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## The Fall of Macbeth: A Psychological Inquiry into the Case of Corrupting Power

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### Abstract

*The research paper investigates how authority, power, and position are the words that denote the god-like status of a person in the world and it has often been seen that when people come to power, they face the temptation of abusing their power for the achievement of unrestrained personal desires. This research is qualitative research carried out within the framework of Renaissance literature and its link with psychological reflections upon Renaissance fiction and history. It is premised upon an explanatory and interpretative analysis of the chosen text Macbeth. The present study aims to explore in-depth the socio-psychological factors that nurture such a mentality through the textual analysis of Macbeth, a play universally recognized for the study of the disastrous upshot of inordinate ambitions. The study is an exploration of the nature of evil in Macbeth, the evil of immoderate ambition planted in the mind of Macbeth, an army General in the kingdom of King Duncan, by his exceptionally ambitious wife, Lady Macbeth, who aspires her husband to become King of Scotland by hook or by crook even if he had to wreak havoc in the lives of all those who stand in the way of her ambition.*

**Key Words:** Temptation, Wield, Renaissance, Qualitative, Inordinate

### Introduction

The present study aims to explore in-depth the socio-psychological factors that nurture a corrupt mentality through the textual analysis of Macbeth, a play universally recognized for the study of the disastrous upshot of inordinate ambitions. The study is an exploration of the nature of evil in Macbeth, the evil of immoderate ambition planted in the mind of Macbeth, an army General in the kingdom of King Duncan, by his exceptionally ambitious wife, Lady Macbeth, who aspires her husband to become King of Scotland by hook or by crook even if he had to wreak havoc in the lives of all those who stand in the way of her ambition. It is important to note that Macbeth starts as an un-ambitious person, but it is only after the taunting of his wife who castigates him for his

want of manly courage that he willy-nilly executes the deed, i.e., the gruesome murder of King Duncan, only to realize later on that he has killed his sleep, peace of mind and spiritual calm in the figure of king Duncan.

Macbeth's character study reveals how the hunger for infinite power can lead one to the total disregard of human values. Obsessed with the idea of gaining absolute power, Macbeth strikes out the difference between what is wrong and what is right and removes every obstacle in his way through power. The more he aspires for the power limitless, the more he degenerates into corruption. The craze for remaining in power makes him act ruthlessly, and he loses any sense of morality or cares for basic

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human values. Paving the way to power through unfair means, he spurred on to the deadly act of the murder of a saintly king; he becomes a hard and unscrupulous killer and crosses limits of cruelty in the desire of perpetuating his regime. Shakespeare's conception of the character of Macbeth is rooted in the understanding of basic human nature, and it is formed on the fundamental assumption that man is by nature greedy and selfish, and when he finds a chance to fulfill his secret desire, he doesn't restrain from committing cruel acts of murder, fraud, corruption and so on.. As political scientist [Mulgan, R. \(2012\)](#) has argued:

'By taking existing duties and rules as given, such definitions are too closely tied to a particular institutional context. They do not provide an external standard by which to assess whether the duties or rules themselves prohibit actions that should be regarded as corrupt.'

Certain deviations from this standard definition of corruption are possible; nevertheless, the central premise that it is misappropriation of power for personal motives remains the same. [Iqbal, Z., Ahmad, H., Mushtaq, M. A., & Iqbal, S. \(2015\)](#) observe "the factors or variables that are associated with corruption and find that personal financial problem (PFP), Lack of Legalization (LOL) & Forced Corruption (F.C.) having a positive association with corruption whereas Other Reasons including lack of technology, low literacy rate and inefficiency of the anti-corruption department not having any correlation with corruption". Corruption induces well-marked changes in the behavior of the corrupted person. He/ She can be discovered behaving abnormally, driven by the overriding motive of attaining power, wealth, or authority; the corrupted person will display evident changes in the behavior. Corruption and moral degeneration that follow lust for power is the dominant concern of Macbeth.

