

## Here is Devil's Plenty Macbeth and Midnight Party: A Study of the Adaptation in Kannada

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### Abstract

This paper makes a probe into "Adaptation Studies" which continues to grow as a field of literary interest with marked strides. That adaptation is loaded with parallel or equivalent terms like 'Stage Version', 'Transformational Studies' or 'Theatre Version' amply justifies its wide currency in the field of re-formation of a text. Adaptations are commonly of two types – Faithful and Transformative. The present paper sticks to the second category to show that a good adaptation is not a semblance of its source but a reassertion of the scholarship it beholds for readers of the new generation. The play understudy reflects the influence of the current culture in which it is created. As increasingly important part contemporary culture, adaptation studies promise to shift from the margins to the centre of contemporary literary studies. The study corpus therefore is limited to "Midnight party" by Naresh Keerthi.

**Key words:** *Adaptation, evil, play*

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"O my land! Look not into the eyes of the rich alone They will  
hypnotize you senseless  
And charm you into looking away from/ignoring the poor O' my  
land, stupor isn't life  
You won't flourish in this mirage of a market place, Run,  
escape from the madhouse,  
Out here is air and light – And  
I, Tukra too, am here"

"Kelenna Deshave", Tukrana Kanasu (play)1991

(Translated from Kannada by Naresh Keerthi)

"A story is new every-time it is told" – this famous adage suggests much pertinently that every story holds possibility for retelling. This self-explanatory adage also points to the fact that retelling of a story not only renews its content but quite possibly makes it culturally - charged. This idea is well-justified by T. S. Eliot who states that "culture is all – in all the incarnation of the religion of the people and therefore the effect of "newness" is equally weighty and illuminating. The second question that nags disturbingly is "why a classic is renewed"? Is it for establishing regional faith? If so, 'retelling is as sacred, an art as is 'creating'. A serious and committed writer would consider 'fiddling' with a classic, as unpardonable as 'blasphemy'. This belief justifies the laudable endeavor of rewriting 'Macbeth' – as 'Midnight play' (An Adaptation).

The play under study is adapted by Naresh Keerthi – Assistant Professor in the School of Linguistics and Literary Studies at the Chinmaya University Kochi. As an avid scholar of literary histories of Sanskrit, Prakrit, Kannada, Tamil and Telegu, also holds a Master's Degree in Biochemistry from Bangalore University. The adapted version is further penned by H.S. Shiva Prakash as further translation of it. The intention of this adaptation is to make the

'evil' more pronounced in destruction and sinful intents and the emotions of Macbeth and his wife more eloquent in their sway from "shame" to "guilt". The transgression of the story makes it feasible to uncover what lay 'invisible' between the lines of moral exploitation and that the witches can never embody 'optimism' for any hero or the like.

The Kannada translation is racy and full of surprises with as many as two changes from the original one by Shakespeare. The play is not only a readable stuff but also memorable. Beginning with ritualistic perambulations and incantations – "Double, Double, toil and trouble/fire burn and cauldron bubble, the play puts the uncanny airy figures at work to set the evil play of full game trap.

The charm is engineered to be "firm and good" as one reads in the Shakespearean version "All: Double, double, toil and trouble;

Fire burn and cauldron bubble. (*Indian Literature*, 162)"

The Queen -Witch directs her subordinates to delve with all agility for "Great Business must be wrought ere morn". This sets the mood and the tempo of the play –

"All: show us show us the hapless couple Who  
are preys to our endless trouble  
Till we make this stage a disturbed lake And make  
their world burst like a bubble. "

(*Indian Literature*, 283 (162-163))

Hecate singles out the couples who are over-ambitious and are ready with any price to pay for their catch. The easy prey-couple is detailed as –

"We will give them the name of Macbeths The  
parents of destruction and deaths Look! She is  
impregnated  
The birth of the child death, is awaited."

