



Psychoanalytical Study Of Lady Macbeth

Mr.Harish A Gamit

Assistant Professor

Government Arts and Commerce College,Fort Songadh

Abstract:

This research paper makes a psychoanalytical study of the character Lady Macbeth with reference to Sigmund Freud's Theory of psychoanalysis. There is a short introduction of the character of Lady Macbeth and the Play where this character appears. After introduction it gives a brief explanation of Freud's theory of psychoanalysis and finally it makes a psychoanalytical study of Lady Macbeth's character with reference to this theory.

Key words: Psychoanalysis, Human Psyche, Id, ego, Superego.

Introduction:

The character of Lady Macbeth is created by William Shakespeare. This Character appears in the well-known tragedy by Shakespeare named Macbeth. The play is thought to have been first performed in 1606. The central character of the Play is Macbeth Who is very ambitious and tries to achieve his ambition through inappropriate way that leads to his downfall. Lady Macbeth is Macbeth's wife. She is a devoted wife and also ambitious like her husband and wants to make him the king of Scotland. Though Lady Macbeth's character is not a main character of the Play, it plays an important role that cannot be avoided. This Character is life like character is life like character that shares all human emotions and also undergoes through psychological changes from the beginning to end of the Play. In this paper we will make Psychoanalytical study of this character with reference to Sigmund Freud's Theory of Psychoanalysis. But before that, let us get a brief idea of Freud's psychoanalytical theory.

Psychoanalytical theory of Sigmund Freud:

Psychoanalysis, developed by Austrian - Jewish Physician Sigmund Freud and his followers, is a comprehensive theory employed to study human psychological functioning and action. Freud's psychoanalysis covers various topics, including the structural theory of mind, dream interpretation, and psychoanalytic technique. Within literature, this approach is known as psychoanalytic criticism, a significant method of analysing literary works. Freud's lifetime contributions led to the development of diverse models of the human psyche forming the basis of his psychoanalytic theory. The id, ego, and super ego constitute the primary components of this model. The id is the impulsive and unconscious part of human psyche that responds directly and immediately to basic urges, needs and desires. It operates on the pleasure principle, that every unconscious wishful impulse should be satisfied immediately regardless of the consequences. The ego, representing the rational and logical aspect of the mind, its role is to regulate instinctual desires of the id and facilitate their release in a non - destructive manner. Superego acts as an internal censor, guiding moral judgements based on social pressure. In contrast to the id the superego operates according to the morality principle safeguarding society and individuals from the Id.

With this brief understanding of Freud's psychoanalytical theory, let us evaluate Lady Macbeth's character aiming to unveil the id, the ego and the superego in Lady Macbeth's psyche.

Psychoanalytical study of Lady Macbeth:

From beginning to end of the Play, Lady Macbeth's character transforms fervently seeking power to sombre self -destruction. Her personality is not static but evolves with the progression of events. Her involvement in the murder plot reveals three distinct phases of change in her psyche: First the "id " where she desires supreme humour and therefore she encourages her husband, Macbeth, for Duncan's murder. The second phase involves the restraint of the "superego ". After Duncan's death, Lady Macbeth starts showing remnants of humaneness, proving she is not an entirely evil woman. The third stage is an irreconcilable "ego ". From Act V onward, it becomes evident that Lady Macbeth is on the brink of collapse, urging for candles throughout the night, Sleep walking in an attempt to cleanse herself of guilt, leading to her eventual revelation of suicide through Malcolm's words.

Id:

In the first half the play, we can observe that Lady Macbeth's psyche is influenced by Id. First time, her character is introduced as reading a letter. After reading letter, her primitive desire to achieve power and honor. Through her husband is aroused. Macbeth also desires to gain power like Lady Macbeth. She understands her husband, his true thoughts, and the actions he might have to face but cannot bear. She acknowledges Macbeth's ambition, taunts him for lacking the necessary wickedness to match his ambition, and advocates for taking the "nearest way", From the moment She reads the letter a fervent belief ignites within her. Destiny is about to crown Macbeth, and key to success lies with her. She is determined to use the "valour of her tongue" to eliminate any hesitation in Macbeth's heart and, with her cunning, place Duncan willingly at death's door. Thus, upon Macbeth's return to castle, Lady Macbeth eagerly express strong ambition and forms plan for murder.

