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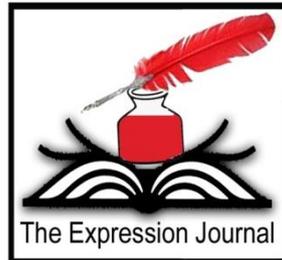
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SHAKESPEARE'S MACBETH AND KARNAD'S TUGHLAQ AS TRAGIC HEROES EVOKING NOT ONLY HORROR BUT ALSO ADMIRATION: AN APPRAISAL

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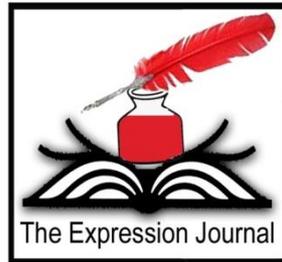
Abstract

Shakespeare is widely known for his tragic plays. He has written how different characters of his plays meet their deadly death just because of the tragic flaw in their characters. Likewise Girish Karnad's plays also have many dominant themes in them due to which their life becomes a tragedy. Both the plays Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Karnad's *Tughlaq* have few similarities as well. It is also a noteworthy point that the main characters of these two plays are not ordinary people; instead they belong to a high rank. This article exposes the characteristics of tragic heroes of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Karnad's *Tughlaq*. *Macbeth* and *Tughlaq* end up with the death of the hero and others who are associated with him. It is some inherent defects in *Macbeth* and *Tughlaq* that fail them to adjust themselves to the environment. Both Macbeth and Tughlaq are men in high state. Macbeth is a General while Tughlaq is a King, Both these heroes appear to be in the afternoon of life. In neither of them can be found the iridescent gleam of youthful vigour and exuberance. They have certain tragic flaw and they are singly responsible for their fall and their errors precipitate their doom and harvest the fruits of their sins. The element of fate can also doom their tragic vision.

Keywords

Virtue, Greatness, Tragic-vision, Vigour, and Judgement.

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Aristotle says that a tragic hero is one who is an intermediate kind of personage since an absolute good man or bad man cannot afford to give the tragic feelings of 'pity' and 'fear'. Thus, the in-between man is not pre-eminently virtuous or just, whose misfortune is brought upon him not by vice or depravity but by some error of judgement. A tragic hero should be good and his goodness is ethical goodness. Unless the heroes have goodness, our tragic emotions cannot be roused, since a badman cannot enjoy our sympathy. Goodness does not mean perfection; a blameness character is not fit to be a tragic hero, because unmerited suffering does not rouse pity and fear. On the basis of this platform, we can see goodness in *Macbeth* and *Tughlaq* with certain blemishes that mar their character.

The tragic hero is better than an ordinary man. He may not be an embodiment of virtue, but he must have an element of greatness. If he is a man of high estate, his fate normally affects the welfare of the whole nation. He must enjoy greater regulation and prosperity so that his misfortune may be regarded as a national calamity. This also evokes our sense of pity because his misfortune is due to his initial mistake. The tragic hero is akin to him, for he shares with us certain common traits, yet he is idealized. His misfortune is brought upon him not by moral depravity but by some 'hamartia' or 'error of judgement'. Etymologically, 'hamartia' means 'missing the mark'. Hamartia is an unintentional art. The hero aims at one thing and ends up with contrary to all reasonable expectation. Hamartia may be differentiated from 'Mochtheri, the moral responsibility of the agent is much greater. In *Macbeth*, there is Mochtherita as Macbeth is goaded by an insatiable ambition and kills the King, who is his guest and subsequently wades through blood to his throne. But in *Tughlaq*, we can see hamartia as he is misled by his misconception and consequently meets failure, frustration and anguish.

J. S. Smart sums up the freedom of tragic heroes, "It is his own character that works out events from within, his own emotions that prompt and mislead him. What he is, is revealed by what becomes of him in the end and it is upon himself the ultimate responsibility falls" (Sengupta 69). *Macbeth* and *Tughlaq* end up with the death of the hero and others who are associated with him. It is some inherent defects in *Macbeth* and *Tughlaq* that fail them to adjust

themselves to the environment. We may not give hope to the suggestion that certain circumstances of life are beyond human control and hence they are not responsible for their tragedy. Even though there is some evidential supernatural urging in the case of Macbeth, none of his actions are formulated either by the witches or by his wife. On the other hand in Tughlaq; there is his idealism with a wrong application creates an unfavourable circumstance. Yet another cause might be their fate or the mysterious power that governs human destiny.

Both Macbeth and Tughlaq are men in high state. Macbeth is a General while Tughlaq is a King, Both these heroes appear to be in the afternoon of life. In neither of them can be found the iridescent gleam of youthful vigour and exuberance. They have certain tragic flaw and they are singly responsible for their fall and their errors precipitate their doom and harvest the fruits of their sins. The element of fate can also doom their tragic vision. There is no contribution of villains in these plays, since each play depicts the story of a hero turned a villain. The Greek dramatists believed in 'Nemesis' the goodness of justice, who according to Greek religion, is the instrument of punishment for all human vices. Hero meets his death because of his own aults. Poetic justice can be given to all wrong doers; this justice wards reward or punishment to those who commit good or evil deeds.

