

# William Shakespeare As A Psychologist: A Study of The Supernatural Agency in Macbeth

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Macbeth: *The Tragedy of Macbeth* is a play by William Shakespeare. It is the tragedy about a regicide and its aftermath. It is Shakespeare's shortest tragedy. The first act opens in thunder and lightning with the three witches. They decide that their next meeting shall be with Macbeth. The three Witches appear to greet them with prophecies.

Both Macbeth and Banquo are surprised and horrified to see them. The first witch hails Macbeth as "Thane of Glamis," the second as "Thane of Cawdor," and the third proclaims that he shall "be King hereafter." Instantly, Ross, a messenger of the King, arrives and informs Macbeth about his new title: Thane of Cawdor. The first prophecy has thus fulfilled. It gives thought to Macbeth for getting position of king.

Macbeth writes to his wife and informs about three witches with prophecies. Coincidentally Duncan decides to spend one night in the Macbeth's castle. Lady Macbeth makes a plan to murder the king. Since, she wants to secure the throne of the king for her husband, Macbeth. Although, Macbeth does not like to murder the king, however Lady Macbeth agrees him for this cruelty. On the night of the king's visit, Macbeth kills Duncan. The audiences do not see the misdeed of murder. In accordance with her plan, "Lady Macbeth frames .....Thane of Fife, arrives."<sup>[1]</sup>

In a feigned fit of anger, Macbeth also murders the guards before they can protest their innocence. According to plan, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth Charge of king's murder on the dead guards. Macduff is immediately suspicious of Macbeth, but cannot reveal his suspicions publicly. Macbeth, the king feels uneasy about the prophecy about Banquo. Therefore, Macbeth takes him as his enemy and invites him at his palace. He hires two killers to murder Banquo and his son. They encounter them in the dark forest. They kill Banquo, but Fleance escapes.

Again, Macbeth visits the three Witches once more. They conjure up three spirits with three further warnings and prophecies. They tell him to "Beware Macduff, but also that "none of woman born shall harm Macbeth" and he will "never vanquish'd be until Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill shall come against him." Since Macduff is in exile in England, Macbeth assumes that he is safe; so he puts to death everyone in Macduff's castle, including Macduff's wife and his young children. Lady Macbeth feels guilty due to king's murder. She starts sleepwalking and washing imaginary bloodstains from her hands. In England, Ross informs Macduff, "Your castle is surprised; your wife and babes / savagely slaughtered."<sup>[2]</sup>

Secondly, Shakespeare may have altered "Banquo's character simply because there was no dramatic need for another accomplice to the murder; there was, however, "A need to give a dramatic contrast to Macbeth a role which many scholars argue is filled by Banquo."<sup>[3]</sup>

It seems, as the play is to be celebrated King James's ancestors and the Stuart accession to the throne in 1603, they argue, "The play is unlikely to have been composed earlier than 1603; and suggest that the parade of eight kings which the witches show Macbeth in a vision in Act IV is a compliment to King James."<sup>[4]</sup>

Supernatural Elements in Macbeth: Macbeth is well known tragedy due to supernatural agency. The form of supernatural agency is witches. They are wholly evil designs of these half-earthly; half innatia physical beings. In this play, we find Banquo's ghost who appears as an agent of the supernatural. Besides it, there are three apparitions and ghost is dramatic. Actually, Shakespeare explores the inner minds of the characters.

Macbeth's opening words "So foul and fair a day I have not seen" are similar to the witches "Fair is foul and foulds is fair." The witches greet Macbeth with the title as Thane of Glamis, Thane of Cawdor and king. In this way, they prepare Macbeth, who is an ambitious man, to murder Duncan and seize his throne. However, Horace Howard a critic is not agreeing with this and he says: "Here is the first intimation of that spirit of wickedness .....a wicked design."<sup>[5]</sup>

Shakespeare introduces three witches in act-(i) sc. (i) of this play. The first witch asks the other witches about the period for their next meeting; the second witch replies that when the war will be ended. Third witch points that it will happen before the sun setting. All the witches' point that fair is foul and foul is fair for them. The witches say:

"Fair is foul and foul is fair,  
Hover through the fog and filthy air."<sup>[6]</sup>

It shows that really, these supernatural creatures have evil thoughts. Since, they are opposite the good deeds.

Her husband has been gone on the sea voyage in the ship called, Tiger. She says that she will go there in the form of mouse to cut the ropes of the ship and make it be drowned. She also will harm the captain of ship. The witch exposes its evil nature and says: "A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap, and munched and mooched, and mounded;

"Give me quoth

"Aroint thee, witch!" the dump-fed ..... I'll do."<sup>[7]</sup>

Second witch says that she will control wind to help her in chasing the ship. Third witch also says that she will give her another wind in that direction. First witch is very angry and she desires to make the captain as dry grass. He will not be able to sleep for some time. He will always live in sad position though his ship will not be drown, however it will stray in the tempest. Look what she has got. Second witch: show me; show me what you have. First says that she has the thumb of a pilot who was wrecked on his way home.

