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Misogyny Against Women in the Shakespeare's Hamlet and Macbeth

Abstract:

This article intends to explore the misogyny against women in Shakespeare's two famous tragedies 'Hamlet' and 'Macbeth'. Misogyny theory is related to expression of hatred of caste, creed colour, race or gender in oral or sign language. The English literature illustrates many writers who consciously or unconsciously applied the misogynistic. William Shakespeare, one of the greatest literary figures of English literature, is not an exception. His greatest tragedies portray the characters who speak misogynistic dialogues against female characters. The textual data analysis of Hamlet and Macbeth reveals ample instances which provide evidences vindicating Shakespeare's brawny innate tendency as misogynist against women. As a gender biased dramatist Shakespeare feels pleasure to disgrace the central female figures like Ophelia and Queen Gertrude in 'Hamlet' and Lady Macbeth in 'Macbeth'. It can be interpreted that whether the strongest characters like Lady Macbeth or the weakest one like Ophelia and Gertrude, Shakespeare never attributed them individuality or independence; rather he tagged his female figures to revolve around their males.

Key words: misogyny, patriarchal, male chauvinism, masculinity, feminism.

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Introduction

Misogyny is a broad term indicating the hatred against the caste creed, colour, nation, gender, religion etc. The term can be traced back to 6th and 7th centuries BC in Greek literature focusing on masculinity and male chauvinism indicating 'men's hatred against women' (Stalker, 1998). Generally, the term is more related to the culture of patriarchal society. According to Laws (1979) misogyny theory constitutes bivalent views of men: first how women should be according to the desires of men and second, men are scared of women. Generally, misogyny is manifested using religion, social and culture dogmas, preaching that woman is a feeble but dangerous creature who can disorder the societal set up by playing untraditional role. The male authors' Misogynistic attitude is strongly glued with the sexualisation; portrayed her cruel image in literature, art, film, and media that has destroyed her image and made her venerable to domestic and sexual violence (Law, 1972). Thus for misogynistic "women is as virgin and whore, as attractive and repulsive, and as desired and dreaded" (Blumstein, 1977, p.33). Such dichotomous social status women and masculinity in male dominated society.

Authors are product of the age. They write and express what the society feels and breaths, and Shakespeare also puts soul in his characters from the society they dwell in. Shakespeare has created some immortal female characters in his dramas. Although Shakespeare's protagonist is always a man, it would not be an exaggeration to state that themes of his plays mostly revolve around women (Callaghan, 2016). However, in some plays Shakespeare portrays the licentious and conniver female figures who tried to shake-up the norms of the patriarchal society (Chirco, 2021). Such views reveal Shakespeare's gender consideration in his world-famous masterpieces *Macbeth*, *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Cleopatra*, *As you like it*, *Titus Andronicus* etc. Though mighty heroes in these tragedies intact the readers and audience to live and go through, but a great interest of the readers is to examine the intrepid and stunning central female figures in the Elizabethan era. The current research investigates the misogynist elements in the portrayal of female figures of Shakespeare's two famous tragedies *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. By applying the textual analysis approach this paper thoroughly

investigates Shakespeare's misogynistic behaviour in Shakespearean patriarchal society.

Objectives and Research Question

The aim of the current research paper is to explore the misogynistic beliefs of Shakespeare against women in his two tragedies, *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*; in addition, paper also investigates how women are discouraged and made responsible for wrong doings of their males and deprived of their self-identity. Following is the, research question:

- How far Shakespeare is misogynist in portraying the female characters in two tragedies *Hamlet and Macbeth*?

Literature Review

Misogyny is a broad term refers to gender colour, caste, creed and race discrimination or prejudice. Generally, it is associated with an era or a social behaviour ruled by stereotyped patriarchal patterns of a society where man is considered superior over women. "Patriarchy is a set of social relationship which has material base and....hierarchical relations between men, and solidarity among them, which enable them to control women" and "patriarchy is the system of male operation of women" (Eisenstein, 1979, p. 10). Nevertheless, "misogyny is *not* about male hostility or hatred toward women — instead, it's about controlling and punishing women who challenge male dominance" (Manne, 2017, p. 13).

