



Justice Unmet and Disgrace Embraced : Mapping the Journey of Jamie Lannister in “Game of Thrones”

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Brief Bio :-

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George R. R. Martin’s most celebrated work “A Song of Ice and Fire” was adapted to HBO Drama series in the year 2011 and since then “GOT” had nailed manifold controversial sparks at every corner of the globe. Game of Thrones was in fact a league of its own and has brought a revolution with its flagship western world. The tectonic map of the multilayered characters which are beyond human perceptions have been put to numerous debates and discussions since then. Peppered with the distinctiveness of characters and contextual arcs, GOT has contributed immensely to the depth of human psychology as well as the insinuation of political correctness and poetic justice. From Dragons to Dire-wolves, from incest to patricide, from bastards to natural heirs and from Myths to fantasies, Game of Thrones is a saga of human lives and human rights within the plethora of kingdoms, dynasties and clans in the land of Westeros. Game of Thrones is all about unfolding the psychological blankets of the countless characters thereby decoding the pulse of justice that was meted out during the medieval age of Legends, Swords and Divine Law.

The curvature of the plot of Game of Thrones suggests that the story takes place in 298 AC. However, the cultural benchmarks and architectural designs along with the costumes rope us into the middle ages where Knights’ tournament and Trial by Combat are common amidst the Divine Law of the King. Nonetheless, Human Rights and Balance in justice can be the most slouching elements in A Game of Thrones. Inhuman treatments coupled with torture like the Red Wedding, Purple Wedding and Proclaimed assassinations are part of the Throne Game. Slavery as seen in the Slaver’s bay, the abuse of the unsullied warriors, unfair trials and unending discriminations speak volumes about the cruelty and barbarism behind unchecked power during this dramatic era. Game of Thrones is incontrovertibly far away from the contours of justice and legitimacy and it definitely bends the very many sympathetic characters to the role of antagonists in the global viewer perception.

Of all the great characters in Game of Thrones, the most remarkable and the most ignominously presented had been none other than Jaime Lannister, the Kingslayer. Ser Jaime Lannister is the eldest son of Lord Tywin Lannister and the older brother of Tyrion Lannister. His incestuous relationship with his twin sister, Cersei - the Queen, casts the first shadow of disgrace on him in Season 1, Episode 1. Jon Snow, who thinks this is what a King should look like, describes him thus.

Ser Jaime Lannister was twin to Queen Cersei; tall and golden with flashing green eyes and a smile that cut like a knife. He wore crimson silk, high black boots, a black satin cloak. On the breast of his tunic, the lion of his House was embroidered in gold thread, roaring its defiance. They called him the Lion of Lannister to his face and whispered “Kingslayer” behind his back.”

Jaime’s initial entry in Season 1, Episode 1 is indeed diabolic as he flings Bran out of the window and makes him a cripple in his future days. He is utterly violent, verbally aggressive and cares for nothing apart from his Lannister family’s honour. In Season 1, Episode 1, he tells Jon Snow “It’s a strange thing, the first time you cut a man. You realise we are nothing but sacks of meat and blood, and some bones to keep it all standing” (S1 E1 37:08). He is so disconnected from the perils of life and leads the life of an insensitive soldier. However, toying with the assumptions of the audience, Game of Thrones smashes the initial significance of the Starks and highlights the defiance of Lannisters by the second episode in Season 1 where Jaime fills the air with his loathsome traits. Jaime Lannister - the Prince of Casterly Rock is described as the greatest swordsmen in Westeros. But his primary image as the golden son of the Lannister family is further oxidised when he attacks Ned Stark who is a true representative of honesty and integrity. The mighty battle he throws in front of Lord Baelish’s brothel against Ned Stark symbolises his triumph over the righteousness that Ned stood for. Despite the villainy he puts through himself, the audience fails to recognise the complex moral high ground on which he lingers. Jaime Lannister is the most disliked and the most misinterpreted characters of the series and when each time Jaime fails within the plot, his inner anguish and pain go unnoticed behind the pride of his family name.

Despite being the golden son of the Lannister Family, Jaime is the only singular character who does not receive justice either from the law of the land or from the loved ones encompassing him. At a profound level of unhinged concepts of love, he has his own vindication when he throws the ten year old Bran out of the towering window. He says, “Things I do for Love” (S1 E1 57:02). His eternal commitment towards his twin sister Cersei is beyond human cognisance which makes him go to the unimaginable levels in preserving her honour as well as the honour of the family name. His egregious act of killing Jory by piercing through his eyes in Season 1 too tarnishes his image in the perspective of the audience.