The Protagonist harbors an unnatural desire of usurping the state by murdering the present King, Duncan, who was not only, according to the political beliefs of the people, a shadow of God on the earth but also a pious King who is respected and loved by all over the country for his benevolent and good treatment of the masses. In the kingdom of King Duncan, the natural order is prevailing: state, politics, religion, society all exist in harmony.

Macbeth, in his mad pursuit of becoming the King, defiles this almost divine order of the things and wages a war against the natural order of things. Thus destroying the country folk, nature, and then finally upon himself because, in Shakespearean tragedy, the law of poetic justice necessitates the evil recoiling on the evil-doer. Dalberg, J. E. E., & Acton, L. view about the relationship between the lust for power and its consequence upon great men that "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are always almost bad men" (2016), is especially true about Shakespeare's great tragic hero, Macbeth. Orwell, G., too in his classic allegorical novel *Animal Farm*, demonstrated the effect of immoderate desire for power on the people and reached the same conclusion that power corrupts man and absolute power corrupts absolutely. The real nature of man is exposed when he comes to power or becomes rich, or when he holds authority because then he fears none. Power, therefore, in European discourses, Macbeth inclusive, has been presented as a corrupting influence that transforms the inner of the man.

### Research Questions

- i. How does inordinate ambition for power and authority corrupt Macbeth?
- ii. How is the moral degeneration of Macbeth the consequence of his lust for absolute power?
- iii. How does Shakespeare reveal the working of evil in the psyche of Macbeth?

### Aims and Objectives of Study

- i. The foremost objective of the study is to demonstrate that the overriding ambition for power and the employment of foul means for the achievement of this desire always inevitably results in the moral decay of the person and brings disaster for him and the others.
- ii. The second objective of the study is to establish that corruption, that is, the abuse of public authority for personal benefit, causes serious damage to the social structures, destroying the basic fabric of society.
- iii. The study also demonstrates that Shakespeare's observation of human nature that man is by nature susceptible to

corruption and that power can corrupt, and absolute power can corrupt absolutely holds in every age and clime.

### **Significance of Study**

The study is significant in terms of highlighting, in the way of textual analysis, the psychological reasons for the indulgence of people into evil passions, like unrestrained yearnings for absolute sway over the lives of others, and the catastrophic consequences of such ambitions for everyone concerned or unconcerned because evil once let loose in society operates ruthlessly and indiscriminately. Making Macbeth, the ambitious army General, the example, the study maintains that wherever striving for a higher position in life, furthering of career or rising upward socially, employing fair and honest ways of struggle is a positive virtue, indeed perfectly human quality and demonstration of one's natural growth, getting obsessed with achieving power by hook or crook disregarding all human values, is highly vicious and hence undesirable human passion. After careful study of the play within the qualitative paradigm of exploring the circumstances that feed and nurture the feelings of exploiting one's position in a place of influence in society, the study signifies that immoderate desire for power and the perpetration of cruelty in an attempt to perpetuate that power after the power has been secured is what can bring the irredeemable decay of individual as in case of Macbeth and hence what is proposed is the need for the cultivation of a healthy and fair social environment in which individuals could grow up as sensible, and balanced human beings so that the risk for the individual's propensity towards moral corruption or any kind of degeneration could be minimum. There is a dire need that such positive virtues as love, tolerance, mutual respect, love for humanity, avoidance from an evil passion of jealousy, etc. should be promoted in society to overcome the breeding and motivating factors of corruption.

### **Research Methodology**

This research is qualitative research carried out within the framework of Renaissance literature and its link with psychological reflections upon Renaissance fiction and history. It is premised upon an explanatory and interpretative analysis of the

chosen text Macbeth. It is an interpretation of the many-sided arguments made by Shakespeare about excessive ambition and its effects upon Macbeth in his seminal work Macbeth. The history, myth as well as discussion of the Renaissance ideas about Elizabethan society as it is reflected in Shakespearean plays as well as the study of non-literary texts are supported by textual evidence. As the research, by its very qualitative nature, requires intensive study of the text to figure out and collect relevant evidence to support our argument, we have deeply and analytically studied the text and marked the relevant portions. After many close readings and intensive study of the text, the relevant textual evidence was located, marked, and extracted. After the extraction of the data, it was meticulously sorted out and carefully categorized. Psychological theories about the weird working of the human mind are applied to analyze the data to address our research questions. Finally, detailed conclusions are drawn from the critical discussions.

