

## THE CAUSES OF HUMILIATION IN 17<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY SELECT PLAYS

UTTAM KOLI

Katkar Lane, A/P-Rangoli, Hatkanangale, Kolhapur, Maharashtra, India

### ABSTRACT

The present research paper clarifies the concept 'humiliation'. It studies the causes of humiliation referring 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century select plays namely *Macbeth* (1607), *Phaedra* (1677), *Blood Wedding* (1933) and *Hayavadana* (1971), written by William Shakespeare (British Dramatist, 1564-1616), Jean Baptiste Racine (French Dramatist, 1639-1699), Federica Garcia Lorca (Spanish Dramatist, 1898 – 1936) and Girish Karnad (Indian Dramatist, Born in 1938) respectively. It ends with the conclusion that the humiliation exists across the world, overcoming all the barriers of countries, cultures, languages, ages, identities, etc. and even irrespective of the causes whatever they may be.)

**KEYWORDS:** The Causes of Humiliation in 17<sup>th</sup> And 20<sup>th</sup> Century Select Plays

### INTRODUCTION

Humiliation seems since the humankind exists on the Earth irrespective of the barriers - age, sex, region, culture, language, identity, etc. Humiliating someone or being humiliated is the essence of it. In it, one loses his / her prestige and self-respect. The synonyms of the word are:

“Embarrassment, mortification, shame, indignity, ignominy, disgrace, dishonor, discomfiture, degradation, discredit, obloquy, opprobrium, loss of pride, loss of face, affront, insult, rebuff, snub, put-down, blow to one's pride, slap in the face, smack in the face, kick in the teeth, brush-off, disesteem, reprobation, vitiation, etc.”  
(<https://www.google.co.in/search?sclient=psyab&site=&source=hp&btnG=Search&q=humiliation>, 19-09-2015)

Bullying, dehumanization, schadenfreude, self-abasement, social defeat, etc. are the alternatives of it. It is social, emotional, psychological, sexual, political, economical, etc. Some reasons of humiliation are: caste variation, superstitions, illiteracy, gender difference, physical disability, ego, salary, border disputes, state disputes, conflicts, generation gap, govt. rules, childlessness, dowry, etc. The weariness, nervousness, frustration, disturbance, hopelessness, irrationalism, negative environment, absence of something, failure in forming meaningful relationships, absurdity, etc. can also be the reasons of humiliation. It results in quarrels, disputes, wars, bloodsheds, murders, suicides, rapes, dacoits, etc.

The definitions of it are as follows:

“Humiliation is the abasement of pride, which creates mortification or leads to a state of being humbled or reduced to lowliness or submission.” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humiliation>, 16.11.2015)

“Erotic humiliation is consensual psychological humiliation in order to produce erotic excitement or sexual arousal.” ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humiliation\\_\(BDSM\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humiliation_(BDSM)), 16.11.2015)

“Humiliating - Liable to humiliate, degrade, shame or embarrass someone”

(<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/humiliating>, 16.11.2015)

“Humiliate - To injure a person's dignity and self-respect.”

(<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/humiliate>, 16.11.2015)

The causes of humiliation have been studied with reference to 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century select plays namely *Macbeth* (1607), *Phaedra* (1677), *Blood Wedding* (1933) and *Hayavadana* (1971), written by William Shakespeare (British Dramatist, 1564-1616), Jean Racine (French Dramatist, 1639-1699), Federica Garcia Lorca (Spanish Dramatist, 1898 – 1936) and GirishKarnad (Indian Dramatist, Born in 1938) respectively.

In William Shakespeare's (1564-1616, British Dramatist) *Macbeth* (1607), King Duncan, Innocent Guards, Banquo, Lady Macduff and her child are humiliated and murdered by the cruel tyrant Macbeth.

Fall from grace causes humiliation. Macbeth is not an ordinary man. He is a man of status. He is from royal family and rich background. He is a noble man of Scotland. He brings many victories to the nation. He has been awarded with the “Thane of Cawder”. He has the vaulting ambition to become the king of Scotland, encouraged by three witches and his wife Lady Macbeth. To fulfill the dream, he falls from grace; becomes villain; brings ruins and destructions to the nation. He humiliates and kills innocent persons and ultimately dies with his own humiliation.

Weakness of will causes humiliation. Macbeth is heroic but he has one flaw and that is his weakness of will. Four witches, including his wife, encourage him to perform the evil. As he is weak in will, he performs that and humiliates himself and others. He has no strong will to stand against the four witches. He has been victimized by the weakness of will which causes him and others humiliation.

