

## Macbeth: Supernatural elements: Witches

William Shakespeare is the brightest star in the galaxy of English dramatists. He is always original and enjoys a deep insight into human nature. The Elizabethan audiences had a strong belief in ghosts and spirits. Shakespeare has been alive to aspect of his contemporary life so, he has made a greater use of supernatural elements in his drama. The present tragedy, Macbeth also abounds in supernatural powers in Witches and ghosts. **M.A. HAQUE**

The Witches are introduced as an integral part of Macbeth as ghosts are of Hamlet. This tragedy begins with the entrance of the Witches in thunder and lightning on a desert heath. They create the whole atmosphere of the play by saying these words:

"Fair is foul, and foul is fair,

Hover through the fog and filthy air"

This short utterance suggests the gist of the play that takes place later on. They reappear again and meet Banquo and Macbeth, the two valiant generals. They make three prophecies to Macbeth - Thanes of Glamis and Cawdor and King thereafter. They call Banquo to be a father of Kings. Then they come to the Healed scene and finally when Macbeth consults them to know more about his future. Regarding their roles in the action of the play, there are differences of opinions among the critics. Some critics believe that they are evil geniuses who tempt Macbeth to his ruin. They are the evil power of the tragedy. But others say that they are the embodiments of the ambitious thoughts of Macbeth. A thorough study of the play reveals that they speak out the unspoken desires of Macbeth. Furthermore, as the play is a tragedy of character, they cannot be all powerful using Macbeth as a tool in their hands.

There is no denying the fact that the

Supernatural forces form key note in the very atmosphere of the Play. But the tragic actions of the Play are not controlled by them. It is an outcome of the passions struggling in the hearts of the characters. Even if we suppose that Macbeth is influenced by the Witches in Duncan's murder, we cannot account for many of his other crimes. The killing of Lady Macduff is not even hinted at. This action is quite human. Besides, if the hero is made to be influenced by the outside forces, he is not free to choose his course of action. Then it will not be a tragedy of character. In fact, here the hero's will is his own will. He has a free choice of action and he chooses wrongly, for he nourishes evil desire. See the following utterances:-

"Stars hide your fires  
Let not light see my black and deep desires"  
Macbeth treacherously murders

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King Duncan not due to the Witches or Lady Macbeth but due to his royal ambition that is deep rooted in his heart. He kills Banquo for his safety. He butchers Lady Macduff and her child for he is in the deep crime and does not have any moral fear. He says-

"I have almost forgot the taste of fear."

The Witches and ghosts are objective symbols of subjective state of mind. They are outward manifestations of inward passions and ambitions. They are visible agents of invisible impulses driving the characters and deeds for which they themselves are responsible. This is their dramatic significance. They do not put any evil idea in men, but strengthen and encourage what is already in minds of characters. They tempt the men but only when they kind themselves to be so tempted. This is what happens in case of Macbeth. The Witches hail both

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both Banquo and Macbeth. But, it is Macbeth alone who wishes to accost them, not Banquo. He has a vaulting ambition and is predisposed to believe what they say. Lady Macbeth knows her late husband's mind:-

"And not without ambition, but without

The illness should attend it."

**M.A. HAQUE** Thus, we see that the supernatural powers in Macbeth are morally neutral. They are not the embodiment of the ideas of evils. They are not more than the outward manifestation of Macbeth who is a free agent in the choice of acts he commits. It is not the Witches that lead Macbeth to the hell of sufferings. It is Macbeth's vaulting ambition that makes him a butcher and brings his tragic end.