

ROLE OF PROPHECY, SIGNIFICANCE OF PRESENCE OF WITCHES IN THE DRAMA

Presence of Supernaturals plays an important role in Shakespearean drama. He has amply introduced the ariels, witches, ghosts to heighten an air of suspense and thrill among his audience. In *Macbeth* too, we see the imposing presence of the three witches whose prophecy plays havoc in the mind of the anti-hero, Macbeth. He commits heinous crimes one after another under the influence of those prophecies. Witches are the mischief-makers. They kill a swine, tosses a tempest torn ship about to toil a sailor to avenge his fat wife. The witches, ironically, never make any direct suggestion to murder king Duncan, Banquo or the helpless wife and kid-son of Macduff. Apparently they can not be held responsible for instigating him directly. Instead, Lady Macbeth can be ascribed for this. The strength of the witches' prediction becomes evident when Macbeth, to his astonishment, discovers that he has been elevated to the title of the *Thane of Cawdor*. The seed of evil is embedded in the mind of Macbeth. It is this evil that rises up crookedly in his mind to mechanise him into the turn of diabolic action. He contemplates the possibility of furthering the prophecy himself. He fails to realize that he became the Cawdor without any effort from his own side. Therefore, if fortune so declines, he will become the King without himself perpetrating for the same. Hence, he himself is effectively responsible for losing the peace of his mind and for his further downfall.

Banquo is not totally uninfluenced by the witches' prophecy either. He ushers King Duncan into Inverness Castle citing the instances of the Marlet bird which nests in peaceful abodes. He tries to dispel suspicion, if any, about Macbeth from the minds of the shocked nobles immediately after Duncan's murder. He goes to Scone to show his support and witness the coronation of the new king, Macbeth. In Forres Castle, Banquo ponders over the prophecy that his descendents will become the future kings.

Lady Macbeth becomes another prey to the lure of the prophecy. She acts as the instigator to corrupt Macbeth's mind and an accomplice to the crime of Duncan's assassination. When Macbeth is worried at the thought of the prophecy that Banquo's sons will become the future kings, Lady Macbeth reminds him that Banquo and Fleance are not immortals. This shakes off Macbeth's hesitation to kill them.

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The second meet consolidates the desperation and earlier thoughts of Macbeth. They have been lurking in his mind. He decides to act upon his thought immediately once it floats in his mind. He blames himself for the escape of Fleance. He attributes it to his procrastination. The prophecy of the apparitions makes him daredevil. He believes no one *born of woman*, therefore actually none can cause him harm, he need not have to fear until the Birnam wood moves towards the Dunsinane Castle. Yet, the apparitious illusion, that the descendents of Macduff will become the future kings of Scotland, shakes his confidence. He resolves to storm the Fife Castle, assassinate Macduff with his family rightaway.

Prophecy plays a vital role in bringing about the complete downfall of Macbeth as well. He does not understand that the nemesis has begun. Prophecy emboldens him beyond any stretch of logic. He remains holed up in the Dunsinane Castle without having taken any concrete proactive measure to thwart the attack. He does not make any attempt to escape or fight from the castle even though the *Birnam Wood moves towards the Dunsinane Castle*. He still banks on the prophecy that *no one born of woman* can cause him harm. Hence, he dares to come out of his Castle and engage himself into contact combat with his enemy.

He finds out the hollowness of the prophecy to his dismay and peril when Macduff informs him that he was born Caesarian, that is, taken out of his mother's womb through surgical operation. He realizes how the prophecy equivocated him into his doom. They first lured him to trust them before they devastated him.