### **Literature Review**

Macbeth's corruption of mind and his subsequent fall to the depth of degeneration are no doubt brought about as much by lady Macbeth as by his lust for power. To understand the nature and motive behind Macbeth's fall, it is important to understand his relationship with Lady Macbeth. In exploring the different layers of the relationship between Macbeth and his wife, our first concern is to draw attention towards a suppressed mother in *Macbeth*, a fact that doesn't surface explicitly in the text rather remains concealed under the sham bravado of Lady Macbeth's utterances. A woman is born a mother. We are not using the word "mother" in a sense, which gives birth to children, but the attributes associated with this word, i.e., to care, look after, nursing, etc., are also attributes of nature. When she becomes old enough, she is taught to live within four walls of the house and manage the domestic chores, and she remains in touch with the physical world compared to the man who is a man of science and goes out for supposedly significant work. All the knowledge a woman attains from society, religion, cultural setups, and family systems confines her sphere. She realizes that it is her primary duty to serve the other family members, especially her father, her brothers, and her husband.

So, she shapes her "Senses" to accord to this knowledge. We are talking about a woman; in general, she takes the responsibility on her shoulder to serve and sacrifice and always remains on the "giving end." This primary education contributes to her psyche, and she behaves like her own mother even at a very early age. As she grows up, she starts treating other family members as her babies to satisfy her "motherhood." Our concern is to assert that woman is purely motherly. Her feminine world is incomplete without a baby, and her desire to have a baby becomes a component of her "feminine nature." Her biological structure also confirms this obligation. Elizabethan and Victorian even modern woman is no exception in this regard.

The Elizabethan woman was bound to learn household responsibilities and become skilled in all housewifely duties. Her education was entirely domestic to fulfill the requirement of a real career option for a girl – marriage. All Elizabethan women would be expected to marry and would be dependent on their male relatives throughout their life. Elizabethan Woman was expected to obey the father and the brothers and any other male member of the family. She was expected to bear children and rear them. She was liable by patriarchal society to invest all her capabilities to perform the role of a mother. Elizabethan women were raised to believe that they were inferior to men. The protestant leader, John Knox, wrote: "Woman in her greatest perfection was made to serve and obey man."

Lady Macbeth, created by William Shakespeare, is also a Renaissance woman but critical examination of her character gives us an idea that she contrasts to all the feminine values set by her era. There are two options whether she hates the Elizabethan feminine virtues or she protests against the Elizabethan patriarchal society. In a patriarchal society, male perception is prevalent in society, and every idea is seen through the eyes of males, and females are denied equality. All the power, knowledge, and authority were man's ownership. So to equate with the male power, Lady Macbeth suppresses her fear, innocence, femaleness and assumes bravery, which she does not possess. She resolves the conflict of masculinity vs. femininity by "unsexing her." In her second soliloquy, lady Macbeth summons the

