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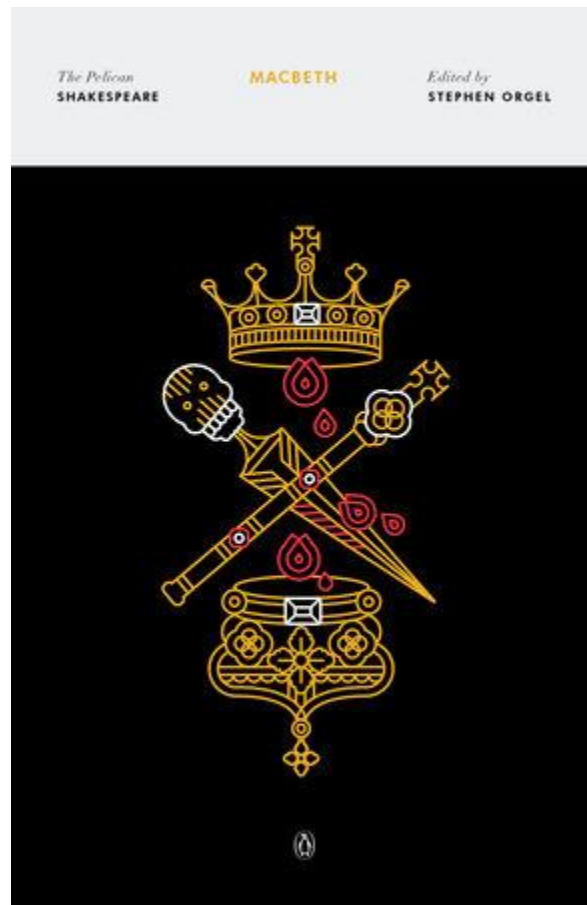
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**“I am not what I am” –  
A Psycho-analysis of Negative Characters  
Lady Macbeth, Iago and Regina (*Little Foxes*)**

**Sathyapriya. S., M.A., B.Ed., M.Phil.**

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Courtesy: <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/319041/macbeth-by-william-shakespeare/9780143128564/>

**Abstract**

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Love is the basic ingredient that the creator has used in making human beings. It does exist in everybody counting the people who are believed to be cruel, merciless and inhumane. People sometimes behave in an unusual way because they are influenced by their id. The unconscious desires motivate people to behave in such a way, says the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. Literature depicts so many negative characters, for example Lady Macbeth, Regina, Iago and many more. These characterizations, if analyzed from a different perspective, i.e., having Freud in mind and applying Subjective reader response theory- it would be palpable that they all possess the tinge of humanity and love within them. This paper aims at exploring that tinge and to expose how some human beings themselves are unaware of it. Literature is said to be the mirror of the society. True it is. With the help of the literary examples, the paper tries to create awareness among all the human beings that we all possess humanity and love; because in this modernized and materialistic world, we fail to remember what we are made of. We must also tag along “Ubuntu” - the African philosophy, which means the quality of being human. Today, a million-dollar question that arises in everybody is “Are humans really humane?” This paper attempts to answer the question.

## **Introduction**

Materialism has strongly placed its root in the modernized society. People’s crave for money and materials has diminished the quality of human beings itself. Weeds like greed, jealousy and ambition has started creeping into the garden of humanity. Slowly they started destroying all the inherent positive characters of human beings and strongly placed its roots in us. Unknowingly we are losing ourselves, our human tendency and our human nature. Before it’s too late, before the Garden of Eden is completely destroyed, the weeds have to be removed. It is not very difficult. Because this negative characters in man are not innate. As Freud mentioned, we are all controlled by the three elements of personality structure: id, ego and super ego.

