An analysis of some of the plays of Shakespeare, therefore, brings us to a point where we may state that the “dark forces”, as represented by Shakespeare, are not actually negative. Rather, it is the unscrupulous and power-hungry people of society, who project them as evil in order to serve as a veneer for their own crimes.

In *King Henry VI, Part I* Joan is initially presented as a bright and innocent woman who is hailed as “Astraea’s daughter”, “the bright star of Venus”, who bears the power of the “nine sibyls of old Rome”. But the moment she fails, she is condemned as a “deceitful dame”. Her enemy, the English, always considered her to be a witch because it hurt their male vanity to be defeated by a woman. But an in-depth study of the play reveals that Joan is not wholly responsible for the defeat of the English, rather it is their own factional feud and personal rivalry which lead to their fall. The English lords joined hands with the French clergy to bring about the tragic end of Joan. The shift in the portrayal of Joan’s character also assumes a specific significance when we find that it is a throwback upon the reigning monarch, Queen Elizabeth I. Prophet-like, Joan pronounces a curse upon the English and the result is the terrible Wars of the Roses. Thus interpreted,
Joan certainly does not appear to be a witch. Instead, she is an innocent prey to the machinations of the crafty power-mongers.

The rich and the ambitious men of Shakespeare's Age used the supernatural as an ingenious plot for trapping their enemies. This has been well depicted in *King Henry VI, Part 2*. The Duke of Suffolk and Queen Margaret, his paramour, considered the Duke of Gloucester to be their greatest obstacle. So they laid a trap with the help of a double-standard priest John Hume. Thus Eleanor Cobham, the wife of Duke Humphrey is convicted of practising sorcery to bring about the fall of the King and this brings an end to the political career of her husband too.

In *Richard III* there is ample reference to evil omens and prophecies. But these omens portend the end of the evildoers themselves and hence cannot actually be evil. Here again, we see the priests serving as religious props to make such a man as Richard III, who is evil incarnate, the King of England. Moreover, the ghosts who condemned Richard III are, in fact, the spirits of men whose blood Richard III has shed. Therefore, their cursing and prophecies are an act of retribution. These very ghosts predict a happy future to Henry of Richmond, the virtuous man who serves as God's avenging angel.
Similarly, a close analysis of the various facets of the Ghost in *Hamlet* has revealed that it is governed from above and has in fact, come to purge out the “rotten” state of Denmark. Indeed the world of Elsinore is a “dark” world ruled by multiple “dark forces”. And anyone who acts to cleanse out this world can certainly not be evil. Rather, it is “an honest ghost”, a purgative spirit that is itself undergoing the process of purification.

In *Macbeth* Shakespeare has undertaken an elaborate study of the world of the witches and their prophecies. The witches are shown to be the faithful followers of a hierarchical order, fraternal to each other. Opposed to them, is the human world where man is ready to kill his fellow man for a little gain. The witches predict the future to such an evil man but their prediction ultimately leads to the fall of the man and indeed this can be called a good riddance. They never equivocate with Banquo, the honest man, but their entire intention is to misguide Macbeth, “a wayward son”. So they do not cause any mischief in the play – rather bring an end to all mischief-makers.

Therefore, it may be concluded that in none of the plays here discussed, have the ghosts or witches committed any evil deeds. It is the powerful and ambitious men, represented by the royalty and the clergy who are the actual evildoers of society. Therefore, the “dark forces” in
Shakespeare’s plays are not the supernatural elements – they are, in fact, the victims of the actual “dark forces”.