Third witch: A drum is being beaten. It means Macbeth is coming. All: We the three witches hand shake. We are creatures who can travel very fast above the earth and sea. We shall make nine rounds totally. All show that these spirits are very angry and revengeful. They are very powerful who can travel on the sea and earth.

Macbeth tells his friend Banquo that how the day is both 'fair and foul' due to victory and fog. Then Banquo looks these witches. He is very wondered at them and asks if they are alive. It is sure that they can understand what he has said to them. Macbeth also asks them who are they.

First witch: We greet you whole-heartedly, Macbeth! We greet you as the Thane of Glamis. Second witch: We greet you whole-heartedly, Macbeth! We greet you as the thane of Cawder! Third witch: We greet you whole-heartedly. Macbeth you shall be the king of Scotland in future!

The witches also predict for Banquo that he will be father of the kings. However, his status will be lower than that of Macbeth and yet higher than as well as not as fortunate as Macbeth. It excites Macbeth and he wants to know more of his future as he is not fully satisfied with the witches he says them.

Macbeth: Stay, you imperfect .....With such prophetic greeting"<sup>[8]</sup>

The incident of witches excites both Macbeth and Banquo. The appearance of the witches creates greed of the highest position. First witch I greet you! Second. I great you! Third, witch I great you!

First Witch: Your status is lower there that of Macbeth, and yet higher.

Second witch: You are not as fortunate as Macbeth is, and yet in a sense you are more fortunate than he is.

Third witch: you shall beget kings,

However, you yourself will never be a king.

So we great you both while heartedly, Macbeth and Banquo

In this way, the Witches predict the future of Macbeth and Banquo. Then they are disappeared. Banquo tells Macbeth that these witches are like bubbles. Banquo presents his views as:

“The earth hath bubbles, as the water has,

And these are of them: whether are they vanised'd?"<sup>[9]</sup>

At this Macbeth says:

“Into the air, and what seem'd corporal melted

As breathe into the wind. Would they had stay'd!"<sup>[10]</sup>

The spirits excite Macbeth to be the king of Scotland. A messenger informs Lady Macbeth that the king will visit her palace and stay there at night. Now third prediction of becoming king for Lady Macbeth seems to be true, it will be a good chance to murder the king. Hence, the predictions by the spirits awaken evil thoughts in Macbeth as well as Lady Macbeth. In real, these imaginative creatures are imagination of Macbeth's mind. Both Macbeth and Banquo are very tempted and imaginative.

Their excited minds provide them the form of the Weird Sisters. Macbeth's opening words, "So foul and fair a day I have not seen" Is quite similar to when the witches say, "fair is foul and foul and foul is fair for us to quote. Macbeth excites himself to be Thane of Glamis, Thane of Cawdor, and king. Macbeth's temptation and his over ambitious nature persuade him to murder Duncan, the king of Scotland.

In real, it was Macbeth who himself wanted to become the king, the witches, were mere embodiments for him to fulfill his ambition. Macbeth himself takes the brutal task in his hand and ultimately is destroyed.

This shows that William Shakespeare has successfully explored Macbeth's mind in vivid manner. According to H.B. Charlton, "Macbeth is fully .....objectives of human life."<sup>[11]</sup>

It proves that there was no witch, but the projection of the mind of both Banquo and Macbeth. Banquo also accepts that there is no witch he and his friend Macbeth witnessed. We have an evidence of this in the text when Banquo says:

"The earth hath bubbles, as the water has,  
And these are of them - wither are they vanished?"<sup>[12]</sup>

At this Macbeth says:

"Into the air; and what seemed corporal,  
In response Macbeth says into the air."<sup>[13]</sup>

Really, there are no witches before Macbeth and Banquo on the other hand they were shapes created by their imaginative and exiting minds and it is proved when Banquo asks Macbeth: "Were such .....went it not so?"<sup>[14]</sup>

Then, the witches are vanished. Macbeth and Banquo are left alone in the desert region.

Thus, Shakespeare exposes the mind of Macbeth. The witches are creation of his mind and vanish in to his mind. Macbeth himself has determined to achieve the throne of Scotland. In the play, Macbeth himself says:

"If chance will have me king.

Why chance may crown me, without my stir."<sup>[15]</sup>

Thy are not the witches .....mother'd in surmise.”

“Look, how our partners rapt”. [16]

Thus we can say:

It is the ambitious nature of Macbeth,

not the witches that bring tragedy.”[17]

G.k. Hunter is also agreed with us and he says: “The power of Macbeth is presented as free floating, with only the weakest of psychological restraints attached, and with powerful enemies of restraints dedicated to its destruction. And in such a miasma of undirected power, free-floating will lessens the battles lost and won;’ indecision has the only decisive victory..... till the human agent takes it inside his mind and makes it his own by a motion of the will”. [18]

Similarly, Lady Macbeth’s words prove that really Macbeth is very coward person. The dagger he looks is only an illusion of Macbeth and we have an evidence of it. When Macbeth himself says: “Is this dagger, which I see before me?

The handle toward my hand? Come, let

I clutch thee.” [19]

All show that Macbeth is very imaginative and so before murdering he imagines a dagger. Lady Macbeth also proves it when she says:

“O Proper Stuff!

