

## **Man and the Mind (with special reference to Shakespeare's *King Lear*)**

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**Abstract.** The article entitled "Man and the Mind" is in two parts. The first part is totally creative, based upon the personal experiences and findings, acquired from the discussion among peers whereas the second part is purely a critical study which runs on the bases which have been propounded in the previous part. The article is an attempt to understand the mind and man individually. Though the two are inseparable biologically, sometimes they function individually. Now, the mind is conscious or super-conscious, then sub-conscious or unconscious. The piece focuses on such issues. The second part is an exhaustive study precisely of Shakespeare's characters' mind, giving more focus on Lear's mind, including other characters in the tragedy *King Lear*. The article is an effort to go deep into Lear's mind and understand the things that go on in his mind through his actions which reflect whether his mind is conscious, sub-conscious, unconscious or super-conscious.

**Keywords :** Conscious; super-conscious; oblivion; dormant; conductor; phenomenon; microcosm; serenity; additives; depersonalised.

The darkest corner of the human mind, that remains surprisingly inactively active, plays a highly mysterious, unexpected and consequential role. Being the most intense part of the brain, it appears as if it were in some infinite oblivion, lying inactive. But the inactive corner is actually in its dormant state, which may be awakened anytime even by the slightest provocation and sometimes it does not even stir when the event has the highest intensity.

Indeed, when the corner of the mind activates, it has capacity to do whatever it intends. Man thinks that he is the master of the two-the mind and the self; he feels that he controls the mind; he does whatever it pleases. At normal level, any common man or woman may think so. Actually, this is only a natural reaction by anybody. The man in the body executes the physical action and thinks that the impact of the execution of the action remains confined only to the physical form. The thirsty throat quenched with water demands none till it is thirsty again; the hungry stomach, once satiated, demands nothing further; the body having been sexually satisfied does not indulge into such an activity till it is aroused again. The man in the body limits the satiation only to the body. But quenching thirst, appetite and sexual satisfaction are such phenomena that have seriously to do with something more serious and that is none other than the mind.

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If the tongue tastes anything pleasing, that is not the pleasure of the tongue but that of the brain; if the nose receives any fragrance or odour, it is not the experience of the nose rather that of the brain; similarly, if the eyes dote on something beautiful or ugly, like other experiences, it is the experience of the mind not of the eyes. The tongue, nose, eyes and other parts are only the mediums which transport the different experiences to the mind. The experiences cause the brain to react and then the brain reacts actively.

The human body behaves like a conductor which is directly related to the mind which now acts accordingly, then oddly or now proportionally, then disproportionately. When the mind reacts to the physical action accordingly or oddly, having known to the probable and expected result, the mind is conscious; whereas when the mind reacts in proportion to an action, whether it be mental or it be physical, is said to be again conscious; but it becomes highly excessively complicated when the action, whether it be mental or it be physical, to differentiate unconsciousness with super-consciousness. A drunkard as well as a mad man behaves exactly how he likes to behave originally without any extra effort or adding to it. Actually, they do not know the reaction, and hence they are unconsciously conscious.

Again, one more knotty issue crops up the moment the study goes ahead, and discerns whether a normal man is conscious or a drunkard is conscious. The former fabricates the behaviour to save himself from some untoward reaction of the affected or the receiver and hence he is conscious of what he is doing whereas the latter, being mad or drunkard, loses his capacity to fabricate and behaves in accordance with the absolute thought which is ineffectual by any fabrication, though the man, executing the action unknown to the reaction to the affected or the receiver, unconscious of the outcome but conscious of the original behaviour and hence he is unconsciously conscious.

Sometimes the man in the mind acts, may be physical or mental, knows the expected consequences but deliberately does not want to react, without taking into his consideration. A person playing with a knife knows very well that a mistake may cause him a fatal cut and bleeding, still he continues his activity, and if unfortunately he is wounded, he realises what he was conscious of, but the time that spans between one point of consciousness, undertaking the work, till the point of reaching the consequence is his sub-conscious faculty of the mind.

