



# DESTINY IS CHARACTER AND CHARACTER IS DESTINY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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## *Abstract :*

Since long ago man is caught by the dilemma of the destiny and the character, it means which one is ultimate. But still today it is very complicated to assert that either destiny or character is dominated. Let us study this topic “Destiny is character and character is destiny” with reference to the Greek tragedies and Shakespearean great tragedies. Aristotle and Greek tragedians represented the theory “Destiny is Character” in many of their famous tragedies. It means fate or destiny is responsible for the tragic end of human beings. On the contrary Shakespeare represented the theory of character is destiny. Tragic flaw’ it means the character itself is responsible for its tragedy. Oedipus Rex also is hailed by many critics and scholars as Sophocles’ masterpiece. It particular drew the admiration of Aristotle in the Poetics. It deals with the story of Oedipus in which he rules Thebes with his wife Jocasta. When the city is wasted by a deadly plague, he learns to his horror that he is the murderer of his father Laius and the husband of his mother Jocasta. He blinds his eyes and Jocasta hangs herself. The play indicates the Greek conception of human impotence in the presence of destiny which may hurl a man, for no fault of his own, from heights of prosperity to utter misery. Fulfill the desire of becoming a king he killed king of Scotland. Then to hide his secrets Macbeth killed ‘Banquo’ and planned to kill Macduff but his murders killed Lady Macduff and his son. All the decisions and determinations of Macbeth are because of his over ambitious attitude to become a king of Scotland. His own follies lead his life towards the tragedy. His tragedy is due to his own mistakes. His tragedy is due to the loss of mental morality. The overambitious nature hides his positive thoughts and leads him towards cruelty. It results for his tragic end.

## *Key words:*

Destiny, character, tragedy, tragic flaw Oedipus Rex, curse, misfortune, Laius, Jocasta, Macbeth, over ambition, Duncan, prophecy, three witches.

## *Introduction:*

Since long ago man is caught by the dilemma of the destiny and the character, it means which one is ultimate. But still today it is very complicated to assert that either destiny or character is dominated. Is really the influence of destiny on human life, then destiny means what? Can we define the meaning of destiny? Generally destiny means ‘fate’. It decides the joys and sorrow, successes and failures and life and death of human beings. Whatever the good and bad incidents occur in human life, it is due to the influence of fate.

Then ‘character’ means what? The human being itself. Few people don’t have the belief over destiny or fate. They are confident over their ability, strength, knowledge and determination. Whatever there may be either the success or failure, joy or sorrow is due to their own ability. So they never have the belief that destiny is ultimate.

Let us study this topic “Destiny is character and character is destiny” with reference to the Greek tragedy and Shakespearean great tragedy.

Aristotle and Greek tragedians represented the theory “Destiny is Character” in many of their famous tragedies. It means fate or destiny is responsible for the tragic end of human beings. On the contrary Shakespeare represented the theory of character is destiny. ‘Tragic flaw’, which means the character itself is responsible for its tragedy.

Let us examine whether it is true or not through the tragedies of Greek and Shakespeare. In Greek tragedy, the concept of character the portrayal of those assailed by the blows of Fate – differs specially from modern expectations. Today’s audience expects character exploration development as an essential part of a play or a film. But Aristotle declared that there could be tragedy without character – although not without action.

In the play of Shakespeare also created tragedy that revolved around a heroic character that falls from greatness. But Shakespeare’s heroes appear fully characterized and their own conscious intervention as from Fate.

### **Objectives:**

- To study the Destiny or Fate is dominated in Greek tragedy.
- To know about Shakespeare’s great tragedy.
- To study about the domination of character, the character is dominated in Shakespeare tragedies.
- To make comparison between Greek and Shakespeare’s tragedies with references the title of this project.

### **Scope of study:**

In this paper one Greek and one Shakespeare’s tragedy ie, Sophocles’ Oedipus Rex and Shakespeare’s Macbeth are referred to make understand the reader about this topic.

### **Methodology:**

To prepare this paper secondary data is referred and analytical historical and comparative methods are used.

Oedipus Rex also is hailed by many critics and scholars as Sophocles’ masterpiece. It particular drew the admiration of Aristotle in the Poetics. It deals with the story of Oedipus in which he rules Thebes with his wife Jocasta. When the city is wasted by a deadly plague, he learns to his horror that he is the murderer of his father Laius and the husband of his mother Jocasta. He blinds his eyes and Jocasta hangs herself. The play indicates the Greek conception of human impotence in the presence of destiny which may hurl a man, for no fault of his own, from heights of prosperity to utter misery.