According to Blumstein (1977) and Laws (1979) misogyny theory constitutes bivalent views of men: first is an explicit view that how women should be according the perceptions of men and second is implicit fear - they are scared of women. The psychologists interpret that man has an innate tendency of superiority complex and they regard woman as an inferior and depend creature (Stalker, 2001). Generally, misogynists consider that "the woman as virgin and whore, as attractive and repulsive, and as desired and dreaded" (Blumstein, 1977, p.5). Stalker (2001) using the psychological terms *reification* and *vilification* states that *reificationist* judge woman as a "biological entity who is reserved for domestic, emotional, reproductive, and sexual services;" denying or restricting her social role; while *vilificationist* believe that woman is a scorned being weak, inactive and idle creature (p. 292). The reification and vilification deemed to

destroy the 'self-respect of a woman' (Stalker, 2001, p. 293). With the passage of time woman started to realize her significance inside the home as well in the social setup "she tries to get an individual identity under the impulsion to be considered a strong figure in the social circle. This strive to be empowered has threatened the status quo" (Panhwar, et al, 2018, p. 102). The empowerment of women was not acceptable to the male dominant society and male do not let her to live according to the perception of her cultivated mannish wills. Men victimized her because she is ambitious, motivated, and skillful to cross all social hurdles to achieve her goals (Eschenbaum, 2021).

English literature provides abundant instances of misogyny where women are victim of male chauvinism. The authors of Shakespearean era enjoyed expressing their hatred against the opposite gender and Shakespeare is no exception; who never let go any instance to ridicule or mock the female characters. Shakespeare expressed gender-disdain in the era when a woman Queen Elizabeth Tudor was on reign; but she herself also faced the patriarchal conventions of English society that regarded woman inferior, born to live lesser life under her master that can be a father, brother, husband son. In Shakespearean, woman was denied of her fundamental equal rights. This is reflected in the literature of Shakespearean theatre where most leading female characters were played by men, depriving of their rights and taking away their opportunity to showcase their talent. Being representative and an active member of his social and literary circle, Shakespeare never detached himself from revealing anti-woman contemplation in his writings. "Women in Shakespearean tragedies are portrayed and presented as lesser and negative stereotypes", (Jajja, 2014, p. 228). The misogynistic beliefs of Shakespeare are depicted in almost in his all poetic and dramatic works. It may be *Cleopatra* of *Antony and Cleopatra*, Lady Macbeth of *Macbeth*, Gertrude of *Hamlet*, Rosalind of *As you like it*, and Tamora of *Titus Andronicus*. Shakespeare vomits poison and portrayed them cynically. These women are the strongest characters and individual figures who hardly relied on the action of their men but Shakespeare speciously made them responsible for the tragic fall of his heroes. In *Fair Youth* Shakespeare presents woman as homoerotic and fascinating entity whereas *Dark Lady* is the entity who is born to disrupt the social

values (Jajja, 2014). Shakespeare openly criticizes the role of women in politics and judges that the involvement of woman in the national affairs is unfortunate and disasters (Jajja, 2014). It is ironic that despite Shakespeare's hatred towards women, the importance of the female characters cannot be denied because the plots of his all dramas could have never developed if there would have been no female characters. Dall (2000, p. 11) painstakingly states the status of women in Shakespearean era in the following words:

“Shakespeare does give female protagonists power within many of his plays. Yet, these plays do not address the role of women royalty. As concern about the sovereign's gender formed one of the primary social considerations of Shakespeare's day, one might expect to see these gender considerations revealed in Shakespeare's writing.”