This is the very painting of your fear:

.....but on a stool”. [20]

Further, Shakespeare reveals the mind of Macbeth when he is decided to murder Duncan, the King of Scotland and he commits it, he goes towards his room, suddenly a dagger is appeared before him. Seeing the dagger, he says:

“Is this a dagger..... clutch thee”. [21]

Thus, Shakespeare describes the state of Macbeth’s mind. On the base of it, we can say that William Shakespeare had profound knowledge of the dark side of human life. In the palace, Macbeth is in the meeting with of Lady Macbeth, Rose, Lenox, Lodes, and other attendants. Then the killers inform him that they have cut the throat of Banquo. It makes him happy as well as sad to escape of Fleance. Then, Macbeth gazes the empty chair of Banquo

and he deeply thinks of him. Suddenly, Macbeth looks the ghost of Banquo who laughs at him. Just then, Macbeth says that he does not fear of its appearance and says to him as:

“Avout! And quit my sight!

..... the pleasure of the time.”<sup>[22]</sup>

Then again Macbeth says:

What man dare, I dare:

.....Unreal mockery, hence!”<sup>[23]</sup>

In real Macbeth is horrified .He is in heavy confusion who only poses to be brave before the ghost. The discussion between Lenex and Macbeth proves it when Lenex says as:

“When Lenex says to Macbeth:

Here is place, reserved, sir.”<sup>[24]</sup>

Macbeth asks him where the place is.

At this Lenox says:

“Here, my good Lord. What is't that moves yours,

Highness?” <sup>[25]</sup>

Actually, there is no ghost of Banquo before Macbeth. Since, Lenox, Rossy and others cannot able to see the ghost. Lady Macbeth also does not see the ghost. If Macbeth looks the ghost then Lady Macbeth cannot see the ghost though she is also involved in Macbeth's black deeds.

Actually, Macbeth does not want to take any risk regarding the murder of Banquo. So he, himself sends two murderers for this black deed. It creates confusion and disturbance in the mind of Macbeth that he imagines the ghost of Banquo. Rightly, Thomas whitely, a critic says: “That Shakespeare intends the ghost of Banquo as an illusion of Macbeth's imagination may be discovered by a simple test, namely, that the specter is invisible to all except Macbeth..... reality and illusion, this apportion is now more real than the life around him.” <sup>[26]</sup>

Thus, we can say that Macbeth's fears force him to take hallucination. And in this way, Shakespeare explores the inner mind and soul of Macbeth and through this he depicts the human nature. After Banquo's murder he is in heavy tensions and fears due to the ill consequences of his black deeds and so he starts dealing in a strange manner that he seems to be abnormal and uncommon. Then Macbeth becomes very angry and he says: “Avout! And quit .....thou dost glare with”. <sup>[27]</sup>

In this way it is very natural that when we talk seriously or afraid of any the picture of same person is become in our mind. It seems to us that he is before us the same thing happens to Macbeth when in the company of guests he talks of Banquo and misses him. Then his mind creates an image of Banquo before the eyes of himself and he takes him the ghost of Banquo.

This kind of study exploring the inner state of his character's minds, Shakespeare proves him a rich psychologist of human nature. There is a long detail of the witches again in act (IV) sc (i) when three witches meet again and they perform to cast their spell. The first witch says the other lets us go round the caldron, and throw into it the various in ingredience lets throw in the caldron poisoned.

In this way these supernatural beings perform an activity around the cauldron for casting their spell. They point that a toe of a frog, the wool of a bat the Tung of a dog the double Tung of an adder, the sting of a believed born the leg of a lizard and the wing of a young should be used for the spell.

Similarly, they also suggest for others in gradients as the skin of a dragon, the tooth of a wolf the bride flesh of dead witches the bally and stomata of a ask gutted with pray in the sift, the sea, the root of plant etc. In the same of lips of a Tartar, the finger an intent to which a prostitute gave birth in a ditch will increase the power of their spell. In this way, thus we find a beautiful and interesting study of the witches' activities cast their spell.

Though Macbeth enters there among the company of witches and to his address to them exposes that the witches are black, dirty and old aged. In this way William Shakespeare portrays that witch is powerful which can perform impossible deeds. Macbeth is his beautiful study of the inner state of Macbeth's mind.

The witches and the ghost of Banquo are nothing but only the result of his creative mind and his ambitious nature, which create the images of witches and the ghost who later proved the causes of his doom. Macbeth is selfish, greedy, ambitious, imaginative and very desiring person who hopes of becoming the king of Scotland and his own will and ambitious nature force him to be active for that aim in the form of witches.

Thus, Macbeth is a play of Psychology which explores the human nature. Actually, there is no effect of the supernatural beings on a human as for their success or failure. It is man himself responsible for it. Through this play, it is clear that supernatural beings cannot harm man if he does not invite them. On the other way, he invites them and visits them for his own aim. They may be helpful or harmful. Hence Shakespeare presents himself as a fine profound psychologist in the English literary through Macbeth.

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