



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Exploring Human Predicament In The Soliloquies Of Hamlet And Macbeth

Prabodha Manas Yarlagadda¹ & Dr. Phani Kiran²

PhD Scholar & Associate Professor

Department of Languages

Sri Sathya Sai University for Human Excellence

Kalaburagi, Karnataka, India.

Abstract

This paper focusses on how Shakespeare's characters in *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*, through their profound soliloquies and monologues, offer eternal insights into the human condition while vividly dramatizing their personal conflicts. Shakespeare elucidates the notion of suffering in these plays, demonstrating that individuals inevitably face the consequences of their actions. While *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* feature distinct characters and topics, many common concepts emerge in their soliloquies. Both protagonists grapple with moral dilemmas that torment them.

In *Hamlet*, the famous soliloquy "To be or not to be" contemplates whether it is nobler to endure life's suffering or to end one's own life. Conversely, in *Macbeth*, the titular character reflects on the futility of human existence in his soliloquy, "Out, out, brief candle!" Macbeth's awareness of the existential suffering tied to his quest for power and the ethical repercussions of his deeds highlights a deep moral conflict. These soliloquies serve as a means for the protagonists to wrestle with serious moral challenges and engage in existential inquiries. They raise profound questions about morality, the purpose of life, and the finality of death. Through these introspective moments, Shakespeare provides eternal insights into the human condition, enriching the narrative and alluring readers and audiences to reflect on their own experiences and the universal struggles of humanity.

Index Terms: dilemma, transience, existence, repercussions, and eternal.

Introduction:

Shakespeare offered humanity pieces of work that have stood the test of time, and continues to explore a wide variety of complex issues. The two tragedies by Shakespeare: *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* have left a huge impact on audiences over the ages. Shakespeare's employment of soliloquies in these plays is especially significant, as they offer insight into the existence of human life. And the lessons that may be learnt from these plays are extremely significant to mankind. They provide insights into such topics as morality, introspection, and the consequences of human acts.

In *Hamlet* as in *Macbeth*, the protagonists undergo a phase of great sorrow, but the cause of that anguish is quite different in each play. King Hamlet, father of Hamlet, was killed, and Hamlet is troubled by restlessness for revenge for his father's murder. His thoughts are sort of moral dilemma cum existential meditation as he navigates the burden of his obligations and the ramifications of his choices. He's caught between doing something and nothing about it there, a constant battle among his own thoughts. On the contrary, Macbeth, a daring general of Scotland is ambitious and greedy on by the prophecy of the witches attempting to achieve the throne.

Macbeth achieves the goal but through treachery and greed and this leaves him to the horrors of intense guilt and anxiety that he cannot escape, which also leads to his death. Shakespeare shows mankind the importance of living with integrity and righteously, when life throws the tempting offers to man. He shows how our life is determined the path of our lives, when walked with integrity and morality. The philosophical torments of Hamlet and the devolution of Macbeth into despotism are cautionary tales about the price exacted by hesitation and absolute ambition. It is Shakespeare's dramas which show that to negotiate the difficulty of life successfully one needs strength, moral courage and awareness. It is because life is filled with unavoidable problems. The analyses of the major themes and key events in Hamlet and Macbeth through the lens of philosophical and ethical considerations that help to guide the fates of the characters.

The explanation of problems that Hamlet and Macbeth on the other hand can be stuck into show that every human being faces challenges at some point of life dilemma, consequences and morality examples, that all the tension leads to destinies of each person. In the end, it demonstrates how Shakespeare masterfully employs these qualities to meditate on the ageless burdens of human existence. William Shakespeare in his monologues and soliloquies reveal some deeper, more inner problems of Hamlet's intellectual contemplations.

In the opening scene of Act 3, Hamlet starts to pour out his dissatisfaction for Ophelia by telling her, "The power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness" (Shakespeare, 1603, Act 3, Scene 1). In addressing Ophelia, this dialogue reveals his hearts discomfort regarding Gertrude's behaviour. In Act 3, Scene 1, Hamlet criticises dishonesty by uttering, "I have heard of your paintings too, well enough." God has bestowed upon you a singular expression, yet you create a secondary for yourselves. These comments highlight his annoyance with Gertrude's treacherous betrayal as well as with Ophelia. Hamlet's following phrase, "I say, we will have no more marriages. "Those that are married already, all but one, shall live" (Shakespeare, 1603, Act 3, Scene 1) conveys his anger on Gertrude and Claudius's marriage.