Jaime’s perennial commitment towards his family is quite often drenched in the incestuous tie he holds with his sister and many of his admirable deeds are washed out in the arrogance and pride he showcases in the first half of the storyline. He is branded as “Kingslayer” for stabbing the Targaryen King Aerys Targaryen while he remained the Hand of the King who should have actually safeguarded the King him from all perils. However, the true reason for slaying Aerys, the King, remains mysterious for a long period even within the story structure. One of the most conspicuous character milestones of the show is Jaime’s revelation to Brienne of Tarth about the slaying of King Aerys, the Mad King. He confides that he was forced to kill King Aerys when he was commanded to execute his own father by the Mad King. Jaime adds that he had to kill the King who otherwise would have burned the entire cities in King’s Landing. Jaime’s human side is more embellished in this act of slaying which rather plummets throughout the storyline where he is continuously lambasted for the death of the Targaryen King. The fundamental reasons which prodded Jaime never balloons out and he remains glued to the miasmatic air of regicide. When Qyburn, the physician asks him “How many lives have you saved?”, he replies “Half a million” (S1 E8 23:08), indirectly indicating the killing of the Targaryen King who would have otherwise brought death to millions of people in King’s Landing. He tells Brienne, “The King said Burn them all, burn them all, Burn them in their homes, burn them in their beds. Would you have done it? Would you have kept your oath then?” (S3 E2 27:34).

It is only in Season 3 that Jaime spills the mysterious truth about the murder of the mad King. The viewers finally learn the reality seething beneath his naming of Kingslayer. Unfortunately, soon after the murder, Ned Stark finds him near the dead King and he gains the name - the Kingslayer. When Brienne asks why he never clarified it with Ned Stark, Jaime responds “By what right does the wolf judge the lion” (S3 E3 18:24). The line echoes multiple interpretations which swings in a symptomatic manner connecting the sigils of the Starks (Wolf) and the Lannisters (Lion). The quote throws light to see the incidents in a totally different perspective.

Jaime, though cast in the robes of a dignified villain, never meets true justice. His rights are often denied and his words are often hurled to oblivion even by his family members. The true colours of Ser Jaime Lannister comes out during his period of imprisonment under Catelyn Stark where the influence of Cersei dwindles day by day. His association with Brienne of Tarth brings out the best part of Jaime. At the onset of their journey together, he protects her from being gang raped and further goes many steps ahead to rescue her from the Bear pit.

The loss of his sword hand can be considered as a turning point in his life which challenges his skills as a fighter and further puts his identity to question. Of the hundreds of knights and soldiers portrayed within the Series, Jaime is the only one single character who is totally denied justice when his sword hand is cut off.

While the first half of the show traces his slow journey through redemption from a titular villain to a chivalrous soldier, his character arc returns to his audacious and diabolic bend while joining hands with Cersei again in the last part.

His undying love for Cersei and his true friendship with Brienne bring two contrasting sides of his tangled personality. The Lannister in him is handsome, honourable, superior and ruthless showing no human weakness. On the other hand, the human inside is thrust out with his new friendship with Brienne of Tarth where his gentleness, chivalry and compassion is reflected.

The Jaime who rescues Brienne from a gang rape is further seen as imposing himself on Cersei in the mourning room following their son Joffrey's death. The convoluted mindset that Jaime goes through is sometimes unconvincing. Nevertheless, Jaime is a man who tries to correlate himself with his own justice when the world spills out injustice to him day after day. Losing the sword hand was the most fatal blow in his life. But as he suggests, the greatest pain was being away from Cersei. His unparalleled love for his sister/lover can be witnessed here evidently. Therefore, it can be clearly interpreted that Jaime's uglier side is always protruded when he is with Cersei. To a great extent, she contributes in making him the craft villain of the piece when in reality his human sides go unnoticed throughout the series.

However, the innate goodness in him comes out with his association with Brienne and this continues when we see him helping Tyrion Lannister - his little brother, escape the imprisonment. Jaime's true love for his brother is further demonstrated when he speaks with their father Tywin Lannister asking him to let go Tyrion from being convicted on the condition that he shall relieve himself from the Kingsguard and inherit Casterly Rock and marry and produce heirs for the Lannister family. The plot gives a clear indication of how Jaime insisted on being in the Kingsguard so that he would never be pushed into the institution of marriage and how he can stay with his sister/lover Cersei forever. His sacrifices throughout his life fail to be acknowledged by the characters around him.