mythological spirits to transform her less like a woman and more like a man by saying; "Come, you spirits/That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here, And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full/Of direst cruelty." Further, she asserts by saying; "Come to my woman's breasts/ And take my milk for gall" (I. v. 41-44), reinforcing the fact that she is trading her traditional feminine role as mother and nurturer in exchange for a power which accords with the violent, masculine world of which her husband is a part. In this world, femininity is not an attribute to be equated with power as she comments on the femaleness of her husband; "It is too full O' the milk of human kindness"(I. v. 18). Lady Macbeth, in moving from nurturing mother to infanticide, represents a shift from the passive "milky" to masculinity. It also marks the crossing of a divide between male and female power. She attempts to be like a man to exude the strength needed to gain additional social status as royalty. Lady Macbeth appears to be very influential in planning – deciding when and how they should kill King Duncan – and chiding her husband for not acting more like a man; yet, despite these capabilities, she is the main reason for the revealing of Macbeth's part in the usurpation of the throne. Lady Macbeth was as much possessed by the idea of masculinity, power, and brutality that she entirely transformed her into a male (man) mentally as well as psychologically. Carl Jung believed that every woman has an analogous animus within her psyche, this being a set of unconscious masculine attributes and potentials. He says, "Woman is compensated by a masculine element, and therefore her unconscious has, so to speak, a masculine imprint" (*The Syzygy: Anima and Animus, Collected Works*, 9ii, par. 28f.). A male Lady Macbeth, opposite to real lady Macbeth, emerges in her psyche, and she inwardly becomes a man even proved by Macbeth in these words; "Bring forth men-children only/for thy undaunted mettle should compose/Nothing but males" (II. i. 73-75). That male lady Macbeth was so iron-willed and strong-headed that when Macbeth was reluctant to murder King Duncan, she decided to commit the murder and is ready to "pluck my nipple from my child's boneless gums/ And dash the brains out, had I so sworn as you Have done to this/ to later being shown as possessed by nightmares of guilt" (I. vii). As bound by the

patriarchal society, she was compelled to invest herself in the role of mother, but in this situation, she is seen as a selfish and anti-female character.

### **Textual Analysis of Macbeth**

Macbeth, one of the four ever-green tragedies produced by the world's greatest playwright, Shakespeare, is critically acclaimed for its thematic and structural compactness. While other three major tragedies, including Hamlet, King Lear, and Othello, are extensive accounts of the heroic exploits and the internal and external conflicts of the protagonists, Macbeth, possibly written in late 1606 or late 1607, the most flowering period of Shakespearean genius, is the briefest, linguistically condensed, swiftly flowing, and free of redundant elements. It starts fiercely with the outbreak of storm at a desolate heath, the habitat of malignant supernatural forces, three witches who plan to meet Macbeth there to trap him in their mysterious prophecies about his future that he would be the King of Scotland. The choice of the setting for the opening of the play, that is, the desolate place with the appearance of the supernatural creatures there, indicates the sinister atmosphere of the play in which the drama of the destiny of Macbeth and other characters will be unfolded. The witches hint at the "fair and foul" things that would soon happen in the lives of the main characters. The scene soon shifts to a battlefield, a place of wholesale massacre, where Macbeth has secured a victory against a rebellious adversary of the state and is now coming home, all puffed up with pride and high feelings. Again the shift of the scene from heath to battlefield significantly shows that the playwright is focusing on the forces of evil, carnage, violence, mystery, and so on to point to the central concern of the play: the conflict between man and nature. Macbeth has fought valiantly on the battlefield and shown feats of rare bravery when he slew MacDonald, the rebel, as Captain points out, "then seamed him from the nave tooth's chops," (Macbeth, 4). The sinister and bloody atmosphere of the war, the ominous appearance of the witches, and the blood-curdling murder of the state rebel are the characteristically Shakespearean beginning of tragedy because the playwright seems to have a persistent belief that tragedy must invoke

