

**The Triumph of Morality in William Shakespeare's *King Lear*:
An Analysis from the Qur'anic Perspective**

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ABSTRACT:

A set of relationships governs the kind of communications among people within one or more societies, of which most important is the one that occurs between children and their parents, especially fathers. Psychologically speaking, this kind of relationship is so significant insofar as it is the basis of the child's personality inasmuch as it is the source of its character and action in social media.

Undoubtedly, the most significant factor in a drama is the social relationships among which child-father relationship is a recurring theme. William Shakespeare appears to be much more occupied in this sort of relationship which prominently and significantly figures out in most of his dramas such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Titus Andronicus* and *Hamlet*. Most important is the child-relationship in *King Lear*. In Shakespeare's plays children and parents interact in various ways, for they are headed to behave in such a way that leads to the resolution he intends to cite at the end of the play. As in life, conflicts among the family members that appear in his drama are very important whether resolved or not.

This paper mainly revolves around the child-father relationship in *King Lear*, especially the one between Lear's daughters Goneril, Regan and Cordelia on the one hand, and their father on the other; and between Edmund and his father Gloucester as far as the theme of ingratitude is concerned. Many studies have been made on the filial relationships in this play, which have at the same time ignored the close relationship between the Qur'anic connotations attained by the dramatist and the essential themes in this play. To attempt such a study like this is to shed light on Shakespeare's awareness of the Islamic representations reflected in *King Lear* as far as the theme of ingratitude is concerned. Many attempts have been made to analyze Shakespeare's drama from the Islamic perspective; yet, this play has not got its due analysis from the Islamic viewpoints. This paper is to clearly view the themes of ingratitude, the children-father relationship, adultery, injustice, foolish behavior and brotherly relationships in terms of the relevant Islamic representations. When considering all the complications that surround the environment of the play it is recognized

that the morality as reflected in the Holy Qur'an triumphs over evil powers and any other representations contrary to it.

Keywords: Triumph, Morality, Gratitude, filial ingratitude

William Shakespeare's plays abound in multitudinous representations, concepts and thought shown throughout his realistic representation of characters with genuine human traits, among which children's ingratitude forms a very conspicuous yet significant aspect of *King Lear*. It is this human trait transplanted in the children of both Lear and Gloucester, which appears to be most influential and prominent all throughout this drama. Undoubtedly, the want of gratitude in them greatly affects character and action in the play, and at the same time directs the course of the development of the other dramatic ingredients such as setting, climax and resolution, not to mention the genre of the play concerned. So far, the play has been analyzed from the prospective of the conflict between good and evil—the good is approved and the bad is punished, and concentration is made on redemption, purgation and salvation. Or, the play is often envisioned from the Freudian and Marxist point of view concerning social relations, which is regarded as being ineffectual and old-fashioned:

Like Freudianism, Marxism is obsolete in its own field and produces interpretive ideas that fit poorly with Shakespeare's depictions of human behavior. The Marxists identify economic class as the chief constituent in social relations. That preconception blocks insight into *King Lear* in two important ways: it gives no adequate access to the feelings of reverence associated with Renaissance conceptions of royalty, and it obscures the sense of a common humanity.

(Joseph Carroll, p. 83)

Nonetheless, almost all the significant representations of this drama can be viewed from the Qur'anic perspective as far as the themes of filial ingratitude, greed, betrayal, adultery and foolery, and above all human nature as a whole.

When considering the issue of *Romeo and Juliet*, it is quite obvious that their suicidal actions are prohibited by Islam that advocates that one should not harm and kill oneself. Western interpretation of this behavior is taken as a kind of sacrifice for the sake of love—a sacrifice to indicate selflessness on the part of the characters concerned. But, had the two families of the two lovers been reconciled to each other, the tragedy would not have occurred. Reconciliation comes in line with the Islamic values that show that reunion, compromise, harmony, settlement and tolerance are all a sign of goodness: “reconciliation is best. Souls are prone to avarice; yet if you do what is good, and practice piety—God is Cognizant of what you do” (*The Holy Qur'an*, Al-Nisa' Sura, from Sign no. 128). Shakespeare advocates the moral lesson that reconciliation is better than enmity and hatred and old feuds.

It may be suggested that Lear should have shown some kind of consideration towards his daughter Cordelia whom he dismisses in moments of nervousness; yet his behavior appears to be true to his own personality as a foolish person lacking in prudence. Yet, he is King, which

implies that he should have enjoyed a minimum amount of wisdom, or at least he should have consulted his followers. Nevertheless, he retracts and recoils from his decision to be inimical to Cordelia at the end of the play when it is too late. His decision to patronage Goneril and Regan and to dismiss Cordelia from the domain of his kindness has not served him, being unaware of which one would treat him optimally in old age. To follow justice when distributing the inheritance is approved by *The Holy Qur'an* that does not determine principles haphazardly. It clarifies that the kind of distribution set in it justifies the fact that parents do not know which of their spouses or children is closest and best to them. This comes in line with what *The Holy Qur'an* advocates: “you do not know which are closer to you in welfare” (*The Holy Qur'an*, An-Nisa’ Sura: 11). Goneril and Regan then behave towards their father as if they were his enemies : “O you who believe! Among your spouses and your children are enemies to you, so beware of them. But if you pardon, and overlook, and forgive—God is Forgiver and Merciful” (*The Holy Qur'an*, Al-Taghabun Sura, Sign no. 14).

