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Juliet: Epitome of Love

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Abstract

A victim of feud in the family, Juliet sacrifices her love and life because of them. A young beautiful innocent girl who is the heroine of the play Romeo and Juliet has become an inspiration and role model for young girls down the centuries. She is love and love is Juliet.

Keywords: Love, lovers, Juliet, family

Introduction

For never was a story of more woe
Than this of Juliet and her Romeo!

Act 5 Sc iii Line 321-322

The romantic tragedy Romeo and Juliet was written about 1594-96, early in the career of the playwright. The plot of the play is based on an Italian tale transformed and translated into lyrical version 'The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet', written by Arthur Brooke. The story of the play revolves around the true and sublime love of "star-crossed lovers" Romeo and Juliet of Verona.

Though the two young lovers epitomise pure-celestial love, yet destiny denies them the opportunity to bask in the full splendor of their love. Their passion is sacrificed at the altar of the feud between their families. Romeo is the sonny heir to the Montagues and Juliet belongs to the clan of Capulets. The Capulets and Montagues have for generations been foes, and this was naturally a reason for their disapproval of the marriage between their children. Amid the doldrums of the family animosity, it is finally Romeo and Juliet who sacrifice their love and life in the interests of their parents. In the play, the adolescent passions and love of the lovers becomes elevated to the status of sacred love. But finally, the sacrifice of the two young lovers results in reconciliation of the two families.

Juliet embodies ravishing virginal beauty and a beholder cannot escape its magic. Her exotic beauty surpasses even the collective beauty of the spring flowers. A young innocent girl of mere fourteen years Juliet is an exemplum of pure and divine love. One is startled at the mellowness of her intellect, which is an unusual trait of such a young girl. So mesmerising is the charm of Shakespeare's youngest heroine, that we sing and celebrate along with her when she falls in love, and we weep and shatter with her, when she sheds her last tears. In fact, Juliet is like the ephemeral daffodil flower which blossoms for a brief span of time and withers. She was like that transient comet, which shines brilliantly but very briefly. Shakespeare's adorable Juliet, his sublime muse, had a concise life, but the Bard's adept delineation of Juliet has earned her the iconic stature of a martyr so much so that she is worshipped by young lovers all over the world. Romeo and Juliet are today regarded as archetypal characters.

In the beginning of the play, this gentle and modest daughter of the Capulets is far away from love and marriage. But as Romeo enters her life and rules her heart, Juliet undergoes a dramatic transformation, she not only reciprocates Romeo's love but also dreams of a nuptial union with him.

Love in all its ethereal splendor is depicted through the two innocent lovers Romeo and Juliet. The "Balcony Scene" where Romeo goes to meet Juliet secretly is the most filmed and staged scene today as it was yesterday.

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In fact, love as a theme is recurrent in almost all of Shakespeare's plays, but in *Romeo and Juliet*, it acquires the highest degree of exaltation and assumes holiness. Shakespeare's own sonnet. - "The Marriage of True Minds" finds an apt interpretation through the verse of this immortal love tragedy.

Juliet's immense love for Romeo, inspires her to speak in eloquent verses. She not only uses marvelous speeches but even sublime poetry to express her apprehensions and to display her emotions of love. She talks of Venus and Cupid which indicates her deep knowledge of mythology. She employs neat and epigrammatic style to very cleverly aggregate her deepest thoughts and feelings regarding Romeo. Her speech where she talks about true love saying that it cannot be expressed in ornamental language and that true love is unfathomable and incomputable establishes her as a very wise girl.

Apart from her poetical endowments, Juliet uses some marvelous imagery to give vent to her intense passions and fertile imagination. For instance, she describes sun as "fiery footed steeds", night as "Sober-suited matron." Her soliloquy about an untrained hawk and inexperience in love is an excellent example of marvel in language. Through Juliet's rosy lips, it is actually the Great Bard celebrating pure, celestial love and concurrently he establishes the immortality of true love.