The tragic heroes are all lonely figures. Though Macbeth had a partner in his sin, Lady Macbeth leaves him in the middle and Macbeth meets his doom in the end. Tughlaq too is a lonely figure. He has no friends and he resembles mightly tree amidst puny plants and grasses. Both these two heroes suffer and die yet they never make us feel depressed. They are confronted with terrible calamities and yet their deaths mean a bold affirmation of the positive values of life.

According to Bradley and Charlton, Shakespeare believed in the oral order of the Universe. But then, the question arises who actually implants the evil instincts in human mind if his actions are against his will? Nobody has answer for this question. Some critics trace that Shakespeare's conception of tragedy is that character is destiny; in other words, the hero is chiefly responsible for his fall. It is because of vaulting ambition that Macbeth is tempted to murder his most noble King, Banquo – his friend, and comrade in the battlefield and Macduff's wife and children. In *Macbeth*, except Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, all other characters are flat. As we have already seen an absolute good man cannot be a tragic hero if he is an absolute good man. The prophecies by the witches wake up the sleeping horse in Macbeth's heart which is smitten by the ambition to become a King. Though Macbeth is not ready to murder the King; he cannot overcome his resistance and cuts a sorry figure when he shows his reluctance and all his good reasons fall into deaf ears when he is totally hen-pecked by Lady Macbeth. The interview between them shows the forceful personality of Lady Macbeth. Macbeth is weak in making up his mind. When the witches hail him as "All hail! Macbeth! That shall be King hereafter" (Turner 12). Macbeth's start is childlike inability to entertain a thought that has been regarded as disloyal. The problem is Macbeth's emotional weakness, his inability to face his desires as well as his crime. Macbeth has formulated his desires in terms of the witches taking what appeared to be the proper means to achieve them, but producing the wrong result the exact opposite of his intention. He cannot hope for the rewards of life which cannot suit him except punishment. He has got what he asked for – the crown, but Kingship means something more than symbolic to Macbeth, thus he feels the valueless and fruitless crown on his head.

Macbeth's success is his failure. The mouth honour he receives instead of genuine respect is reminiscent of Falstaff's exposition of honour at the end of Henry IV – Part-I. In a Shakespeare's tragedy, both inner and external conflicts are clearly manifested. The soul of the

hero is at war. A Shakespeare's tragedy is more introspective than that of his contemporaries and his tragic hero has a world within a world. Macbeth is shown in his mental conflict and Shakespeare has actually made us feel the conflict of Macbeth's passion and his soul rather than external conflict. Macbeth is distinguished from Oedipus, whose tragedy is due to the working of inexorable fate, although some critics suggest that his 'hubris' or pride is his fatal flaw. Shakespeare's Macbeth is an exceptional being and is shown dignified even in his fall. A noble tragedy is always a better revelation and it brings us closer to truth and dissolves all vanity prejudice and darkness of godly dignity. Basically Macbeth is not a desperate soul and is made so by his incessant murders. He is certainly not a villain, for a tragic hero cannot be a villain. Macbeth is a successful valourism; who commands the love and trust of many people. He appears as fallen from great height and he is not completely denuded of his human and heroic qualities. He murders but he lacks the prudence of a murderer. The entire world of Macbeth is shifting from realities where he struggles unsuccessfully. Macbeth says;

"Life is 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" (P 170).

It is his life that has lost its purpose. Meaning in life is indicated earlier which Macbeth later makes it impossible. In the end, he never misses our sympathy and there remains something sublime in his defiance against Macduff in the battlefield. He encounters earth, hell and heaven at one stroke.

It is hard to regard Tughlaq as a tragic hero if he does not possess goodness and his goodness is coloured with cruelty because of his inexperience, shortcoming and impulsive nature. In her pursuit, Tughlaq self-effaces his needs and avoids his sleeping and always indulges into action. His character is drawn from the history of India. As a tragic hero, his feelings are noble but he suffers 'hamartia'. He wants to build an utopia; all his edicts have received opposition and it incubates suspicion and hatred both from Hindus and Muslims. As a man ahead of his age, Tughlaq is wrongly placed in a circumstance unsuited to him. Tughlaq is endowed with great ideals and principles but his actions and steps to generate them as to be reached to the needy are not moulded in a proper way. He did not get appreciation either from Muslims or from Hindus.