Most significant and interesting is the fact that an entire royal family has come to meet its doom due to the kind of child-parent relationship, which points to the moral and psychological developments of families in the various aspects of real life. The action of *King Lear* has been set in the domain of family relationships in which conflicts are made between brothers and sisters to the extent that they show wrathful and strong vengeful anger and indignation to one another. However, this drama depicts the faithfulness of Lear’s daughter Cordelia and Gloucester’s son Edgar. Thus, *King Lear* is essentially a drama of faithfulness and unfaithfulness: “The domestic side of life is thus torn with fearful struggles, and its quite affection and repose are turned into display of malignant hate and passion. The parents are both faithful and faithless to their relation; so are the children, taken collectively” (Helmut Bonheim, 1961: p. 39).

It has been pointed out that the action of *King Lear* is set in a pagan domain where heavenly religious and moral principles, especially those related to inheritance, have not been known as being set against particular criteria, which may organize relationships whatsoever: “The setting of *King Lear* is the pagan Celtic world of ancient Britain” (Ronald H'uebert, p. 429).

From the Islamic perspective, a father should treat his children as fairly as possible, so that he would not make discrimination among them. Lear’s disapproval of one of his daughters, Cordelia, and his decision to deprive her of her legal inheritance is supposed to be an act against her rights. The denial of one’s inheritance is forbidden in *The Holy Qur'an*. Lear’s unfair judgments concerning his three daughters lead nowhere but to his downfall caused by his ungrateful daughters, Goneril and Regan. It can be suggested that Lear himself does not know who of his children would be best for him—a fact indicated in *The Holy Qur'an* that justice should always be adhered to in any case whatsoever: “O you who believe! Be upright to Allah, witnessing with justice. And let not hatred of any people prevent you from acting justly. Adhere to justice, for that is nearer to piety.

And remember Allah. Allah is informed of what you do” (*The Holy Qur’an*, Al-Ma’idah Sura, Sign 8).

Drama in general and Shakespeare’s drama in particular should be the exposition of human relationships of which child-relationship is most significant in that it is part and parcel of human life and experience, and therefore this kind of relationship almost always assumes its presence in his drama. It may be suggested that his plays abound in the characters of parents and children, for they comprise two-thirds of the entire number of his plays, if not all of them:

Shakespeare's plays present parents and children who are interacting in a variety of ways, and the plots of these plays often focus on familial conflicts. In the tragedies, the familial conflicts are not resolved, or if they are so, the resolution comes too late to escape the tragic outcome.

(Suneetha Yelad et. al. 2016: p. 602)

Due to Shakespeare’s skill in depicting the filial conflicts—inner and external—among his characters such as Hamlet, King Lear, Romeo and Juliet that contribute to achieving eternal themes and to creating the dramatist’s universality, and at the same time their stories never depart the memory of the literary media at all times insofar as human nature and relationships are the same in all ages.

It should be observed that the plot representations are related to the relations between Lear and The Earl of Gloucester on the one hand, and Goneril and Regan, and Edmund respectively, on the other. Besides, Lear and Gloucester share the same trait, parallel as it were, in that both of them exhibit unfair treatment towards their daughter and son, Cordelia and Edgar respectively, and at the same time they have highly been dependent on their deleterious and evil children that appear to be very dangerous to them. To deepen their tragedies, Lear and Gloucester discover the opposite of what they have expected to realize. Their discovery of their children’s ingratitude forms a great shock to the sentiments of their fathers:

Gloucester: All dark and comfortless. Where's my son Edmund?

Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature,
To quit this horrid act.

Regan: Out, treacherous villain!

Thou call'st on him that hates thee; it was he
That made the overture of thy treasons to us;
Who is too good to pity thee.

Gloucester: O my follies! Then Edgar was abused.
Kind gods, forgive me that, and prosper him!

(III. vii. 84-91)

From the start, Cordelia displays her point of view concerning the nature and personalities of her two sisters, Regan and Goneril, when she says that she knows them very well, an opinion about them which cannot but be interpreted in the bad sense. When examining these two characters throughout the entire play, it is realized that they have already represented the epitome and essence of evil. Both of them do not keep loyalty not only to their father, but also to each other after having their share of the kingdom

from their father. Once they have assumed power and responsibility, they appear to be occupied in feuds with each other, and rumors about them begin to spread among people:

CUR. Have you heard of no likely wars toward
‘twixt the dukes of Cornwall and Albany?

EDM. Not a word.

CUR. You may do, then in time. Fare you well, Sir.