The role of women in power and politics, perhaps, is the favourite domain of Shakespearean denigration. The most surprising aspect is that he criticized the active role of the women in politics at the time when Queen Elizabeth was ruling and this era was the glaring period of English drama. Obviously, he wrote for the courts but surprisingly Shakespeare uttered poisoned remarks against women through his character in the court when Queen Elizabeth herself was among the audience. Elaborating this overly suspicious aspect of Shakespearean drama, Wain (1965) relates it to the Tudor monarchy that witnessed the failed marriage of King Henry with Queen Mary, and Queen Elizabeth was unmarried. The English people considered it an unstable scenario and potential danger for English monarch. The overambitious and ambivalent decisions of Queen Elizabeth forced Shakespeare to confirm his opinion, like his countryman, that woman lacks stability. Through the powerful female characters “Shakespeare reflects political gender anxieties; in the themes, he develops a schema of conflict and chaos erupting from such anxiety, and in the plays' contextual resolutions, he fulfills the desire for a return to state stability through a solidification of the patriarchal system” (Dall, 2000, p. 8).

It sounds that previously women were treated as if the only job of a female is to take care man of his family. On the contrary, the reign of Elizabeth on thorn was a startling and a novel role for the men oriented society, it was hard for men to gulp down such power of a

tender girl to reign the country and rule the men when “the genders had fixed norms and roles” (Dall, 2000). Such a narrative may be based on the facts that the most women of his dramas are presented as victims who are used by their male as an easy stair for getting the throne (Gertrude, Lady Macbeth, and Cleopatra etc.).

Methodology

As mentioned earlier this paper tends to explore the textual analysis of Shakespeare’s two famous tragedies, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*. The aim is to investigate Shakespearean misogynist gender-biasness as discussed in the following section. For data analysis the primary source is the printed text of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*. Using the textual analysis all those parts of the plays are focused on those portions where Shakespeare praises patriarchy and masculine and the woman is cynically portrayed, criticized and ridiculed for her wisdom and active social and political activities

Shakespearean Misogyny in *Hamlet*

Shakespeare’s famous tragic drama *Hamlet* remained an immortal love of critics in every era. One of the themes of the *Hamlet* is conflict which itself is interwoven with female issues. The murder of king who is the father of Hamlet and unexpected rush of Queen Gertrude to marry her brother-in-law Claudius raises suspicion in her son Hamlet who suspects that his mother is involved in his father’s murder. This makes *Hamlet* as a revenge play as well as a struggle for power between Hamlet and Claudius. Prince Hamlet believed that her mother is a power monger. Shakespeare expressed the active participation of women in politics through the character of Gertrude. He believes that the role of women is in home not in state politics because she cannot lead or fight in the battlefield or have intelligence to fight back against court-conspiracies “for a woman, her only source of honor is her sexual ‘credit’” (Levin, 1994, p. 3). Such expression is symbolical interpretation and indicative of Shakespeare’s concerns for gender anxieties of a female political figure, i.e. Elizabeth Tudor, who is unmarried and surrounded by the conspirators, through the character of Gertrude. “None of the critics of course has failed to see Gertrude as vital to the action of the play; she is the mother of the hero, the widow

of the Ghost, and the wife of the current King of Denmark” (Heilbrun, 1957. p, 201). Shakespeare hardly allowed Gertrude any chance to speak to justify her innocence. This has surrounded the mystery around Gertrude and therefore the majority of the readers consider her evil. As Graf (2013, p. 16) pointed out “the words of other characters both affect negatively and make awry our interpretations about her character and choices”. Even Hamlet, her son, thinks about her as the root cause of all his miseries and chaos that engulfed not only his life but the whole kingdom. Shakespeare imbued in the mind of Hamlet and the audience that Gertrude is a self-interested mother who has given priority to her brother in law; the murderer of her husband. Her marriage with Claudius is the “dexterity to incestuous sheets” to betray her son Hamlet, the legal heir of the throne, by passing Kingdom to Claudius (Graf, 2013, p. 16). Thus, Shakespeare shows that Gertrude has been an accomplice: it is not Claudius but Gertrude who is responsible for the murder of her husband:

“A bloody deed almost as bad, good mother,
As kill a king and marry with his brother”
(III.iv. 27-28)