Support in evil deed causes humiliation. Lady Macbeth supports her husband in his vaulting ambition to usurp the throne. She is more ambitious to Macbeth. She wants to see her husband a king. She supports him in all his evil deeds which causes her and others humiliation.

Over confidence causes humiliation. King Duncan has overconfidence upon Macbeth. He offers Macbeth ‘Thane of Glamis’ and ‘Thane of Cawder’. He calls Macbeth:

“My worthy Cawdor!”

(<https://www.goodreads.com/ebooks/download/8852.Macbeth>: 16.12.2015, 21)

He comes to pass one night in his castle but Macbeth shows treachery and humiliates him by brutally murdering him.

Craving for revenge causes humiliation. Macbeth, to fulfill his ambition, kills King Duncan, Banquo, Macduff's son and wife, etc. Macbeth is wrong in his place. Therefore, to take revenge, Duncan's sons - Malcolm and Donalbain, Banquo's son Fleance and Macduff are united and formed a group of army to take revenge upon Macbeth, humiliate and kill him.

Fate or destiny causes humiliation. Macbeth is a tragedy of character and destiny. Fate pushes him in such a situation from where he has no return. He goes ahead with misdeeds. If he had been firm at will, he could have not committed mistakes but it is his destiny, which is at the root to humiliate him and others.

Internal conflict between ambition and conscience in one's mind cause humiliation. In the play 'Macbeth', we find internal conflict between ambition and conscience in Macbeth's mind. He is ambitious to become the king and for this, he does many evil deeds. He is conscience of the fact that he is responsible for all the misdeeds and this thought occupies his mind. He suffers a lot and dies a very tragic death with humiliation.

Being avoided by someone causes humiliation. Lady Macbeth is more ambitious. She wants to see her husband the king of Scotland. She supports him in all his deeds. He also takes her in his confidence. But later, he stops her taking in his confidence and that causes her extreme sadness. It does not let her seat quiet. It starts troubling her. She loses her confidence. She becomes mad. She starts walking in night. She sees nightmares. Her humiliation is the result of her husband's avoid of her.

Vaulting ambition causes humiliation. Macbeth has vaulting ambition to become theKing of Scotland. Therefore, he murders King Duncan. He becomes king but he is not satisfied with it. He wants to preserve throne for his progeny and also to seek personal safety, he murders Banquo. He slaughters Macduff's wife and son. He humiliates all including his wife too. He has to repay for that means his vaulting ambition results in his own humiliation and death.

Imagination causes humiliation. Macbeth suffers from his own imagination. It is his humiliation by himself. His imagination takes him to become superstitious. Witches prophesy easily influences him. His imagination creates evil thoughts in his mind. His ambition is high but his imagination discourages him. When he goes to murder King Duncan, he sees dagger hanging in the air; when he murders King Duncan in sleep, he hears somebody's speech that he will never sleep as he has killed King in sleep.

"Sleep no more!" to all the house:

'Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor

Shall sleep no more; Macbeth shall sleep no more."

(<https://www.goodreads.com/ebooks/download/8852.Macbeth>: 16.12.2015, 39)

He alone sees the ghost of Banquo, which is the part of his imagination. It is a spiritual anguish, which is the result of conflict between his ambition and imagination. Because of this, he is being torn and his soul falls into pieces. This is his areal humiliation and tragedy.

Treachery and cruel nature cause humiliation. Macbeth is treacherous and cruel. He murders King Duncan. He kills innocent guards. He bullies Scottish people. He murders Banquo. He further murders Lady Macduff and her child. His treacherous and cruel nature causes humiliation to others.

Prophecy causes humiliation. Witches' prophecy makes Macbeth more ambitious and that becomes the cause of his and others humiliation.

Inhuman nature causes humiliation. Lady Macbeth is inhuman. She does not show kindness towards old king. She is not bothered by the murder. She does not hesitate to put the charge upon innocent guards. She always encourages Macbeth in misdeeds:

"You do unbend your noble strength, to think

So brainsickly of things. Go get some water,

And wash this filthy witness from your hand.

Why did you bring these daggers from the place?

They must lie there: go carry them; and smear

The sleepy grooms with blood”

(<https://www.goodreads.com/ebooks/download/8852.Macbeth>: 16.12.2015, 39)

Her inhuman nature humiliates others.