(II. i. 10-15)

Furthermore, they have badly treated their father. They have not only harmed their father and sinned against him, but they have also sinned against their sister Cordelia and, as wives, they have betrayed their husbands, for there are in the play certain indications yet impressions to point to their love relation with Edmund. Goneril, for instance, tells Edmund the following:

GON. If you dare venture in your own behalf,
A mistress command. Wear this, Spare speech [Giving a favor]
Decline your head. This kiss if it durst speak,
Would stretch thy spirits up into the air.
Conceive, and fare thee well.

(IV. ii. 20-24)

Shakespeare makes it obvious that both sisters compete for winning Edmund despite the fact that they are married women:

EDM. To both these sisters have I sworn my love,
Each jealous of the other, as the stung
Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take?
Both? One? Or neither? Neither can be enjoyed
If both remain alive...

(V. i. 55-59)

Being two fathers of children, Lear and Gloucester share the same suffering in that both of them have been harmed by their children—Lear by his two evil daughters, Goneril and Regan; Gloucester by his illegitimate son Edmund. Both fathers suffer from filial ingratitude and vindictiveness. To add to the affinity between Lear and Gloucester, it may be suggested by some critics that Lear’s madness is regarded as an equivalent to Gloucester’s blindness. According to Oscar James Campbell, the semblance of their situations makes “the tragedy more than a different treatment of the same circumstances—that it raises the inhumanity of children to aged fathers into a declaration of moral and philosophical law of human behavior” (Campbell, 1974: p. 431). From the Qur’anic perspective, some like to be praised for nothing. So is Lear. He likes to be praised by all his daughters of whom the elder ones lied to him when describing and amplifying their love for him: “Do not think that those who rejoice in what they have done, and love to be praised for what they have not done—do not think they can evade the punishment. They will have a painful punishment” (*The Holy Qur’an*, Ali’Imran Sura, Sign 188). Thus, Lear seems to be punished by bitter disillusionment from the fact he has sacrificed all his wealth for the sake of false words of praise. However, when Cordelia tells

him the truth, he hates to hear what she has said, which comes in line with what *The Holy Qur'an* shows in this regard: “We have given you the truth, but most of you hate the truth” (*The Holy Qur'an*, Az-Zukhruf Sura, Sign 78).

The moral attitude in *King Lear* reveals that Edmund has been stripped of all signs of human dignity because of his father's sin represented by the illegal sexual intercourse to beget him as a bastard. The moral to be obtained from this situation is that evil may breed evil unless it is reformed or destroyed in one's inner nature. Helen Morris gives a clever elaboration of the contrast between the two stories contained in the play—the story of Lear and the story of Gloucester—pointing out how the two stories parallel each other in almost everything:

Lear has good and bad daughters, Gloucester good and bad sons; each mistakes the good child for the bad, and vice versa; the good child is disinherited and rejected in favour of the bad. The plot cross when Lear is condemned by Gloucester's wicked Regan and Goneril. The good child returns to save the father, who in neither case immediately recognizes his saviour. Even in such details as the emphasis on the word 'nothing' in Lear's interrogation of Cordelia (I 1 85) and in Gloucester's interrogation of Edmund (I 1 31) the stories echo each other; again, Lear is urged to 'see better' (I 1 157) and Gloucester needs spectacles (I 2 36). (2)

(Helen Morris, 1965: p. 51)

Being a bastard deprived of all the rights to inherit properties, he feels that he is just like an outcast that society does not want him, and thus he behaves unnaturally because he does not want to conform to the moral and social conventions of his civilized people. Hence, Campbell, in the voice of Edmund, postulates the following question: "Why, he asks, should be bound by a moral law his father violated in begetting him? (Campbell, p. 432). Furthermore, Goneril and Regan are also regarded as evil characters as long as they are only looking for their own interests and trying to make illegal relations with Edmund despite the fact that they are married women. When trying to dominate their father they “turn upside down an important phase of the God-ordained social order—the submission of children to their parents” (Campbell, p. 432). (4)

On the other hand, it is Gloucester who should be blamed for his gruesome act of adultery that has resulted in the birth of a vicious bastard that appears to be, like his father, adulterous in that he makes love to Lear's daughters Goneril and Regan, and at the same time he is the antagonist of the play who manages to remove his brother, Edgar, and dismiss his father from the earldom and becomes earl himself. He comes to believe in no moral value except those related to superiority and cunning. His wish to maintain power and supremacy makes him manipulates any trick possible to achieve his aims—a wish that makes him appear to be a conscienceless villain, though at the end of the play he shows some feelings of repentance concerning his attempts to harm his father. *The Holy Qur'an* asserts that children should treat their parents kindly. The moral to be obtained from Edmund's behavior is that his bad treatment of his father is something

prohibited and leads nowhere but to catastrophes. The holy book shows the following: “Your Lord has commanded that you worship none but Him, and to be kind to your parents. If either of them, or both of them, reaches old age with you: do not say to them words of disrespect, nor scold them, but speak to them respectfully” (*The Holy Qur’an*, Al-Isra’ Sura, Sign no. 23).