Austrian physician Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) was the founder of the Psychoanalytic School. The Psychoanalytic theory of Sigmund Freud is based on the idea that strong inner forces, which are present in unconscious mind, influence Human behavior. The theory includes the three elements of Personality Structure. They are - ID is a group of instincts, present within the unconscious level and based on Pleasure Principle. This aspect of personality is mainly driven by basic drives and needs. EGO which is based on the Reality Principle, it works to achieve the id’s drive in a real way and helps to balance both, ‘id’ and ‘Superego’. SUPEREGO is the third element of Personality Structure; it is driven by Morality Principle. It acts in accordance with the morality of higher thought and action. The super ego works in such a way to make us behave in socially acceptable ways. It employs morality and helps us to judge what is good and what is evil; what is right and what is wrong.

## **Lady Macbeth**

Character of any person is determined by the influence of the personality structure. If a person is highly influenced by id, he will be thinking on his own pleasures not caring for anybody. They might possess anti-social characteristics. Lady Macbeth of Shakespeare’s

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Macbeth is the most powerful among his characters. She is said to have unsexed herself. She is portrayed as a very cruel woman who says,

“I have given suck, and know  
How tender ‘tis to love the babe that milks me  
I would, while it was smiling in my face,  
have pluck’d my nipple from his boneless gums,  
and dash’d the brains out, had I bought so sworn  
As you have done to this ...”

No mother can be imagined to give such an example which involves the death of her child. But if this character of Lady Macbeth is analyzed psychologically, it will be proven that it might not be an innate one. Freud himself argued that the reason for such activities of Lady Macbeth is the result of the psychological problem of not having a child. She laments it in one of her speeches:

“As we shall make our griefs and clamour roar upon his death.”

### **Meaning of “Our Grief”**

Here the veiled meaning of “our grief” is the grief of her barrenness though it referred to the pain of Duncan’s death. She has the scar of her barrenness deep inside her heart. Towards the end of the play, while dreaming she behaves more like a woman, soft and gullible. Her childlessness is more feminine in nature. Her love for her husband also is a proof that she doesn’t have the negative character. It is for her husband, she goes to the extent of killing the king. The ambition to be the king is the ambition of Macbeth. She wants to help her husband accomplish his wish. Thus, it is proven- with psychological analysis and subjective reader-response theory- Lady Macbeth is not cruel in nature. She possesses love. It is only the circumstances, her love for her husband, and her guilt of barrenness has turned out her to behave in such a way.

### **Iago**

“Iago stands supreme among Shakespeare’s characters”. Many critics quote that he has motiveless malignity. But there are motives behind the deeds of Iago. He hates Othello and Cassio because he was not given the post of lieutenant. Othello, who is well aware of the bravery of Iago, ignores him for the post of Lieutenant and gives it to a mere arithmetician, Cassio. This has rooted envy and anger in the mind of Iago. He couldn’t bear that Othello has underestimated him and that has resulted in the motive of vengeance. Jealous, envy and vengeance are the common traits seen amidst the people of all walks of life. But in Iago’s case his id has forced him to act cunningly and cruelly. He suspects Othello, Cassio, Desdemona and even his wife Emilia. This is also because of the urge to find ways to take revenge. Iago has innate love for power. When he is denied with the post of lieutenant, he wants to take the power in his own hands to revenge Othello and Cassio to prove his superiority. Ridley supports Iago saying that his acts are

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like that of a child who finds pleasure in pulling a fly to pieces or tormenting his younger brother. The comparison, to some people may seem over-simplification. But in psycho-analytic point of view it is true because his soul has received a painful feeling. So it finds pleasure when reason behind the pain got hurt back. His motive in the beginning was not very cruel. He didn't aim to kill either Othello or Cassio, neither Desdemona nor his wife Emilia. It is the circumstance that drives him to be malicious. Everybody believes Iago. None of the characters in the play suspects him for the evil designs. This shows that Iago was a very loyal and faithful person to all till he gets the pain of denial of the lieutenant's post and develops vengeance. Cassio when speaking about Iago says: "I never knew a Florentine more kind and honest" Desdemona says, "O that's an honest fellow" Othello says "And for I know thou art full of live and honesty". When these words are analyzed, implying subjective reader response theory, it is obvious that Iago is an honest and loyal person by nature