feelings of fear, mystery, bloodshed, etc. that necessitate the inclusion in the play of the elemental forces of evil like witches, wars, and villains. His conception of tragedy, continuation to some extent of the Greek concept, involved the supernatural elements as well as the bloody scenes that in Macbeth foreshadow the series of murders to be executed by Macbeth for the continuation of his regime. Our impression about Macbeth's personality grows indistinct as we have at the beginning of the play two contradictory opinions about him: we are impressed by the Captain's description of the courageous and dauntless exhibition of warrior's spirit, but, simultaneously, Macbeth's unusual reaction at witches' prophecies (in contrast to Banquo's reasoned response to witches) puts his previous impression into serious doubt. His enthusiastic spirit at listening to the witches' prophecies with a great deal of belief in what they say, though, apparently there is no reason for his becoming King of Scotland, betrays his deep desire for attaining power by whatever means it comes. The fact that the prophecy comes from the "bubbles of the air," as Banquo puts them, insubstantial elements of the universe whose pronouncements are nothing but "half-truths" provokes Macbeth to think of the mega promise made by the witches, and he starts cogitating over how the great opportunity can present itself. His meeting with the witches confirms that he had already secretly had the secret desire of becoming the King of Scotland, and it seems probable, as it transpires from the letter of Lady Macbeth to him, that they had hatched the plan of stealing the position of the premier man and lady of the kingdom, but they couldn't materialize their desire because there was "neither time nor place" to do so. But from the moment Macbeth meets the witches and sees the possibility of having his dreams materialized (witches, being instruments of evil might have seen the desire lurking in Macbeth's mind), he remains agitated and resolves to execute the deed whose "horrid image" is haunting him day and night. Since his first meeting with the witches, he cannot put the thought of kingship out of his mind, but the idea comes to maturity only after he meets with his wife, Lady Macbeth, far more ambitious than her husband, who is notoriously regarded as the "fourth witch" of

the play, the one who is embodied in flesh and blood and will never be content unless the bid deed is done.

Witches in one sense are the projection of the secret desires of Macbeth, the externalization of his horrid plans, so when he confronts them unexpectedly, he doesn't show a grain of disbelief in their predictions, rather feels excited at their happy auguries, their rhetorical pronouncements of "Thane of Glamis, thane of Cowder" and then the jackpot-the King of Scotland, "all hail Macbeth, that shall be King hereafter" (7). It is important to note that not once in the entire course of the play do witches ask him to murder Duncan, nor do they conspire with him any device for the attainment of the throne; they only tell him what is within the realm of possibility. The steps that Macbeth takes to make the prophesied future happen are exclusively his own, of course in conspiracy with his wife, which indicates that the responsibility for the consequences of the action cannot be fixed on anyone but the lord and lady Macbeth. Macbeth realizes immediately that witches can prophesize only not become an accomplice in the murder of the King, and hence the fulfillment of prophecy may require him to hatch a secret plot and execute the murder. The very thought of having to murder Duncan makes him cold, and he can't convince himself to do this heinous act because king Duncan is a nobleman and has been very generous to him in the past. He can't resolve determinedly to execute the deed, nor can he leave it undone, so he faces the dilemma and needs a provocation. He is not the kind of person who would kill someone without feeling the prick of conscience. He got to have a good, genuine reason to take someone's life; to be on the battlefield is a different thing, there he can slash many on the slightest provocation, but in personal life, he is quite different.

Lady Macbeth makes him do what he dreads to do; she appears on occasion and instigates him to commit the unspeakable act by taunting him of his cowardice, reminding him of the time past (before the staging of the play) when they had neither time nor place, but now with King Duncan sleeping under their roof as a guest they have everything in favor, so she forces him to murder his wishes. She behaves like a fearless, determined man taunting, encouraging, energizing, and exploiting his love for her, and finally

