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Character Sketch of Macbeth

With exception to that of Hamlet, the character of Macbeth is the most complex one that Shakespeare has ever portrayed. It is complex in the sense that Macbeth's motives can not be clearly analysed and labelled . Macbeth is one of the most perfect and most complex hero of Shakespeare. In him we find the most pathetic example of great man of power, nobility, strength and courage ruined through the existence of a trifling inherent weakness brought into contact with the special hostile circumstances calculated to defeat him. Writing with a steel pen and sore heart Shakespeare seems to prove through the character of Macbeth that it is possible that such a noble person as Macbeth may "end as a traitor, as a murderer, as a bas habitual deceiver, as a monster of unhesitating cruelty, as a despairing disbeliever in all goodness, as the veritable fiend of Scotland whom with righteous reason all men hate.

A Heroic Character : - Macbeth is a man of indefatigable courage and formidable valour. He is brave beyond brave man's standard and courageous beyond the ordinary bounds of courage. He is the yielding hero of fierce bloody wars and adventures. His sword spits fire on the battle field. Describing Macbeth's feats in the war the captain says to Duncan :

"Brave Macbeth

Disdaining fortune, with his brandished steel

Which smoke with bloody execution,

Like Valour's minion, carved out his passage."

This shows that he is a great general of the king's army.

His ambition :- A very important feature of Macbeth's character is his inordinate ambition. He is by temper too ambitious and his ambition gradually develops into a passion. In prophesying that Macbeth would be the king of Scotland, the weird sisters rightly touched the weakest point

in Macbeth's heart and it begins to take a definite shape when lady Macbeth studies his wavering purpose by the valour of her tongue. Macbeth himself confesses :-

*“I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself,
And falls on the other.”*

Yet his ambition might not have been strong enough by itself to tempt him to crime, it is his weakness of will which is more responsible for his crime.

Weak Will :- Yet in spite of this vaulting ambition, Macbeth is weak of will . He lacks determination at least in the early part of the drama. He aspires for the crown of Scotland but wavers in determination. The very thought of murder unnerves him and unfixes his hair and makes his seated heart knock against his ribs. He decides to knock out Duncan in order to capture his throne but just in the scene he comes out with the decision.

“we will proceed no further in this business.”

It is owing to this weakness that Macbeth falls an easy prey to prophecies of the witches and to the criminal incitement of his wife.

Superstitious : Yet another weakness in Macbeth is that he is superstitious. He accepts the prophecies of the witches as truth. He is a bit skeptical about them but when two of their prophecies are fulfilled he begins to pin his faith in them. Therefore, he visits the deserted land to get advice about his future course of action.

His Tyranny : Macbeth fulfils his ambition by murdering his king, and then to secure his throne he commits further murders – first Banquo then Macduff's wife and children. Naturally he begins to rule as a tyrant, and alienates his courtiers and subjects.

A Man of Conscience : The most redeeming features of Macbeth's character is his glowing imagination and lively conscience. Although he murders the king, slaughters Macduff's wife and children, butchers Banquo, yet the forces of moral and spiritual life do not wholly die in him. “Murder was done as if it were an appealing duty and the instant it is finished its futility is revealed to Macbeth as clearly as its vileness had been revealed before.” He suffers terribly after the murder of Duncan. He strives from crime to crime though his soul never ceases to bar his advance with strokes of terror or to clamour in his ears that he is murdering his peace and casting away his ‘eternal jewels’ so when the murder is done, Macbeth goes mad with horror. He hars fearful cries in air – *“Sleep no more! Glamis hath murdered sleep and, therefore, Cowdor shall sleep no more. Macbeth shall sleep no more.”*

Thus, we can say that the forces of moral and spiritual life do not wholly die in him. After killing Duncan, Macbeth tells his wife, "Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my head? This shows that moral is still alive in him.

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