As Lear’s children are divided into two categories representative of good and evil, Goneril and Regan, and Cordelia, Gloucester’s children, Edgar and Edmund respectively are representative of good and evil too. Though regarded as unfamiliar experience, Edmund’s betrayal and coercive treatment of his father can be considered a daily experience and may mainly be intended by the dramatist to amplify the tragic sense of the play and make the audience sympathize with both fathers, for the gap between what should be expected according to the normal ethics and what has really happened to them due to their children is great. When considering the relationship of Edmund and Edgar with their father, it is important to realize that one son is evil; the other, bad—the concept of the good son is represented by Edgar. As to Edmund, he represents the concept of the evil son that tries to always oppress his parents. He does not only betray his father Gloucester, but he also tortures him, and therefore he proves himself to be most horrible and most oppressive. His greed for power is so great that he does not care for whom he can harm in order to achieve his deceitful ambitions. But, God’s providence is to pounce on him and let him meet his doom to rid his people from his wicked yet oppressive actions. This comes in line with the son to whom God has sent somebody to kill him because God already knows his wicked intentions to oppress his parents in his future manhood; hence, morality overcomes and is triumphant at the end of the play: “As for the boy, his parents were believers, and we feared he would overwhelm them with oppression and disbelief” (*The Holy Qur’an*, The Cave Sura, Sign no. 80). Edmund’s wicked intentions and his indifference as to whom he may harm is shown in the following excerpt:

Edmund: To both these sisters have I sworn my love;
 Each jealous of the other, as the stung
 Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take?
 Both? one? –or neither? Neither can be enjoy'd
 If both remain alive: To take the widow
 Exasperates, makes mad her sister Goneril;
 And hardly shall I carry out my side,
 Her husband being alive. Now then we'll use
 His countenance for the battle; which being done,
 Let her who would be rid of him devise
 His speedy taking off. As for mercy
 (V.ii. 55-65)

Edmund dupes his father in making him believe that Edgar, his brother, has betrayed him, for Gloucester has “always been afflicted with moral and spiritual blindness and so easily mistakes evil for good and good for evil,” (Campbell, p. 432), which leads him nowhere but disaster. Though his eyes are blind, his mind's eye, later on, can see clearly and

discover Edmund's false allegations towards Edgar. His blindness causes him to be in a state of despair and pessimism. He despises the gods that are, he believes, injurious to him. He believes that they are no more than powerful beings that amuse themselves with men as if they were a child's plaything. Hence, the disparagement of the pagan gods may have been intentionally made by the dramatist, so that he can support the heavenly principles that oblige children to serve their parents. Illegal love and sexuality are utterly prohibited by *The Holy Qur'an* because they are a source of further vicious actions. It seems that Shakespeare, in *King Lear*, discards lust because it is a waste of progeny: "Gloucester has wasted his seed, the bodily equivalent of his land, and his waste precipitates the stripping of his son Edgar's inheritance. In consequence, Gloucester loses his eyes; and even Edgar regards the loss as a fitting punishment for his father's lecherous crime" (Rebecca Ann Bach, 2007).

In its quarto versions and in its folio version, Shakespeare's *King Lear* utterly rejects lust: both lust as male sexual interest in women and lust as female desire. Gloucester's adulterous affair has caused him too much suffering in that it has been conducive to a bastard son who turns him against his other good son Edgar and employs every means possible to destroy them both. It is significant to recall God's call in this regard: "And do not come near adultery. It is immoral, and an evil way" (*The Holy Qur'an*, Al-Isra'a Sura, Sign no. 32).

Many critics consider this drama a morality play because of the so many moral lessons it displays to the audience. As a matter of fact, the play displays situations closely related to real life with all its ramifications, and at the same time it may be suggested that the play is one of hope and faith. From the pagan background one can therefore infer Islamic connotations and pretensions which prevail in almost every theme and are related to the main characters involved in the significant representations of the play and which may be concordant to the Islamic and Christian doctrines as well.

To hide assumptions of goodness and piety behind the curtain of paganism is Shakespeare's attempt to color this drama with an Elizabethan framework, so that the play becomes compatible to the Elizabethans' way of thinking. When fully purged, and after having suffered too much, Lear's soul aspires to have a belief in what he calls to be "the gods." Though pagan, "the gods" in this regard are representative of Lear's spirituality and his attempt to have faith in God. Thus, Lear resorts to Cordelia before they both meet their doom. He comes to realize that she is a symbol of true love, and as G. Wilson Knight calls her the representative of "supreme love" (1949: p. 189) considered to be within the domain of idealism and spirituality, for she is the only figure in the play to remind all the other characters and the audiences as well of the notion that the world can be rid of foolishness, bestiality and atrocity.