In Hamlet, his affection for his deceased father is evident, and his struggle to come to peace with Gertrude's behaviour drives his numerous soliloquies. His distress, caused by Gertrude's dishonesty to King Hamlet's legacy, is also evident in his interactions with Ophelia. Through the agony of Hamlet, Shakespeare explores how human selfishness, and emotional ties end up hurting others. Gertrude, his mother, has become a vessel for Hamlet's distress, and in the final act, all that worry subjects her to torment as the play nears its sad resolution. Shakespeare shows through Gertrude's character that people often manifest their own mental agony through their actions. In contrast, Claudius reflects qualities that lead to demoralization and disintegration as a human. His desire for Gertrude and his dream about the throne is interlinked with his hatred for King Hamlet who stands as an obstruction to him to achieve. These impulses set up the play's main conflict.

The treacherous deeds of Claudius are a definite example of the desires filled with unrighteous ambitions. In Act 3, Scene 2, Hamlet stages the play *The Mousetrap* to understand whether Claudius is guilty. Hamlet then ponders in response to Claudius's agitated response, "Let the deer that's been shot go off and weep, while the unharmed deer happily plays. For some must watch while others must sleep; that's how the world goes" (Shakespeare, 1603, Act 3, Scene 2). This moment further proves the ghost of King Hamlet's words are true and Hamlet's desire for revenge is meaningful. For example, Hamlet's famous monologue, "To be, or not to be," (Shakespeare, 1603, Act 3, Scene 1) is a manifestation of his existential crisis in his mind between life and death. Subsequently, with *The Mousetrap*, Hamlet's indecision dissipates, and his mission for revenge becomes clear. Claudius's remorse becomes overwhelming. In Act 3, Scene 3, Claudius laments, "Oh, my offence is rank. It smells to heaven. It hath the primal eldest curse upon 't, A brother's murder. Pray can I not" (Shakespeare, 1603, Act 3, Scene 3). His efforts at repentance are in vain, resulting in a state of sadness engulfed by guilt and devoid of redemption.

Hamlet, witnessing Claudius in prayer, abstains from murdering him, thinking that doing so during Claudius's prayers could secure him a place in heaven, so undermining Hamlet's quest for vengeance. It's so evident that prayers with right attitude of repentance would even wash away the sins of the sinner. Many such subtle messages are in the play through different characters. Shakespeare adeptly conveys significant philosophical insights through Hamlet's contemplation and Polonius's wisdom. Hamlet's soliloquy, "Ah, I wish my dirty flesh could melt away into a vapor, or that God had not made a law against suicide" (Shakespeare, 1603, Act 1, Scene 2), shows the sanctity of life and God's prohibition of suicide. Similarly, Polonius's advice to Laertes in Act 1, Scene 3, provides timeless guidance: "Give thy thoughts no tongue, nor any unproportioned thought his act. "Be familiar, but not vulgar" (Shakespeare, 1603, Act 1, Scene 3). His final advice, "This above all:

to thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man” (Shakespeare, 1603, Act 1, Scene 3), underlines the significance of authenticity and integrity. In Hamlet, Shakespeare contemplates humanity's divine potential and its constraints. Hamlet wonders, “What a perfect invention a human is, how noble in his capacity to reason, how unlimited in thinking... And yet to me, what are we but dust?” (Shakespeare, 1603, Act 2, Scene 2). This phrase encapsulates the contradiction of human excellence and mortality. Shakespeare conveys to his audience that, regardless of humanity's accomplishments, all ultimately revert to dust, after travelling with life at differing levels for a purpose and fulfilment.