Loyalty and devotion cause humiliation. Lady Macbeth is loyal and devoted to her husband. Her life is for her husband's success and greatness. But her loyalty and devotion leads to her and her husband's downfall and tragedy. Her loyalty and devotion is in Macbeth's crime. With her support, he gets throne but later, he stops her to take in his confidence, which disillusions her, makes her sad and causes mental torture and humiliation.

In Jean Racine's (1639-1699, French Dramatist) *Phaedra* (1677), the hero Hippolytus is humiliated by his stepmother which causes him misery and death.

Awareness of fidelity towards husband causes humiliation. Phaedra is aware about fidelity towards her husband but her love towards Hippolytus is beyond her that constantly torments her soul. She pines alone for him. All her attempts to forget him go in vein. This brings her psychological ailment and closer to death. She could have disclosed, at the outset, her love for Hippolytus but the awareness of fidelity towards her husband causes her humiliation.

Love and pretendance of hate cause humiliation. Theseus brings Phaedra to Athens. When she first sees her stepson, Hippolytus, she falls deep in love with him and describes:

“I looked; alternately turn'd pale and blushed

To see him, and my soul grew all distraught;

A mist obscured my vision, and my voice

Falter'd, my blood ran cold, and then burn'd like fire.”

(<http://book-land.ro/free/Phaedra-de-Jean-Racine.pdf>: 16.12.2015)

However, being aware of the guilt, she pretends to hate him. To keep him away from her eyesight, she forces her husband to banish him, which becomes the cause of his humiliation.

One's force in decision-making causes humiliation. Oenone is the confident nurse and important decision maker in Phaedra's life. As the rumour of Theseus' death spreads, she forces her to express her love for Hippolytus and as Theseus arrives, she forces her to plot against Hippolytus. This plot and force in decision-making cause humiliation and death not only to Hippolytus but also to Oenone and Phaedra.

Fear of betrayal causes humiliation. When Theseus returns from expedition, Phaedra's mind occupies with the constant fear that Hippolytus may betray her to her husband. As a precaution, before Hippolytus, with the Oenone's directions, she approaches Theseus and as the sword of Hippolytus is with Phaedra, she succeeds to convince Theseus about outrage. Theseus becomes furious, calls Hippolytus traitor and says:

“I tell you once again,—fly, haste, return not,  
Rid all my realms of your atrocious presence.”

(<http://book-land.ro/free/Phaedra-de-Jean-Racine.pdf>: 16.12.2015)

This Phaedra’s fear of betrayal and Theseus’ anger cause humiliation and horrible death to Hippolytus.

Jealousy causes humiliation. When Phaedra comes to know about the severe punishment given to Hippolytus by Theseus, she feels guilty and is aware that she only can save him. Being bold, she decides to disclose the guilt to Theseus, accepting the punishment in advance, whichever he gives. She meets Theseus with same plan but as she knows Hippolytus and Aricia’s love for each other, she returns without disclosing the truth because she feels jealousy of Aricia. This jealousy causes further humiliation to all including Phaedra herself.

Part in devilish plot and one’s death causes humiliation. As Phaedra comes to know the horrible death of Hippolytus, she suffers a lot. She repents for being a part in devilish plot and causing death to innocent. As a result, she takes a deadly poison and confesses her guilt to Theseus:

“I must repair the wrong that he has suffered—  
Your son was innocent.”

(<http://book-land.ro/free/Phaedra-de-Jean-Racine.pdf>: 16.12.2015)

After this, she dies a shameful death. This is her real humiliation.

Hatred of someone causes of humiliation. Hippolytus is young and handsome but hates women and keeps himself away from their company. He devotes Artemis and never Aphrodite whom he considers ‘vilest of the deities’. Therefore, the goddess ‘Aphrodite’ takes revenge on him and humiliates him. He becomes helpless and dies by the game of ‘Aphrodite’.

Innocence causes humiliation. Hippolytus is innocent. One reason is enough to justify the statement. After Theseus’ safe return from expedition, he meets Theseus and as an innocent, asks permission to go back to hunting. He does not reveal his love for Aricia or Phaedra’s realization of illicit love. This innocence and disclosing no truth to Theseus cause him humiliation and death.

Guilt and confession of the same cause humiliation. Phaedra’s illicit love for stepson, its discloser, her plot against him and his horrible death is her guilt and she confesses the same to Theseus:

“Twas I who cast an eye of lawless passion  
On chaste and dutiful Hippolytus  
Heav'n in my bosom kindled baleful fire,  
And vile Oenone's cunning did the rest.”

