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Macbeth as a Tragic Hero - Butcher as a Hero - A Hero Villain

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William Shakespeare is the brightest star in the galaxy of English Dramatists. His tragedies mark a progressive revolution in the traditional concept of tragedy. He has made a bold experiment of making a hero out of villain and a villain out of a hero. This is his distinct originality that is to the contrast of the classical view of tragedy. However, Shakespeare's dramatic art successfully excites the true tragic emotion of Pity and Terror for the tragic ruin of Hero.

Macbeth is a peculiar Tragic Hero of Shakespeare. He is a criminal who commits a series of murders during the course of action of the play. He is a traitor who traitorously murders his chief guests and patron, under the very roof of his own castle. He brutally kills Banquo. He mercilessly butchers Lady Macduff and her child. He is a man who can be called a heartless butcher, but, in spite of all these inhuman and criminal deeds, Shakespeare makes him a tragic hero for whom we feel pity at his tragic end.

It is important to note that Shakespearean Tragedy is a tragedy of character. The hero becomes a tragic figure for he has some weakness in his character that becomes fatal. From this loophole many evils and misfortunes spring that bring destruction to both the innocent and guilty characters. This is Shakespeare's Tragic Concept of life. Hamlet is an idealist and lives in the world of thoughts and reflection. But the real world is full of evils that require sharp and immediate opposition. Hamlet lacks this quality that works as his tragic flaw. Similarly, Othello is a valiant Moor who is a misfit in the hypocritical society. His overcredulity is his tragic flaw. If Hamlet does not act quickly, Othello acts too quickly. In the same way King Lear's tragic flaw is his error of judgement.

The same is the case with Macbeth. His tragic flaw is his high ambition. At first, Macbeth is a valiant warrior,

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Loyal to the King and Bellona's bridge groom. He is the strongest pillar of the Scotland. He is a trusted noble and a worthy cousin of King Duncan. Macduwald reports about his valour in the battle field: -

"For brave Macbeth, well he deserves that name
Disdaining fortune, with his brandish'd steel
Which smok'd with bloody execution."

But what he does in the play is quite different. His good qualities are sacrificed at the altar of his royal ambition. He commits murders for he is inordinately passionate and selfishly ambitious. But, he intensely feels that his deeds are inhuman. There occurs a conflict between the higher and lower nature of his character. Finally, his evil nature overpowers him. His sacrifice of his good nature at the altar of ambition makes him a tragic hero. See how he feels: -

"Will all great Neptune's oceans wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine

Making the green one red." M.A. HAQUE

Further more, Macbeth is influenced by the Witches and Lady Macbeth. The fulfilment of the two of the prophecies instigates him to desire for the third. Even then, he is not ready to adopt false means. But when his wife calls him coward and challenges his love for her, Macbeth's good nature subsides. His real nature is revealed by Lady Macbeth:

"It is too full of the milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way."

Macbeth feels shuddering fear at the sight of Banquo's ghost. He also suffers from the moral fear at the murder of Lady Macduff and her child. That is why when Macduff appears in the battle field, he surrenders before him. So, we can say that his villainy is

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humanised which shows that he is a man and not a monster. He is really a hero and not a villain.

In short, Macbeth is a tragic hero. He is not Richard III. He is not Iago. He is himself. He is a real man who has ~~too~~ human ambition. The external forces exploit his weakness and lead him to a level of a criminal. But, he remains a hero for he realises his mistakes and welcomes his end at the hands of Macduff.

M.A. HAQUE