### **Regina Giddens**

Regina Giddens is an epitome in being highly materialistic. Her ultimate aim is to get the money which her brothers and her husband are trying to hold it for themselves. She is forced by her id to go to any extent to get hold of the money because she is longing for it from her childhood. When she was a little girl,

“there was so little place for what I wanted. I wanted the world”

She is denied of the share in her family property. Her father cut her out of the will. So, her id is forcing her to get money. Regina and her brothers decided to make an investment which would make them rich. They agreed that each must put up some amount as one third of the interest. Regina plans to get that amount from her husband who has union specific bonds in strong box. But cunningly her brothers stole it and Horace, Regina's husband, knowing this makes a will mentioning that stolen bonds to be the share of Regina and rest to their daughter. When she realizes this, she is reluctant to help her husband who is falling from the stairs. She allowed her husband die in her sight and doesn't regret for that. Instead threatens her brothers and successfully got her share. But she is not happy in getting what she wanted from her childhood because Alexandra, her daughter, leaves her saying that her mother might be responsible for the death of Horace. Regina if greedy by nature and materialistic by birth would have been really happy at getting what she had been longing for years. But she is like a child who needs to be by the side of the mother. In the end she asks Alexandra to sleep with her. It implies that she is not completely materialistic. She too acquires love and sentiments. It is her pain of not having what she wanted had turned her materialistic.

### **Today's Iagos and Lady Macbeths**

The world comprises of so many Iagos, Lady Macbeths and Reginas. Sigmund Freud explained that if human beings master the tactics of balancing the three personality traits – id, ego and super ego, they will be in the state of equilibrium. People will tend to understand the reasons behind their own thoughts and deeds and they will be able to find the solutions too. How

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to make the people to understand this is again a big question. Completely altering the terrorists into saints in a day is impossible. People with negative thoughts can be counseled. They must be made aware that this negative character of theirs is not theirs at all. Apart from this, the solution that I would like to suggest is to implement moral education to all the youth. They constitute tomorrow's society. Hence, they have to be moulded. Now we are not in a situation to cleanse the corrupted society. At least such mishaps can definitely be prevented in future. Let's make the pillars of tomorrow to realize what really life is; what we are really made of. If it is done then our blooming world will really be a beautiful flower which pleases everyone with its colourful petals and fragrance.

### **Implication for Building a Positive Nation**

As discussed above, imparting moral and value education to all the students should be made mandatory. Today's students are completely equipped with technical knowledge, but they lack manners and culture. These kinds of students only, when they grow up, involve in anti-social behaviors because they know no human values. So, it is the prime duty of everybody to inculcate the moral values in them but not imposing it. The quote,

“Tell me and I forget  
Teach me and I remember

Involve me and I understand” is a beautiful example for this too. Yes, if we teach moral values to the students they will not understand. An excellent way is to make them read literary texts. While reading the texts like Macbeth, Othello, Dr. Faustus, etc., they will realize the importance of morality in life and the consequences of its negligence.

### **Conclusion**

"You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view...Until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it." says Harper Lee in 'To Kill a Mockingbird'. Exactly, People have reasons for all their behaviors. It has to be sorted out before judging them good or bad. They are not really what they appear to be. Even the darkest night will end, and the sun will rise as Victor Hugo says.

"It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."  
—Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*.

Negative characters in man can be undeniably changed provided we put ourselves into their shoes and pave room for them to understand that they are also normal human beings who are made out of love, compassion, empathy and feelings.

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Sathiyapriya. S., M.A., B.Ed., M.Phil.  
Assistant Professor  
KPR Institute of Engineering and Technology  
Coimbatore  
Tamilnadu  
India  
[sathiyapriya.s@kpriet.ac.in](mailto:sathiyapriya.s@kpriet.ac.in)

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