When the play opens, the city of Thebes is wasting away under a plague that leaves its fields and women barren. Oedipus, the King of Thebes, has sent his brother-in-law, Creon, to ask the house of Apollo to ask the oracle how to put an end to the plague. Creon returns, bearing good news: once the killer of the previous king, Laius, is found, Thebes will be cured of the plague (Laius was Jocasta’s husband before she married Oedipus). Hearing this, Oedipus swears he will find the murderer and banish him. He asks Creon some questions: where was Laius murdered? Did anyone see the crime? How many men killed him? Creon answers: Laius was killed outside the city by a group of robbers, and the only witness was a sheered who still lives nearby. Hearing this, Oedipus asks the people of Thebes if any of them know any information about the king’s death. The Chorus (representing the people of Thebes) suggests that Oedipus consult Tiresias, the blind prophet. Oedipus tells them that he has already sent for Tiresias.

When Tiresias arrives, he seems reluctant to answer Oedipus’s questions, warning him that he does not want to know the answers. Oedipus threatens him with death, and finally Tiresias tells him that Oedipus himself is the killer, and that his marriage is a sinful union. Oedipus takes this as an insult and jumps to the conclusion that Creon paid Tiresias to say these things, he also mocks Tiresias, telling him that he is no prophet; a prophet should have been able to answer the Sphinx’s riddle, but Oedipus himself was the only one who could. Tiresias counters that although he has no sight, Oedipus is the one who is blind to the truth. He asks him whose son he is and reminds him of the curse on his parents’ heads. He tells him that he will leave Thebes in shame. Furious, Oedipus dismisses him, and Tiresias goes, repeating, as he does, that

Laius' killer is right here before him – a man who is his father's killer and his mother's husband, a man who came seeing but will leave in blindness.

### ***William Shakespeare's Tragedy Macbeth:***

William Shakespeare was the greatest playwright of the sixteenth century in the history of English literature. He was a genius tragedian that we ever had such a great writer. His creation of new characters is amazing. The themes of his tragedies are forever and eternal. His theory of tragedy is differed from Greek tragedies. He deliberately not followed the theory of Greek tragedies but it was his natural genius that he got this idea in his mind. And it is true that having belief in fate is difficult that is only by the experience of human beings. That experience may not be ultimate. But Shakespeare's theory of 'tragic flaw' is acceptable. Every individual can have that experience. If his heroes were not taken wrong decisions and determinations they could have no sufferings and no tragic end. Their tragedy is surely because of their own follies. Shakespeare proved that there is no influence of fate for all happenings, the character itself is responsible for his tragedies.

The calamities and sufferings which lead to the final disaster in a Shakespeare's tragedy are not merely sent from above, nor do they happen by accident; they chiefly from the actions and character of those concerned. Not character alone, but character chiefly is responsible for suffering and tragedy.

As the full horror of his crime is revealed to him through the reactions of others an awareness of his true status a murderer oversees him. There seems little doubt that here he speaks with perfect sincerity; the words of Malcolm to Macduff late in the play bear testimony to this gracious period. Duncan trusts Macbeth as kinsman, host and soldier. No other character in the play had voiced a similar multiple relationship with the hero. The tragedy lies in Macbeth's desecration of this bond by his murder of Duncan. Macbeth's relationship with Banquo is apparently of a nature of crisis. They are comrades-at-arms but there does not exist any friendship between them. Even this tenuous relationship is destroyed at their very first appearance. The prophecy of witches is the turning point and with that starts the crisis of hero Macbeth. The prophecy of the witches sows the seeds of rivalry between them expressed in a brief exchange.

The murder of Duncan is a deed of horror of which invites crisis of values and the constraint that flows between Macbeth and Banquo has been sharpened. Lady Macbeth is here like Milton's Satan encourages first the angels and then Eve, to aspire for fulfillment beyond the limits of their hierarchical status. The consequence in all cases are identical, valuating ambition overleaps itself and falls on the other. Instead of the promised ascent to a higher link in the chain of being there is an irrevocable descent. A normal man and a woman whipping up their courage to pretend to each other that they are capable of the most gruesome brutality which carry's the inevitable consequence. In spite of Lady Macbeth's crucial role in this scene we must be careful not to exaggerate her influence over her husband. It is important to realize that he never tells her the prophecy of the witches about the children of Banquo. In his letter to her he reports "They met me in the day of success". Lady Macbeth never knows the full reason why her husband is driven to kill Banquo after the first murder has been successfully committed. Macbeth does not want to share the secret with Lady Macbeth. The strain of his lonely guilt brings him to the point of confession.

When the Ghost of Banquo appears at the Banquet scene. He is paralyzed by fear, oblivious of the assembled guests and even Lady Macbeth has no inkling of the new horror that is haunting him. She is her ignorance chides him for the only one that she knows about "This is the very painting of your fear; This is the air-drawn dagger which you said Let you to Duncan".

