

AN ANALYSIS OF IDENTITY CRISIS OF OSBORNE'S CHARACTER "JIMMY PORTER" IN "LOOK BACK IN ANGER"

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ABSTRACT: *This study aims at the analysis of identity crises in Osborne's character Jimmy Porter in "Look Back in Anger" (1956). The character of Jimmy will be analyzed with general perspective of psychoanalysis highlighting specifically the theory of identity crisis by Erikson in order to find out the riddles found in his personality. To meet the objectives of the study and to obtain findings certain scenes and situations exposing Jimmy's identity crisis have been analyzed through the in-depth study of the text and the theory. Throughout the play we find him as an angry young man whose anger is the result of his frustration and identity crisis.*

KEYWORDS: Anger, Jimmy, Identity Crisis, Osborne, Psychoanalysis

INTRODUCTION

Identity crisis means a feeling of unhappiness and confusion caused by not being sure about what type of person you really are or what the true purpose of your life is. In Medical dictionary the definition of identity crises is a personal psychological conflict especially in adolescence that involves confusion about one's social role and often a sense of loss of continuity to one's personality.

"Look Back in Anger" (1956) by Osborne first appeared at the royal theatre. Osborne was appreciated for his talent as the play was found rich in emotions. Osborn was labelled as an "Angry Young Man". All incidents and events of the play are mainly related to four characters Jimmy, the protagonist of the paly, Alison, Jimmy's wife, Cliff, who is friend of Jimmy, Helena, friend of Alison and Jimmy. All the character of the play except Jimmy are simple if compared to the character of Jimmy. His Character is also important for psychological study. Jimmy, the "Angry Young Man" is not satisfied with his life and society. The story of the play shows his anger against people and things in his surroundings.

In the beginning of the play we find three characters. Jimmy, Alison who is wife of Porter and a friend of Jimmy named Cliff. Jimmy and Cliff belong to a working class while Porter's wife Alison belongs to an upper Middle class family. The difference of social status between Jimmy and Alison causes Jimmy's condition of dissatisfaction. His attitude shows him as a rebel of society. This character shows his all offenses and alienation for the high class of society. Throughout the play we find him fighting against the sense of alienation and identity crisis.

LITERARY REVIEW

"Look Back in Anger" (1956) was a revolt against the traditional British theatre. To this Osborn's work critics reacted differently. According to Cecil Wilson as he described in Daily Mail, the character of Jimmy "Young Neurotic" who lives like a pig and his "bitterness produces a fine flow of savage talk". He further added that Porter's personality was complex because the play had given no main explanation of his behaviour. His attitude was boring because it was difficult to explain it.

Barker, The Daily Express May 9, 1956, gave his opinion about the play as it was "intense, angry, feverish and undisciplined". It was even crazy bit he called it repeatedly young for three times. Tynan, May 13, 1956 also called it a good young drama of his age. Million Shulman, The Evening Standard May 9, 1956 was of the opinion that Look Back in Anger is a "dispraising Cry" but have only a position of self-pitying snivel. Shulman agreed that Osborne had the great quality to provoke and stimulate dialogues and his characters were convincing

According to the critic of the New Stateman and Nation "Look Back in Anger" was not perfect but it was full of excitement and life. He said it is an address to you if you are young and even it will help you in understanding the feelings of young. Judie Dench, Maureen Paton, Daily Express June 8, 1989 were of the opinion that "Look Back in Anger" is a good attempt to discuss relationship of husband and wife in a different way. The "Good plays change meaning with time". Micheal Billington, June 8, 1989. It is an expression of personal gain more than a social play.

METHODOLOGICAL & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The mode of inquiry for this research paper is qualitative, based on analysis of Osborne's character Jimmy Porter in "Look Back in Anger". To meet the objectives of the study and to obtain findings the researcher has read the text of "Look Back in Anger" in detail and has identified why and how Jimmy Porter was facing identity crisis. The researcher has focused on the psychological study of Porter's personality to come up with a sound analysis and logical conclusion.

This study aims to analyze the identity crisis of Osborn's character Jimmy Porter in "Look Back in Anger" with the view point of modernist psychoanalytical approach.

In psychology, the term "identity crisis" introduced by Erikson means an individual who fails to get ego identity (p. 210). Unlike many other developmental theorists of his era, Erikson's psychosocial theory of human development covers the entire lifespan, including adulthood. Erikson used the term "crisis" to describe a series of internal conflicts that are linked to developmental stages. According to Erikson's theory, the way a person resolves the crisis will determine their personal identity and future development.

