

The Unbridled Horses: Krishna's Chariot as a Paradigm for Reading Shakespeare's Macbeth

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Abstract

This paper offers a cross-cultural reinterpretation of William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* through the philosophical framework of the *Bhagavad Gita*, employing Krishna's chariot as an interpretive paradigm for understanding tragic consciousness. While Shakespearean criticism has traditionally approached *Macbeth* through Aristotelian, psychoanalytic, political, and existential perspectives, this study proposes an Indian philosophical lens that foregrounds the dynamics of self-mastery, moral agency, and ethical action. Drawing upon the symbolism of Krishna as the divine charioteer and the broader Indian chariot allegory, the paper argues that Macbeth's downfall results from his inability to govern the "inner horses" of ambition, desire, fear, and attachment. His surrender to unchecked passion transforms kingship into tyranny and moral conflict into self-destruction.

The study further examines the concepts of *dharma*, *karma*, *buddhi* (discriminative wisdom), and the three *gunas*—*sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*—to demonstrate how Macbeth's psychological and ethical decline parallels the *Bhagavad Gita's* account of a mind overwhelmed by desire and delusion. Rather than presenting the *Bhagavad Gita* merely as a comparative text, the paper positions it as a hermeneutic framework that opens new possibilities for interpreting Shakespearean tragedy. By bringing Indian philosophy into dialogue with Renaissance drama, this study contributes to comparative literature, cross-cultural hermeneutics, and global Shakespeare studies, demonstrating how classical Eastern thought can illuminate the moral and psychological complexities of one of Shakespeare's most enduring tragic heroes.