Lear's abdication of the throne that immediately makes him decide to live under the patronage of his daughters points to the beginning of his journey starting with his residence within the properties of his two daughters Goneril and Regan and ending in the Tower where he hopes that

Cordelia is still alive and that he can heal her ancient injuries caused by his foolish behavior. Therefore, the play can be taken as a journey to a sublime state—purgation. It points to the journey of Lear's body and soul through the medium of sufferings and pains to attain purgation. Hence, Lear begins to search "for the spiritual truth that will enable him to surmount the blows of circumstance and to establish sanity and peace in his disordered nature". (6) (Campbell, p. 432). The beginning of the journey, the subsequent complications and other developments have already been stimulated by his daughters' ingratitude, which does not only bring about a change in the course of events but also a change in the inner thoughts of both Lear and Gloucester.

The other moral to be obtained from the play is that which interprets the English proverb "birds of a feather flock together," for Edmund, being an evil character and a bastard as well, has naturally and spontaneously been made to be connected with the evil Goneril and Regan. Thus, as pointed out by Samuel Johnson, Shakespeare has been given the chance to relate evil to another evil throughout the character of Edmund. Shakespeare connects "perfidy with perfidy, and connecting the wicked so with the wicked daughters, to impress this important moral, that villainy is never at a stop, that crimes lead to crimes, and at last terminate in ruin" (Samuel Johnson, in Campbell, 437). Thus, the play, Johnson proceeds to say, shows "a profound commentary on life set against a backdrop of eternity. It is a pilgrim's progress, mankind's agonized search for the true values of both of these religious systems" (Johnson, in Campbell, 437).

At the beginning of the play, Lear's behavior has been determined by his own foolish thinking and passions that may be agitated by the least word "Nothing" uttered by his dearest daughter Cordelia and it is only throughout sufferings he can attain that state of purgation. Lear's troubled soul and the incongruity of his passions determine the chaotic circumstances in which he has been left. In order to reach a peaceful state of body and soul Lear has to live unprotected and unaccommodated, so that he can learn facts necessary to his understanding of life.

Lear bitterly feels the gap between what he thinks of Cordelia's love and what reality unfolds to him, and his insistence on his righteousness at the time he is wrong leads him to face a bitter reality. Hence, his mind and views about things should undergo certain changes, so that he can be corrected. This is the reason why he has been driven mad. His behavior towards Cordelia is foolish and void of any wise thinking. This may form the core of his tragedy, for his lack of wisdom in crucial moments leads to losing all his power and estates: "He gives wisdom to whomever He wills. Whoever is given wisdom has been given much good. But none pays heed except those with insight" (*The Holy Qur'an*, Al-Al-Baqarah Sura, Sign no. 269).

To G. Wilson Knight, Lear's mind needs to be purged of madness:

His purgatory is to be the purgatory of the mind, of madness. Lear has trained himself to think he cannot be wrong; he finds he is wrong. He has fed his heart on sentimental knowledge of his children's love; he finds

their love is not sentimental. There is now a gaping dualism in his mind, thus drawn asunder by incongruities, and he endures madness. (9)

(G. Wilson Knight, in Campbell, 438)

It has been suggested that the story of *King Lear* was familiar to the audience when Shakespeare represented it on the Elizabethan stage. The fact that that story was recorded in Holinshed's *Chronicles* helped the dramatist to start the play where it began, needless to represent things that had already been known to the audience. The play opens with a situation in which Lear has already declared that he is going to distribute the kingdom among his daughters. Because of his foolish mind and weak thinking, not to mention his arrogance and pride and vanity, Lear feels that he needs to be humored by his daughters' flattery before he gives each one her due share. The wicked Goneril and Regan have managed to skillfully respond to his demands, whereas innocent Cordelia fails to do so. She declares that she is unable to express her emotions:

Cordelia. Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave

My heart into my mouth. I love your Majesty

According to my bond, nor more nor less.

Lear. How, how, Cordelia! Mend your speech little,

Lest it may mar your fortunes.(10)

(*King Lear*, I. i. 93-97)

It is generally accepted that Shakespeare experiments with the dramatic forms and elements. In *King Lear*, he experiments with the use of animal imagery. Harrison points out that Shakespeare "experimented with the possibilities of a concentrated poetic imagery". (11) (G. B. Harrison, 1968, p. 1139) In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare also resorts to animal imagery when comparing man with a castrated male pig reared for meat, a hog, when he is lazy; and a symbol of the animal kingdom. And in *King Lear*, man is a fox when stealing; a wolf when expressing signs of greediness; a dog when expressing madness; and above all, a lion when preying upon his victims. In *King Lear*, animal imagery is employed on a wide scale to provide the dramatist with the abstractions necessary for the typicality of the significant characters in a morality play. This kind of representation is concordant with what *The Holy Qur'an* advocates: "He [Man] was unfair and ignorant" (*The Holy Qur'an*, Al-Ahzab Sura, Sign no. 72).