A comprehensive investigation into the negative effects of ambition, ethical compromise, and the downward spiral into insanity is explored in Shakespeare's Macbeth. It is a play that explores these factors. The drama centres on Macbeth, a formerly esteemed general whose greed drives him with an ambition for power which makes him to murder, psychopath, and dictator. Macbeth goes from being a revered warrior to becoming a cruel ruler who is enveloped by remorse and insecurity. This transformation is driven by the mysterious prophecies of the witches as well as the forced persuasion of his wife, called Lady Macbeth. This change acts as a potent statement on how unrestrained ambition and external pressures may corrupt even the most ethical persons. From the beginning, Macbeth grapples with his conscience. In Act 1, Scene 3, upon hearing the witches' prophecy that he will become king, he confesses, “Even though it's just a fantasy so far, the mere thought of committing murder shakes me up so much that I hardly know who I am anymore” (Macbeth, 1.3.138–140). These statements disclose his ethical personality and inner turmoil, demonstrating how ambition starts to take over his decisions. Nonetheless, his determination to pursue his ambitions intensifies as the play unfolds. In Act 1, Scene 4, he states, “Stars, hide your light so no one can see the terrible desires within me. I won't let my eye look at what my hand is doing, but in the end, I'm still going to do that thing I'd be horrified to see” (Macbeth, 1.4.50–51). This critical part in the play signifies Macbeth's willing choice to put his personal desire and greed over his moral principles.

Lady Macbeth plays crucial role in Macbeth's path of ethical decline. Her relentless desire and cruelty drive Macbeth to commit murder. She challenges his bravery and valour, imploring him to take decisive action to realise the witches' prophecy. Macbeth exhibits early reluctance in Act 1, Scene 7, contemplating the repercussions of his deeds: “But for crimes like these there are still punishments in this world. By committing violent crimes, we only teach other people to commit violence, and the violence of our students will come back to plague us teachers” (Macbeth, 1.7.8–10). But still even after uttering those lines he is highly motivated by his ambition and Lady Macbeth's words, he ultimately makes the decision to kill King Duncan, despite the fact that he is aware of the repetitive nature of violent acts.

As a result of Duncan's murder, there is a marked increase in both violent acts and feelings of regret. Macbeth's guilt increases over time, and he becomes increasingly concerned that other people may take his throne in the same way the way he overthrew Duncan's government. His delusion instigates him to keep going with other killings, including that of Banquo, whose progeny the witches foretold would ascend to the throne. In Act 3, Scene 4, Macbeth recognises the extent of his moral degradation: “I am in blood / Stepped in so far that, should I wade no more, / Returning were as tedious as go o'er” (Macbeth, 3.4.135–137). As Macbeth realises that he has crossed an insurmountable threshold, this realisation sheds light on the cyclical relationship that exists between remorse and ambition.

Following the progression of the narrative, the character of Lady Macbeth, who was the driving force behind Macbeth's rise to prominence, ultimately gives in to feelings of humiliation and insanity. Her decline is vividly depicted in Act 5, Scene 1, where she compulsively cleanses her hands, exclaiming, “Out, damned spot! Out, I say!” (Macbeth, 5.1.37). Her inability to get rid herself of the symbolic bloodstains is a representation of her tremendous regret and the ensuing emotional breakdown that occurs as a result of it. Macbeth's reaction to her demise in Act 5, Scene 5, is characterised by disappointment and philosophical despair: “She should have died hereafter. There would have been a time for such a word. / Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow, / Creeps in this petty pace from day to day” (Macbeth, 5.5.17–20). These phrases illustrate his increasing recognition of life's futility and the inherent emptiness of his aspirations.

Macbeth's demise is determined by his arrogance and excessive belief in the witches' predictions. He adheres to their guarantee that “no man born of a woman” may inflict harm upon him, perceiving himself as invulnerable. His arrogance obscures his perception of the prophecy, resulting in his downfall at the hands of Macduff, who was delivered through Caesarean section and hence not "born of a woman" in the traditional sense. This twist brings to life that prophecy and emphasises the concept of ambiguity that permeates the drama. Shakespeare employs Macbeth's journey to examine significant moral and existential enquiries.

Macbeth's journey from a valiant hero to a dictator illustrates how unrestrained ambition may undermine ethics and humanity. His contemplation in Act 5, Scene 5, in which he laments the transitory nature of existence and the inevitability of death, stands in well focused contrast to the goals he had previously set for himself. At its conclusion, the play serves as a cautionary tale about the fruits of excessive ambition and the ethical compromises that are required.

