

Filial ingratitude in king lear!

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Filial ingratitude is a dominant theme in King Lear. It is a universal theme in the sense that it is common to find many sons and daughters who show much ingratitude and cruelty towards their parents. In the play, there are two fathers (Lear and Gloucester) who suffer because of favoring certain kids to others. Their tragedy is caused by those whom they have already favored and preferred. The play gives us incidents which connect one father (King Lear) with his two ungrateful daughters (Goneril and Regan) on one hand, and another father (the Earl of Gloucester) with his son (Edmund).

Those two lines of relationships display the issue of ingratitude on a very deep and comprehensive level. What made this play a tragedy was the evil children's "filial ingratitude," for the "blindness" of Lear and the Earl was so great that only through suffering from the "monster ingratitude" of Goneril, Regan, and Edmund did they learn to distinguish the good children from the evil ones.

It was "filial ingratitude" which opened Lear's eyes to the "painful truth": he had disinherited his good daughter and had given power to his evil daughters.

Lear expresses his great shock addressing ingratitude as an enemy that has occupied the heart of his daughter. He says: "Ingratitude, though marble-hearted fiend, More hideous when thou showest thee in a child Than the sea-monster!" The traditional values that make the parent-child relationship natural and wholesome are distorted and destroyed in this play. The order and harmony that usually characterize a stable family are disrupted by the

evil designs of the greedy Edmund, Goneril, and Regan. Lear and Gloucester are both trusting fathers.

They foolishly believe the words of their evil children and banish the offspring that truly love them. As a result of their lack of judgement, both fathers are made poor by their unthankful children. The filial greed and ingratitude shown by Edmund, Regan, and Goneril bring immense suffering to all. The play begins by an unusual incident. King Lear wants to divide his kingdom among his three daughters because he has become too old to rule. Therefore, he asks each one to express her love to him. The first two daughters (Goneril and Regan) choose very passionate and poetic terms to flatter their father which reflect how hypocritical they are.

Goneril says: “ Sir. I love you more than words can wield the matter; Dearer than eyesight, space, and liberty; Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare; No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour. ” The most horrible moment occurs when it is Cordelia’s turn to speak. Lear is shocked when Cordelia has not said what he expects from her as his most beloved and dearest child. She says that she loves him as any dutiful daughter should love her father: “...I love your majesty According to my bond; nor more nor less... You have begot me, bred me; I Return those duties back as are right fit Obey you, love you, and most honor you.

” She is very realistic in her expression which indirectly expose the exaggeration and hypocrisy displayed by her sisters. But her father is too emotional and rash to get her point; he misunderstands her considering her ungrateful and cruel, and consequently, punishes her. The first sign of ingratitude is displayed immediately after the two sisters receive their share

in the same session. Goneril and Regan have a private conversation in which they reveal their real identities. They begin to conspire against their father whom they regard as very rash and emotional. They plan to treat him in the way that they think he deserves.

Goneril comments on her father state saying: “ You see how full of changes his age is; The observation we have made of it hath not been little: He always loved our sister most; And with what poor judgment he hath now cast her off. ” The development of the action in the play shows that the two daughters prove to be ungrateful and Villain. The reality of Goneril is revealed to Lear when he visits her. She does not want him to behave as a king anymore because she thinks that if he still has his title (as a king) and the royal accompaniment (represented in the one hundred knights), he will remain the real king the eyes of the public.

In this way, she with her husband will do their dirty work without much recognition. She wants to dismiss 50 knights and give orders to her steward to ignore her father and treat him badly: “ Put on what weary negligence you please, You and your fellows. I’d have it come to question. If he dislike it, let him to our sister, Whose mind and mine, I know, in that are one, Not to be overruled. Idle old man, That still would manage those authorities That he hath given away! ” These words reflect how bad and ungrateful this daughter is. She insults her father calling him an ‘ idle old man’ who still wants to enjoy his lost glory.