Lady Macbeth lacks any conflicts or doubts like Macbeth. She is filled with terrifying self-confidence and self-assurance. Moreover, she does not consider the danger and consequences of murder, dismissing the presence of other and potential retaliation. She lacks a moral compassion, believing she can do whatever she wishes. She provokes and challenges Macbeth, using words like "Coward", intolerable for a man, and a soldier would scorn such language.

Thus, Lady Macbeth wants to fulfil her desire at any cost without considering the consequences of her act. In Lady Macbeth's views, honourable sentiments are synonymous with shameful weakness. Life's honour is a superfluous embellishment, while unrestrained ambition becomes a symbol of love. It is this dark evil thought that determines her ability to be so ruthlessly satisfied during the murder of King Duncan. The "id" or subconscious, is the core of the human psychological structure, it stores desires that are hidden and suppressed, possessing primitive and animalistic characteristics, free from moral and rational constraints. The subconscious is constantly hidden in the depths of the human psyche; secretly active until conditions are met, awakening, it, breaking through the precocious, and entering consciousness. A letter awakens Lady Macbeth's subconscious. In this stage, Lady Macbeth's subconscious rapidly expands, rational inhibitions

are lost, murderous thoughts surge forth, and the feeble self cannot control the subconscious. The superego seems to lose all power.

Ego:

The ego represents the rational and logical aspect of the mind. Its role is to regulate the instinctual desires of the id facilitate their release in a non - destructive manner. If we apply the concept of ego to Lady Macbeth's character, we come to conclude that her character represents irreconcilable ego. It is Lady Macbeth that spurs Macbeth for murder. Initially she seems to be a strong minded lady. Macbeth confides his ambitious aspirations, wholeheartedly believing in her words and always heeding her advice when making decisions. She used various methods to stimulate him, urging him to summon the courage to undertake "deeds of consequence." But later on we witness that Lady Macbeth's character changes. She gradually distances herself from her husband, the instigator of Macbeth's crimes becomes marginalized, turning from an agitator to a mere spectator of Macbeth's atrocities. The strong minded lady remains no longer as if is. After committing colossal sins, she now revisits the murder scenes in her dreams. This self -assured, ruthless and bold woman begins to feel fear. She is afraid of the night, and hell, and contemplates the fate of other. Some might think her " conscience " has awakened , yet the ton of her words about being unable to way away the bloodstains sounds more like disgust than remorse. The mental agony in her sleep does not equate to a surrender or admission of guilt. Consequently, She cannot escape the psychological hell she finds herself. The pleasure derived from satisfying the id diminishes, while the influence of the superego gradually strengthens. This increases her mental burden - one end being heinous crimes committed to fulfil subconscious desires another end covering up those crimes to maintain Macbeth's rule and yet another end facing a renewed and vehement moral condemnation within her consciousness.

Superego:

Superego is that part of human psyche that acts as an internal censor, guiding moral judgements based on social pressure. It operates according to the morality principle, safeguarding an individual from the id. But in the case of Lady Macbeth's character, this aspect of human psyche seems to be restrained. From her several dialogues and actions in the particular occasions in the play, we come to know that her character lacks morality. Her character is influenced by Id and tries to satisfy her desire without considering its consequences.

She doesn't look at her action and its results through societal or moral viewpoint. Her plea to the spirit to rid her of her feminine tenderness in that particular speech indeed conveys her evil and ruthlessness. After receiving Macbeth's letter, she arranges everything to execute the murder of King Duncan. She conceals disappointment with willpower, adopting a masculine toughness to dismiss concerns with concerns with consistent confidence, her advices Macbeth: "what's done is done; let's not dwell on it ". Hence, we can say that Lady Macbeth's character represents restrained superego. But it is not totally true. Later on Lady Macbeth's character has been shown as repenting over her immoral behaviour and deeds.

Conclusion:

To sum up, the psychoanalytic study of Lady Macbeth's character through Freudian theory, reveals the intricate layers of her psyche and provides valuable insights into her psychoanalytical evolution. Lady Macbeth's journey can be dissected into distinct phases such as id where her subconscious desires urges her towards murderous actions with confidence ; the restrained ego phase marked by a gradual emergence of remorse and vulnerability as societal moral pressure exert their influence ; the irreconcilable ego stage , portraying her descent into a psychological conflict between suppressed desires and moral constraints intensifies . Her psychological evolution reflects the complexities inherent in human nature. The interplay of subconscious desire, societal pressures, and moral considerations shapes her character, leading to a tragic unravelling.

Hence, this psychoanalytical study provides a deep insight into the character of Lady Macbeth.

References

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