

Role of Fool “King Lear”

Virender Singh

Extension Lecturer , Department of English , Govt. College, Loharu, Haryana (India)

ARTICLE DETAILS

Article History

Published Online: 13 March 2019

Keywords

Fool, entertainment, plays, antics, treatment, King Lear

*Corresponding Author

Email: virendersingheng@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The introduction of a Fool in Shakespeare's tragedies is very rare though the Fools are very common in comedies. The main role of the Fools is to provide entertainment through their witty and humorous dialogues and songs. They are wise people and beloved of the groundlings. Their presence in the plays, their antics, their songs and their jests make the plays a variety of entertainment. They enjoy full freedom from their patrons to say anything and cut to jokes. In King Lear the Fool is one of Shakespeare's triumphs and his introduction in such a painful tragedy is to provide comic relief especially when the events oppress our minds too much and where the sufferings of the chief protagonist become almost unendurable for us. In other words, the jests of the Fool serve to lighten gloom and to relieve the tension and the stress which are generated by the cruel treatment meted out to King Lear by his own daughters and also by the storm, the fury and violence of which are too great for the aged King to bear. This is why the Fool appears in the play with the start of the sufferings of King Lear and he remains with him till his sufferings continue and disappear as soon as King Lear reaches Cordelia's camps at Dover.

1. Introduction

Shakespeare was born and brought up in Stratford-upon-Avon. At the age of eighteen, he married Anne Hathaway, with who he'd 3 kids: Susanna, and twins Judith and Hamlet. Between 1585 and 1592, he started a prosperous career in London as part-owner, writer, and an actor associated with a playing firm known as the Lord Chamberlain's Men, later referred to as the King's Men. He seems to have retired to Stratford around 1613 at age forty nine, exactly where he died 3 years later on. Not many records of Shakespeare's life that is personal survive, and there has been considerable speculation about such issues as the looks of his, religious beliefs, sexuality, and whether the functions due to him had been authored by others.

Shakespeare created the majority of the recognized work of his between 1589 and 1613. His first plays had been mainly records and comedies, genres he raised towards the good of artistry and sophistication by the tail end of the 16th century. Next, he wrote mainly tragedies until approximately 1608, like *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *King Lear*, and *Hamlet*, regarded as several of the best works in the English language. In the final stage of his, he wrote tragicomedies, likewise referred to as romances, and also collaborated with various other playwrights.

Shakespeare was a revered playwright and poet in the own working day of his, though his status didn't rise to its current heights until the 19th century. The Romantics, in particular, acclaimed Shakespeare's genius, so the Victorians worshipped Shakespeare with a reverence which George Bernard Shaw named "bardolatry". In the twentieth century, his job was repeatedly used and rediscovered by brand new moves in performance and scholarship. His plays continue to be extremely well-liked now and are continuously studied, performed, along with reinterpreted in diverse cultural and political contexts throughout the globe.

2. Objectives

The purpose of this research paper is to attract the attention of the readers towards the importance and **Role of Fool “King Lear”**. The research scholar further tells that the Fool is a good judge of the Nature of others. When King Lear decides to go to Regan thinking that she is kind-hearted and comfortable and she will certainly punish Goneril for the ill-treatment meted out to him, the Fool says that his other daughter will no way prove to be better than Goneril.

The Fool's first Appearance: The name of the Fool is heard in Act 1 scene IV when King Lear feels the need of his proximity with him. His sufferings begin to surface during the first few days of his first stay with Goneril for a month. The servants of Goneril have been instructed by her to put on weary negligence. King Lear also notices the fact that for some time late he has not been getting so much of love as was professed by Goneril in the protestation of her love. It is at such a time King Lear asks where is my Fool? "One of his attendants then brings the news that the Fool has felt much grieved at the departure of the young lady Cordelia and ever since he has been sulking away his time. And the Fool comes to King Lear exactly at such a time when the Earl of Kent is striking and kicking Oswald for his rude behaviour and showing disrespect to King Lear. The Fool offers his cap to Kent for the treatment he has given to Oswald and then tells him why he is offering his cap to him as "why? for taking one's part that's out of favour. He further says to Kent is that King Lear is a Fool as he has given his everything to his daughters keeping nothing for himself and banishing his third daughter, so it he follows him it would be necessary for him to wear a Fool's cap because if he follows him, he will prove himself to be a fool. And when King Lear says to the Fool that he will be whipped for what he is saying again gives a very sarcastic but wise answer "truths a he must be whipped out when my lady Brach may stand by stand sink."

Has acted very foolishly by giving his everything to his daughters and Keeping nothing for himself and as nothing can be made out of nothing, he too is going to get nothing, he calls "The Fool" a bitter Fool." "I have used it, nancele, e'er since thou maid's thy daughters thy mothers; for when gav'st them the rod and putt's them the road and putt's down thine own breeches,"

Then they for sudden joy did weep
And I for sorrow sung,
That such a King should play bo-peep
And go the Fools among.