Ugly hell opens out to gape at Lady Macbeth and Macbeth to change them into "brutish beasts" for "hellish fall". Macbeth is a regicide; he brings in tumult and disorder within by the provocation first of the witches and later by the instigation of his wife. Intoxicated by the vision of the crown, he walks easily on the path of black and despicable desires. To this, Macbeth consciously and progressively degrades his nobility by embracing along-with his wife what they collectively know to be evil. With the valor of her tongue, lady Macbeth writhing in labor pain goads her husband to put the night's business to a quick perfection –

"Do you remember the words of witches? Unless your king kinsman  
is killed

You will not be crowned. Neither will my world – conquering

Baby be born? O pain! Have you no pity for your wife And  
unborn self your own child? And greater pity  
For what half dead man? (165)

And

Lady Macbeth: stand up and listen No one  
will know in this story night  
When you cannot hear your own footsteps

Go and release with a dagger the king's soul from his body

Sleeping as if dead.... (165)''

When Macbeth is lost in the labyrinth of doubt, she goads him into the world of darkness by saying – “Take courage / From roaring thunders / Follow the faith blazed forth / By the lighting dagger (165). Simultaneously her son is struggling to be born yet she manages to guide Macbeth in between “spasms of stabbing ache”. In her distress she is physically supported by the witches who not only play midwives to Lady Macbeth but also narrate the dark dead Macbeth to act out-

“Witches: Birth is death and death is birth They  
are both the cause of our mirth

Witch 1 : Macbeth has now reached the stair case leading  
To the king chamber.

The act of black dead is described with elaborate details as word-  
picture.

Witch 3: Ten. Lift up your dagger

O brave one.  
Don't think. Just stab  
Good. Deeper.

Twist. Deeper still. Let the other hand stop his Dying  
month from screaming aloud (167)''

Hand in hand Macbeth's baby boy is born who the witches pacify in equally an awe – inspiring way –

“Witch 3 – Don't cry, O baby of death your father.

Will soon wash your infant body with the aged blood (167)''

Macbeth's heart shudders at the strange connection between taking of life and giving life. When Macbeth holds the baby offered by the witches, his face becomes contorted by the mangled shape he looks at. The baby is Macbeth's look alike - “have nostrils, but no breathing chest. But no heartbeat. Has wrist/ But no pulse (167). As a nightmare, he questions the birth image as “Death or life”. Lady Macbeth horrified at the sight of the baby stands frozen but is led to participate in the mock coronation rite:

“Macbeth: O you gave given me this crown of thorns! Lady

Macbeth: And me, this throne of a grave?

Macbeth: How I wish I could go back!

That the fruit of action was not dependent On  
action but on our wish. (169)''

The pangs of guilt surface with equal immediacy in Lady Macbeth who as a mother of a dead prince is hapless and hopeless. She cries out her loss and despair with equal poignancy as does her spouse – “How shall I go on playing the queen/ with the prince dead? I am cheated/ How could I reap life after sowing death?” moving further on the path of evil is Macbeth's desperate choice for he realizes that “I have waded/ so far in blood that going back would be/ Astedious as going on. So, let's go on” (169). Faustian in nature, Macbeth needs to augment his crimes steadily to prolong himself in power. His conversations with wife, witches and himself makes him dreadfully interesting and grants him ‘intense inwardness’. In addition, his greatest horror is his brooding conviction which makes his murderously villain but the same makes lady Macbeth ‘murderously inhuman’. This makes Henry David Thoreau so pertinent in his remark

– “Men are probably nearer to the essential truth in their superstitions than in their science”.

The play, as a treatise in philosophy, is darkness as aftermath of lust for power. By depicting negative human living, it emphasizes the essential humanity inclusive of peace, love and unity.

By killing Duncan, Macbeth kills the gentle inherent instinct of humanity. L. C. Knight speaks profoundly as – “killing may be common in wild nature, but it not natural to man as man; it is a violation of his essential humanity.”

(*Some Shakespearean Themes*, 1959) The evil deliberately willed and persisted in causes inner disintegration of both Macbeth and his pale – criminal partner (Nietzsche's terminology) and leads them to self-ruin through suicide. The suspension of intellectual activity and moral alarms blind them to the extent of easy enslaving to the witches- the dark agents engineering only darkness in the inner and the outer worlds.

Consequently, the chaotic disorder deprives both of their profound feelings and turns Macbeth as ugly picture of a deadly butcher and his wife as a fiend-like queen. Lady Macbeth is an emotive woman who is expectedly and eagerly waiting for her child to be born to adorn her with motherhood. Her endearing words in the grip of sharp pain reflects her 'sweetness' within

– 'Don't roll about so fast, my unborn son. Don't/ prick my nerves ... / ... Don't end my life before / I taste the sweet fruit of all this suffering'. Once Duncan is murdered, she hallucinates damnation in the form of the ghost of dead king seated in her place and cries hysterically –

“What do I see? Is it the dead king Or my  
dead baby? It is now one  
And now another. Away you illusion. (171-172)”