It is Shakespeare who makes Hamlet his mouth piece to omit poison against women. Hamlet belames his mother and calls her the “most pernicious woman” and a “wanton widow and lustful woman” who allowed Claudius to snatch everything including the crown, “of the chameleon's dish. I eat the air, promise-criammed” (III, i, 93-95). This is an implicit attempt to hide Claudius, the real murderer and shift his sins on Gertrude. The indifferent attitude of Gertrude in the state affairs is portrayed as she is a stereotype lusty woman. “frailty, thy name is woman” (I.ii.146) is a strapping phrase of gender misogyny and odium expression against sexual variability of the woman. The word ‘frailty’ itself is allegorical to anatomize as physiologically an obedient and loving woman. Simultaneously, Shakespeare shoots from allegory to pun to construct himself as the most misogynistic dramatist in the Elizabethan Drama gallery. In another verse Shakespeare pours out abhorrence in the following contemptuous lines:

“Honeying and making love
Over the nasty sty”
(III. iv. 94-95)

Shakespeare bluntly made Gertrude responsible for all insane actions of Hamlet without allowing her a chance to brush off the accusations. It is very obvious that Hamlet synthesized all the chaos around him but Shakespeare keeps blaming the woman for all the pandemonium.

“I have heard of your paintings too, well enough.
God hath given you one face and you make yourselves another”
(III.i.146-146)

As observed in the following lines Shakespeare never hesitated to accuse and curse the woman whenever he finds a chance:

“Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
Against thy mother aught: leave her to heaven
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge
To prick and sting her,”
(I.v.85-88)

In the same vein Montgomery (2009) blames Gertrude of the trouble of Hamlet and states “Gertrude is thoroughly developed, autonomous, morally responsible and accountable self, a true participant in Hamlet's tragedy; she is also an accomplished analyst, interpreter, and shaper of the play's dramatic reality” (p. 101). On the contrary the critics believe that it is Gertrude who detached herself from Claudius and drinks the poison instead of Hamlet after knowing the villainous nature of Claudius. Despite coming from strong social background Gertrude is on the back foot in time of action. Though she is a major player in the play but she is portrayed as if she never existed. Her only fault was that she loved her men “whether she has knowingly or unwittingly been draw [sic] into Claudius's plot, she is guilty by virtue of her power to disrupt the patriarchal power structure in spite of her actual passivity” (Jardine, 1989, p. 93). Instead to praise her grace and scarifies Shakespeare dragged her in the shadow of lewd just to satisfy manly-ego which was dominated social fashion of Elizabethan time.

Another innocent and charming character of the play *Hamlet* is Ophelia, the beloved of Prince Hamlet, who lived her life under the strong parochial shadow of her father and brother. Being brought up in the protected milieu she never got a chance to be independent or

decision maker of her life. Her upbringing in a protected atmosphere made her mentally and emotionally frail and feeble. However, her fragility affixes an admirable angelic innocence and purity that attracts the reader towards her. Her virtuousness and diffidence made her perhaps the most lovable and immortal character among all Shakespeare's female characters. Teker (2006, p. 113) called her "an ideal women", contrary Shakespeare classifies her conformity for parents as "frail" and her beauty and modest mannerism in the negative connotation in the following words:

"The fair Ophelia—Nymph, in thy orisons,
Be all my sins remembered"
(III.i.88-89)

Hamlet viewed Ophelia as a simple and dependent entity. Shakespeare presented the woman as a symbol of status in the societal circle therefore; he portrayed the role of Ophelia in the life of Hamlet only as a beautiful rich woman who is a symbol of prestige and power in the socio-political circle of Hamlet. Ophelia, who lost her father, her brother and even her own life because of Hamlet but not a single line is attributed to her sacrifices.

A writer may use variety of literary tools especially when he/she has to mock or ridicule a character. Shakespeare's favourite mockery tools are allegory, pun and cynicism to ridicule his female characters furthermore, he goes to an extreme and switch from pun to cynicism, hinting strong misogynistic biased lines.