In his reign, the Muslims and the Hindus do not trust each other; the Hindus smell something foul in Muhammad's exempting them from the Jiziya Tax and treating them as human beings. The Muslims advise their young Muslims to beware of the Hindus who embrace them. The Hindus would turn Islam into another case. Under this condition, Muhammad exhibits justice and brotherhood and wishes justice should be at work without any disparity. He longs for equality, progress and peace. The old Muslims call his action a folly and the Hindus a trap. Apparently all his edicts formulated to help the Hindu are greatly enjoyed by Muslims especially by Aziz who disguises himself as a Brahmin. Tughlaq is an intelligent King and a demagogue, pious, idiosyncratic and iconoclastic, provocative and intensely exciting. As an ardent devotee of Islam, he wishes he were a Hindu, so that he could believe in recurring births'. He wants to spread his branches in the stars. He is an existentialist and thus owes the responsibility. Why should I call on God to clean the dirt deposited by men?" (Gowda 5). He throws himself enthusiastically into the work of building a utopia. He says, "Every action in my kingdom to become a prayer, every prayer becomes a further step in knowledge every step to

lead us to God” (Rajagopalachari 23). Like a megalomaniac Muhammad is fully convinced that he alone is capable of saving his people. Under the zeal of giving something new to the people, he makes prayers compulsory five times a day. An old man sees the futility of this and says “what is the use? One must act according to it?” (6). But Sultan fails to foresee this, at a later stage bans the prayers and again orders the people to pray. He confesses “what is the use? I was trying to pray but I could only find words learnt by rote which left no echo in the heart”.

In a fit of madness, Tughlaq moves the Capital from Delhi to Danlatabad. This issue brings with it many problems and he wants to go back to Delhi once again. It is not the change of place that matters much, it is change of heart that can bring peace to the muffled heart. Earlier, Tughlaq is fooled by Aziz who files a suit against his majesty and all his reforms are misused by Aziz. When Sheikh Imam Ud Din reveals his acts of patricide and fratricide to the people, he does not like it, though in his reign people are given full freedom of expression. He introduces copper currency out of his self-righteous egoism and says to Sheikh-Imam-Ud-Din” it is a question of confidence...In China, they have paper currency, paper mind because people accept it, they have faith in the emperor’s scale of the piece of paper” (Barche 5). Amirs clearly sees the futility of this but the Sultan is blind in his passion and the policy fails miserably not only Aziz but also all Hindus house would turn into a mint house which ends up in the collapse of financial condition. All these copper coins are dumped in the rose garden an image of Saadi’s poem which symbolizes the dumped dreams of Sultan.

Karnad with an unerring dramatic instinct externalizes the schizophrenia of Tughlaq through Barani and Najib. They are his veritable alter-egos. Barani is a humanist and a historian. The very presence of Barani calls forth the food side of Sultan. Nijab appeals to what is inhuman in him. By showing that a number of times they hit at the same expedience for example on the issues of Ain-Ul-Mulk and Imami-Ud-din they have a plot to remove both the enemies at one stroke. Tughlaq’s continual favour for Najib suggests how the worse in Tughlaq is constantly taking an upper hand over the good. It is not only Barani who picturizes the inhumane in Tughlaq, but also his step-mother. The murder of Najib by her seems as an attempt to end Muhammad’s predilection to violence. The death of the step-mother suggests that in the people have their share in crucifying the human impulses and killing is ironically transformed into a collective ritual. Tughlaq fails to maintain good relationship with the people. The stepmother and Barani have been trying hard to bring back the attraction of human values and the capacity to entertain lofty ideals in Tughlaq, since they plan to make him human again. He keeps wallowing in the evils and violence and feels momentarily the humane and spiritual impulses he was once capable of; does this momentary regret take him back for an ideal King? He could not go for it as his regrets are in sincere. The humane and spiritual feelings have got distorted result in his frustration and they lose their bearings and he simply roam aimlessly. In short, like the fake copper coins which are dumped up as piled in the rose garden all his grandeur feelings are left as disquieting memories.

Tughlaq’s rule disproves the maxim that philosopher King is ideal. Tughlaq is spurred by a feverish pursuit of his ends without caring for the means. This moral ineptitude is his flaw that leads him to his madness. He would punish all who resist and criticize him. A series of murders mar his political maneuvering. His love of the game of chess symbolizes his crafty political game. The degeneration of his Kingdom symbolizes the reduction of his Kingdom into ‘Kitchen of Corpses’ instead of an utopia. Basically Tughlaq is a poet and has the compassion and the comprehensive vision to tolerate human weakness, thus he forgives Aziz, a cheater and this forgiving act is a real Sultan. But in politics, he kills people even his close friends and

relatives mercilessly. The conflict is between the visionary and the ruler and he struggles between them and cannot go to any one side. It is an excellent tragedy that depicts the struggle and failure of a poet who wants to become an absolute ruler. We call him a poet since he has all the qualities a poet should have. He loves chess, a rose garden and enjoys reading Saadi's poem and reads Greek and is aware of Greek in him and constantly talking about the future. This play also suggests how it is difficult for a poet to become a successful king.

To conclude, both Macbeth and Tughlaq find their absolute power tastes bitter because it is accompanied by the curses and hatred of the people. They realize that they have made wrong choice and are aware that there can be no turning back. Macbeth forges forward with grim determination and faces the certainty of death with heroic courage. Tughlaq on the other hand, becomes mad and accepts his failure like a true hero of great virtues. Macbeth has broken the bonds tying him to humanity and Tughlaq has turned his Kingdom into a dump of corpses. Yet both are drawn ambivalently, evoking not only horror but also admiration.

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