A good judge of Human Nature: The Fool is a good judge of the Nature of others. When King Lear decides to go to Regan thinking that she is kind-hearted and comfortable and she will certainly punish Goneril for the ill-treatment meted out to him, the Fool says that his other daughter will no way prove to be better than Goneril. He says "she will taste as like this as crab does to a crab." And this is what King Lear finds when he goes to Regan. She rather proves to be more fiendish and ungrateful and cruel than Goneril.

Fathers that wear rags
Do make their children blind,
But fathers that bear bags
Shall see their children kind
Fortune, that arrant whore,
Ne'er turns the key to th' poor

His loyalty to King Lear: The Fool is very loyal to King Lear. He does not desert his company in his adversity. He follows him even in the stormy night. He is a true friend of King Lear and as such he never flatters him and makes him blind to the stark reality of life. Like a true friend he goes on making King Lear realize his folly and the bitter truth of life and ultimately makes him a wise man. It is because of his sarcastic remarks that King Lear realizes the wrong that he has done to Cordelia. And it is because of his Loyalty and sincerity that King Lear loves him not the least. Although his bitter sarcastic remarks hasten Lear's madness, he does not have intention to hurt the king. It is for his sake King Lear agrees to enter the novel.

The exit of the Fool: Right from the very beginning of his appearances in the play till his departure, the Fool goes on

making the king realize his folly and bemusing the groundlings by his witty remarks containing great wisdom. But towards the end, his childishness comes on the fore and amuses us when he runs out of the hovel terrified by the madman and crying out to the king 'help me, help me. A little later he exclaims, "This cold night will turn us all to fools and madmen' and almost from that point he leaves the King to Edgar. His last words are significant. When King Lear says 'well go to supper in the morning the Fool answers, 'And I'll go to bed at noon as though he felt he had taken his death. He is so benumbed and women that he scarcely notices what is going on. Kent has to rouse him with Out

Come, help to bear thy master
Thou must not stay behind.
After this the Fool is heard no more in the play

3. Summing Up

To sum up; the research scholar comes to the point that the introduction of a Fool in comedies but in tragedies is very rare. The Fool in King Lear is one of Shakespeare's triumphs. His role is to provide comic relief at the time of too much of tension. The Fool comes in the fourth scene of the first act exactly at a time when King Lear's sufferings have started surfacing up. The Fool is very bitter as all the time he goes on speaking the bitter truth of King Lear's Life. He goes on making King Lear realize his folly him that his other daughters and keeping. The Fool is a good judge of the characters of the people. When King Lear feels disgusted with the ungrateful behaviour of Goneril and decides to go to Regan thinking her to be kind and comfortable tells him that his other daughter will in no way prove to be better or kinder. And exactly Regan proves to be more fiendish. The Fool's loyalty to the king is unquestioned. He never deserts the king even in his adversity. As a true friend, he goes on trying to make King Lear realize his error. The Fool exits from the stage with the words "noon" and afterwards he is heard no more.

Acknowledgements

I consider it is my moral duty to pay honour, regards and thanks to the authors, librarians and publishers of all the books, Research papers and all other sources which I have consulted during the preparation of the present paper.

Works Cited

1. Halie, Jay. L. The Tragedy of King Lear. Cambridge University Press.1964. Print. Hunter, G.K. ed. William Shakespeare-King Lear Penguin Books.1972. Reprinted 1973. Print.
2. Kelly, Philippa. Shakespeare's King Lear. Sydney University Press in association with Oxford University Press, 1993. Print.
3. Lamb, Sidney. Shakespeare's King Lear. IDG Books Worldwide, Inc.2000. Print.
4. Muir, Kenneth. Ed. Shakespeare's King Lear. Methuen & Co. Ltd. 1972. Reprinted 1975. Print. Wellsford, Enid. The Fool, 1935 [Source: The Fool (1935)].
5. Reprinted in Casebook Series, 1992, Macmillan Press Ltd. Ed. Kermode, Four Centuries of Shakespearean Criticism (1965)]
6. Brink, J.R., 2008. What does Shakespeare leave out of King Lear? King Lear: New critical essays. Ed. Jeffrey Kahan. New York: Routledge.
7. Bradley, A.C. (1905), Shakespearean Tragedy; Lecture VII, on King Lear, 2nd Ed.
8. London: Macmillan. pp 244-279.
9. Degünther, A. (2012), Good and Evil In Shakespeare's King Lear and Macbeth, Munich,
10. GRIN Verlag. Retrieved from: <<http://www.grin.com/en/e-book/200565/good-and-evil-in-shakespeare-s-king-lear-and-macbeth>
11. Johnson Dr. S., Preface to Shakespeare