Shakespeare makes use of animal imagery to abstract those animal traits and qualities in order to describe human behavior. The play may then show a conflict of abstractions and may culminate into an allegory. As a matter of fact, Shakespeare is not merely making a simple comparison between man and animals to indicate that man is just like a beast, but he indirectly displays an extended metaphor as long as the play appears to be one of the morality plays in which significant moral lessons and implications are elaborated. So, traces of the morality plays can by no means be avoided or overlooked in Shakespeare's drama. According to L. C. Knight, Shakespeare avoids the sparsity of the direct allegorical representation of the character and action of the medieval drama as shown, for instance, in the morality play *Everyman*, and he turns his hand at

something richer: “Character and situation alike take on a symbolic quality and are made to point to a range of experience beyond themselves. And they do this because of the ways in which the reader or spectator is involved in the metaphoric process that constitutes the play” (12) (L. C. Knight, 1965, p. 177).

To place important characters—Lear, Gloucester and Edmund—in a natural environment, the heath, is only to point to the typical qualities of these characters that can be modified by the adjective “beastly.” It should be noted that Shakespeare, for the sake of poetic requirements, intends to portray man living in a natural world as animals do. When Hamlet expresses his disapproval of the hasty marriage of his mother he resorts to an animal image: “Oh, god! A Beast that wants discourse of reason/ Would have mourned longer—married with my uncle” (*Hamlet*, I. ii. 150-151).

The following passage points to Lear's foolishness as he dismisses Kent from his sight, ordering him not to interfere in his affairs. Besides, the animal imagery employed in the play shows that Lear is like a dragon. This is only to substantiate the natural prospect of the setting in which men and women exhibit their animal desires:

LEAR. Peace, Kent!

Come not between the dragon and his wrath.

.....

LEAR. The bow is bent and drawn, make from the shaft

.....

LEAR. Out of my sight.

(I. i. 124-125, 145, 160)

Besides their individuality, evil characters do reflect those typical qualities found in animals, and even the general atmosphere of the play is shown in Lear's words that though they are relatives they will not see one another as if they had been living in a jungle where the animal offspring usually depart from their parents, looking for their natural needs. Lear tells his daughter Goneril the following:

LEAR. I will not trouble thee, my child—Farewell.

We'll no more meet, no more see one another

But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter.

(II. iv. 222-224)

Family within the royal court is divided by a conflict among its members for the sake of power and properties. On the one hand, marital ceremonies are held in the beginning as Lear marries off his daughters to significant personalities. The division of his kingdom among his evil daughters can be regarded as distributing inheritance—a social issue. On the other hand, Edmund's pursuit for power and properties makes him plot against his brother Edgar. These social activities and aspirations for greed and acquiring wealth and power invite critics to analyze the play in terms of a society and social dealings: “And you devour inheritance with all greed,” “And you love wealth with immense love” (*The Holy Qur'an*, Al-Fajr Sura, Signs no. 19-20). These hypothetical representations concerning the pure and innocent personalities of Cordelia and Edgar can be accounted for as

follows: “By Time. The human being is in loss. Except those who believe, and do good works, and encourage truth, and recommend patience” (*The Holy Qur’an*, Al-’Asr Sura, Signs no. 1,2 and 3). This point of view can be clearly realized when light is shed on the patience of Cordelia and Edgar: Cordelia has been harmed by her father and sisters; Edgar, by his father and brother. Edmund has deprived Edgar of his legal title as earl and lets him desert the situation in fear of inevitable death. Edgar appears to be a good son with magnanimity in all situations. It has been his moral responsibility to protect and avenge his father to the extent that he may be regarded as the play’s major hero triumphant over the iniquities and wrongdoings done by the evil characters. He exhibits goodness towards his father, and when he is with Lear in the wood, pretending as a mad man, poor Tom, and speaking gibberish sounds, he appears to be very compassionate to the extent that his tears may spoil his disguise: “My tears begin to take his part so much/ They’ll mar my counterfeiting” (III. vi. 60-61).

It must be noted that Shakespeare seems to remind kings of the danger of abdicating the throne to undeserved children. Lear’s attempt to divide the kingdom causes destruction to himself, his children, and those who have faithfully served him. The play poses the question of the influence of the bastardy of a son on society and the dangers that may arise from man’s deviations from natural practices in order to indulge into unnatural domains where one should meet unhappy consequences as is the case with the adulterous Gloucester.

To abdicate the throne to two evil daughters is supposed to be most unnatural—a dealing that has rarely been made before and which will never occur in the natural world—a practice that cannot be called but most unnatural thing. Reminiscent to this practice is brother-murder in *Hamlet*, regicide in *Macbeth*, the killing of a king that is relative to the murderer, and the killing of one's wife because of jealousy, all these murders are unnatural ones. As to *King Lear*, the most unnatural practice is the revolt of children against their parents. Almost the entire order of the kingdom in *King Lear* has been turned upside down. In K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar's words, in *King Lear*

There are not two ‘mighty opposite’ alone as in *Hamlet*, but whole armies of opposites, whole tiers of battle-fields, with confusion being confounded more and more, the issues are joined at every point,—Nature against man. Man against man, man against himself,—and so all order within and without loosening, breaking up, and disintegrating into primal chaos. (K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, 1986: p. 470)