(<http://book-land.ro/free/Phaedra-de-Jean-Racine.pdf>: 16.12.2015)

This all causes her humiliation and death. Hippolytus falls in love with Aricia against the wish of his father, Theseus, is his guilt and its confession to Theseus makes him angrier which makes the punishment more severe which

causes Hippolytus humiliation and death. Oenone pushes Phaedra on the way of damnation, which is her guilt. She confesses her guilt to nobody but when she commits suicide in the sea, she confesses to the god. Theseus pushes Hippolytus in to horrible death without knowing and confirming Hippolytus' innocence, which is his guilt and confesses the same when he learns the reality. All this guilt and confession cause humiliation.

Conflict causes humiliation. There is an internal and external conflict delineated in the play, which causes humiliation. Phaedra, Hippolytus, Aricia and Theseus suffer from internal conflict. Phaedra is torn between her passion and her duty to her husband; Hippolytus is torn between his love for Aricia and duty to father; Theseus is torn after learning the truth from the Theramenes and Phaedra and says:

“Ah, disabused too late! Come, let us go,  
 And with the blood of mine unhappy son  
 Mingle our tears, clasping his dear remains,  
 In deep repentance for a pray'r detested.  
 Let him be honour'd as he well deserves”

(<http://book-land.ro/free/Phaedra-de-Jean-Racine.pdf>: 16.12.2015)

Aricia is torn by thinking about the fate of their love, if the Hippolytus is punished. As well, the external conflict between Phaedra and Hippolytus, father and son, Theseus and Aricia, Phaedra and Oenone, Hippolytus and Sea-Monster, and Hippolytus and Wild Horses cause humiliation to these characters and others on wide scale.

Close affinity causes humiliation. Oenone has close affinity towards Phaedra. She is the nurse of Phaedra, very confident and always accompanied her. From a very childhood, she is the caretaker and devoted to Phaedra. Welfare of Phaedra is her topmost concern. No wonder, she becomes restless of seeing her mistress suffering from some secret ailment. Her sorrow is genuine and actions prompt from her wish to save Phaedra. However, her extreme closeness and concern causes her, her mistress and others humiliation and misery.

In Federica Garcia Lorca's (1898-1936, Spanish Dramatist) *Blood Wedding* (1933), the characters like Bridegroom and Mother are humiliated by Bride and Leonardo Felix.

Family feud causes humiliation. Three families are referred in the play and family feud is shown between two families – Bridegroom's family and Felix's family. The husband and elder son of Mother are humiliated and died because of this family feud. Leonardo is also humiliated and killed because of this family feud.

Love triangle causes humiliation. The love triangle rotates round three characters, i.e., Bride, Bridegroom and Leonardo Felix. Leonardo and Bride are former lovers but for some reasons, they did not marry each other. Leonardo marries her cousin sister and he has son too but it seems, he is not happy in his married life. Bridegroom loves Bride and wants to marry her. His mother, being aware of Leonardo Felix's deeds, reluctantly gives permission for his marriage with Bride. However, minutes after the marriage, Bride elopes with Leonardo and continues her clandestine relationship. This love triangle results in bloody knife fight between Bridegroom and Leonardo in which both of them humiliate and kill each other.

“Two men killed for love.

With a knife.”

([www.24grammata.com/?did=1823...lorca-blood-wedding...com-pdf](http://www.24grammata.com/?did=1823...lorca-blood-wedding...com-pdf): 16.12.2015)

This further leads to the humiliation of Bride because this time onwards, she has no husband and lover and she has to lead life alone in a tragic way which is the real humiliation of her.

Passion causes humiliation. Leonardo arouses his passion for Bride. Bride arouses her passion for Leonardo. Forgetting the terrible consequences, they unite and elope. Mother arouses her passion of hate and revenge. The passion of all these characters results in humiliation and tragic deaths.

Betrayal and adultery cause humiliation. Bride and Bridegroom are wealthy landowner's children and have similar social status. Bridegroom is a very good person. He accepts Bride as a beloved. He marries her even though she had earlier relationship with Leonardo whose ancestors had killed his father and elder brother. This shows his understanding. But she betrays him by uniting and eloping with her earlier lover, Leonardo. This betrayal and adultery leads to Bridegroom's humiliation and makes him revengeful which further leads to his tragic death.

