Name

Professor name

Subject

May 29, 2019

King Lear as a tragic hero

Shakespeare’s play "King Lear" deals with the tragic hero who ends in destruction and downfall. King Lear plays the character of Britain's ruler while the writer has captured the period of the eighth century. The old man throughout the play is surrounded by grave duties for the protection of his land and people. The suffering of the ruler remains visible that leads to confusion and his death. The king plays the role of a protagonist who is a victim of his false proclamations of devotion. He is outraged to explore that his power is challenged by the giving throne to Goneril and Regan. His error of decision relinquishes his own power by putting the land into jeopardy. Anagnorisis becomes discernible as the king identifies his flaws by experiencing the outcome of the decision.

Lear's anagnorisis remains visible as he suffers the repercussions of wrong judgment. Anagnorisis is a literary term that explains the life of Lear stating that “the point in the plot especially of a tragedy at which the protagonist recognizes his or her or some other character's true identity or discovers the true nature of his or her own situation” (Merriam). He fails to foresee the implications of his own choice until he encounters demise and humiliation. The first humiliating instance is when Goneril orders him to discharge half of his servants. He is also disrespected by Regan and Cornwell against his expectations. The mistreatment received by Lear shows his anagnorisis. Such encounters allow the kind to witness the true nature of his own situations. The worst part of the tragedy is that Lear crafts his bad fortune by making wrong choices. The two evil sisters unite in scene IV to take the power from their father. His decisions cause him to witness betrayal and rejection. However, he decided to leave his daughters and preferred to live without shelter. The anagnorisis becomes more discernible as the king loses all his power and is no longer capable of commanding his people.

Lear realizes his mistake and foolishness that causes him to realize his tragic situation. The tragedy was not natural for Lear because he remained the controller of his life. The tragedy is defined as "a serious drama typically describing a conflict between the protagonist and a superior force (such as destiny) and having a sorrowful or disastrous conclusion that elicits pity or terror” (Merriam). This reflects the role of anagnorisis remains dominant throughout the play. The decision made by the king brings him to a state of regret but he is unable to change his fate. He lacks the power to recreate or change his reality because he no longer serves the leader of the land. He expresses regret on his wrong decision of betraying his only loyal daughter Cordelia. The transformation from being rich to poor reflects anagnorisis in the play. Lear had the highest power because he enjoys the status of the king. The analysis of the play reveals that power varies among people of society depending on their wealth and status. Lear's status is visible in the way he maintains influence over the people. His orders are never declined because people are bound to obey the king. On becoming king, Lear earns the same power and status. This reflects the link between wealth and status. His high rank allows him to abuse the power of highness. King Lear metaphors that the rich are capable of breaking the lance of justice by their power and richness while the poor lack power. There is a clear distinction between the rich and the poor as the later appears in rags and tattered clothing. The tragedy of the king is discernible in the comparison of his initial state and the transformed one. Errors of his decisions cause his downfall becoming apparent in his tattered condition when he is without shelter.

The king had significant power and remains the most prominent character in the play. His power convinced people to follow his rules and stay loyal to him. However, his power has obstacle him from seeing the challenges. He is so obsessed with his position that he ignores the risks that caused his demise later. His flawed decisions depict his inability of identifying the risks that bring his destruction later. Anagnorisis is a state of realization of his wrong decisions when he lacked power and status. The transformation of Lear’s position makes him realize the role of statuses. His encounter with a poor boy Edgar convinced him to believe that all humans are equal. State of regret is apparent as he mentions, “the weight of this sad time we must obey, speak what we feel, not what we ought to say. The oldest hath borne most: we that are young shall never see so much, nor live so long” (Shakespeare). Lear on becoming poor witness his reality that no one is going to live powerful forever. The status of human beings change constantly and they are the victim of their own choices. He only manages to see the reality of the poor when he himself searches for shelter.

The powerless state of Lear transmits the themes of tragedy and anagnorisis. His failure in recognizing the outcomes of his actions leads to his ultimate demise. In Act IV, his imperfections again become apparent as Cordelia, king's banished daughter returns to rescue him. This proves the flaws of Lear's decision because he had treated her unfairly in the past. He against realizing his mistake by drawing a comparison of Cordelia's behaviour with his other daughters. This is also a state of anagnorisis as the king regrets his decision of treating Cordelia with disrespect by banishing her from the land. The tragedy is visible because the king realizes his foolishness. Irrespective of his realization he is unable to undo his errors. This is the worst tragedy of the king because his time has changed and in his powerless position, he lacks authority to do anything. The character of Cordelia also allows Lear to realize how he had chosen evilness over virtue during his reign. He made the wrong choice by betraying his loyal daughter who later emerges to offer him help (Tamblyn).

King Lear plays the character of a tragic hero who is entrapped into a situation of demise and downfall due to his own choices. Anagnorisis is visible throughout the play and becomes discernible when the king realizes his mistake. Irrespective of his realization there is no possibility of changing the reality because he is the designer of his bad future. The failure of Lear to recognize his loyal daughter also reflects his imperfections and flaws. His obsession with status and wealth convinces him to take a wrong decision of banishing his daughter, Cordelia that later brings his destruction. Similarly, tragedy is also apparent in his flawed decision of giving the throne to his unfaithful daughters who later treats him with disrespect. The humiliation experienced by Lear also reflects tragedy because it is the outcome of his personal choice.

Work Cited

King Lear. By William Shakespeare. 1606.

Merriam. Anagnorisis. 2019. 29 05 2019 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/anagnorisis>.

Tragedy. 2019. 29 05 2019 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tragedy>.

Tamblyn, William Ferguson. "Tragedy in "King Lear" ." The Sewanee Review 30.1 (1922): 63-77.