Thus, early in the play, Gloucester anticipates the chaotic situation to be encountered by almost all the characters:

These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us...nature finds itself scourg'd by the sequent effects: love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide; in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond crack'd 'twixt son and father...machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders, follow us disquietly to our graves. (I. ii. 99)

It is made obvious that bastardy is a social evil that may be destructive to both the bastard and his begetter, as is the case with Edmund and his father. Though the play consists of a pagan setting, the Islamic ethics of the *The Holy Qur'an* have not been overlooked in this regard: “When he gains power, he strives to spread corruption on earth, destroying properties and lives. God does not like corruption” (*The Holy Qur'an*, Al-Baqarah Sura, Sign no. 205). Cordelia, for instance may be regarded as a symbol of innocence; Edgar endeavors to castigate evil, despises sins, and sets things right. Edmund himself has changed his mind concerning the murdering of Lear and Cordelia, but it too late for the latter has already been hanged. The everlasting struggle between good and evil is quite explicit and culminates into Edgar's triumph. In Harbage's wording of the same idea, it is made clear that the moral representations are ultimately victorious:

on the human level, the implications of the play are more comforting than the idea it abstracts. In our actual world, suffering is not always ennobling, evil not always self-consuming. In every scene where there is someone who strives to relieve that pain. At the close, the merciless have all perished; the last sound we hear is the choral voices of the merciful. (Harbage, 116)

The play may be dealt with as being educational and instructional. To be an old father is not necessarily to be wise, for good judgment and prudence are insistently needed when a father has to deal with his children. The moment Lear hears unsatisfactory standpoint from his youngest daughter, he immediately behaves foolishly and deprives her of her portion in the kingdom. His wrath towards Cordelia is conducive to the atmosphere of darkness he then finds himself in: “And Jonah, when he stormed out in fury, thinking We had no power over him. But then He cried out in the darkness” (*The Holy Qur'an*, Al-Anbiya Sura, Sign no. 87). It is true that Lear represents a typical king; yet, he is a man who may find his prototype among men in human society. His peculiar individualities distinguish him from any other man in the world. He has behaved in the way he does not because he is king, but because he is an individual obsessed by the passion of anger and rashness. Any king or any man in his place would not, of course, behave in the same manner. He is a man and a father responsible for a family of three children that can by no means be separated from human society. The play

is also a family gathering. There is the father, and there are servants, and children of his house. The central figure is, and seems always more so as the play weaves its spell, not only archetypal king, Man and Father, but particular king, man, and father. No symbol that remained purely symbol could so touch our emotions. To have children of his flesh and blood, the father must be flesh and blood—such as can be old, grow weary, feel cold and wet. (18) (Harbage, p. 118)

As a matter of fact, Lear's and Gloucester's wrongdoings are what ignite the evil deeds of their children. What ignites the entire tragedy and then filial ingratitude is Lear's wrong decision to divide the kingdom

among his daughters and at the same time deprive himself of the most important yet significant ingredient of his sovereignty. It is Gloucester's fault that has lead Edmund to adopt the course he has followed throughout the play which is one full of ingratitude, treachery, dirty plots, adultery, and murder. The gist of King Lear, concerning both the acquisition and loss of power and the acquisition and loss of honor can be summed up in the following sign:

Say, "O God, Owner of Sovereignty. You grant sovereignty to whom You will, and You strip sovereignty from whom you will. You honor whom you will, and You humiliate whom you will. In Your hand is all goodness. You are Capable of all things. (*The Holy Qur'an*, Al-imran Sura, Sign no. 26)

In the end, Goneril has poisoned her sister and plans to murder her husband. She learns that Regan has already claimed that Edmund is her new husband. Goneril commits suicide as soon as her evil deeds are uncovered. Goneril and Regan have not only failed to be good daughters to their father but they have also failed to be good rulers, good sisters, good wives and good princesses. It is worth noting that both of them do not show any sign or an indication of repentance which points to the fact that they represent the essence of evil and all sorts of ingratitude not only towards their father but also towards themselves, husbands, and above all their own country. It may be shown

that neither she [Goneril] nor Regan feels any sort of remorse for their behaviour, nor even (it seems) any sense that they have done wrong, despite their failure as daughters, as sisters, as wives and lastly, as princesses. Goneril puts herself above her father, her husband, and finally—'most monstrous'...above the law. (19) (Morris, p. 50)

Throughout the purgatorial moments Lear has undergone, he comes to discover his mistake, repent and ask for forgiveness: "Pray you now, forget and forgive: I am old and foolish" (IV.vii. 84). He has learned what true love means and how it feels. He discovers that he has been a fool when treating his daughter in a bad manner. His self-discovery comes during moments of humiliation. Now, he would like to be nursed by Cordelia whom he once wronged: "Through the excursion into self-discovery, he grows into a more complete human being. He is tender, unselfish, and understands the meaning of empathy and humility" (Elena Gierstae, 2015, p. 87). This remark comes in line with what *The Holy Qur'an* exposes in relation to Lear's loss of power and humiliation: "Say, 'O God, Owner of Sovereignty. You grant sovereignty to whom You will, and You strip sovereignty from whom you will. You honor whom you will, and You humiliate whom you will. In Your hand is all goodness. You are Capable of all things.'" (*The Holy Qur'an*, Ali'Imran Sura, Sign no. 26).