In Girish Karnad's (Born in 1938, Indian Dramatist) *Hayavadana* (1971), the characters like Kapila and Devadatta are humiliated by the erotic behavior of Padmini, which results in the death of all these three characters.

Curse causes humiliation. Hayavadana has human body with horses head. His mother is the princess of Karnataka. She is beautiful. She has been allowed to select her husband at her own level. She does not prefer any prince. But as she sees the handsome prince of are by with his great stallion, she decides to marry with horse and stays with him for fifteen years. One morning, the horse transforms in to Gandharva. It is said that Kuvera had cursed him for misbehavior and now he is free from the curse. It seems, he is suffered and humiliated for many years because of curse. After release, he asks princess to accompany him to heavenly abode but as she refuses, he curses her and makes her horse. Hayavadana describes:

“Released from his curse, he asked my mother to accompany to his Heavenly Abode. But she wouldn't. She said she would come only if he became a horse again. So he cursed her.”

(<https://books.google.co.in/books?id=CKZQAwAAQBAJ&pg=PA332:16> .12.2015, 321)

After that, she goes with him happily. Both of them go to heaven leaving back Hayavadana alone with horse's head, which causes him misery and humiliation.

Incomplete listening causes humiliation. Hayavadana goes to the temple of Kali to get rid of the horse's head and becomes a complete man. He prays goddess but the goddess listens half and makes him complete horse with human voice. This causes him humiliation.

Drizzling over someone causes humiliation. Devadatta and Kapila are close friends:

“Two friends there were

One mind, one heart.” 314

(<https://books.google.co.in/books?id=CKZQAwAAQBAJ&pg=PA332:16>.12.2015, 314)

Kapila helps Devadatta in his marriage with Padmini. Kapila usually goes to their house. Padmini likes his company. One day, they arrange a trip at Ujjain. Kapila goes to bring cart. He is little late. She continuously looks out of

the window and repeats again and again:

“Where is Kapila?”

(<https://books.google.co.in/books?id=CKZQAwAAQBAJ&pg=PA332:16> .12.2015, 332)

This makes Devadatta jealous and angry. The quarrel starts and Devadatta asks about her drooling over Kapila. Padmini becomes disappointed and tells Devadatta to drop the plan of trip. This affinity and drooling over someone cause humiliation to Padmini. Kapila also drools over Padmini. When he returns with cart and as he comes to know about the cancellation of trip, he becomes sad and feels humiliated emotionally.

Infidelity of wife causes humiliation. When Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini are on the way of Ujjain, Padmini is attracted towards Kapila. Despite the oppose of Devadatta, she goes to the temple of Rudhra with Kapila even against his wish to go to the temple of Kali. Devadatta becomes angry and jealous by witnessing his wife’s infidelity. He alone sits in the cart as watchman. He becomes sad because of his wife’s infidelity; goes to the temple of Kali and dies there. Even after the transposition of heads and begetting a child from Devadatta with Kapila’s body, she goes in forest and unites with Kapila, which shows adultery and further cause fight, death and humiliation. Padmini goes ‘sati’. Three of them leave the world in a tragic way.

Closeness and affinity towards friend cause humiliation. Devadatta and Kapila are intimate friends. When Kapila and Padmini return from the temple of Rudhra, they find Devadatta’s absence. Kapila goes in search of Devadatta in the temple of Kali where he finds Devadatta’s dead body. He is shocked; he humiliates himself and as he cannot live without his friend, he cuts of his head and dies. Such affinity and close friendship cause misery and humiliation to someone.

Mistransposition causes humiliation. With Goddess Kali’s blessings, Devadatta and Kapila are alive again but Padmini mistakes to attach heads to the wrong bodies; Kapila’s head to Devadatta’s body and Devadatta’s head to Kapila’s body which causes humiliation. Both having mistransposition of each other’s head and body, start claiming for Padmini as wife which causes rivalry and humiliation to each other to find solution, they go to Rishi who gives the judgment:

“As the heavenly Kalpa Vriksha is supreme among trees, so is the head among human limbs.”

(<https://books.google.co.in/books?id=CKZQAwAAQBAJ&pg=PA332:16.12.2015>, 352)

Therefore, she goes with Devadatta and Kapila with Devadatta’s body becomes sad and feels humiliated.

It is to conclude that humiliation exists across the world overcoming all the barriers of countries, cultures, languages, ages, identities, etc. and even irrespective of the causes whatever they may be.

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