"Go thy ways to a nunnery.
Where's your father?"
(III. i. 120-128)

Hamlet ridiculed Ophelia's obedience for her father and brother and for himself. Shakespeare switched his pun to cynicism and tried to portray a dark image of Ophelia. He firmly believes that the women avoid hardship but under the shadow of man they want a blissful life, thus he thinks for that woman blatantly can go to any extent:

"With an auspicious and a dropping eye,
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delight and dole—
Taken to wife"
(I. ii. 11-10)

It is a peculiar feature of Shakespeare misogyny to present female characters as morbid, clinically mad and neurotic women who are frequent victims of fits of hysteria. Whether it is Gertrude, Ophelia or Lady Macbeth “the mad women” is Shakespeare’s favourite phrase frequently employed in his works. He believes that a woman, by instinct, is deceitful and impotent to stand out in time of crisis while male is ever geared up to handle difficult and impossible situations, man has a gift to turn tide in his favour. Shakespeare speaks poison against both Gertrude and Ophelia causes irreparable loss to their dignity on the basis that they have no guts and gumption to stand or be parallel to the actions of their male.

Misogyny in *Macbeth*

The play *Macbeth* is not possible without Lady Macbeth who is the plot mover, she is the conflict and to some extent the evil power. Unlike Gertrude Lady Macbeth is stronger, ambitious and ruthless who viciously engineered the plan to trap King Duncan. Her husband Macbeth being a coward man was reluctant to kill Duncan but he was motivated by Lady Macbeth (MacMullen, 2005). Although Macbeth and his wife Lady Macbeth were equally guilty to wangle the murder of the king to achieve their wicked dream but Shakespeare blamed Lady Macbeth for all the evil doings and portrayed her as antagonist of the play *Macbeth*.

Shakespeare presents Lady Macbeth as the stubborn dictator, who is adamant to get her dreams come true regardless of what price she has to pay. Lady Macbeth is absolute in her decision. After meeting the three witches Macbeth did not believe them but it is Lady Macbeth, the fourth witch, who makes sure that prophecy is fulfilled. After prophesies of witches the stubbornness and rigidity in character of Lady Macbeth is amplified:

“Wouldst thou have that
Which thou esteem’st the ornament of life,
And live a coward in thine own esteem,
Letting “I dare not” wait upon “I would, ”
Like the poor cat i’ th’ adage?”
(I.vii.41-45)

While Macbeth was reluctant to slay King Duncan:

“Prithee, peace:

I dare do all that may become a man;
Who dares do more is none”

(I.vii.46-48)

Lady Macbeth seems charmed after prophecies and she invigorated her husband to accomplish her dream, to be queen of Scotland. Lady Macbeth fully realises that it is only through her husband Macbeth that she would get her dream come true. She knows that societal general thinking perceives man as the better engineer and planner. When she noticed that her husband is wavering in taking the decision to kill the king, she calls Macbeth in the chide word and commanded him to fulfill her wish:

“Hie thee hither,

That I may pour my spirits in thine ear
And chastise with the valor of my tongue
1All that impedes thee from the golden round,”

(I.v.12-15)

It is she who shares her evil with Macbeth, who is weak and feeble and had no courage to kill the King. She being the force behind him aggravated him to carry out the heinous crime:

“I have given suck, and know

How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me.

I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums
And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn as you
Have done to this.”

(I.vii.54-59)

Under her ruthless impulsion of desire to be on the crown as queen, she even goes to the extent to curb and murder her every human feeling;

“Make thick my blood.

Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,”

(I.v.33-37)

Lady Macbeth's wish to be "unsexed" explicitly indicates the gender roles in the Elizabethan age. Lady Macbeth understands the truth that she cannot compete with the males in male dominated society. She supplicates to unsex her and be a gender-neutral as a glowing sign of the social standing of the women in the male-oriented Elizabethan society.

"Come you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here;
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full
Of direst cruelty!"
(I.v.36-40)

Such desire is not anti-feminism rather she realizes that being a woman she cannot achieve her goals. In order to get power, she is ready to crucify her female identity which is an extreme step for a woman in Elizabethan time and it can be considered above ordinary humanistic approach. Lady Macbeth was well aware about the psyche of Renaissance English society is that if she can transform her gender then she will be able to achieve her dreams. She realizes the gender biasness of the era and her desire for neutral-gender is under the impulsion for power, at any cost. MacMullen (2005) states that "Lady Macbeth is fixated on masculinity, finds femininity a flaw". To regicide she needs to be unsexed indicating that being a woman is considered as weak. She realises that transforming her gender from woman to man is the only way to compete men, especially, when Macbeth called her feeble:

"Thou wouldst be great
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it."
(I.v.17-19)

The illness mentioned by Shakespeare reflects the physical weakness. Men always considered women as a weak and considered himself as a superior entity. Such attack deemed to make the woman believe that physically, emotionally and mentally she is a feeble creature.