To sum up, the diabolical behavior and intentions, together with the actions of Lear, Goneril, Regan, Gloucester and Edmund highly contribute to their downfall. They have not only lost their power and estates, but they have also lost their lives. They have first become poor and helpless yet submissive until they have ultimately lost everything. Their satanic actions

are against the will of God. Poetic justice has been achieved. They deserve their fate. Following the dictates of Satan, they have been led nowhere but to poverty and destruction: “Satan promises you poverty, and urges you to immorality; but God promises you forgiveness from Himself, and grace. God is Embracing and Knowing” (*The Holy Qur’an*, Al-Baqarah Sura, Sign no. 268).

As a conclusion, *King Lear* is reminiscent of the medieval morality plays in which morality is always triumphant. The conflict to get power by illegal means has been resolved on behalf of the good characters. Edmund has been challenged and is fatally wounded by Edgar when in disguise of another character that is Albany. Because of jealousy Goneril has poisoned her sister Regan and then kills herself in fear of discovering her treachery. Before he dies, Gloucester rejoices the fact that his son Edgar is going to protect the honor of the family. It has been suggested that Edgar is to share the rule with Duke Kent but the latter refuses the offer on the account that he is too old to govern and he abdicates the throne to Edgar—the good, innocent and patient personality: “God is with the steadfast” (*The Holy Qur’an*, Al-Baqarah Sura, Sign no. 157). Hence, morality triumphs in the end.

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المستخلص

هناك مجموعة من العلاقات التي تحدد نوع التواصل بين الناس ضمن مجتمع واحد أو أكثر والتي من أهمها تلك العلاقة التي تقوم بين الأبناء وآبائهم، فمن وجهة نظر علم النفس تعد هذه العلاقة ذات أهمية بالغة لأنها أساس شخصية الابن كونها مصدر هويته وأفعاله في الأوساط الاجتماعية. ومما لا شك فيه، تعد العلاقات الاجتماعية العامل الأكثر أهمية والتي تكون فيها علاقة الابن بالاب موضوعاً دائماً الحضور إذ يبدو وليم شكسبير مهتماً بهذا النوع من العلاقات الذي تبلور في الكثير من مسرحياته مثل "روميو وجوليت" و "تايتس اندرونكس" و "هاملت"، والأكثر أهمية في هذا المجال علاقة الابن بالاب في مسرحية "الملك لير". تبين مسرحيات شكسبير بأن الأبناء يتعاملون مع الوالدين بشتى الطرق حيث تم توجيههم للتصرف بطريقة ما بحيث تؤدي إلى الحل الذي يقصده ان يكون في نهاية المسرحية. تعد النزاعات بين أعضاء الأسرة الواحدة في مسرحياته مهمة جداً سواء تم حلها أم لا كما هو الحال في الحياة الواقعية.

يتمحور البحث المعنون انتصار الأخلاق في مسرحية شكسبير "الملك لير": دراسته تحليلية من منظور قرآني بشكل رئيس حول علاقة الأبناء بالآباء في مسرحية "الملك لير"، سيما تلك العلاقة بين بنات لير كونزيريل وريكان وكورديليا من جهة وأبوهم من جهة أخرى، وبين إدموند وأبيه كلوستر بقدر تعلق الأمر بموضوع عقوق الوالدين. ظهرت دراسات عديدة حول العلاقات الابنوية في هذه المسرحية التي تغاضت عن الصلة الوثيقة بين المضامين القرآنية والمواضيع الجوهرية لهذه المسرحية. أن هذه الدراسة تسلط الضوء على دراية شكسبير بالمضامين القرآنية المعكوسة في مسرحية "الملك لير" قدر تعلق الأمر بموضوع عقوق الوالدين. هناك محاولات عديدة لتحليل مسرحيات شكسبير من المنظور الإسلامي إلا أن هذه المسرحية لم تحظى بالقدر الكافي من التحليل من المنظور القرآني. يقدم البحث رؤية واضحة لموضوعات عقوق الوالدين وعلاقة الأب بالأبناء والعلاقة الحميمة غير الشرعية والظلم والسلوك الأهوج والعلاقة الأخوية من حيث المضامين الإسلامية ذات العلاقة. فعندما تؤخذ جميع الملابس التي تحيط بالبيئة التي تدور فيها أحداث المسرحية نجد أنتصار الحالة الأخلاقية كما نتأملها في القرآن الكريم على قوى الشر وأي قوى أخرى نقيضة لها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: عقوق الوالدين، عرفان، أخلاقيات، انتصار.