



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 4. Issue.4., 2017 (Oct-Dec)



INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

WITCHCRAFT AND EVIL IN SHAKESPEARE'S *MACBETH*

DABBETA RAMESH

Lecturer in English

RD Women's Degree College, Warangal, Telangana



ABSTRACT

William Shakespeare was not only a poet, playwright, but also the pre-eminent dramatist. His works made everlasting impressions in English literature. Many research works have been done on his works across the world. His plays were and are popular for the various social, cultural and political contexts throughout the world. *Macbeth* is one of the famous plays. The three witches, in this play, represent darkness and impending doom. With their witchcraft the three witches turn the peaceful life of the main character into tragedy. During those days the witchcraft was the terrible practice and unscientific action. And the witches were regarded and seen worse than criminals and rebels. Because this practice was and is an anti Christian one. The purpose of the witchcraft is to spoil the human beings physically and spiritually. It is very confusing thing how these three witches could straddle the borders of the story between nature and supernatural things. And these witches control the fate of the characters, mainly the main character. Indeed, most of the situations in the play are noted where evil is depicted as good, while good is as evil. With the line "Double, double toil and trouble," we can understand the pervasive intentions of these witches. Their aim was to trouble the human beings who lead faithful life in their surroundings. They spelled everything indirectly and with double meanings. For their deceitful and wrong prophesies *Macbeth* became victim. He was tempted by such prophesies and aspired to become king by killing King Duncan. Added to his evil desire, his evil-minded wife Lady *Macbeth* persuaded him constantly to murder the king. These witches corrupted the thoughts and plans of *Macbeth* and guided him on the path to his own destruction. And this paper is an attempt to discover how the fate of main character was turndown by witchcraft and ended in ambiguous manner.

Key words: William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, The Witches, Christianity etc.

Introduction

*Macbeth* which is set in Scotland mixes with craft, prophecy and murder. Shakespeare is a universal playwright. He wrote 37 plays 154 sonnets 2 long narrative poems. In the present play the three witches represent darkness, chaos and conflict while their role is as agents and witness. They represent treason and impending doom at the time of Shakespeare witches were seen as worse than rebels, "the most notorious traitor and rebel that can be. They were not only political traitors but spiritual traitors as well.

The first act in the play starts with these lines uttered by witches "Fair is foul and foul is fair: Hover through the fog and filthy air". While the witches do not tell Macbeth directly to kill King Duncan, they make him tempted when they tell Macbeth that he is destined to be king. Macbeth is written in 1623 published 1623 in first folio. Witches create main role in the play. The play begins with the brief appearance of a trio of witches. The witches prophesy that Macbeth will be made thane of Cawdor and eventually king of Scotland. Witches also prophesy that Macbeth companion, Banquo will be getting a line of Scottish kings, although Banquo will never be king himself. It is performed in 1606. Macbeth is dramatic a tragedy split into five acts. The line "Double, double toil and trouble" communicates the witches' intent clearly: They seek only trouble for the mortals around them. The witches' spells are remarkably similar to the spell of the witch.

While the witches do not tell Macbeth directly to kill king Duncan. They use a subtle form of temptation when they tell Macbeth that he is destined to be king. By placing these thoughts in his mind they effectively guide him on the path to his own destruction. This follows the pattern of temptation used at the time of Shakespeare. First, they argued a thought is put in a man's mind, and then the person may either indulge in the thought or reject it. Macbeth indulges in it, while Banquo rejects.

Macbeth examines the nature of evil and corruption of the human soul in Macbeth evil is the opposite of humanity. The deviation from that which is natural for human kind, yet evil originates in the human heart. Supernatural and unnatural forces are the agents of human beings, not their instigators. The witches' words do not seduce Macbeth. He is compelled by his own ambition and his wife's ruthlessness. Similarly, spirits do not solicit Lady Macbeth; rather she invokes their aid for her purposes.

The evil of Macbeth and lady Macbeth is so great that ultimately both of them. The human soul cannot endure such evil. One way or another evil destroys the soul. Knowing he is doomed to lose, Macbeth still battles against Macduff, the representative of virtue and the redresser of the play. Lady Macbeth is defeated by madness and death. Evil is incompatible with humanity.

Macbeth is all about evil and ambition. Macbeth is an honourable man at the beginning of the play, but high decisions lead him astray. I think he is evil in the final analysis because the witches give him a prophesy, does not mean he needs to act. He kills cruelly, sometimes when it doesn't even necessarily benefit him at that moment. While there are many plausible excuses for some of his actions, ultimately I think if you believe in evil, you would have to say that killing for power is its epitome. I think evil is kind of subjective. However, Macbeth killed his best friend (and his son) and he killed Macduff's wife and son. To me this is the evil part. Killing Duncan was a horrible act, and possibly an evil one but at least he had a reason. He did not have a reason to kill Macduff's wife and son.

Macbeth himself stands as a symbol for Satan's sin of ambition. Like Satan, Macbeth's insatiable lust for power and ambition drives him to commit evil. The present play consumed by evil, evil intentions, evil thoughts and evil doings.

The Play is centred on the coexistence of good and evil the theme of evil and its consequences are clearly seen throughout the play as it changes the characters in the play and brings nothing but destruction.

### Conclusion

Thus this paper discussed the changes occurred in the central character's behaviour after meeting the three witches. Witchcraft forces him to do evil things in order to attain the kingdom in illegal ways. It teaches the lessons about the consequences of evil and immoral activities. Macbeth's over ambition leads him into destruction.

### References

1. Shakespeare William . *Macbeth*. Collins Classica : 2010.
2. A.C Bradley . *Shakespearean Tragedy*, Fourth Edition. 10 November 2006