

## **The Role of Witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth***

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### **Abstract**

Shakespeare is the most prominent writers of his age as well as he is celebrated for his flamboyant works even till today. In his works we can find the audacity of Shakespeare to write on topics such as kings, nobles and topics such as witches and projecting dark and evil characters. Witches are mostly seen in Shakespeare's plays. In the times of Shakespeare and even before people considered witches as one of the most evil beings, who always want to harm people. Shakespeare uses these horror characters to fascinate his audience. Witches are considered as the symbol of Evil. They intrigue the audience if they are correct in their prophecies. The voices of the witches are a focus towards unnaturalness and disorder.

**Key Words:** Witches, unnaturalness, disorder

Shakespeare always kept his audience in his mind. He made use of dark characters such as witches in most of his plays. For instance, in *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth offers no comment on the witches, 'the metaphysical aid' who promises so much to her husband. It is Macbeth who needs the witches to tell him what is in his mind, but is too afraid to acknowledge and he refers to them as the instruments of darkness. When Macbeth and Banquo encounter the three witches, the three witches are observed to be as either the goddesses of destiny, or else some nymphs or they might be some fairies filled with the knowledge of prophesy by their necromantical science.

*“ The three woman in strange and wild apparel, resembling creatures of elder world”*  
[Macbeth]

Shakespeare had an influence of the University wits in his plays. Robert Green says that “ Shakespeare is an abstart crow beautified with our feathers”. He took a lot of concepts and techniques from his contemporary writer Marlow and the University Wits. His sonnets are considered to be written for two of his secret admirers called Mr.W.H and Dark Lady. Many critics say that Shakespeare would have had an attraction towards a lady with a dark toned skin on the other hand few critics suspect that Shakespeare was a homophile as he wrote love sonnets for a man Mr. WH. Though all these are just a controversies and perceptions of the critics. Shakespeare never revealed to whom he wrote his sonnets to. There is also a criticism that one of the sonnets “Shall I compare thee to a summers dream” was not actually dedicated to Dark Lady or WH but was dedicated to Hamnet his dyeing son.

As there is a criticism about Shakespeare that he gets influenced very quickly by his contemporary writers or by his predecessors. The concept of Shakespeare’s ‘Three Witches’ might be an influence of the old Norse or Norse Mythology. The Three Witches concept can also be an influence by a law passed by King James nine years ago. That law was untouched for about a hundred and thirty days.

S.T. Coleridge is one of the positive critics of Shakespeare where he says that the three witches, who are considered to be sisters, should be seen as ambiguous figures. According to S.T Coleride the three witches should not be called as witches by themselves or other characters in the play. More ever they were depicted as more fair than foul.

The three witches, first appear in Act I Scene I, where they assure Macbeth that they would meet him later. In Act I Scene III the three witches meet Macbeth and Banquo and make a prophecy there. They prophesy on Macbeth saying that he would be the king of Scotland, and that Banquo’s offspring’s would be in the thrones of Scotland. The prophesy has a great impact upon Macbeth, as he works towards sitting on the throne of Scotland as a king.

## **Conclusion**

Initially when we look at the character of Macbeth we see that he was an honest and faithful soldier of the King of Scotland. But, when greed entered him he turned into a totally new person. A good character was turned into an evil one. The three witches act as the mysterious luck and fate for Macbeth. The witches put a hope in his mind of becoming the king of Scotland, but did not direct him in a positive way, or guide him to take the path of patience to become successful. Instead they leave him in dilemma as how he would become the king. The reason for Macbeth's fate and death was his blind belief on the words of the witches, which is not practical.

**Works Cited :**

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