

**Comparative Study of Transiency (*anicca*) one of the Buddha's  
Doctrines and the Perspective towards Morality in the  
Characterization of Macbeth  
(Based on William Shakespeare's Drama Macbeth)**

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**Introduction**

More than 2560 years have elapsed since the passing away of the Lord Buddha, yet his unique influence is exerted through his 'Dhamma' on all who come to follow him. The population in almost all the oriental Buddhist countries like Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Nepal, Tibet, China, Mongolia, Korea, Japan and many occidental countries still existing in the world hail Lord Buddha as their Supreme Teacher. The Buddhas' teachings consists mainly, of The Four Noble Truths (Cattāri ariyasaccāni), The Law of Moral Causation (Karma), Re-birth (Punarbawa), Dependent origination (Paticcasamuppāda), The Noble Eightfold Path (Āryāstāngamārg), Ultimate Goal of Buddhists (Nibbana), The Doctrine of Transiency (Anicca), Sorrow (Dukkha), and No-Soul (Anattā). All the Dhamma recited by the Buddha during his Buddhahood is claimed to be only forty five years.

The Tipitaka was compiled and arranged in its present form by those Arahats of old. The Tipitaka consists of three categories, the Basket of Discipline (Vinaya Pitaka), the Basket of Discourses (Sutta Pitaka) and the Basket of Ultimate Doctrine (Abhidamma Pitaka). The Sutta Pitaka consists chiefly of discourses, delivered by the Lord Buddha himself on various occasions. This Pitaka is divided into five Nikayas or collections. Smaller collection is called Khuddaka Nikaya out of the five Nikayas, and this Collection is subdivided into fifteen books. Dhammapada (Way of Truth) is available amidst of them. The following stanza in Dhammapada is expounded the doctrine of Transiency (Anicca), some 2500 years ago.

“Sabbe sakhārā aniccāti - yadā paññāya passati  
Atha nibbindati dukkhe - esa maggo visuddhiyā.” (5: Magga-Vagga)

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(“All conditions are impermanent:” when one sees this with wisdom, one is disenchanted with suffering; this is the path to purity.)

William Shakespeare (1564 - 1616), one of the greatest poets and playwright lived in London during the Elizabethan Period, considered as the Golden Period of literary works in England too grasped the abruptness of the livelihood of human beings. His extant works consist of some thirty nine plays, hundred and fifty four sonnets, two long narrative poems, and a few other verses. His plays have been translated into every major living language and are performed more often than those of any other playwright. Among the literary works written by Shakespeare, The drama Macbeth (1606) holds an importance place.

Macbeth was an ambitious Scottish soldier. He was applauded for sacrificing his youth for the loyalty. Due to the success of the military duties, he was promoted to a higher rank in the Army, by the King. Accepting the oracle of superstition, he wanted to be the King of Scotland. Macbeth assassinated brutally King Duncan. Shakespeare impresses the truth of Transiency which is one of the themes in the drama Macbeth, through one of the soliloquies of the major character Macbeth he was deprived of each and every expectations, especially the sudden bereavement of his wife, Lady Macbeth.

### **Research Problem**

The research problem is to find out whether the Buddha’s teaching of the concept of ‘Impermanence’ is depicted by Macbeth, the main character through the drama Macbeth, written by William Shakespeare.

### **Objective**

The objective of this study is to become aware of Macbeth’s character through the concept of impermanence related in Buddhism.

### **Methodology**

The methodology of this study is mainly based on primary sources including oriental religious sources and literary sources. Occidental approaches to literary criticism sets the scope of this study.

### **Results and Findings**

As mentioned in one Dhammapada verse in Magga Vagga, if a person who realizes the transiency in the mortal world, he would become the achievement of wisdom. According to the Buddhist standpoint, there is a mutual connection between avarice and moral degradation of human beings. To the wise, contentment is an indispensable guide; to the spiritually evolved, an intellectual treat. It is depicted by Shakespeare in the drama of Macbeth, that who fails to control his

acquisitiveness, gets the moral deterioration of the human mind. But realisation of the truth within a short period, achieves maturation. Shakespeare contrasts the Macbeth character as earlier established. It seems to be the realization of human life. It can be seen a reconciliation of the Lord Buddha's teachings before 2500 years.

### Conclusion

The Buddha expounded the doctrine of Transiency (*Anicca*) some 2500 years ago while He was sojourning in the valley of the Ganges in India. Later he delivered that all the things are ephemeral, not permanent and not everlasting. Shakespeare also realized the truth of transiency while he was living in the bank of river Themes in London.

**Keywords:** Buddhist Doctrine, Dhammapada, Macbeth, Transiency (*Anicca*)

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