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Greater Evil - Macbeth or Lady Macbeth

Macbeth is one of the greatest tragedy play by William Shakespeare which sheds light on the lustrous power ambition of Macbeth and his wife lady Macbeth. The desire of winning the rule was not for the sake of the general public, in order to ensure their peace and prosperity, however, it was for the personal gains of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, as they wanted to hold all the political powers in their hands. One of the most important prompts about the play is to explore who was the greater evil among the husband and wife. Both the husband and the wife committed some crimes, which shed light on their evil nature. However, their actions were supported by each other and it is quite important to analyze who was the greater evil among the two. Lady Macbeth may have been the greater evil in the play, as she played the primary role in making her husband a killer, by influencing and supporting his actions, for the sake of winning the rule, though he was reluctant to do so on his own.

Lady Macbeth is greater evil as she prayed to spirits to bestow her with the courage of killing King Duncan. Macbeth was told the prophecies by three witches that he would become the ‘Thane of Cawdor’ and the ‘Thane of Glamis,’ he became confused about that and was not sure how he could reach that point. However, after becoming Thane of Cawdor, he became ensured of the truth of the prophecy and told his wife about that. This is one of the points which depicts Lady Macbeth as the greater evil character. Macbeth had prayed to the spirits to close the darkness in his heart when he got the idea of killing Duncan (Shakespeare, 25). He did not want to kill him, but wait how the prophecy became true. On the other hand, greater evil lady Macbeths prayed to the spirits to provide her with the courage of killing the king on her own, if her husband becomes weak at the moment. Moreover, she thought about the ways that she could use to convince her husband, as well as influence his actions of killing the king and becoming the ruler of the land (Sinha, 20). William Shakespeare has described her thoughts in the following words,

“And that which rather thou dost fear to do,

Than wishest should be undone. Hie thee hither,

That I may pour my spirits in thine ear

And chastise with the valor of my tongue

All that impedes thee from the golden round,

Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem

To have thee crowned withal (*Macbeth* I.v.27-33)”

Lady Macbeth is the greater evil in the play, as she supports the actions of her husband and tells him not to worry, after killing King Duncan. She plays an important role in convincing her husband to win the ruler by killing the king, instead of waiting for his time and things to unfold on their own. She gives him the idea of inviting the king to his place and then kill him during the sleep while putting the blame on his guards. When Macbeth, finally acts according to the plan and kill the king, he suddenly becomes terrified of his action and repents it. Lady Macbeth emerges as greater evil at the time and supports the actions of her husband by telling him that he should not think deeply about it and just prepare for the coming time, as he needs to take the rule in his hands. He becomes worried over the fact that the heavenly spirits did not support his actions, as he was not able to say amen when he was making the final prayer and she responds to him that he should not think about it so deeply and focus on the upcoming events (Schoenbaum, 50). The playwright has explained the scene in the following manner,

“Consider it not so deeply.

MACBETH But wherefore could not I pronounce “Amen”?

I had most need of blessing, and “Amen”

Stuck in my throat.

LADY MACBETH These deeds must not be thought

After these ways; so, it will make us mad (*Macbeth* II.ii.41-46)”

Lady Macbeth is the greater evil as she gets angry over her husband because he feels worried and regretful after killing King Duncan. Lady Macbeth played an important role in influencing the actions of her husband. He was not ready to kill the king, but she wanted him to do so and emotionally blackmailed him to do so. She is the one who corrupted her husband, instead of stopping him from going on the path of evilness. She actually led him to that path, when he was hesitant of walking on that. She not only made him kill the king, however, also supported his action and future ventures, after the king had died. Just after killing the king, Macbeth becomes fearful of his action. Lady Macbeth did not lose a chance of supporting his actions, as well as stopping him from becoming weak, so she gets angry on him for thinking too much (Mowat, and Werstine, 85). She tells him that the king has already died and he is no more than a picture and there is no one who would blame him for that she says to him,

“Infirm of purpose!

Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead

Are but as pictures. ’Tis the eye of childhood

That fears a painted devil. If he does bleed,

I’ll gild the faces of the grooms withal,

For it must seem their guilt (*Macbeth* II.ii.68-73)”

She was the driving force for her husband to walk on the path of evil and did not show any remorse, till he got absorbed in his spree of killing others, in order to secure his rule. At the end of the play, she did become hysterical and committed suicide, because of her guilt of leading her husband on the path of evilness. On the other hand, Macbeth, who was initially reluctant to walk on that path, became even more absorbed in the world of killing and killed every other person who posed any threat to his rule or life. He did not even leave the kids alive, due to his fear that they would become young and take revenge from him. Still, Lady Macbeth was greater evil because she forced him to become a killer, while he killed all the other people in order to secure himself (Islam, 190).

The debate of the comparisons of the evilness of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth is greatly important because of the fact that the actions of each other brought the doom of Macbeth and his wife. Lady Macbeth was greater veil than her husband because of the fact that she actually forced him to commit the wrongful actions against his will. Even after committing the crimes, he was worried and fearful. However, she supported his actions and motivated him to stay focused on becoming the king. When he finally indulged in the spree of killing others, in order to secure his life and rule, she finally realized her mistake and committed suicide due to her guilt.

Works Cited

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