Jaime's gradual redemption and the projection of his humanitarian side troubles Cersei but they forge a more stronger bond later when they lose all their children including Joffrey, Tommen and Marcella.

Jaime, as a lover suffers because of his incestuous relation. While Cersei drifts into a marriage with Robert Baratheon and sleeps with the Lannister boy, Jaime stays steadfast in his love for Cersei. Though for political reasons, Cersei's tie with Euron Greyjoy disappoints Jaime. On the other hand, Jaime severs all ties with Brienne and rushes to King's Landing to save Cersei in the last moment as Daenerys Targaryen swings fire with her dragons around. When Brienne tries stopping him, Jaime says "She is hateful, but so am I" (S8 E3 44:09). While Cersei's love swings according to her political predilections, Jaime is too stubborn in his love for Cersei. He would not have been dead if not for his pure dedication and eternal love for Cersei. His addictive love for Cersei is unconditional and it is this love that keeps her moving all through the trying times witnessed within the plot. However, it is still questionable as to how supportive Cersei had been to Jaime during his troubled times - when he loses his sword hand and when he disinherits Casterly Rock to join the Kingsguard for Cersei. Moreover, his silence to many criticisms against Cersei is a tacit agreement to the fact that he is not blind to her ruthlessness and that he sees her through accurately. This is reflected further more when Jaime decides to ride north to help the Northerners with the war against the White Walkers. But Cersei finds this as an opportunity here that her true enemies would be decimated by the white walkers and her position can remain unchallenged. Jaime disagrees with Cersei and says "I pledged to ride North. I intend to honour that pledge" (S7 E3 37:08). Jaime's heroic potential is further escalated in this season and we realise that he is not completely blind to his love.

Though Jaime is puzzled by Cersei's growing madness, he chooses to keep supporting her. Margery's grandmother, Olenna of Highgarden speaks thus to Jaime, "You do love her. You poor fool. She will be the end of you" (S7 E5 24:03) Jaime suffers even as a father. His children believe that they are the true born children of Robert Baratheon and treats him as an uncle. He misses the best times with them and two of his children, Joffrey and Marcella die within his hands. He fails on a double level as a father and as a Kingsguard when he fails to protect the life of his own children.

Jaime's sacrifices cannot be numbered and there comes a classic move when he decides to attack the unguarded Daenerys for the war for Cersei. He willingly sacrifices himself to blow success for his sister.

Unfortunately, Ser Jaime Lannister is the one phenomenal hero who is denied of justice and human rights at every phase of his life. He being aware of the toppled system of justice, once asks Catelyn Stark,

“ What Gods are those? The trees your husband prayed to ? How were the trees when his head was getting chopped off? If your Gods are real, if they are just, why is the world so full of injustice ?
(S2 E3 27:17)

Jaime Lannister is the most sinned against character in Game of Thrones and he is a true tragic hero in the Aristotelian sense. He hardly gets justice from any of the contexts surrounding him. His undying devotion to Cersei lands him in all troubles and eventually pushes him to his tragic death under the Red Keep amidst the crumbling towers. His unequivocal devotion is never reciprocated in its true measures from Cersei. Being the greatest swordsmen in all the Seven Kingdoms, his sword hand was chopped off by a man named Locke from House Bolton as a challenge to his father Tywin Lannister who at that point of time was at war with the Boltons. Losing his prowess as a swordsman acts as a sudden catalyst in the complex psychological transformation that Jaime undergoes.

Though treated as the golden son, he never meets justice throughout his life. His transitional arc from an unsympathetic villain to a chivalrous soldier takes a sudden swing when he retraces his steps and goes back to Cersei eventually. His honour touches the zenith when he entrusts Brienne of Tarth in finding and protecting Sansa Stark by giving the Valyrian steel sword to her.

Jaime, undoubtedly, is the knight who saved millions and ensured justice over tyranny. His righteous act of killing the Mad King was judged by Ned Stark as how it appeared and maligned him throughout his days. Considering the shades of gray in every individual, Jaime Lannister is the most sympathetic character of Game of Thrones. Catharsis, the visceral reaction to art's narrative arc, as suggested by the Greek philosopher Aristotle, proved best with Cersei's death in the Last Season of Game of Thrones. However, the sympathy of the audience stay glued with Jaime who dies along with Cersei. Thinking beyond the banal actions and bloody wars, cutting across his aggressive and violent charms, Jaime Lannister dies far away from the roads of justice. The confusion and the feeling of helplessness that he felt continued and followed him to his grave. Despite all odds, Jaime Lannister still remains one of the most loved and admired characters of Game of Thrones.

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