The first crisis typically occurs during early to middle adolescence, and is called the crisis of identity versus identity confusion. This crisis represents the struggle to find a balance between developing a unique, individual identity while still being accepted and "fitting in."

The second crisis, occurring between late adolescence and early adulthood, is called the crisis of intimacy versus isolation. This crisis represents the struggle to resolve the reciprocal nature

of intimacy; i.e., to achieve a mutual balance between giving love and support, and receiving love and support. Thus, youth must determine how to develop and to maintain close friendships outside the family, as well as how to achieve reciprocity in romantic relationships. The research has analyzed how according to the above mentioned symptoms and effects Jimmy Porter is the character suffering from identity crisis.

Analysis

The character of Jimmy Porter in "Look Back in Anger" by Osborne belongs to the generation who have been deprived of their great past, with dull and ambiguous present and going to face an aimless coming time. Hence, an aloof, without aim and goals, without purpose, confused and hopeless generation was produced. Identity crisis was the main issue of the time. This frustration and boredom made Porter an "angry young man". Throughout the play Jimmy Porter constantly shows his anger against society, class and sex conflicts and even his hatred for religion. Before leaving Porter, Alison shows her desire to go to church with Helena. Jimmy asks her, "where you are going" when he comes to know that she is going to church Porter says, "You are doing what"? Have you gone out of your mind or something"?

We find him continuously making complaints against the corruption, injustice and irregularity of the society. He says that there are "no beliefs, no convictions and no enthusiasm". We find him in anger constantly abusing and cursing society and system and even his near ones but he proves mere "a wolver stone Hamlet" unable to make any action. He is unable to lessen the agonies of his or the people of his class and fails to convey his idealism to others. He belongs to a working class have "University Education" but have to work at a shop of sweet. This helplessness makes him angry because he thinks it is only because of this trauma that he belongs to a middle class so that society is making and fixing the choices of his aims values and goals of life. He was facing many questions which remain unsolved and the main question was of his existence and identity.

He is longing for the company of anyone to whom he can express his ideas and feelings regarding society, religion causing frustration, disillusionment and nihilism in him. In his search for identity and existence he has only sufferings and pains. Jimmy hates the upper class in spite of it that his mother and his wife's relatives are "Pretty Posh". Jimmy Porter blames class and status system of society for making his existence and identity meaningless. He likes Cliff only because he (Cliff) calls himself a "common man". He says to Nigel, the brother of Alison, "You are never heard so many well-bred common places coming from beneath the same bowler hat" Helena says about Jimmy Porter. "I feel he thinks he's still in the middle of the French revolution and that is where he ought to be, of course"

She adds; "he does not know where he is or where he's going. He will never do anything and he'll never amount to anything".

He was frustrated because he was born out of his time, in a complete static and hostile unjust society. He fails to find a way or someone to express his feelings of despair. He was so absorbed in his past that he fails to feel and has his existence and identity in the present life. He was ten years old when his father died. The death of his father greatly influenced his personality. He says to Alison when he was not aware that she was pregnant. "If only something... something would happen to you out of your beauty sleep! If you could have a child, and it would die".

His hatred for upper class is shown when he says about Mrs. Red Fern as “an over freed, over privileged, old Bitch”. Alison said to his father, “You are hurt because everything is changed, Jimmy is hurt because everything is the same”. And “something’s gone wrong somewhere” Hasn’t it? He is always demanding for his existence, dignity and identity.

He said; "Let's pretend that we're human beings and that we're actually alive". He is like a person running to have his ways out of a circle. He hates his society without any hope or cause when Alison comes back to him he says “I may be a lost cause, but I thought if you loved me, it need not matter”.

Jimmy’s struggle for identity increased his sense of insecurity. We find him facing conflict of classes and sexes. Two out of four main characters Cliff and Jimmy belong to working class while Alison and Helena belong to upper class. This created social as well as sexual conflict resulted in identity crisis of Jimmy Porter. He showed his hatred by saying about his wife Alison, her mother and Helena that, “They represent predatory, selfish, ignorant and insensitive society”. Jimmy Porter feels unmanly because of the upper status of Alison and he also fails to arise warm sexual feeling in his wife. The absence of father figure is another cause of insecurity and identity crisis for Jimmy. He bursts into “stream of consciousness”.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the character of Jimmy Porter from the perspective of psychological approach forcefully proves that Jimmy Porter, the main character in “Look Back in Anger” by “Osborne” was a frustrated, disillusioned and hopeless “angry young man” of “lost generation”. He was striving to search identity and existence in a society that was completely hostile to his view point. He questions the traditional traits in a pessimistic way. This unsuccessful struggle to find out identity makes him angry and alienated to society, religion and his dear ones too.

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