There is a soliloquy delivered by the protagonist in Act 1, Scene 7 of Macbeth. "I have no spur / To prick the sides of my intent, but only / Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself" (Macbeth, 1.7.25–27) articulates his self-awareness on the impulsion behind his actions. Despite this comprehension, he permits ambition overtake his ethical ideas, illustrating the complex relationship between self-awareness and morality. This stands in clearcut contrast to Hamlet, who is immobilised by excessive contemplation, as illustrated in "And thus the native hue of resolution / Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought" (Hamlet, 3.1.84–85). Both characters ultimately endure suffering due to their inability to reconcile their inward observations with decisive and ethical action. The function of associated characters, such as Lady Macbeth and Polonius, enhances these plays. Lady Macbeth's greed and desire serves as an ignition for Macbeth's decline, her exploitation of his thoughts compelling him to perform atrocious deeds. Nonetheless, her subsequent breakdown exemplifies the burden that shame imposes, even on individuals who initially seem resolute.

Conversely, Polonius functions as a rational voice in Hamlet, imparting enduring counsel, exemplified by the maxim, "This above all: to thine own self be true" (Hamlet, 1.3.78). His interference and absence of self-awareness ultimately result in his downfall, illustrating that wisdom must be moderated by humility and restraint. Moreover, both plays emphasise the repercussions of leadership and the burden of responsibility. Macbeth's despotism engenders turmoil and anguish in Scotland, illustrating the detrimental effects of a leader motivated by egocentric desire. On the other hand, Hamlet's lack of resolve allows corruption to flourish in Denmark, demonstrating how the lack of strong leadership can have just as terrible results. These portrayals highlight the importance of maintaining balance in governance, wherein ambition must be guided by moral principles and decisiveness must align with equity. Shakespeare emphasises the limitations of human agency and the inevitable nature of fate in both plays. The witches' mysterious forecasts in Macbeth and the ghost's revelations in Hamlet lay the groundwork for the protagonists' journeys, yet both characters make choices that ultimately lead to their deaths. Viewers are prompted to consider the extent to which people control their own destiny rather than having it dictated to them by external factors by this interplay between fate and free will.

Shakespeare's Hamlet and Macbeth offer profound insights into ethics, morality, and the consequences of unchecked ambition and indecision. Shakespeare uses the tragic stories of Macbeth and Hamlet to highlight the devastating power of unbridled ambition and the necessity of moral reflection. Macbeth's transformation from a good general to a ruthless dictator serves as a reminder of how ambition may completely consume a person when it is fuelled by unrelated forces like Lady Macbeth and the witches. His failure to align his acts with his conscience provoke a cycle of violence and misery culminating in his demise. Likewise, Hamlet's internal struggle and philosophical contemplation highlight the perils of excessive rumination and inaction, since his indecision postpones justice and results in collateral consequences. Both pieces examine existential enquiries that resound over generations.

Macbeth's contemplations on the meaninglessness of existence, exemplified in "Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow" (Macbeth, 5.5.17–20), resonate with Hamlet's renowned soliloquy, "To be, or not to be" (Hamlet, 3.1.56). Macbeth acknowledges his mortality with disillusionment, whereas Hamlet contends with the apprehension of the unknown that follows death. These reflections invite viewers to reflect on the transient nature of life and the need of making morally and purposefully driven decisions. Thus, Shakespeare illustrates the internal conflicts of his protagonists, demonstrating that self-reflection, when lacking clear action or moral clarity, can result in despair. Ultimately, both Macbeth and Hamlet function as lessons regarding the dangers of indecision, and unethical ambitions. Shakespeare imparts lasting lessons on the significance of ethical decision-making, the results of human greed, and the necessity of understanding one's position within the broader context of existence through the tragic destinies of Macbeth and Hamlet.

References:

1. Bradley, A.C. *Shakespearean Tragedy: Lectures on Hamlet, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth*. Macmillan, 1904.
2. Farzana Nasrin et al ,“William Shakespeare: Soliloquies and Asides in Hamlet” *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)* Volume 4, (10), October 2016, PP 82-92.
3. Larry S. Champion, "By Indirections find Directions: The soliloquies in Hamlet”,*The Journal of General Education* Penn State University Press Vol. 27, (4),1976), pp. 265-280
4. Shakespeare, William. *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. The Complete Pelican Shakespeare, edited by Stephen Orgel and A.R. Braunmuller, Penguin Books, 2002, pp. 1307-1404.
5. Shakespeare, William. *The Tragedy of Macbeth*. The Complete Pelican Shakespeare, edited by Stephen Orgel and A.R. Braunmuller, Penguin Books, 2002, pp. 1425–1450.