has him accomplished the dark crime, that is, the murder of Duncan in an ominous night. Had Lady Macbeth not been there to revitalize his debilitating ambition and energies, Macbeth would never have found the spur, the real motivation for the accomplishment of the action, so it is appropriate to say that Lady Macbeth is the real force behind the murder, and her vaulting ambition, more than Macbeth's, determine the destiny of both of them. Shakespeare has crafted her character in terms of contradictions; she is a bundle of confusion and yet the most profound and exciting character after Macbeth himself. Sharing the characteristics of witches, being inexplicably treacherous, unshakably resolute, and wicked, she appears more vigorous and imposing than men. Political and moral confusion permeates the whole play, and though the theme of moral confusion becomes prominent through the actions of different characters like Banquo, Lady Macbeth, Macduff, and King Duncan, it is mainly the character of Macbeth whose confusion of mind regarding murdering the King or not engages the attention of the audience. Mysterious prophecies of the witches as well as their perplexing pronouncements regarding the future of Macbeth; Lady Macbeth's indirect references to the mutual agreement between the husband and wife on the murder of the King to gain the highest seat of influence, all contribute to Macbeth's moral confusion, so he decides the momentous action under tremendous stress, for in case of deciding against slaying Macbeth, he will have to not only put up with Lady Macbeth's mordantly sarcastic denigration of his masculinity, but she may also decide to abandon him altogether because what is important to her more than the love of husband is the fulfillment of her long-cherished dream of becoming the first lady, therefore, he goes to Duncan's chamber with heavy strides, deeply torn in his mind between the love of his wife and the voice of his conscience, but he finally decides to besmear his hands with the innocent blood of the King, only to find later on that the blood on his hands can't be washed away even by the water of all oceans. Fair and foul are muddled in his mind, and the ominous words of Macbeth, "so foul and fair I have not seen" (7) echo Witches' words, "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (3) forging, on the one hand, the link between Witches and Macbeth, and on

the other hand adds to the sense of moral confusion that is mainly projected on Macbeth. In the beginning, Macbeth doesn't seem to have steadfast resolve, but Lady Macbeth reminds him of the promise he made to her in the past and says to him tauntingly that she would not have broken the promise even if she had to leave her newborn baby to death,

"How tender it's to love the babe who milks me:  
I would, while it was smiling in my face,  
Have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums  
And dashed the brains out, had I so sworn  
As you have done to this" (20).

The firm resolve of Lady Macbeth here to have fulfilled the promise if she had committed so, even if she had to let her tender baby starve to death shows, her ferocious heart, and, on the other hand, she becomes the personification of what she says about what a person should be like, "look like an innocent flower, and be the serpent under it." It is after listening to such snide remarks from his better half, a woman, who was supposedly far less audacious and enterprising than his male counterpart and would not have been thought to be so relentless, that Macbeth can no more continue to waver. She makes him go about the bloody business playing on the gender-based notions of gallantry and cowardice, suggesting that Macbeth can prove the manliness associated with masculinity only by murdering the King; otherwise, he doesn't deserve to be called a man, a symbol of superiority, courage and the whole range of positive ideas associated with the males. She is obsessed with the idea of seeing her husband, the King, at any cost. She would have liked to hold power and authority by herself if the social and political conventions had allowed it. However, she can still hold power and exercise it indirectly by motivating her husband on what to do and what not to. Once the King is removed from the way, and Lady Macbeth thinks that kingship will be easy to traverse. However, the trip to the throne proves tough going, and Macbeth discovers he has to kill or get killed many others to perpetuate his position. Though occasionally disturbed by the return of the conscience, he repents over what he has been doing since his coronation; his hunger for power has

become so strong that his once impressionable mind has turned into mercilessly hard, so he gets Banquo killed because the witches had prophesied him the father of the progeny of the King. Macbeth forgets the difference between friend and enemy, good and bad, and himself becomes the evil personified, an unscrupulous killer who wants to maintain his position, though the whole world may perish.

Macbeth's slant from an impressionable army General to an unscrupulous killer symbolizes the degeneration of human nature and a gash into the order and harmony of the universe. Macbeth, in degenerated state of mind, wounds nature, deforms its face, and ultimately nature takes revenge upon him. Duncan has been presented in the images of life, fruitfulness, spring, and Timon, the source of the goodness of life, while Macbeth, on the contrary, has been portrayed using anti-life images. Lady Macbeth can't kill him because he is a fatherly figure, "Had he not resembled/My father as he slept, I had done it" (24). What had stopped Lady Macbeth from assassinating the King was his resemblance to her father, whom she must have once loved so dearly, so she couldn't dare kill the father figure. However, ironically, she forces Macbeth to do what she can't. Duncan was a generous "cousin," whom Macbeth has so much regard for, and knows to the best of his belief that killing such a man would keep him disturbed, but, again, the vaulting ambition gets better of him, and he deals the deathly blow against nature's unity and peace, killing with Macbeth all chords of social, domestic, spiritual and political unity and concord. With nature's beauty, harmony, and order fallen to pieces, Scotland turns from heaven of tranquility and peace to hell of chaos, disquiet, and terror.