The growing feud between the families on one side and the ever ebbing love on the other side, propels the lovers to secretly marry, and consummate their love. The consecration of love has some very intense and passionate moments depicted by Shakespeare. But, the bridal-scene reaches the zenith of the Bard's literary expertise in dealing with the passion and emotions of love. Juliet as a newly-wed is seen waiting for her husband her love Romeo on the bridal-bed. The eagerness of the bride to experience the first touch of sexual love on one side, and slight unhappiness on the other for not having received the blessings of the parents, is beautifully expressed. The mixed feelings of longing and waiting for her husband and Juliet's apprehension on the other side are delivered and expressed through some very effective verses. It is amazing, how could Shakespeare being a man, so intricately and with such marveling accuracy picture with detail the inner most sentiments and sensations of a newlywed girl? Is it that the Bard transposed himself into the heart of Juliet, in order to sing about her fervor? Yes indeed he did, and that makes Shakespeare a man with a remarkable feminine sensibility. He effectively used this medium to delineate a woman's heart and psyche in all its nuances.

The secret marriage, does not help the love lorn couple, who eventually fall into the fatal clutches of destiny. Unaware of the marriage, Juliet's father arranges her marriage to the Count of Paris. She tries to flee with Romeo and hence plots with the Friar whom she trusts a lot. According to the plan, she risks her life by drinking the potion administered to her by the Friar and slips into this drug induced coma for "two and forty hours". But as fate had proposed, she rises from the sleep only to find Romeo dead. In utter grief she stabs herself, thus releasing her immortal soul from the mortal body to unite with Romeo in eternity. Indeed it had been very daunting for a girl of fourteen to stab herself and to drink the potion which could have been equally fatal. It reflects how love had instilled in her the sense of strong determination and courage and boldness to do anything for her love and for Romeo.

Romeo and Juliet lived centuries ago, but down the ages, the two have acquired the status of that archetypal lovers, who are worshipped by love lorn couples all over the world. Their love story is sung in form of the folk-ballad all over the world even in present times. They have been popularised through the media and find a special place on Radio, T.V., Celluloid, Theatre, books and magazines. The legendary house of Juliet in Verona houses her huge bronze statue. The place has acquired the status of a shrine and thousands of lovers come on a love - pilgrimage seeking blessings of Juliet. The walls of the boundary to Juliet's house are full of letters written to Juliet in the faith that she would read and bless them by fulfilling their wishes and desires. A number of feminine articles like clothes, toys, lingerie, female accessories etc. use Juliet's name to promote their brands. In fact, *Romeo and Juliet* with their pure, sublime love stands above all star-crossed lovers, of the world. They are the mortal 'Gods of Love' for all youngsters in love all over the world.

Through the play Shakespeare has himself opposed the traditional male society to a vast extent. Romeo's death in the tomb of the Capulet's - his in-laws, rather than in that of his own ancestors reverses the traditional custom of the society. And Shakespeare also reverses the tradition of the society regarding a married woman where the passage of the female over to the male house in marriage, and her final departure from the mortal world from her in-law's house. He even betokens Romeo's refusal to follow the code of his father's family tradition. And finally, it is Juliet not Romeo, who boldly uses his dagger against herself - a strange courage.

Juliet is very young and in spite of a young age, she is thrust into a lot of action by the Bard, who proposes to unveil a strong Juliet through each ordeal. Juliet is very early in the play thrust to adulthood where she quickly deals with issues of life such as love, passion and even death. She is also disowned by her parents and emotionally betrayed by the nurse who had reared her and on whom Juliet had vested deep trust. Juliet is widowed, drugged and ultimately she commits suicide near Romeo's body.

In each of her ordeal, Shakespeare's Juliet emerges out as a headstrong and intelligent girl. It would not be wrong to call her the real hero of the play as against the impulsive Romeo. It is Juliet who sets the boundaries of behavior in their relationship with Romeo. She pledges her commitment before him and suggests marriage as a solution instead of indulgence in pre-marital sexual relationship. She instructs Romeo to control his passions. She also forgives him for murdering her cousin Tybalt and her act of clemency indicates her mature nature in contrast to Romeo's passionate impulsiveness. She thus appears more-strong than her male counterpart.

Furthermore, Juliet lies and clandestinely subverts her family's wishes, which is a truly rebellious action against the traditional patriarchal society. She is thus one of the most extraordinary heroines of Shakespeare embodying the dramatist's own philosophy of the feminine sensibility.

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