-337).

Heaven’s Deference

Goneril’s sister, Regan, also contrasts the deference to heaven shown by the men in that Regan’s appeals are earth and sister-bound, and she takes the power of enforcing judgment into her own hands rather than relegating it to some higher authority. For example, after Lear complains to Regan about Goneril and commands the “taking airs” to “Strike her young bones” with “lameness!” (II.iv.163-64), as well as for the “nimble lightnings” to “dart [their] blinding flames/Into her scornful eyes” (II.iv.165-66), Regan responds simply by mocking Lear’s reliance on the divine: “O the blest gods! So/Will you wish on me, when the rash mood is on” (II.iv.168-69). Rather than turning to the gods and the heavens to solve problems here on earth, Regan seems to believe that justice is better served from the man’s own plate. When she and her husband encounter the bickering occurring between Oswald and Lear’s most devout follower, the Earl of Kent, Regan stringently imposes Kent’s punishment for having harassed Goneril’s steward, Oswald: “My sister may receive it much more worse/To have her gentleman abus’d, assaulted,/For following her affairs. Put in his legs [into the stocks]” (II.ii.148-50). Regan is here demonstrating her powers to mete out punishment, as well as reinforcing her bond to her sister.

Earthly Connections and Divine Rejections

The earthly connections and divine rejections exhibited by Goneril and Regan contrast also with the characterization of Cordelia as redemptive, “saintly heroine,” and sacrificial devotee of Christ, or put more simply, as virgo (Cox 148). Cordelia, upon her reintroduction into her father’s life towards the end of the play, exemplifies the virgo, Christ-reminiscent martyr role: “For thee, oppressed king, I am cast down” (V.iii.5). In turn, Lear treats her with saintly reverence: “When thou dost ask me blessing, I’ll kneel down/And ask

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 **13:12 December 2013**

Pankaj Sharma

Depiction of Woman as Human: A Reading of Excesses of Feminist Readings of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*

of the forgiveness” (10-11). Furthermore, as Cox points out, Lear’s handling of Cordelia’s dead body reflects a reversal of the “pieta,” thereby positioning Cordelia as the sacrificed holy body.

Earth-Bound Viragos

In contrast to this divine virgo figure, Goneril and Regan are earth-bound viragos who take on the earthly connotations of the disruptive Eve more than they take on the spiritual associations of the peaceful Virgin Mary. Their earth-directed, and therefore virago-grouped characterization, is also revealed in the opening scene of the play, in which they pay lip-service to the patriarchy so that they can get what they want. They hyperbolize their love for their father upon his request: “Sir, I love you more than words can wield the matter/Dearer than eyesight, space, and liberty” (I.i.55-56). These expressions acquire each of the two sisters a portion of their father’s kingdom, but are also very quickly undermined as Goneril and Regan privately plot to work their way around Lear’s “poor judgment” and “the infirmity of his age” (I.i.291-3). That is, the reverential, sacred and extremely profound love they originally express is a means through which they can appease the patriarchy and procure the ends of their own interests as well. Cordelia, on the other hand, uses her father’s inquisition into her heart as an opportunity to pontificate on some higher ideals and call the patriarchy into question:

You have begot me, bred me, lov’d me: I
Return those duties back as are right fit,
Obey you, love you, and most honor you.
Why have my sisters husbands, if they say
They love you all? (I.i.96-100).

Idealistic Realm vs. Patriarchal Society

Cordelia continues to discuss the dangers of dissembling, which also serves as an indirect commentary on a system that reinforces such maudlin, yet empty professions. Her philosophizing indicates that Cordelia attaches herself to the abstract, idealistic realm, while Goneril and Regan confine themselves to the objective, inveterate mandates of patriarchal society. The distinction between abstract and societal thinking mirrors the distinction between

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 **13:12 December 2013**

Pankaj Sharma

Depiction of Woman as Human: A Reading of Excesses of Feminist Readings of
Shakespeare’s *King Lear*

spiritual and earth-bound focus that funnels the three sisters into their proper Virgo or Virago channels.

Cox's Analysis

Cox's analysis of the Lear daughters as subjects incorporated into some very long-standing binaries is an extremely useful lens through which to read the text. Only focusing on Cordelia, however, limits the utility of such an analytical lens for Goneril and Regan's discourse reveals some very interesting distinctions between the virgo and virago representations in *King Lear*, as well as some fruitful distinctions between masculine and feminine speech and philosophy in the text. Future studies need to examine the significance of so heavily prescribing heavenly appeals to Lear's speech, while keeping the Goneril and Regan's speech objective and grounded. Cox may be claimed s immaculate reader by feminist critics but she is stretching the logic too far and as a result her analysis gets lopsided.