Lady Macbeth may be deluded enough to speak of the murder as great business, but Macbeth from the first regards it as an act so horrible so contrary to accepted values that even the contemplation of it induces a kind of neurosis, a raptness in which he loses contact with those around himself.

When Macbeth realizes the full significance of Duncan's murder he formerly casts himself for the role of murder in the life of play acting to which he has condemned himself. There is nothing serious in mortality. All is but toys. Like Othello's murder of Desdemona, Macbeth's murder of Duncan is also a kind of suicide, in each case the tragedy of crisis lies as such in the violation of the hero's own nature as it does in the violation of an innocent life. Macbeth has performed the murder of Renown and Grace for his world "as well as for himself". And having killed his true self, he is left with nothing but the counterfeit; he stalks

through Scotland like his own Ghost. Macbeth's alienation from the world of the living finds most dramatic expression in the appearance of Ghost of Banquo, he is condemned in this world but here, as well as in the life to come.

As the play proceeds Macbeth progressively loses touch with the world of reality and puts complete trust in a world of in reality where not even his wife can follow him. The connection between Macbeth and witches is much more ominous and it is established in the opening scene when they accounted their plan to meet Macbeth on the heath. As soon as he and Banquo see them, the latter at once identifies them, as "the instrument of darkness". Their appearance is so completely in conformity with the traditional motion of witches that there is no room for the kind of doubt that plagues Hamlet about the nature of the Ghost. These are unambiguously agents of the devil. Yet because their prophecy that he shall be King. Macbeth accepts them as omniscient divine powers. Ultimately the fate of Macbeth is being realized and the crisis of value in this juncture is explanatory and he cries out.

Macbeth is tired of being the poor player whose only role has turned out to be that of blood-stained murderer. He would himself now like to watch a change of scene from sickness to health from darkness to light. But he himself is the disease blasting his country. But this violation of life has been too absolute for any reconciliation with society to be possible at the end.

In the tragedy Macbeth's follies played a vital role. The over rousing ambition of Macbeth has caused ultimately the downfall of Macbeth. Here we can get a psychological phenomenon of a man. The selfish nature of Macbeth i.e. how to become the King was the only motto behind his deeds.

The soaring pride and power of Lady Macbeth's first speeches return on our memory and the change is felt with a breathless awe. Any attempt even by Shakespeare, to draw out the moral enfolded in this awe, would but weaken it. For the moment too, all the language of poetry seems to be touched with unreality and these brief toneless sentences seem the only voice of truth. Such is the play Macbeth, a play of magnificent moments and patches of incomparable poetry but of incomplete design. It is valuable to compare it with other great tragedies, for in his very lack of finish it shows by contrast the great care which Shakespeare spent on his work. We are sometimes accustomed to regard Shakespeare as a slap-dash and careless artist who achieved his results by sheer genius and the inspiration of the moment.

When he met the three witches he was influenced by their prediction and prophecy. And then he revealed the prophecy of the three witches to his wife Lady Macbeth. His wife instigated him to become a king. And when king, Duncan was the guest of Macbeth's castle Lady Macbeth inspired him to kill king, Duncan.

Fulfill the desire of a king he killed king of Scotland. Then to hide his secrets Macbeth killed 'Banquo' and planned to kill Macduff but his murders killed Lady Macduff and his son. All the decisions and determinations of Macbeth are because of his over ambitious attitude to become a king of Scotland. His own follies lead his life towards the tragedy. His tragedy is due to his own mistakes. His tragedy is due to the loss of mental morality. The overambitious nature hides his positive thoughts and leads him towards cruelty. It results for his tragic end.

### **Findings:**

- 1) The belief on fate or destiny among the Greek people.
- 2) Their Zest to watch tragedies which are based on Destiny is dominated.
- 3) 'Tragic Flaw' in Shakespeare tragedy
- 4) View against the influence of destiny or Fate in Shakespeare tragedy.
- 5) Is it possible to come out of the influence of Destiny in the modern world? Can modern people believe either on Destiny or in their own strength and ability.

**Suggestions:**

1. The influence of destiny or fate is the belief that we believed with the happenings of various incidents but it cannot be proved scientifically.
2. The strong faith and belief on destiny leads us towards the success.
3. The belief of fate or destiny keeps human beings good and sincere.
4. The confidence can overlook the influence of fate and it leads us to great success.
5. Most of the fortunes occur in human life due to the determinations and hard work.
6. Modern man is still in dilemma of what he is to believe either “Destiny” or “Character”

**Conclusion:**

A sincere effort is made of through the Greek and Shakespearean tragedies to know the influence of fate and character in the modern world. To accept either the influence of fate or the influence of character is depended upon his / her own ability.

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