It seems that she accuses him of being fool when he willingly gives up his power. In addition, they indicate the two sisters’ conspiracy against their father; Goneril is sure that when her father goes to Regan, she will treat him

badly. Lear is hurt by his evil daughters' ingratitude, which is made obvious by their great disrespect and intolerance toward him. Goneril's meanness towards him prompts him to say, " How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is/To have a thankless child! " Leaving Goneril's home in anger, Lear exclaimed, " Monster ingratitude! "

Therefore, he heads to Regan expecting her to take his side and criticize her sister. Unfortunately, the sign of ingratitude shown by the second daughter is worse than that shown by the first one; Lear is badly received by his daughter, Regan, who apologizes for not meeting him, claiming that she has been tired. He becomes angry and says: " Deny to speak with me? They are sick?... Mere fetches. Fetch me a better answer. " Lear becomes furious as a result of this strange attitude of his daughter. He cannot believe what happens to him, and therefore, he asks the elements of nature to avenge his humiliation:

" We are not ourselves when nature, being oppress'd, commands the mind. To suffer with the body. I'll forbear. " He will " forbear" because he can no longer restore what he has lost as a result of his rashness and injustice. Regan is crueler than her sister. In addition to sharing her sister in treating her father badly, she dismisses him from the palace making him face the outside storm alone. Devoid of love for him, the two sisters show that they are ungrateful, insulting, and threatening to the father who gave them both land and power. It is not proper on all scales of morality to dismiss a father in such bad weather.

Therefore, Lear speaks to Kent expressing the internal storm which goes inside him. He states that Goneril's and Regan's villain actions leads him to

madness: " The body's delicate: the tempest in my mind Doth from my senses take all feeling else Save what beats there. Filial ingratitude! Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand For lifting food to't? But I will punish home: No, I will weep no more. In such a night To shut me out! Pour on; I will endure. " In such a night as this! O Regan, Goneril! Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all,–

O, that way madness lies; let me shun that; No more of that. Following the other line of ingratitude (Edmund's ingratitude towards his father), we find that Gloucester does not choose to abdicate his role, as Lear has already done. Therefore, his ruthless son Edmund schemes and plots against him to replace Edger (Gloucester's legitimate son) as heir, and then seek an opportunity to depose his father. Edmund plans to make his father read a letter that contains a conspiracy against him by Edger. When he speaks to himself, we realize that he is, not only ungrateful son, but also a real devil.

He displays his hatred of both his father and brother saying: " I do serve you in this business. A credulous father, and a brother noble, Whose nature is so far from doing harms, That he suspects none; on his foolish honesty My practices ride easily! I see the business. Let me, if not by birth, have hands by wit: All with me's meet that I can fashion fit. " His vicious scheme succeeds and Gloucester rejects his son, Edger. Then, Edmund humiliates his father by revealing his sympathy with Lear to his daughters and a secret letter which his father has received regarding the landing of French forces.

These incidents lead Gloucester to blind himself saying: " O you mighty gods! This world I do renounce, and in your sights Shake patiently my great affliction of. " Gloucester's life is saved by his son, Edgar, whom he has

already deserted. This action is completely contrary to the villain actions and vicious schemes made by Edmund who is regarded as the “ fiend”. In a moment of enlightenment, Gloucester, after becoming blind, that Edmund has deceived him and that his ingratitude has been so intense. He discovers that his son has sacrificed him in return of some worldly benefits.

It is quite clear that Edmund ingratitude is motivated by achieving his personal interests and his wicked nature. In the same way, Lear reaches the same stage of enlightenment when he is provided with care and concern by Cordelia, the daughter whom he has already deserted. She comes to him to mend and cure him. She wants to be a relief that my wipe her sisters' ingratitude. When she sees him in his miserable state, she says: “ O my dear father! Restoration hang Thy medicine on my lips; and let this kiss Repair those violent harms that my two sisters.

Have in thy reverence made! ” Now he is able to realize the sharp contrast between Cordelia, as a dutiful daughter, and her two ingrateful sisters. At the end he says some very passionate words to Cordelia indicating that she is the only one with whom he feels happy and satisfied even in prison. He asks her to forgive him for his injustice towards her: “...Come, let's away to prison We two alone will sing like birds i' the cage. When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down, And ask of thee forgiveness. So, we'll live, And pray, and sing, and tell old tales and laugh.