The Dread of the Feminine Organ

The most powerful piece of feminist criticism comes from Peter Rudnytsky's article "The 'darke and vicious place: The dread of the vagina in *King Lear*." The article takes a feminist psychoanalytical approach to even the minutest details of the play. In the subplot, Cornwall gouges out Gloucester's eyes.

Rudnytsky asserts that Gloucester's missing eyeballs are like testicles, so that when his eyes are removed as part of his manhood is lost as well--a castration of sorts. In place of his eyes, he is left with two gaping sockets which represent the vagina. Gloucester is left with two bleeding vaginas, in essence.

The vagina also represents nothingness in this play. The word 'nothing' is used frequently; such as Lear's repeated idea "Nothing will come of nothing." According to this feminist criticism, Lear discredits a woman's contribution to society; though life is created in a woman and the vagina plays a major role in this process, if the vagina is nothing then whatever comes through the vagina is also nothing.

Also, in some of the bawdy humour found in the text of *King Lear*, the penis is often referred to as a thing or thing. So it makes sense that the female genitalia might be referred to as nothing. Lear fears the vagina. He realizes that the women have power because of their indispensable part in the procreation process. If the vagina is a dark place, then it represents mystery, and Lear does not welcome the unknown. The place that the vagina represents is a place that is hidden away from men; it is a place familiar to women because it includes their essence.

Gaining the Kingdom, Rather Than Losing His Soul

Finally, in the vein of feminist criticism, Edmund, who epitomizes one kind of masculinity with his cheating heart and devious mind, kills Cordelia, who is the quintessence of femininity. In that small act, Shakespeare made a statement about male/female relations in this play; essentially, the women could not survive in the male-dominated world of Lear and his fellow men, is what the feminists would like us to believe. But the critic Northrop Fry questions the implications of applying hermeneutics to a particular piece of work in his famous “Psychology and Experience”, “We do not go to watch Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* to know the history of Scotland, but to discover what it is for a man to gain his kingdom and lose his soul.” But the charge of domains like history, anthropology, ethnography, cultural studies and most of all Gender studies seems to be directed at ‘gaining the kingdom’ rather than losing the soul.

Call for an All-Inclusive Composite Dialogue

Even if we agree with all the assumptions of the feministic school, it is being dishonest to Shakespeare, *King Lear* and literature in general. Let us stop using it as site and running away after collecting, recovering and misreading the event without its reference or reconstructing the context without caring for reference. Here the tail wags the dog, by a strange logic of theoretical dissection and hence it is lopsided at the best and misreading at the worst. Within fifty years a lot of awareness and empowerment of the weak has taken place and we are barging into new areas and territories of identity, awareness and empowerment and hence this third wave of feminism will try to avoid any militant and fragmentary agenda and will forge an all-inclusive composite dialogue. Women deserve their

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 **13:12 December 2013**

Pankaj Sharma

Depiction of Woman as Human: A Reading of Excesses of Feminist Readings of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*

rightful due, there are no doubts about it but the question of power cannot be bigger than life itself, and post feminism will try to restore these priorities, and help us in restoring a balanced reading of characters as human beings first and man and woman later on.

=====

Works Cited

- Cox Catherine S. "An Excellent Thing in Woman": Virgo and Viragos in King Lear".
Modern Philology 96, No.2 (Nov.1998), pp. 143-157
- Frye, Northrop. Anatomy of Criticism. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP, 2000. Print.
- Kahn Coppelgia "The Absent Mother in King Lear," in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference*, ed. Margaret Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy Vickers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985): 141-170
- McLuskie, Kathleen. "The Patriarchal Bard: Feminist Criticism and King Lear"
Critical Essays on Shakespeare's King Lear. Ed. Jay Halio. New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1996: 91-153.
- Rudnytsky, Peter L. "The 'Darke and Vicious Place': The Dread of The Vagina in *King Lear*". Modern Philology 96 (1999): 291-311.
-

Pankaj Sharma, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Department of English
Ch. Devi Lal University
Sirsa 125055
Haryana
India
pscdlu@gmail.com