## Conclusion

Macbeth is possessed by an overwhelming desire not only to remain in power by whatever means it is possible and whatever price he has to pay for it but also to be the father of the dynasty of kings. This desire of his is directly in the clash with the witches' prophecies: they had predicted that Banquo would found the dynasty. In this case, instead of believing in or solemnly accepting the prediction of the witches, he wages war against Banquo, an instrument of nature and the future, trying to thwart the future

from happening. This eccentric attitude of Macbeth, according to psychologists, is due to perverse occupation with power. Lehrer refers to this as "the paradox of power. Once the person rises to power, instead of being polite, honest and outgoing, they become impulsive, reckless and rude" (2010). Murdering someone doesn't appear to him as a gross act of immorality or sin against nature because the excessive craving for power has almost driven him mad, so he plans to get both Banquo and his son Fleance brutally killed by hired assassins and succeeds in removing his most dreaded friend/enemy. However, Fleance escapes, thus symbolizing the truth that Macbeth cannot determine the course of the future. But his overweening nature precludes him from realizing the truth, and he continues to shed blood, and the cruel murder of good Macduff's wife and children rends the hearts of the audience. Accomplice of Macbeth in all the bloody deeds, Lady Macbeth, fails to hold off her own, her once-mighty intent weakens as if the bout of inebriation was over, and she suddenly collapses, plunging into madness and sleep-walking and dies issueless. Macbeth and his wife bruise and violate the laws of nature, don't restrain from killing even the innocent children, the image of God, and are in turn deprived of the fruits of life as they die childless. Contrary to Macbeth's initial belief that by seizing absolute power and authority, he would command great respect and honor and enjoy perfect happiness, he not only loses his heart's content but becomes deprived of the blessings that make one's life on earth meaningful and happy. Shorn of all moral values, family and social pleasures, peace of mind, and a bevy of sincere friends, Macbeth experiences extreme absurdity of life and pronounces:

'Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more; it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,

Signifying nothing (79).

The above-quoted lines are conclusive and significant to understand Macbeth's nihilistic views about life and his immediate situation. After realizing the futility of his efforts to alter the course of nature and circumventing the inevitability of death, it is not surprising to find him in a mood of unrelieved pessimism and frustration, thus disregarding all the positive values of life. But he can't expunge the fact of his being a human being living in a society whose social, religious, moral, cultural, and humanistic values are too deeply rooted in the psyche of the individual, therefore, committing atrocious acts for the fulfillment of egotistical desires, ascribed to animalistic passions, but it doesn't mean the erasure of natural human feelings. Therefore, Macbeth can't help feeling remorse at the past ignoble deeds, and his sharp sense of repentance becomes evident in his wish to have died before the fateful event of Macbeth's death. His soul cries, "Had but died an hour before this chance, / I had lived a blessed time; for from this instant/There is nothing serious in mortality" (30). After he committed the first murder, there was no return possible, so Macbeth embarked upon a series of killing to preserve his power and authority. Not wanting to lose omnipotent power, he wreaks havoc in the country in consultation with three witches. Fear of losing control makes him become a butcher, and he murders anyone he believes can be a potential threat to his authority, and finally loses his life in the battle with "unnaturally born" Macduff, whose wife and children he had already got killed. Macbeth's immoderate desire for power and the consequent fear of losing authority drove him to immeasurable corruption, and he obliterated whoever was an obstacle in the way of his absolute sway over Scotland, but finally, his tragic death at the hands of Macduff makes him an example for all who are overridden by the passion of power deeply rooted in their psyche.



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