Haunted by “misshapen and buried crowns, she loses her sanity completely whereby lets out all hidden hideous acts to the suspicious officers. Yet the moral – mutiny is not pacified. With destruction and merciless blood spread everywhere, Macbeth begins to perform martial dance and the witches wildly scream about and encourage him for ugly fierceness –

“Hecate: Don't stop the fight: what happened

Against you? Don't stop the fight. What happened To cities  
that opposed you?  
They are drowned in blood

No man born of a woman can touch you

Which means no-one. Quell this green foe Macbeth Cut down the  
fierce animals pull down the proud trees That put up resistance  
(176)”

The external “hurly-burly” is fiercely internalized generating “a murky hell”. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth victimized by their repressed conscience surrender to divine retribution. Under the strain of ultimate endurance, she walks about with a lighted candle and finally kills herself by self-immolation. In imitation of his wife, Macbeth under the rush of unregulated impulse inserts his dagger within his vitals and sets another example of personal condemnation of the horrid deed. If ambition is Macbeth's fatal fear; damnation is Lady Macbeth's. In discharging their dark deeds they collaborate with devilish hags by trodding collectively on the path of self- destruction.

“*Midnight Party*” is a picture of sinning consciously and willingly. In this process Lady Macbeth consciously unsexes herself and Macbeth over-does his ambition and determination consequently the noose of their ugly deeds as multiplied villainies, growing callousness and over-louder maledictions lead them to hellish death. Collectively they leave their moral world with blind confidence in the malevolent hags to meet their fatal doom. Agonized by their blood- stained hands, they realize that their guilt is enormous and its mark is indelible on their soul. Scared of this profound sense of sorrow, they kill themselves as inescapable prey to hell-hound melancholy. Darkness appals Lady Macbeth which she herself invokes and Macbeth struggles to free himself of the blood-stained dagger that dug a dreadful life. It proves right the Emersonian adage. “Crime and punishment stem from the same root”. The close of the play reads as –

“A look of consternation on Macbeth's face. He begins to struggle with his dagger. The witches' dance works up to a crescendo.

Meanwhile Lady Macbeth begins to struggle with the candle trying to blow it out. The two actions are synchronized along with the witches' dance movements, till Macbeth given in and stabs himself.

And Lady Macbeth unable to put out the flame, "becomes the flame." (177)"

The play presents the barter-kind relation of Macbeth to the witches. In the Shakespearean version, the witches totally leave her out of their devil-doings so much so that not even once accost her on any blasted heath. Here the change is interesting and Lady Macbeth is colored with infernal quintessence for the witches apply death-force as midwives in helping her to deliver a still-born-deformed child. This establishes Lady Macbeth's intimate contact with the dark underworld initiating her into the phase of self-torture. "How shall I go on playing the queen/ with the prince dead? I am cheated. How could I reap life after sowing death?" (169). she questions her husband's callous and indifferent attitude with much wonder and little scorn

"You make me strange even to the disposition that I owe, When now  
I think you can behold such sights,  
And keep the natural ruby of your cheeks, When  
mine are blenched with fear. (172)"

Appalled by the horror of death-first as her son's corpse, then of Duncan, she hallucinates and unknowingly declares in open what was secret. As a 'pale criminal' to use Nietzsche's term for a criminal heart loaded with the burden of remorse, she cries out –

"A good – night to all! Good night to king!

And to queen. And to the killed. And to the dagger. And to the  
throne. And to the crown. (172)"

As characters, Macbeth is "tyranny incarnate, Lady Macbeth 'crime incarnate' and the witches are 'disaster-creators'. Macbeth suffers as divided soul whereas Lady Macbeth is gnawed by 'dividedness' to such an extent that she loses her sanity in her attempt to escape moral catastrophe. To Macbeth bloody thoughts are the seeds of bloody deeds continuously but to Lady Macbeth once is enough to lose all rather than have a long harvest as Macbeth does. This tragic distinctiveness justifies the aptness of the title for both are criminals hence 'Macbeth or The Macbeths' would not have justified the essence of the play. Evaluating the original work Harold C. Goddard in his essay 'Macbeth' writes –

"What that something is, the difference between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, makes plain, for the husband, not the wife, is the truly tragic figure, and the play is rightly entitled Macbeth and not The Macbeths". Some Shakespearean Themes, (105) It is the crime and its tumult agony – 'Internal tumult' that properly defines the adaptation entitled as **Midnight play**.

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