Shakespeare is prejudice to present that the women are greedy and impetus for power. They are ready to repudiate and compromise everything, even their sexual attraction

“Come you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here;
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full
Of direst cruelty!”
(I.v.30-34)

Shakespeare depicted the character of Lady Macbeth bursting with hamartia (tragic flaw) and a true portrayal of antagonist of the play. This biased believe is indicated in the lines mentioned below. He believes that women are treacherous and iniquitous soul who plays the sinful games. Macbeth when saw the witches believed them to be men but he knew that they are witches as it was a common belief that sinful women will grow beard.

“You should be women,
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret
That you are so.”
(I.iii.45-47)

No one knows the real name of Lady Macbeth. Shakespeare was so scared of her character and to underpin it he left her nameless. In fact, he took away her identity and we only know her because of Macbeth. She is addressed only as “Lady Macbeth” In the beginning at many places she is called "Macbeth's wife", "Macbeth's lady", or just "Lady" without any royal protocol. Later she is titled as “Lady Macbeth”. Shakespeare deliberately took away her identity; left to be known and recognized by her husband Macbeth.

It is not only lady Macbeth who is the victim of Shakespeare’s Petrarchan behaviour but even the minor characters are not spared from the misogynistic sarcasm of Shakespeare. While describing the three witches, Shakespeare has given masculinity to them as they grew beards but “associated with female role” to show that female is the vicious figure and responsible of down fall of human being (Stallybrass, 1992, p. 34). Even a young character speaks daggers- Hamlet has the same reaction when he commented about Gertrude, his mother, as she married Claudius in haste-same is voiced but this time through the son of Macduff:

“Lady Macduff: Now God help thee, poor monkey!
But how wilt thou do for father.
Son: If he were dead, you would weep for him
If you would not, it were a good sign that I should
quickly have a new father.”
(IV.ii.56-60)

Shakespeare believed that women have no right especially if she is a wife. Her soul priority is to mourn the death of her husband and should abandon her life and happiness. Though many critics (e.g. Shiddall, 2002, Azam, 2014) believe that the above-mentioned lines refer to the social status of a widow in English society in Shakespearean age but a deep analysis reveals that Shakespeare made a conscious attempt to humiliate the social status of women. “Women are inherently susceptible more susceptible to evil than men, as, disguised as a serpent, first tempted Eve, who then tempted Adam. Shakespeare recalls these originals in when Lady Macbeth uses her sexual power over her husband and persuades him to evil” (Shiddall, 2002, p.73). The patriarchal belief was so strong that women were deprived of the freedom of speech even they “were not allowed to participate in universities or the judiciary” (Azam, 2014, p. 63). Shakespeare follows the convention and he literary presented strong character of Lady Macbeth as a potential threat to the political divine status quo that man is born to rule and woman is bound to be submissive and her existence is only to satisfy the sexual instinct and to bore children for man.

Shakespeare criticizes Lady Macbeth for her over ambitiousness to achieve political goals. He considers it unnatural by gender and compares it to lust. In Macbeth, Shakespeare tried to expose political gender anxieties caused by women’s incompetence and lack of vision to handle the political crisis, thus. “Lady Macbeth’s unbridled political ambition” which is the symbolical indicator to reveal his “real political concerns that evolved from and during the reign of Elizabeth Tudor” (Dall, 2000). By showing the tragic end of Lady Macbeth Shakespeare reveals that over ambitiousness of a woman may prove to be fatal. Lady Macbeth proves that as a woman she is unable to bear the anguish and agony and she takes the best option available to her to take her own life. “self and violent hands”. Even in the end he compares her to evil calls Lady Macbeth as “dead butchered” and his “fiendlike queen” indicating