A man, asleep, having a dream after getting up, reminds it and somewhere in the darkest corner feels a possibility of happening as a prediction, and comes about accordingly, shows his super conscious state of mind. The phenomenon is like an intuition in the sleepy state of the mind. It is only the body that sleeps while the mind is conscious—better say conscious mind in the unconscious body. A super

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conscious mind is the mind which is truly aware of the cause and effect. The super activeness of the mind to presume the consequence creates sensation in the mind which leads the mind to the futuristic phenomenon. Sometimes the sixth sense of living being perceives the visible and the invisible, all around and then it is believed that it is the sixth sense that is over active. The sixth sense has hardly any existence without the mind. The sixth sense is also an integral part of the mind, the whole microcosm, and the sixth sense is the over active part of the darkest corner of the mind. To be super conscious, it requires to be serene in the mind with excessive churning of the mind. The mind reaches the pinnacle of serenity only when it is saturated with the additives of the sensory experiences. To clarify through an analogy, the brain is like a receptacle; the information received from senses and sent through the nerves to the mind acts like sugar; and the experience is like water. The information and experience continue to mix with solubility in the innermost water-tight compartment like brain. When the solvents reach saturation point, the two are together, the water turns sweet, but the two have still independent identity. It is the same process in the mind as goes on in a receptacle while sugar and water are mixed. As the mind gets depersonalised, it receives an independent identity. It remains unaffected from any external affairs and it perceives something which makes the mind super conscious.

## II

Now, let us examine the brain of King Lear. The king is introduced to the readers in the Lear's palace. Something is going on within his mind, something like 'dark purpose'. (*King Lear* 4) He is conscious of the things that are going on in the darkest corner of his mind. The meaning of the 'darker purpose' clarifies when he announces to retire from all of his state of affairs, and to distribute his kingdom among his three daughters namely, Goneril, Regan and Cordelia. He declares :

...Know that we have decided  
In three our kingdom; and 'tis our fast intent  
To shake all cares and business from our age,  
Conferring them on younger strengths, while we  
Unburden'd crawl toward death. (I. i. 35-40)

Obviously, he is conscious of what he is doing , but the moment he expresses :

Tell me, my daughters...  
of territory, cares of state, –  
Which of you shall we say doth love us most?"  
(47-50)

The question is a stimulant for the daughters. Goneril's and Regan's brains react alike. Moreover, the innermost part of the brain is also conscious of the brain which is expecting a persuasive response, pacifying to Lear's brain and then she replies :

Sir, I love you more than words can wield the matter;  
 Dearer than eye-sight, space, and liberty;  
 Beyond what can be valu'd, rich or rare;  
 No less than life, with grace, health, beauty; honour  
 As much as child e'er lov'd, or father found;  
 A love that makes breath poor and speech unable;  
 Beyond all manner of so much I love you. (54-60)

Regan also responds similarly:

I am made of that self metal that my sister,  
 And prize me at her worth. In my true heart  
 I find she names my very deed of love;  
 Only she comes too short : that I profess  
 Myself an enemy to all other joys  
 Which the most precious square of sense possesses  
 And find I am alone felicitate  
 In your dear highness' love. (68-75)

But Cordelia is conscious only of what she has to say. Her response is balanced:

Unhappy that I am, I cannot have  
 My heart into my mouth: I love your majesty  
 According to my bond; nor more nor less.(90-92)

Cordelia's response arouses Lear's anger of which the latter is conscious but he is not conscious of what his anger is to lead to. And then he announces:

Here I disclaim all my paternal care  
 Propinquity and property of blood,  
 And as a stranger to my heart and me.  
 Hold thee from this forever. (112-115)

The head strong king Lear divests Cordelia of her share. He has lost the command of intelligence whereas Kent thinks intelligently. He is conscious of the difference between love and flattery, though he is ousted from the court. He dares to advise Lear:

Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak...  
 When majesty falls to folly. Reserve thy state;

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And in thy best consideration, check  
 This hideous rashness: answer my life my judgment,  
 Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least;  
 Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound  
 Reverbs no hollowness. (146-153)

Lear is conscious of only his action not of the consequence which results from his action. He divides his kingdom between Goneril and Regan and deprives Cordelia of her share of fatherly love and affection. His action causes his ultimate destruction both mentally and physically; whereas Cordelia is conscious of the other things which are going on within the mind of Goneril and Regan. Cordelia knows very well that his daughters have masked their venomous thought and evil-intention behind the show off of false love for their father, Lear. She has enough mental strength to sense such doings. She has actually foreseen the destruction of her father. She could do it because she is more than conscious. This is why, before departing from there, she warns Goneril and Regan:

The jewels of our father, with wash'd eyes  
 Cordelia leaves you: I know you what you are;  
 And, like a sister am most loath to call  
 Your faults as they are nam'd. Use well our father :  
 To your professed bosoms I commit him :  
 But yet, alas ! stood I within his grace,  
 I would prefer him to a better place.  
 So farewell to you both. (268-275)

She further clarifies:

Time shall unfold what plaited cunning hides :  
 Who covers faults, at last shame them derides.  
 Well may you prosper ! (280-282)

Lear remains ignorant of Goneril's and Regan's conspiracy. His ignorance continues to grow till he realises what is happening to him and what Goneril and Regan are made-up for. Goneril and Regan maltreat with him. He is insulted and made destitute.