that she was one who ruled him and encouraged him to be the King of Scotland. The character of Lady Macbeth subconsciously develops a schema and poses a question “could a woman queen lead the state through war? Could a woman queen rule over male subjects?” (Dall, 2000). The catastrophe conclusion of *Macbeth* where Lady Macbeth takes her own life is the reply this question that women are not fit to rule as it is an unnatural phenomenon and to some extent against the divine law. Breaking a divine law might lead to create a chaos and instability indicates “the masculine value” and “manhood is equated with the ability to kill” (French, 1992, p. 15). Shakespeare portrays downfall of his female character from prosperity to insanity and finally committing suicide. The whole process elucidates that the ultimate end of ambitious women is annihilation and death. Shakespeare gives a clean chit to Macbeth and puts Lady Macbeth in a position from where she becomes responsible for all the killings and ambitions. It is important to note that Macbeth being the devil and the villain wins the sympathies of his audience. Macbeth performs all the evils because he was under the strong influence of his wife Lady Macbeth, the fourth witch.

“Of this dead butcher and his fiendlike queen,
Who, as 'tis thought, by self and violent hands
Took off her life; this, and what needful else
That calls upon us,”
(V.viii.70-74)

French (1992) states “Lady Macbeth is not so judged; she is seen as supernaturally evil. Her crime is heinous because it violates her social role, which has been erected into a principle of experience: She fails to uphold the feminine principle” (p.17). Despite that Shakespeare propel all tragic flaws in this character but “by all these it is clear that Lady Macbeth possesses the qualities of being a tragic hero, but she is not considered a [protagonist] because Shakespearean society does not allow a woman to be a tragic hero” (JashimUddin and Sultana, 2017, p, 73). It is ironical that Shakespeare tried her best to retire Lady Macbeth “more and more into the background, and he becomes unmistakably the leading figure” (Bradley, 1992, p.307). The tragic flaw that is thrust upon her has made her the strongest character. “she becomes all remorse and heal defiance” (Freud, 1992, p. 44).

“O gentle lady,
’Tis not for you to hear what I can speak:
The repetition, in a woman’s ear,
Would murder as it fell.”
(II.iii. 58-61)

Lady Macbeth shows “her intellect to achieve the goal and becomes evil because the society does not tolerate her intellect and work by which she can succeed” (Jashimuddin and Sultana. 74). Lady Macbeth’s extraordinary qualities as stateswoman forced Shakespeare to give her a disgraced death. This does not indicate the scrawny character of woman but she was the voice that was silenced because she was an ambitious woman.

Conclusion

The textual data analysis of *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* provide ample instances where Shakespeare exhibits gender biasness against the central characters like Ophelia and Queen Gertrude in *Hamlet* and Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*. The strongest characters like Lady Macbeth or weakest one like Ophelia or Gertrude, Shakespeare’s female have no individuality or identity. They need a man to define them. As mentioned earlier almost all actions of Shakespearean heroes revolve around their female characters but even then, Shakespeare never shows an optimal gender balance. “it is impossible to reconstruct Ophelia’s biography from the text: we can imagine Hamlet’s story without Ophelia, but Ophelia literally has no Hamlet”(Edwards, 1979, p.36).

Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* share an interestingly aspect that is Shakespearean men and women both represent the strongest personality of their time. Shakespeare cautions about the role of women in politics which is the reflection of male chauvinism of his time. He believes that the role of women is at home and she should refrain from taking any part state politics. The reason for the following beliefs are because she cannot lead or fight in the battlefield or have intelligence to fight back against the court conspiracies. He presented women as inferior in the time when “petticoat was on the crown” (Jonson, 1974, p. 472).

The play *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* provide ample examples vindicating Shakespeare's brawny innate tendency as misogynist and gender biased dramatist who feels pleasure to disgrace women characters like Lady Macbeth, Ophelia and Gertrude. On the contrary, these are innocent and non-damaging figures and victims of the insane male conspiracies. Adelman (1992) states that Shakespeare wants to "eliminate women from the life process to create world comprised exclusively of males" (p. 61)

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