Lear has a jester. Fool, in his company. Though he is only a fool, ironically enough, he is more intelligent than Lear who is, really, foolish not intelligent as he wrongly believes to be. The Fool's mind is free whereas Lear's mind is overloaded with his short-sightedness, recent adverse and unexpected development which has restrained his mind and has subdued his consciousness. Even the Fool understands well that Lear was wrong in his judgment regarding Cordelia. He also gives a bit of his mind to Lear:

Mark it, nuncle : –  
 Have more than thou shovest,  
 Speak less than thou knowest,  
 Lend less than thou owest,  
 Ride more than thou goest,  
 Learn more than thou trowest,  
 Set less than thou throwest...  
 And thou shalt have more  
 Than two tens to a score.(I. iv. 113-123 )

The Fool further asserts:

...thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown, when thou  
 gavest thy golden one away.”(157-158)

The fool's brain is highly active and has proper understanding of human mind. Lear has not so much capacity as the fool has. He further sarcastically remarks:

I had rather be any kind o' thing than a fool; and  
 yet I would not be thee, nuncle; thou hast pared  
 thy wit o' both sides, and left nothing i' the middle  
 : here comes o' the parings. (178-181)

There is seldom any confusion in his thought. He knows that Goneril has plotted against both Lear and Cordelia.

Lear's consciousness is still subdued. Goneril treated her father, Lear inhumanly and ultimately drives him away. The humiliation excites his brain but his consciousness still remains inactive; he thinks of getting shelter at Regan's but again it is Fool who is alive to his brain and makes him understand:

Shalt see thy other daughter will use thee kindly;  
 for though she's as like this as a crab is like an  
 apple, yet I can tell what I can tell.(1.v 13-15)

Fool's words, impregnated with wit, awake the unconscious brain and then Lear, first time, realises that he has done injustice to Cordelia. He utters:

I did her wrong (22).

But he, foolishly expects Regan's help. She, too, proves even more inhuman, and the treatment causes him to lose control over his mind. The upheaval that is in the mind corresponds to the upheaval in nature. Precisely speaking, the upheaval is a violent reaction of the mind which was laid subdued for a longer period. The mind

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Rumble thy bellyful! Split, fire! spout, rain!  
 Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters:  
 I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;  
 I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children,  
 You owe me no subscription : then let fall  
 Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave,  
 A poor, infirm, weak, and despis'd old man.  
 But yet I call you servile ministers,  
 That have with two pernicious daughters join'd  
 Your high-engender'd battles 'gainst a head  
 So old and white as this! O! O! 'tis foul! (III.ii.14-24)

Lear consciously feels:

My wits begin to turn. (68)

And, then, he curses Goneril and Regan:

Now, all the plagues that in the pendulous air  
 Hang fated o'er men's fault light on thy daughters!  
 (iii. iv 65-66)

He is to acquire his consciousness on his regeneration after his mental death. He goes mad. The sight is too pathetic for Cordelia to bear. Lear was

...As mad as the vex'd sea; singing aloud;  
 Crown'd with rank fumiter and furrow-weeds,  
 With burdocks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flowers,  
 Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow  
 In our sustain corn. A century send forth;  
 Search every acre in the high-grown field,  
 And bring him to our eye  
 What can man's wisdom  
 In the restoring his bereaved sense?  
 He that helps him take all my outward worth.  
 (IV iv 2-10)

Lear's total insanity is his mental death and the re-awakening of the mind is his re-generation. He regains his sense and then the mind becomes conscious of the injustice which he had done to Cordelia. He becomes repentant and begs pardon of Cordelia:

You must bear with me:  
 Pray you now, forget and forgive: I am old and foolish.  
 (IV. vii. 83-84)

Lear has now a capacity of consciousness. He recognises the truth of the truest Cordelia and Cordelia's decision. He has reached the same height of awakened consciousness which is always with Cordelia. He emphatically utters:

No, no, no, no! 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 ring, and tell old tales, and laugh  
 At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues  
 Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too,  
 Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out,  
 In a valid prison, packs and sects of great ones,  
 That ebb and flow by the moon. (V. ii. 67-76)

Cordelia is assassinated. This assassination hastens Lear's death, which is an indispensable requirement of the play. His heart is released from all loads and the mind is brightened up. Cordelia is lying dead in his arms. His mind has gone from different states of mind to super consciousness, and the super conscious state of mind provides him capacity to abnegate his life and calmly leaves his body with Cordelia in his arms.

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